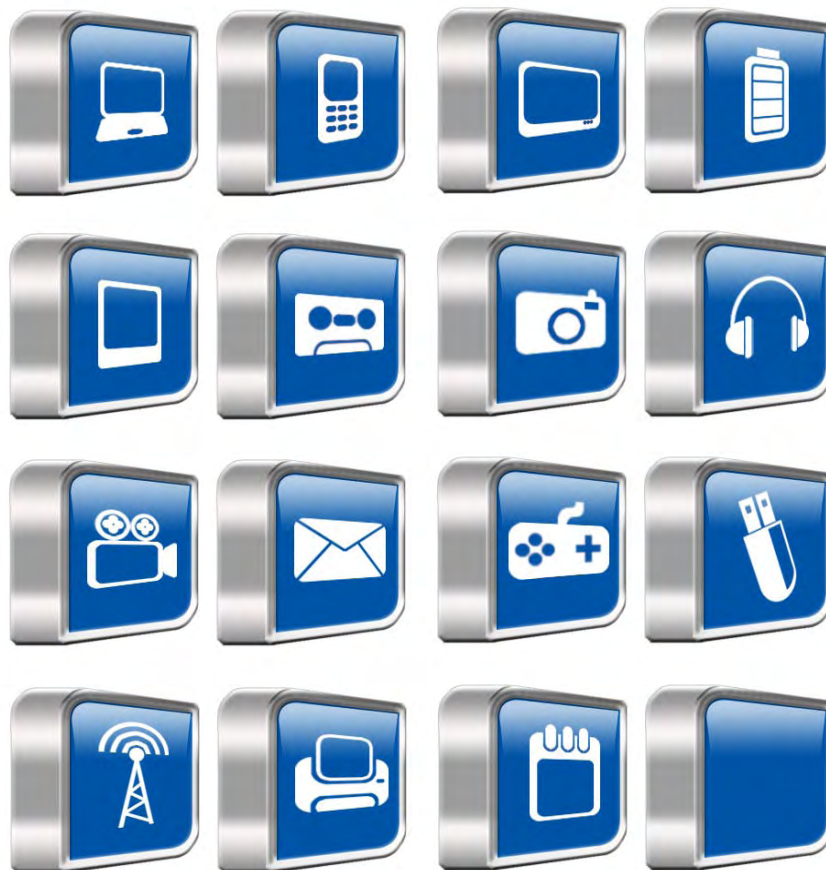


# RECRUITMENT AND SOCIAL MEDIA

**Building an effective online presence:  
A first insight in using social media for  
recruitment purposes**



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August 2009

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The current economic crisis offers organizations the possibility to rethink their recruitment activities and employer branding strategies. As fewer vacancies are being created and only a limited number of new employees are hired, the quest for the right candidate(s) who can be efficiently integrated in the organization is perhaps becoming more significant.

In addition, the current economic world crisis will only affect job market positions on the short- and middle run: it will become getting tighter similar to the situation before the crisis. Organizations used to have a relative luxury position where candidates were looking for them but in the last decade, a shift has been made to situations where organizations sometimes experience a more intensive quest for right qualified candidates. These conditions create new and unknown challenges and strategies for recruitment in general and approaching candidates in specific. Organizations' positioning, marketing and communication have to adapt to this shift.

Those recruitment activities are becoming even more relevant since the rise of the new media on the World Wide Web (including Web 2.0, social software, ICT 3.0 and other concepts). 2008 was the year that social media became mainstream. Within this digital environment, everything is focused on active behavior and social connecting: user generated content, sharing, collaborating and creating. It resulted in a web that developed itself from a medium where information was sent and consumed, to a platform where content is being created, shared, reused, changed and forwarded.

These new social media create various opportunities for recruiters and their communications, but there are also big pitfalls which can instantaneously harm the organization's reputation and impression that was built up so carefully in previous decennia. Online conversations can become the most important information source for the current digital natives. Consequently, an employer brand could be primarily defined by people external to the organization. As such, before using social media for recruitment objectives, the whole concept of social media has to be understood and the different possible marketing and communication applications for organizations' recruitment activities have to be evaluated. The goal of this report is to establish a first and general – not comprehensive - overview of social media and implementations for recruitment purposes, aimed at young graduates. In essence, a social media presence of the employer brand on a meta level. Therefore, the report is guided by the following research question:

*How can social media be applied to build a strategic online presence of the employer brand?*

This research was executed during an internship at IBM Netherlands' HR department in 2008. During this internship, a parallel scientific research was executed about trustworthiness within social networking sites (ten Kate, 2009<sup>1</sup>). As such, this research bears an academic and applied character. Further research can focus on more comprehensive applications that social media offer. Although the report sometimes is focused on the Dutch job market, its general recommendations have universal value.

This report is organized as follows. The next chapter presents a short review of the background and trigger of this report. Chapter three will shortly describe the research steps and its focus, followed by an extensive introduction of social media. The next chapter explains social media its significance for recruitment communications. Chapter six will describe the basics of establishing an online employer presence, which will be followed by a review of social media applications and recruitment opportunities they offer. Chapter eight will integrate all these chapters into a conclusion and general list of recommendations.

## 2. BACKGROUND OF THE REPORT

Within the development of the World Wide Web, a new media form has been established – the social media. This new media revolution was triggered by the rise of the Web 2.0. The Web 2.0 serves as a social platform, where social interaction and connecting people is the essence. This new media is different compared to the former mass media, where companies could 'push' their communication to their receivers. The new media, triggered by the mass usage of the Internet, pc and mobile phone, transform from traditional mass media to 'media mass' (Bloem, van Doorn and Duivestein, 2008). Due to media mass its personalized character, the whole topic is becoming further customized.

Social media include online social networks, weblogs, video sharing, photo sharing, message boards, podcasts, communities, serious games and RSS. They changed the playing field of recruitment's job market communication completely and turned it almost 180 degrees. Candidates want to be approached on a personal way and they want to be found by the companies, instead of vice-versa. It focuses on 'ME the media', where candidates are skilled enough to find the company and the company has to sell itself and the role/job. These fast developments call for a more visible and

**How can a recruiter employs Hyves, Facebook, Myspace, LinkedIn, Plaxo, Twitter, Second Life, Youtube, podcasts, games and search engines, while also reading and updating blogs, RSS feeds, doing the regular job and speaking people in real life?**

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.stephantenkate.nl/thesis>

distinguished online presence of the employer brands. Although communicating via the Web is usually free, only a small number of recruitment practitioners are effectively using social media for recruitment applications. Social media create a lot of opportunities for recruiters and their communications. But caution needs to be taken: an extensively build reputation and impression that has been build over the years can be harmed easily within these social media, where information sharing can be done straightforwardly. This decrease of the online employer brand often occurs because most recruitment departments are acting within social media from the digital immigrants' perspective.

Further more, acting within the new media costs a lot of time and effort. How can a recruiter employs Hyves, Facebook, Myspace, LinkedIn, Plaxo, Twitter, Second Life, Youtube, podcasts, games and search engines, while also reading and updating blogs, RSS feeds, doing the regular job and speaking people in real life? This was already be illustrated by Dutch research by the Intelligence Groups, which conclude that 52% of the Dutch office recruiters does not pick up his/her phone<sup>2</sup>. With all current developments, it's not always clear which systems are valuable and which are not. Consequently, employing social media has to be done in an efficient way. This exploratory study provides an introduction in using the social media.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.intelligence-group.nl/bijblijven/nieuws?newspath=%2FNews%2Fnl%2FMeer+dan+de+helft+van+de+bureaurecruiters+neemt+de+telefoon+niet+op> (Dutch)

### 3. RESEARCH METHOD

This research is executed during an internship at IBM Netherlands HR Department in 2008. As has been stated in the introduction, this report bears an academic and practical character. During this internship, a parallel extensive qualitative scientific research was executed about trustworthiness within social networking sites. This explorative study utilized multiple scientific publications, documents and interviews with expert groups. Moreover, for the more practical examination, practical sources have been used. These sources can be divided into different aspects:

- Research reports / books / articles
- Relevant websites / RSS Feeds
- Weblogs
- Communities
- Exhibitions and conferences
- Expert interviews
- Interviews with users



The combination of the usage of different sources and an internship of eight months created a solid foundation for this report. Although the underlying technologies are the foundation of the Internet, there is little awareness of it in nowadays Internet usage. For this reason, this research focuses on the user experience of young graduates, instead of the underlying technologies. This studied user experience is aimed at the marketing and communication processes for recruitment applications, not at searching potential candidates.

## 4. AN INTRODUCTION OF SOCIAL MEDIA

### INTRODUCTION

The terms social media and Web 2.0 are frequently stated and heard within various areas. They appear to be the Holy Grail within the Web development, but they are often ill-defined and completely elusive. Social media are starting to be embedded within recruitment applications and processes, but little results are known. Additionally, its descriptions are often not more than general descriptions, instead of practical terms. Since the current and future young graduates' usage of social media is becoming further intertwined with their daily life, the underlying technologies of social media are becoming commodities. As such, recruitment marketing and communication processes merely have to focus on the user experiences social media create (instead of the underlying technologies). However, to get a beneficial insight in the usage of social media in building an online presence, a more formal description of social media from the user perspective is needed. This will be done in the next paragraph. After that, the characteristics of social media will be explored, followed by its size and impact. Thereafter, the various forms and tools of social media will be introduced.

### 4.1 SOCIAL MEDIA DESCRIPTION FROM A USER PERSPECTIVE – PARTICIPATION IS KEY

#### 4.1.1 The media background

Media are a central concept in our lives and consist of different forms of mediums, which means the storage and transmission tools to deliver information or data from a sender to a receiver. Before the rise of the Internet and web media, there only existed the traditional mass media such as newsletters, journals, magazines, radio and television. Broadcasting via these media was expensive and only well-funded institutions had access to these media. As such, traditional mass media was employed to push communications to the senders, with little dialogue and customizations. This media landscape changed dramatically since the growth of the Internet and social technologies: the web media evolved, including the web 2.0 and social media.

#### 4.1.2 The Web 2.0

Web 2.0 has been described or perceived as the next generation of the web. It is not a stand-alone construct however: seen overall, the Web 2.0 can be perceived as a component of the social media. Yet, since the large amount of attention of the concept, it is worthwhile to look at the Web 2.0 concept and its development, before elucidating the social media



concept. When the Internet bubble collapsed, various companies fell out of the digital market, got bankrupt, or were taken over. These shakeouts often implicate that there is a new, upcoming technology that takes a central role (O'Reilly, 2005) – the Web 2.0. The concept 'Web 2.0' was developed during a brainstorm session at a conference of O'Reilly Media (Skiba, Tamas en Robinson, 2006). They thought that the Web was more important then ever, with new applications and the rising of new classes of websites. Besides that, they noticed that the organizations which survived the Internet bubble shared some common features and characteristics (O' Reilly, 2005). The concept of 'Web 2.0' was born and meant the 'new' web. Web 2.0 became a buzzword, and most companies were analyzing how they could integrate Web 2.0 tools in their marketing strategy. Yet, most of them weren't any successful by mainly focusing on tools. After all, the Web 2.0 was a component of the new social web which had nothing to do with new technologies and tools (all in all, the current version of the Web is often called Web 3.0 or 4.0). Actually, it does not consist of new techniques or infrastructures at all; most of the used technologies that are implemented within the social web already existed before the concepts of web 2.0 and social media were created. Programming techniques such as AJAX and RSS do play a role, but the essence is the graphical interfaces which are stimulated by these techniques, and on their turn, boosts social interactions on a global scale – the social media.

**Web 2.0 reflected the transformation of the Internet as an information source, into an interactive platform.**

#### **4.1.3 Social media**

The new social media serve as a social platform, where everything is focused on doing and social connecting: sharing, collaborating and creating. Although the term social media can be seen as a fashionable marketing concept, it can be explained as the evolution from the surfing experience of the web (the nineties), to searching (year 2000) and to doing (present). It's about connecting people and making technology efficient for them. Forms of social media include blogs, forums, social networks and virtual worlds.

Although there is not a general definition of the social media, their websites do share some common characteristics, such as online communities, self-expression, user generated content, open source environment and social networks. It results in a web that develops itself

**Social media is not about technology; it's about the social interactions they trigger.**

from a platform where information has been sent and consumed, to a platform where content is created, shared, reused, changed and forwarded. This development was boosted due to the expansion of social software. Social software delivers significant

value to social connections. It can be defined as “(...) software whose design characteristics is that it treats genuine social phenomena as different from one-to-one or one-to-many communications. It seeks to build one’s expectations about the social interactions that the software will facilitate into the design of the platform” (Benkler, 2006, p. 372). It allows for social relations within mediated environments that are almost as rich and valuable as they are in real life, where sociality is key (Bouman et. al., 2008). An analogy can be made of the beginning of the web as a digital newspaper. The new (social) web can be visualized as “a shared canvas where every splash of paint contributed by one user provides a richer tapestry for the next user to modify or build on. Whether people are creating, sharing, or socializing, the new Web is principally about participating rather than about passively receiving information” (Tapscott and Williams, 2006, p. 37).

## 4.2 CHARACTERISTICS OF SOCIAL MEDIA

The previous descriptions and comparisons captured the essence of the social media and their underlying technologies. It results in a rich user experience of social interaction, with focus on new attitudes, instead of new technologies (Boyd, 2007).

These developments led to a group of new kinds of social media, which can be best illustrated by the characteristics they have in common<sup>3</sup>:

- **Self generated content.** Instead of thinking about social media as a hype and how it will last, it is more useful to look at the fundamentals that initiated the expansion of social media. Its technologies enable the user on a straightforward way to create and distribute their own content. This new means of production and distribution are stimulating the spreading of social media, because it facilitates people to be themselves (iCrossing, 2007, p. 8).
- **No technologies, but which activities they trigger are important.** Social media is much more than user generated content. Technologies enable users to create content and to share, discuss, analyze, remix and discover it within communities and online networks. Users do not take notice of these technologies themselves; instead, they act within social media and create rich cultures by using the social tools (Solis, 2008, p. 5).
- **Digital natives.** Digital natives are the current (and first) generation of people who grew up with the Internet and take the online opportunities as a given. Digital immigrants, on the opposite, are older media users who do not take the Internet for granted and whose

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<sup>3</sup> Mainly based on iCrossing’s eBook ‘what is social media?’,  
[http://www.icrossing.co.uk/fileadmin/uploads/eBooks/What\\_is\\_Social\\_Media\\_icrossing\\_ebook.pdf](http://www.icrossing.co.uk/fileadmin/uploads/eBooks/What_is_Social_Media_icrossing_ebook.pdf)

media consumption is more focused on traditional mass media. Digital natives are also labeled as the Net Gen (Tapscott and Williams, 2006, p. 47) or Gen Y.

- **Authenticity.** Authenticity matters within social media. Since it is relatively easy to produce and distribute your own content, users expect others to be authentic and real. There are two reasons to do so. First, passion is hard to fake and people can sense authenticity without a lot of effort (Brogan, 2008). Related with that dimension, authenticity is also more important due to the public character of social media. One of the known rules from the web is that if you are lying, people will find out eventually. It is not just about you lying to the world, it's about the world finding out you are lying. They actually put you on the spot publicly. This is reflected in users' assumption about honesty of the self-posted information on the web (ten Kate, 2009).
- **Openness.** Openness is related to authenticity. Without openness, authenticity can not be established. Social media tools are designed to encourage feedback and participation. Without openness, authenticity is not created and users will find it hard to assess others. Consequently, participation will decrease.
- **Participation.** Social media tools produce more communication and more socializing. Due to participation and socialization, individuals can express themselves any moment they want. The segregation of media and audience is altered, since the social tools stimulate contributions, feedback and discussions (iCrossing, 2008). The Internet itself is by definition an interactive medium, where an individual decides how and when he/she is surfing and using websites. New generations websites have been established which focus on participation (ABN Amro, 2008).
- **Conversation.** Traditional mass media are focused on broadcasting; distributing information to the audience (receiver). Since social tools facilitate extensive participation, social media can better be characterized as conversation/dialogue (a deeper analysis on this dimension in chapter six).
- **Community.** Social media tools facilitate the setup of communities, where people are networking and sharing knowledge, content, documents, webpages, pictures, and videos. Online communities such as social networking sites, forums, discussion boards and blogs, are formed by people sharing various multiple characteristics (e.g. geography, age, gender, product usage, ethnicity, religion, hobbies, education, status, technology adoption, life circumstances, and interests) (Kania, 2001).
- **Connectedness.** Interaction is one of the foundations of social media. Multiple social tools are connected with each other and use content from various tools, sources and users. An example is a mashup; a web application that integrates information from various sources into one tool.

### 4.3 SOCIAL MEDIA'S SIGNIFICANCE

“Should you care? Of course you should care! Social software is all around us. It is altering the organization of social life.”

This citation belongs to Danah Boyd<sup>4</sup>, a researcher on social dynamics of online communities. It is not to say that social media are primarily the domain of researchers, youth and geeks. On the contrary; as stated before, social media is not about technology, but about people. This makes social media more than a hype, and it is used by various communities and populations. Some statistics can illustrate its global coverage and size.

#### 4.3.1 Size and numbers

Table 4.1 reflects the top ten of websites that generated the most traffic on a global scale, and within the Netherlands respectively. What can be seen from table 4.1 is that the majority of the most-trafficked websites share a social media nature. In august 2008, comScore highlighted that the usage of social networking sites exploded with a 25% increase of unique visitors, compared to an 11% increase of total Internet visitors (see table 4.2).

The user bases of the largest social networking sites for the Netherlands are also still growing and have established a large amount. Hyves, the largest Dutch social networking site, has more than 7 million members<sup>6</sup>. LinkedIn, worldwide and within the Netherlands the largest professional network, has a global coverage with 40 million registered users<sup>7</sup>. Universal McCann's research project highlighted this year that 184 million Internet users have started a blog, while 346 million Internet users are reading blogs<sup>8</sup>. Other interesting statistics include Wikipedia having over 2.8 million English and 0.5 million Dutch articles<sup>9</sup>,

**Table 4.1 Most-trafficked websites (global)<sup>5</sup>**

Rank	Website (global)	Website (Netherlands)
1.	Google.com	Google.nl
2.	Yahoo.com	Hyves.nl
3.	Youtube.com	Live.com
4.	Facebook.com	Youtube.com
5.	Live.com	Google.com
6.	MSN.com	MSN.com
7.	Wikipedia.org	Nu.nl
8.	Blogger.com	Marktplaats.nl
9.	Baidu.com	Wikipedia.org
10.	Myspace.com	Yahoo.com

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.danah.org/papers/BlogTalkReloaded.html>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.alexa.com/topsites>, May 18<sup>th</sup> 2009

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.hyves.nl/about/press/>, May 15<sup>th</sup> 2009

<sup>7</sup> <http://press.linkedin.com/about>, May 15<sup>th</sup> 2009

<sup>8</sup> <http://technorati.com/blogging/state-of-the-blogosphere/>, May 15<sup>th</sup> 2009

<sup>9</sup> <http://wikipedia.org/>, May 15<sup>th</sup> 2009

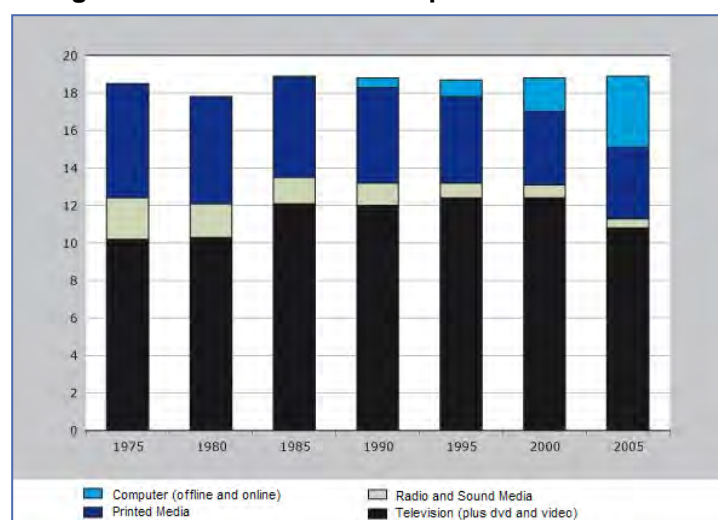
Flickr hosting over 3 billion pictures<sup>10</sup>, and Twitter having more than 3.3 million active users since its start in 2006<sup>11</sup>.

**Table 4.2 Growth of social networking sites (global)**<sup>12</sup>

	Total unique visitors		
	June 2007	June 2008	% Change
<b>Total Internet: Total audience</b>	<b>778.310.000</b>	<b>860.514.000</b>	<b>11%</b>
<b>Social networking</b>	<b>464.437.000</b>	<b>580.510.000</b>	<b>25%</b>
Facebook.com	52.167.000	132.105.000	153%
Myspace.com	114.147.000	117.582.000	3%
Hi5.com	28.174.000	56.367.000	100%
Friendster.com	24.675.000	37.080.000	50%

Statistics underline the fundamental change of the media landscape and segmentation in the Netherlands (Huysmans, van den Broek and de Haan, 2004). The Dutch Social and Cultural Plan Office (SCP) studies the media consumption within the Netherlands every five years. The last SCP research dated from 2005. Although the total media consumption remains constant, there is a decline in the television consumption and a growth in the Internet consumption (see figure 4.1). There is also a decline present in the consumption of print. It has to say that updated facts are not available for 2009, but it can be assumed that this growth of Internet usage continued heavily.

**Figure 4.1 Media Consumption in the Netherlands**<sup>13</sup>



<sup>10</sup> <http://blog.flickr.net/en/2008/11/03/3-billion/>, May 15<sup>th</sup> 2009

<sup>11</sup> <http://twitdir.com/>, May 15<sup>th</sup> 2009

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.comscore.com/press/release.asp?press=2396>, May 15<sup>th</sup> 2009

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.tijdbesteding.nl/hoelangvaak/vrijetijd/media/algemeen/20061018.html> (Dutch)

### 4.3.2 Impact

As such, the social media revolution has become mainstream and leads to new marketing and communication channels and in turn, impacts recruitment activities and employer brands in the following areas.

#### Balance of power and the long tail.

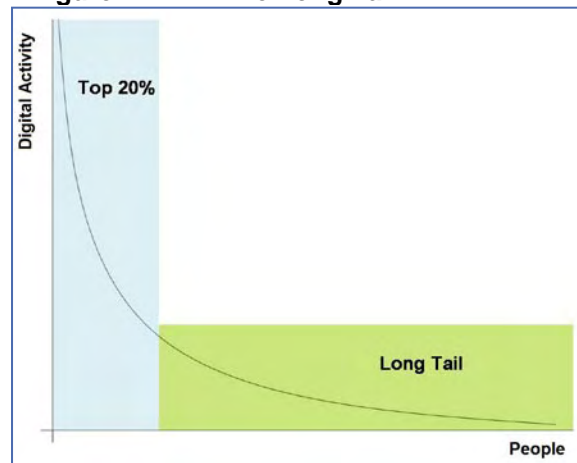
Social media's conversational character (see paragraph 4.2) results in a new balance of power. New possibilities for individuals to get out of the anonymity and join communities gives each organization and recruitment department the opportunity to make effectively use of the long tail and word-of-mouth. The concept of the long tail includes the targeting of niche markets and individuals, instead of primarily focusing on the mass market. Due to the new media revolution, every individual can act within the social media on a time he/she thinks is appropriate and within a form he/she thinks is effective. This creates new possibilities for an organization to reach more people who are open for these messages (see

**Web users can become advocates of the employer brand by effective use-of-mouth strategies.**

figure 4.2), by making these communications personalized for these individuals (Karjalainen, 2008). When this strategy is effectively applied, persons within the social media can become advocates of these messages (in the recruitment example become recruiters). This usage does not to be in place on a

campaign basis; it has to be integrated in all communication applications. Brand ambassadors can be created in this way, where organizations need a social DNA<sup>14</sup>. The challenge is to harness the power of this word-of-mouth. Scott (2008) proposes three critical constructs that have to be in place for the effective usage of the online long-tail: 1) some great and free Web content (video, blog, tool, e-book, etc.); 2) valuable information within that content; and 3) a network of people that link and spread the message.

**Figure 4.2 The Long Tail**



<sup>14</sup> <http://log.mroumen.com/2009/05/het-belang-van-een-social-dna/> (Dutch)

### The importance of virtual / online identities.

Because of the growth of social media and its importance in individuals' lives, people's online identities matter. Since it's easy to share and discover information, organization's reputation can easily be decreased. This also holds for the employees who are representatives of the organization. That's the reason for increased interest in online personal branding. Chapter six will explain the basics of acting within social media and how to enhance one's online presence.

## 4.4 COMMON FORMS OF SOCIAL MEDIA

What can be seen from the former paragraphs is that the concept of social media is multidimensional and the landscape of all available online tools is scattered. Within this landscape, a recruitment team has to employ 'SMO' – Social Media Optimization. This optimization includes an effective mix of social media tools which are embraced by various individuals and which enables the recruitment department to enhance their online presence. This optimal application will not develop at once: optimal distributions and activities will only develop by acting within social media and experimenting and monitoring these activities. The focus during the choice and usage of the diverse online tools should be on providing value to users by engaging in conversations, not only by sending messages in one-way directions. There are basically a couple of common forms of social media that can be applied to enhance online presences. These will be shortly listed; a more extensive description and its recruitment applications will be given in chapter seven. This list is not intended to be comprehensive; its goal is to give a broad overview of the diverse forms of social media.

**Social media optimization will only develop by acting within social media and experimenting and monitoring these activities.**

**Social networking sites.** These sites are aimed at establishing online networks and articulate these social connections. Through various online functionalities, people can easily setup their personal profile and share content with all the connections. There are thousands of different social networking sites to serve each possible niche network. This makes them interesting applications from the perspective of the long-tail. The biggest social networking sites worldwide are Facebook and MySpace. Hyves is the largest social networking site within the Netherlands.

**Blogs.** Weblogs are perhaps the best known representatives of the social media. They allow individuals to step out of the anonymity and add input and value to the new media landscape



in an easy way by using for instance services such as Wordpress or websites like Blogger and Livejournal.

**Content communities.** Content communities are probably not well-known by this label, but most websites behind the label will be. Content communities share and organize various kinds of content, such as photos (Flickr), videos (Youtube), music (last.fm), bookmarks (Delicious) and news (Digg).

**Forums.** Forums (or fora) facilitate in online discussions, often around specific topics and/or interests. These online communities exist since the beginning of the Internet and contain communications mediated by various computer technologies. While online communities where niches in the beginning of the Internet (e.g. Usenet, Arpanet and Listserv) they became one of the trendiest words in the end of the 90's (Dyson, 1998).

**Microblogging.** Microblogs combine online social networks with a light form of blogging. The best-known form of microblogging is Twitter. As Jantsch (2008, p. 2) state: "in simplest terms, Twitter is a free service that allows anyone to say anything to anybody in 140 characters or less – it's the "what are you doing right now" kind of micro-blogging that permeates online social communication."

**Gaming.** Games used to be separated from social media, but since serious games and virtual worlds attract a diverse and massive audience, they are getting further intertwined with organizations' activities. Examples are Second Life, World of Warcraft and mashups of game applications such as the virtual workplace for new hires or 'a day on the job' (Gallagher, 2007).



## 5. SOCIAL MEDIA AND RECRUITMENT

### 5.1 SOME OLD FACTS AND NEW STATISTICS

Previous academic studies and articles already revealed the importance of social connections for information distribution of job offerings to potential candidates (e.g. Granovetter, 1973 and 1983). This social network theory research field is not new (it originates from the 1940's and had considerable size in the 1970's), but it has gained

**Social media enables recruitment to tap into the long-tail and build personalised relationships.**

renewed interest from different disciplines due to its practical implications within organizations and the rise of social media. It reflects social media's value and possibilities for recruitment.

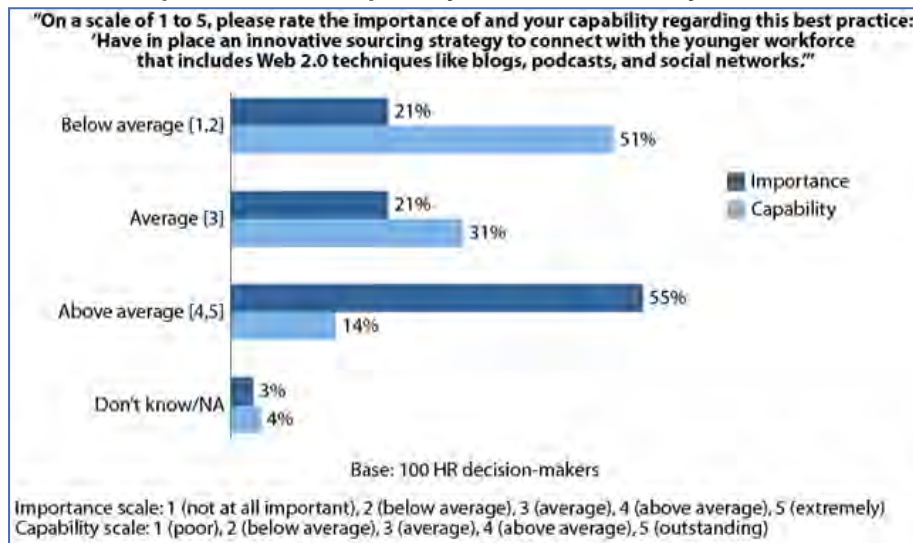
Social media changed recruitment, putting relationships at their very core. It changed the recruitment experience primarily via two dimensions. By using social media to build personalized online relationships and connections, it not only can enhance marketing activities, but it can also encourage people to share information about the employer, possible interns and job offerings, etc. with their connections. As such, seen from a recruitment perspective, social media's value is two-sided and can tap into the long-tail of potential candidates.

Besides that, an employer brand is already part of social media; if an organization participates or not. People are already speaking about employers online. As Harrison states: *"Your employer brand is defined by people external to your organisation"*<sup>15</sup>. That is definitely the case if an organization does not participate in social media, because future young graduates (Generation Y) will surely do. They will also talk about the organization's employer brand. And potential candidates will use this information for their decision to work for that organization or not. There are a variety of examples available where people are talking about employers within social media.

As such, brand images of employers are already a topic within social media. Consequently, the integration of social media within organizations' external communication channels has to become a high priority. This importance is already acknowledged by other organizations - research of Forrester based on 100 HR decision-makers, shows that the importance of using social media for connecting and keeping young high potentials (digital natives), significantly differs from the perception of HR professionals' social media capability (see figure 5.1).

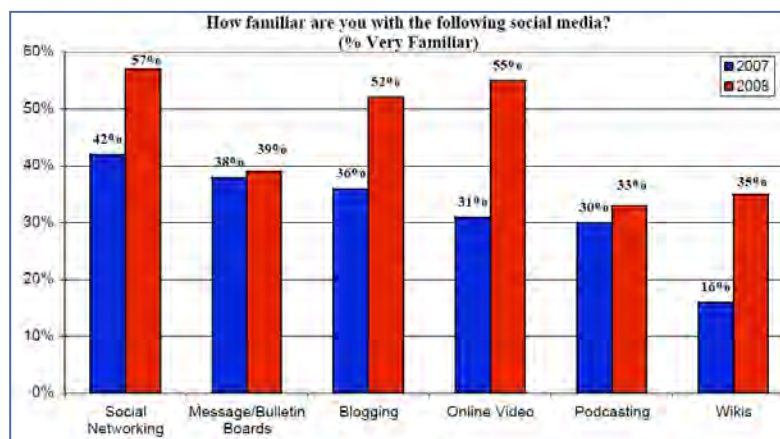
<sup>15</sup> <http://recruitmentmatters.nl/2008/11/12/grc-dag-2-employer-brands-and-social-media-waardevol/> (Dutch)

**Figure 5.1 Importance and capability of social media by HR decision-makers**<sup>16</sup>



The adoption and importance of social media among corporate organizations worldwide were studied for the first time in a longitudinal way by University of Massachusetts Dartmouth Center for Marketing Research<sup>17</sup>. A citation from the abstract: "This research proves conclusively that social media has penetrated parts of the business world at a tremendous speed. It also indicates that corporate familiarity with and usage of social media within the Inc. 500 has nearly doubled in the past 12 months" (the Inc. 500 is an elite list with the 500 fastest growing organizations in the US). Two interesting results are illustrated by figures 5.2 and 5.3: familiarity of social media has significantly increased in one year and the percentage of organizations finding social media important almost doubled from 2007 to 2008.

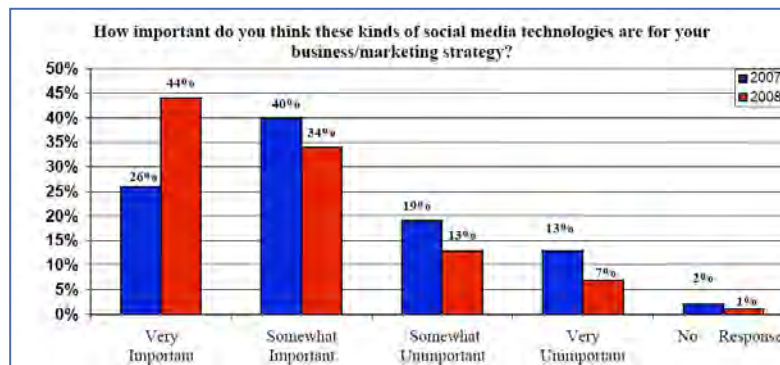
**Figure 5.2 Familiarity of social media by Inc. 500 companies**



<sup>16</sup> Forrester Research, see: <http://recruitmentmatters.nl/2008/11/14/online-recruitment-20-waar/> (Dutch)

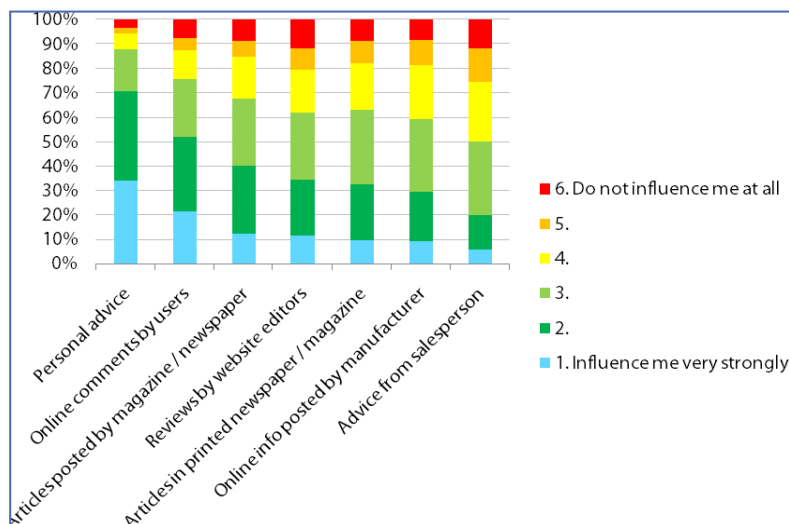
<sup>17</sup> <http://www.umassd.edu/cmr/studiesresearch/blogstudy5.pdf>

**Figure 5.3 Importance of social media by Inc. 500 companies**



Most recruitment departments mainly use social media tools to screen candidates<sup>18</sup>. This is one of the possibilities of social media, but it ignores the effect of social media on candidates' mindset. Rubicon Consulting's report (2008) offers some insights in social media's impact from an online recruitment perspective. Figure 5.4 shows the degree of influence a communication channel has on purchasing decisions (including looking for a job). Word of mouth still has the most impact, but online reviews and information are the second most important source of relevant information in general. Social media enables users to generate content and consequently, confirming its value for recruitment.

**Figure 5.4 Purchase decisions influencers<sup>19</sup>**

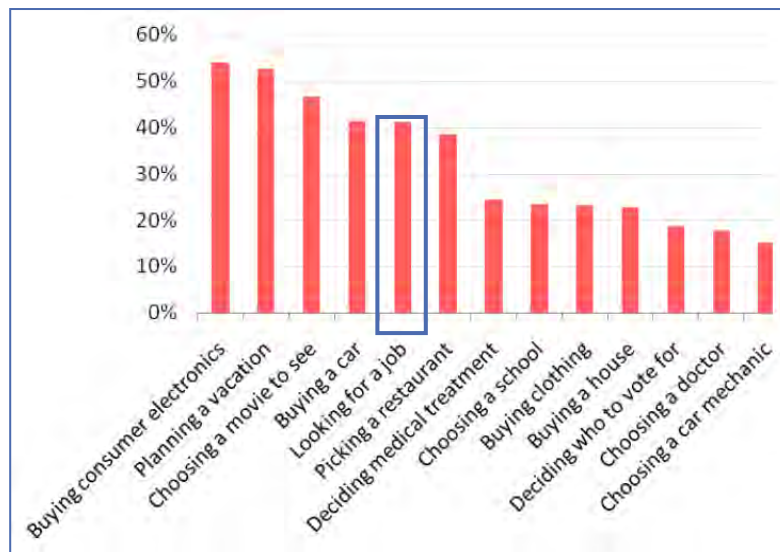


But the degree of reviews and other online information channels which influence these decisions are also related with the product or service. As can be seen from figure 5.5, more than 40% of users stated that they are influenced by online information when looking for a new job. This underlines the importance of organizations' recruitment website, online job board and online reputation for instance.

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.personeelslog.nl/2008/08/13/recruiters-ontdekken-netwerksites-vooral-voor-screening/> (Dutch)

<sup>19</sup> Rubicon Consulting (2008)

**Figure 5.5 Web influence by product/service category**<sup>20</sup>



## 5.2 EXTENDING EMPLOYER BRANDING WITH SOCIAL MEDIA

Most recruitment departments consist of digital immigrants. This often result in a contradiction where the online application of technology is seen as a blessing and concern. As such, social media are applied in a non consistent way. This can harm the employer brand, since all usage of social media can be seen as job market communication. The impact of social media on these communications is enormous, as Karjaluoto (2008, p. 2) acknowledges: "Traditional marketers are accustomed to carefully honing messages. This allows for control, but the results are difficult and costly to measure. Social media turns this whole scenario around. With it, control is shared with the crowd, and real feedback becomes immediate." Social media created a new platform that harnesses collective dialogues. A lot of these conversations are about brands and experiences, which influence Web users greatly (see previous paragraph). As such, it's more important for organizations than ever to have an online recruitment presence.

To establish an effective online reputation and presence, there has to be a solid basis. Since every message can be seen as job market communication and branding starts from the organization's core, there has to be consensus across the whole organization to realize the value of the online employer brand. Management support for seeing online recruitment as an investment instead of a cost is essential. This does not only hold for the top management, but also across various departments. To enhance the employer brand and increase synergy, there has to be collaboration in place between HR, marketing and communications departments.

<sup>20</sup> Rubicon Consulting (2008)

## 6. ESTABLISHING AN ONLINE PRESENCE WITHIN SOCIAL MEDIA

### 6.1 THE VALUE OF AN ONLINE PRESENCE

The previous chapters emphasized social media's significance and recruitment possibilities that they can offer. The next chapter will give some examples of how a recruitment team can apply some social tools to enhance its presence. But before enhancing the online presence, there has to be an online presence developed. Demopoulos (2008, p. 4) framed it as: "If you don't exist online, do you exist?" The answer is no, since social media is largely embedded in people's daily life (especially within the Generation Y) and this closely knit will further strengthen as more social media tools become mainstream. Potential candidates for instance will use Google to answer questions like "what kind of organization is this?" and "who is that recruiter?"

**Potential candidates will use Google to answer questions like "what kind of organization is this?" and "who is that recruiter?"**

That's the reason an effective online presence is important.

As such, an integrated social media optimization has to be in place to develop and control the online presence of the recruitment team. Having such an online presence is priceless, since the power of word-of-mouth and peer-to-peer referrals is significant within the recruitment topic. The online recruitment presence can be divided in two aspects: the overall online employer brand presence and the online personal presence of representatives of the recruitment team (recruiters and marketing/communication employees). The following paragraphs will introduce a short outline of how to establish an online presence in general.

### 6.2 THE BASICS: CONSISTENCY, STRATEGY, AUTHENTICITY, TRUSTWORTHINESS AND VALUE

The basis of an effective online presence is consistency. Without consistency, potential candidates are getting multiple different signals from a recruitment department. The result is a confused candidate that does not know why he/she has to choose for the organization. Similar to every marketing communication, an online presence needs a unique and distinguished character. This can only be created by using a consistent strategy. It can't be based on loose activities without a sound strategy and action plans. As such, awareness has to be raised of what the organization as an employer means.

**By being real and authentic, a consistent social media strategy can be implemented.**

But how to create consistency? The easiest way to do so (online and offline), is to stay close to the organization and to yourself. Just by being real and authentic, no discrepancy will be present in the activities and communications. The recruitment department

is passionate about the organization (and its employer brand) and this passion has to enthrall and energize potential candidates to apply. When being online, it is good to recognize that the Internet is a public place where most information is open. Consequently, passion is hard to fake and people can sense authenticity without a lot of effort<sup>21</sup>. By continuous authentic and genuine online activities, a feeling of trustworthiness among other users is created (which lays at the core of interpersonal relationships). This is the most effective result of using social media and it relies on indicators that shape the trustworthiness assessments. As such, the witnessed presences of actors (recruitment team and organization) within social media platforms are cues for their trustworthiness attributes. Social media offer ideal environments for these reflections, due to their variety of features and information sources (ten Kate, 2009).

**The online presence within social media reflects the human side of the employer brand.**

In line with this authenticity is the provision of value. The usage of social media for recruitment applications can only be effective if candidates assess the posted content and used tools as valuable. If it is not possible to deliver value for social media users, it is not advised to contribute anything. Otherwise there is a great chance it could be perceived by users as spamming and that will lower the trustworthiness of the employer brand and the respective recruitment employee.

### **6.3 HOW TO USE SOCIAL MEDIA TO BUILD UP AN ONLINE PRESENCE:**

#### **BUILDING THE FOUNDATION**

**“Many marketers are merely engaging in cultural voyeurism at best.”**

**- Brian Solis**

This quote is highly relevant in the context of using social media to enhance an online recruitment presence. What Solis means is that marketers not only have to look at their target group, but they also have to participate and develop conversations with them. Social media offer recruitment departments possibilities to participate and establish a fully engaged relationship with the potential candidates. This can be done by building and maintaining communities where candidates participate in. But before participating and joining the conversation, some prior steps have to be taken according to Solis (2008):

**Observation.** By diving into the social media and by listening and monitoring what's happening, valuable information will be revealed. Valuable derived information can be:

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<sup>21</sup> <http://www.chrisbrogan.com/passion-drives-personal-brand/>



places where the conversations take place, which kind of people join the conversations and participate, what they are talking about and what kind of information they need.

**Identification.** By analyzing the observation results, it can be defined which relevant potential candidates are acting within the social media and where they go to for information (employer ratings and reviews for instance). This can also reveal valuable information about competitors and how they are perceived by

**The identification of target groups and which social tools they use serves as the basis for campaigns.**

candidates. Identification is a very important step and serves as the base for choosing which social media channels to apply. Identification can be done by the recruitment team, but it is also valuable to ask employees which social media tools they use and which tools are being used by their social network. Additionally, already existing market research done by marketing departments can facilitate this identification process. Next, this analysis can be used for the creation of a detailed blueprint of all social media that are relevant for the employer brand.

**Participation.** The logical next step after this blueprint is participation within the social media. As previous stated, participation is about acting as a person, not as recruiter or marketer. Participation can not only be done by the recruitment department, but also by other employees who are active within social media. They are passionate about the organization and can be the online business card of the employer brand.

**By connecting with passionate employees, active users can be found who can be the online business card of the organization as an employer.**

**Join the conversation.** After every listed social tool, the next logical step is to become active and visible (present) within the chosen social tools. Just as the participation phase, recruitment has to make use of the internal possibilities of employees. The main principle within this phase is becoming the potential candidate and joining the conversation. This is completely the opposite of marketing via traditional media channels, where only one-directed communication was possible and sufficient. Within social media, communication is focused on dialogues, not on messages. Discussions are often held, which bring people together and share and discover information.

**Experimenting and monitoring.** A continuous activity within social media strategies which often is overlooked is experimenting and monitoring. Social media optimization is difficult to reach and numerous organizations stop the online activities if the first approaches do not lead to the desired results. Using social media is just like marketing, only by experimenting

and monitoring an optimized set of approaches can be developed. Continuous learning has to be in place as such.

**Policies and guidelines.** Organizations' business guidelines are in place which have to be followed by each employee when he/she acts online. Naturally, every employee has to act as a professional and is not allowed to make confidential information public. But social media do not work when total control is present. These restriction will lower their value since there will be no authenticity. Information posted on the Internet is permanent, but engaging in a conversation within social media does not differ from an offline conversation about the organization. As such, faith in employees' online conversations needs to be present.



## 7. APPLICATIONS AND THEIR RECRUITMENT OPPORTUNITIES

This chapter explains some of various available social media tools and gives a general introduction in how to use them from a recruitment perspective. More extensive and specific activities can be applied after setting up a consistent strategy and identification of the organization its target groups. The following applications will be introduced: social networking sites, online niche networks, content communities, weblogs, microblogging and recruitment websites.

### 7.1 SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES

#### 7.1.1 Description

Every person in the world acts within communities. Examples are neighborhoods, schools, football clubs and bands. On the web, people engage in online communities. One of these social communities that has boomed in the last few years, are social networking sites (SNS, also referred to as social network sites, social software systems or social network services). These sites are aimed at organizing and maintaining relations.

Although SNS are almost completely embedded in current social activities and lives, they only exist since 1997 with the start of Classmates and Sixdegrees and did not reach a considerable size until 2002 with the founding of Friendster (Boyd and Ellison, 2007). Systems such as SNS provide capabilities to engage in social networking and maintaining social relationships in addition to physical interactions. This study uses Boyd and Ellison's definition of SNS as "(...) web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system" (Boyd and Ellison, 2007, p. 211). Social networking sites often have the same basic features and techniques: "network of friends listings (showing a person's "inner circle"), person surfing, private messaging, discussion forums or communities, events management, blogging, commenting (sometimes as endorsements on people's profiles), and media uploading" (Breslin and Decker, 2007, p. 86).

#### 7.1.2 Recruitment applications: using the organization's ambassadors

There are two kinds of social networking sites interesting from a recruitment perspective; personal and professional SNS. Personal social networking sites are aimed at friends, while professional sites focus on business connections. Research of Synovate points out that the

Netherlands are one of the front runners on social networking sites<sup>22</sup>. The most popular personal SNS within the Netherlands are Hyves and Facebook, while the biggest professional SNS are LinkedIn and Xing (although this last one is a lot smaller than LinkedIn). The power of SNS lays in referral marketing and referral recruitment, because people trust close connections more than they do unknown recruiters: word of mouth is key. Academic research acknowledges that referrals perform better than people who are recruited via other channels<sup>23</sup> (Castilla, 2005) and referral candidates are passing selections sooner, integrate better and are more loyal<sup>24</sup> (Yakubovich, 2006).

But posting an interesting job or possibility to close connections will not lead to successful recruitment, only more social spam. These traditional push methods are sometimes used by recruiters and some lead to results, but only because recruitment applications of SNS is a relative new phenomenon. Sending spam mail and posting general banners are not effective. Social networking is not about advertising, but about networking. This perspective also seems to become visible within the advertisement market, where social networking advertisements' growth are forecasted to decrease.<sup>25</sup> As such, a qualitative approach is needed where the connections of the recruitment team are playing a big role. One such a form is the following model<sup>26</sup>:

**Online communities do not differ from real life communities: you are not pushing messages out of nowhere on birthdays too.**

**Quality.** Building a qualitative network of connections and maintaining these relations serves as the basis for using online networks. Just as offline networking, networking does not always have to be related with the direct goal of recruitment or marketing; this will not provide value for the other connections and as such, they will not be willing to cooperate.

**Size.** Social networking sites are the ideal environment for establishing large networks, based on direct and indirect (second- or third-degree) connections. Social networking sites offer easy dynamic overviews of networks and changes within them.

**Willingness.** The other connections have to be willing to speak with their networks and to act as a referral for recruitment. They can be the ambassadors of the employer brand. This can only be reached by establishing a meaningful relationship with sometimes a referral bonus system.

**Knowledge.** The organization's ambassadors have to possess relevant knowledge about the organization, the hiring processes, different possibilities and the current vacancies. Hand

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.synovate.com/news/article/2008/09/global-survey-shows-58-of-people-don-t-know-what-social-networking-is-plus-over-one-third-of-social-networkers-are-losing-interest.html>

<sup>23</sup> [http://web.mit.edu/ecastill/www/publications/Castilla\(AJSMarch202005\).pdf](http://web.mit.edu/ecastill/www/publications/Castilla(AJSMarch202005).pdf)

<sup>24</sup> <http://faculty.chicagosgb.edu/workshops/orgs-markets/archive/pdf/Yakubovich.pdf>

<sup>25</sup> <http://www.emarketer.com/Article.aspx?id=1006799>

<sup>26</sup> <http://www.csnblog.nl/stop-social-spam-met-via-voor-gevoorderden/> (Dutch)

over this information in a personal way, not by referring to the general employment website but by handing over information that is customized for that specific ambassador.

**Action.** In the end, employees have to come into action and act as ambassadors. They should be facilitated by the recruitment team and they should contact the recruitment team in an easy way.

**Feedback.** Just like choosing which social media tools to embrace, experiments have to be made with these activities. Feedback from the ambassadors on these processes is very valuable.

Recruiters that approach candidates in an impersonal way on a massive scale can be called body hunters. Based on their (non effective) recruiting behavior, some general guidelines can be made up about acting in an effective way within social networking sites<sup>27</sup>.

1. Complete your own profile for 100%.
2. Add a picture on the profile; provide visualization and an identity.
3. Stop searching on keywords which are focused on function name only.
4. Read the “contact settings” and “interested in” of each person and observe them extensively.
5. Personalize your mails. Not only change the person’s name in the first line, the rest of the mail has to be personalized as well.
6. Built a relationship.

For more specific information about approaching candidates within LinkedIn, I refer to Valkenburg (2008).

### 7.1.3 Maximizing SNS presence

Another approach for building an online employer presence, is by maximizing the existing presences of the organization and its (recruitment) employees. There are a couple of possibilities to achieve this.

#### Presence of the organization’s brand within SNS

The organization’s brand is probably already present within multiple social media tools. There are three ways to profit from these presences:

1. Job market communication. Employees can (via their profiles) show their friends and other connections that they are working for the organization and how they enjoy their work/internship.

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<sup>27</sup> <http://socialsofties.net/handleiding-linkedin-voor-body-hunters/> (Dutch)

2. The employer brand image. Employees propagate a positive image of the organization via their profile, for instance how innovative, flexible or diverse the organization is.
3. Network contacts. Employees maintain relations with others via LinkedIn and other networking sites, which can be valuable for the organization.

There are already various online presences of organizations which are relevant for young graduates. An organization can stimulate the communication of these presences to increase awareness. This can be done by involving the specific employees and by putting more attention to these presences via multiple communications. Key is not to try controlling the conversations and initiatives that develop, since that decreases the authenticity of the employer brand. The first step before using these existing presences is to inventory all existing presences. After this, the laid-out strategy has to direct which presences to use and how to apply.

**Do not control the existing organizational presence, since that decreases its authenticity of the employer brand.**

### **Presence of recruiters within SNS**

Not only the employees are an organization's business card within social networking sites; a special role is reserved for recruiters. They are specifically informed about candidates' needs, desired young graduates, coming events etc. As such, recruiters need to be visible online. Social networking sites offer various ways to update viewers about upcoming events and relevant jobs. Examples are integrated blogs, photos, status messages etc. When visiting recruiters' profiles, people get informed about the organization as an employer.

### **Focused advertising on SNS**

This seems a contradiction with the message in paragraph 7.1.2 which stated that general advertisements through banners have the opposite effect for the employer brand. However, focused advertising differs from general advertisement and can be effective for job market communication. Focused advertising on SNS is possible, because most sites offer targeting possibilities for banners, ads, tools etc. Hyves for instance offers the possibility to target on every subject that is stated on someone's profile. Possibilities for segmentation are for instance: current city, age, education, function, company name and interests. This targeting can be effective, since it is not aimed at all users and it can be perceived as valuable by the segmented target audience. It's definitely not the holy grail of advertising on social networking sites, but it can establish a viral effect. Another form of campaigns which can be potentially effective, are widgets. These little applications/games are often shared with other connections and as such. If these applications are fun/interesting/cool and/or valuable for

users, a viral campaign can be developed. The development and usage of such applications are more complex and expensive however.

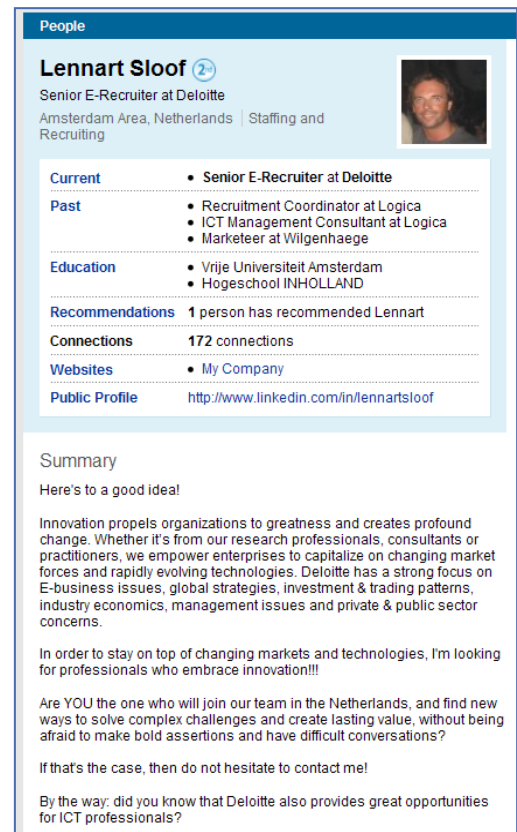
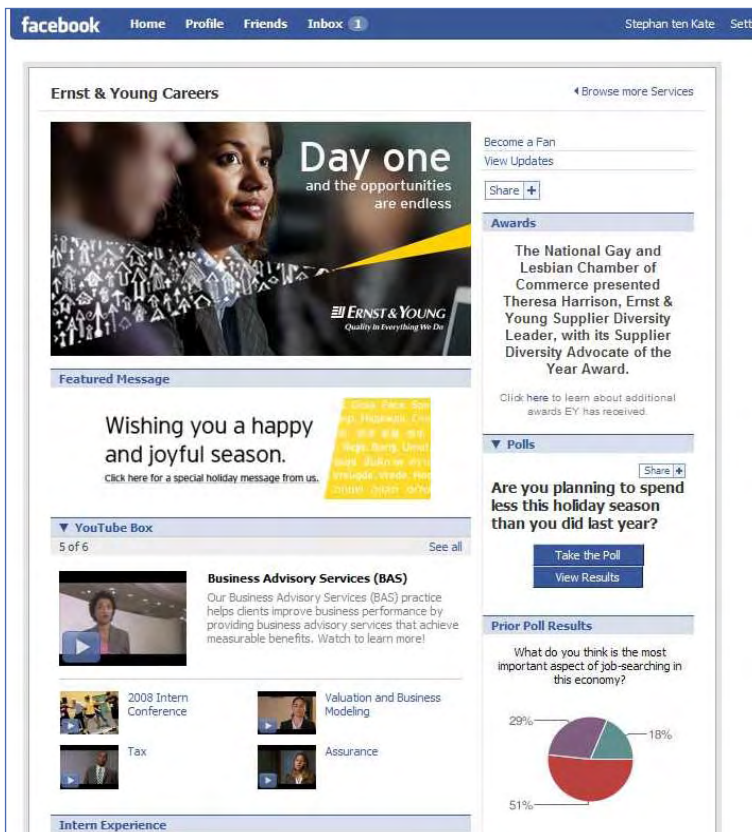
### 7.1.4 Examples

There are multiple examples of organizations which maximized their presences within social networking sites. Ernst&Young for instance maximized their “Ernst & Young Careers” presence within Facebook (see figure 7.1). This page already has more than 28.000 facebook fans<sup>28</sup> and offers a diverse set of information about the company. The facebook page includes a featured message, Youtube movies, an intern experience, awards won, a poll, corporate social responsibility information, photos, discussion boards, press center information and the messages on the wall. Not only does the company provide valuable information for potential candidates, young graduates can also post questions and get answers from (recruitment) employees of Ernst&Young.

Another example are the recruiters of Deloitte Netherlands, who optimized their presence within LinkedIn by providing information about the company, which possibilities are present, and approachable communication methods (see figure 7.2). Potential candidates who are looking up the recruiter, can as such become more aware of Deloitte as an employer. Key for a recruiter is to be authentic and building a relationship with the candidate, instead of only pushing messages to them.

Figure 7.1 Ernst & Young Careers on Facebook

Figure 7.2 Deloitte's recruiter on LinkedIn



### 7.1.5 Recommendations for social networking sites

Some general recommendations can be listed for recruitment teams to use the organization's ambassadors and to optimize its online presence within social networking sites. More extensive and specific activities can be applied after setting up a consistent strategy and identification of target groups. For understanding the basics of recruitment via LinkedIn, the book *Recruitment via LinkedIn* (Valkenburg, 2008) is highly recommended.

- Approach potential candidates with respect. Use the ambassadors to approach second-degree connections. Approach third-degree connections in respectful and personalized way.
- Make an inventory of all existing presences of the organization within social networking sites.
- Optimize these presences by providing valuable information for potential candidates.
- Maximize the online presences of recruiters, for instance by using the status sections of SNS. Provide information which can be valuable for potential candidates, but remain authentic as well.
- Do not transform the presences as traditional push communications, since they will lower the authenticity (and as such the employer brand).
- Contact the employees who coordinate the existing presences and involve them in the recruitment communications.
- Use the employees to learn at which social networks they are active.
- Learn about competitors' communities.
- Set up special pages on SNS to inform people about new internships/jobs.
- Set up pages where new interns or new starters can gather and have conversations with each other. Build for instance a community on Hyves or Facebook where new interns can meet and share experiences.
- Use focused advertising to target niche networks within SNS. Segregate on the profiles which are laid out in the strategy.

### Do's and don'ts for social networking sites<sup>29</sup>:

#### Do's

- create a page to promote the employer brand
- point candidates to other information sources
- encourage a discussion and participate frequently
- explore targeted advertising opportunities

#### Don'ts

- create a page and fail to maintain it
- try a hard sell approach
- censor comments
- spam candidates/fans with frequent private messages – you'll drive them away
- post false information

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<sup>29</sup> Based on 'The conversation – An introduction to social media', see: [http://www.slideshare.net/tactica\\_inc/the-conversation-an-introduction-to-social-media-presentation](http://www.slideshare.net/tactica_inc/the-conversation-an-introduction-to-social-media-presentation)



## 7.2 ONLINE NICHE NETWORKS AND CONTENT COMMUNITIES

### 7.2.1 Description

As already mentioned in paragraph 7.1.1, there are (next to social networking sites) online niche networks and content communities as well. Some are niche social networking sites, some look like SNS but only are focused on sharing a particular type of content (iCrossing, 2008). Online niche social networks are small networks focused on a special group of people or a special theme. De Jonghe<sup>30</sup> studied 1.000 special online networks and classifies them in: business networks, friends networks, dating networks, niche networks, video/photo networks and mobile networks. Examples are sites like Youtube (video), Last.fm (music), Flickr (photos), delicious (bookmarks), slideshare (presentations), Tweakers (Dutch forum on informatics) and yourfuture.tv (employer movies).

### 7.2.2 Recruitment applications

Online niche networks and content communities can be interesting for recruitment applications, since they provide access to a smaller segmented group of people or people who are interested in a special topic. As such, focused targeting is possible to potential candidates. When this targeting is adapted to the special group of the topic, it has the potential to develop a good fit. This can boost the employer brand. The same basis for social networking sites also holds for online niche networks and content communities: use ambassadors and optimize the presence(s).

In general, there are already various overall organization presences within online niche networks and content communities which can be valuable for young graduates. These various presences can have multiple implications if they are applied for recruitment activities: it has the possibility to increase a general awareness of the organization as an employer; to give specific information about jobs; and to provide information about the products and services the organization produces and sells.

### 7.2.3 Examples

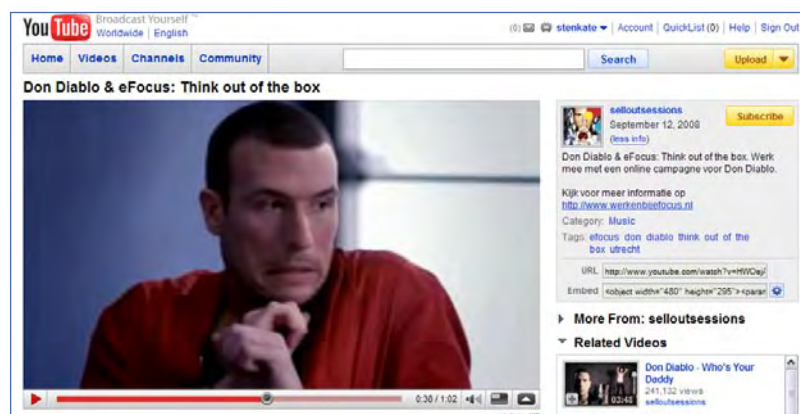
There are some examples of organizations which used online niche networks and content communities. Efocus, a Dutch strategy and webdesign company, created a recruitment viral via Youtube with a famous Dutch DJ (Don Diablo, see figure 7.3) and a special recruitment website (made in Flash). The result were analyzed after six weeks, and can serve as an illustration of the viral effect of social media. The video on Youtube was seen 30.000 times (3 copies from the movie on Youtube). The video on the website had 1013 unique plays (334

<sup>30</sup> <http://worldwidenetworking.blogspot.com/2008/02/social-networks-around-world-facts.html>



times a second time played). The video was posted on the Hyves page of Don Diablo. A viral was posted on some big blogs (Marketingfacts, DutchCowboys and Molblog). These blogs had between 15.000 – 20.000 views (there are no statistics available of the other blogs). There was some attention from different print media. The special recruitment website was visited 2500 times by 2003 unique visitors. The general recruitment website [www.werkenbijefocusgroep.nl](http://www.werkenbijefocusgroep.nl) had 30% more traffic than average. The campaign resulted in 4 received resumes. All four led to an introduction, but there was no candidate hired.

**Figure 7.3 Recruitment video efocus on Youtube**



This case of efocus also shows that although social media offer viral effects, one action which is loosely coupled with the general recruitment strategy often becomes an ineffective one-shot. Although the viral probably improved the employer branding, no significant hiring success resulted. While traffic of the general recruitment site increased with 30%, only 4 resumes were handed in. There was perhaps a mismatch with general website (with a static layout) and the temporaliy special recruitment site (with a more flashy look).

#### 7.2.4 Recommendations for online niche networks and content communities

Some general recommendations can be listed for the recruitment team to use online niche networks and content communities. More extensive and specific activities can be applied after setting up a consistent strategy and identification of target groups.

- Make an inventory of all existing presences of the organization within online niche networks and content communities.
- Optimize these presences by providing valuable information for potential candidates. One example is using Youtube to post videos about the organization, employees and products.
- Do not transform the presences as traditional push communications, since they will lower the authenticity (and as such the employer brand).

- Contact the employees who coordinate the existing presences and involve them in the recruitment communications.
- Use the employees to learn at which online niche networks and content communities they are active.
- Learn about competitors' communities.
- Search niche networks to target special groups to increase diversity.
- Set up special pages on online niche networks and content communities to inform people about new internships/jobs.
- Use focused advertising to target potential candidates within online niche networks and content communities. Segregate on the profiles which are mentioned in the overall strategy.
- Integrate recruitment virals within the overall recruitment strategy.
- Establish online niche networks around special events. An example is ERE, a US based recruitment agency, which also organizes some events. They set up social networks for these events, where visitors could communicate about the event<sup>31</sup>. This can also be done for recruitment events. Those social networks are valuable from two perspectives: the organization knows upfront which issues are important for the visitors, and visitors can get some valuable information before the event. A digital tool which facilitates in the setup of these networks is Ning<sup>32</sup>.

#### Do's and don'ts for video sharing<sup>33</sup>:

##### Do's

- be informative, useful and/or entertaining
- create a summary and detailed description
- post video replies to others
- allow commenting and participate in the conversation

##### Don'ts

- just upload infomercials
- be afraid to experiment until find a formula that works.
- make the video longer than it needs to be – keep it concise and entertaining

<sup>31</sup> [http://www.marketingfacts.nl/berichten/20080507\\_recruitment\\_met\\_niche\\_sociale\\_netwerken/](http://www.marketingfacts.nl/berichten/20080507_recruitment_met_niche_sociale_netwerken/) (Dutch)

<sup>32</sup> <http://www.ning.com/>

<sup>33</sup> Based on 'The conversation – An introduction to social media', see: [http://www.slideshare.net/tactica\\_inc/the-conversation-an-introduction-to-social-media-presentation](http://www.slideshare.net/tactica_inc/the-conversation-an-introduction-to-social-media-presentation)

### Do's and don'ts for photo sharing<sup>34</sup>:

#### Do's

- tag photos with relevant keywords
- use the organization's website address or brand name as the Flickr screen name
- upload quality photos of the organization's products/services, and things related to its business
- link prominently from the corporate/recruitment website to Flickr photo streams

#### Don'ts

- stuff linked keywords into the photo descriptions or comments
- plaster the organization's URL all over the photos you upload
- discourage people from using the photos (as long as they provide attribution such as a link back to your website)

### Do's and don'ts for niche networks and forums<sup>35</sup>:

#### Do's

- keep the message board active by regularly participating in the conversation
- collect minimal information during registration
- keep focus and attract users by clearly identifying the community purpose and target audience
- promote popular discussions throughout the organization's website

#### Don'ts

- build it and expect people to start participating without encouragement and seeding
- forget to moderate - spammers and trolls will drive users away
- censor or allow militant moderators to take too much control over the conversation. You want to encourage open discussion, not stifle it.

### Do's and don'ts for podcasts<sup>36</sup>:

#### Do's

- come up with a format (form, topic, and duration)
- use a good microphone
- promote the podcast on the website and podcast directories

#### Don'ts

- worry about length
- invest in a lot of equipment – simple tools and software are all you need to get going
- leave too much time between podcasts

<sup>34</sup> Based on 'The conversation – An introduction to social media', see: [http://www.slideshare.net/tactica\\_inc/the-conversation-an-introduction-to-social-media-presentation](http://www.slideshare.net/tactica_inc/the-conversation-an-introduction-to-social-media-presentation)

<sup>35</sup> Based on 'The conversation – An introduction to social media', see: [http://www.slideshare.net/tactica\\_inc/the-conversation-an-introduction-to-social-media-presentation](http://www.slideshare.net/tactica_inc/the-conversation-an-introduction-to-social-media-presentation)

<sup>36</sup> Based on 'The conversation – An introduction to social media', see: [http://www.slideshare.net/tactica\\_inc/the-conversation-an-introduction-to-social-media-presentation](http://www.slideshare.net/tactica_inc/the-conversation-an-introduction-to-social-media-presentation)

## 7.3 WEBLOGS

### 7.3.1 Description

Weblogs ('blogs') are one of the most familiar forms of social media. Blogs are online journals where the latest entries are published first on the website. They can be published by every Internet user: most blogs do not have a professional background. iCrossing (2008, p. 16), explains the features of blogs:

**Tone.** Blogs tend to be written in a personal, conversational style. They are usually the work of an identified author or group of authors.

**Topic.** Blogs tend to define what it is they are writing about. They can be as specific as a blog about a book in progress or as wide in scope as "my musings on life and stuff".

**Links and trackbacks.** The services people use to write blogs make it very easy for them to insert links to other websites, usually in reference to an article or blog post or to provide further information about the subject they are writing about.

**Comments.** Each blog post has a comments section, effectively a message board for that article. On blogs with large audiences the debates in these sections can run to hundreds of comments at a time.

**Subscription.** Blogs can be subscribed to, usually via RSS technology, making it easy to keep up with new content. Blogs are easy to set up using any of a number of services. One of the simplest is the free Blogger service. Others such as Wordpress and TypePad offer more features, the latter for a fee.

The whole landscape of blogs is called the Blogosphere, where various blog forms exist: personal blogs, business blogs, political blogs, 'almost media' blogs (start-ups which are employing blogs full-time) and mainstream media blogs (blogs for reporters and editors of traditional media).

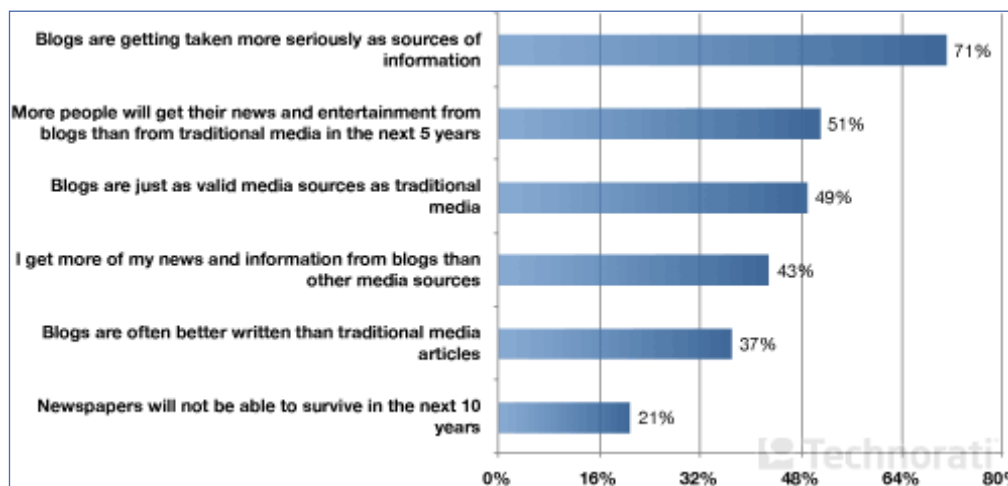
A special form of blogging is microblogging. Microblogging stands for blogging combined with instant messaging. Like Google stands for search engine, Twitter stands for microblogging. Within Twitter, users send each other message via little text messages with a maximum of 140 characters (called 'Tweets'). Users can instantly react on these messages. Messaging can be done via the website, instant messaging, sms, e-mail, RSS or other applications.

That blogging can be killing for an organization, can be illustrated by Kryptonite locks. Kryptonite locks were branded as secure locks that could not be hacked very easily. Yet, online postings and movies showed that Kryptonite's locks could be opened in a few seconds

with a simple pen. This is a perfect example of how one posting on a blog resulted in the replacing of all locks by Kryptonite, which cost the company \$ 10 million on lock replacements and, probably having more impact, lowered their brand value and trustworthiness in at least the short term.

Chapter four already gave some statistics about the size of the blogosphere. It is interesting to see that more brands are furthering entering the blogosphere<sup>37</sup>. Blogs are becoming a mainstream information source for assessing a brand's value, trustworthiness, etc. The early adopter of blogs, the bloggers self, place great value on blogs as information source (see figure 7.4). The Blogstudie2007 of the University of Leipzig shows that the public distrust the content of corporate blogs the most<sup>38</sup>. This is also acknowledged by research of Forrester<sup>39</sup> (see figure 7.5). By contrast, the IPSOS study *The power of blogs in Europe* (2006) shows that independent bloggers are perceived as highly trustworthy. Information of consumers on blogs and other websites are valued as much trustworthy as articles in newspapers. One in five Europeans have changed their opinion about a company's products or services after reading blogs by customers. With all these statistics available, it can be concluded that blogs are highly relevant for employer brand images.

**Figure 7.4 Bloggers are gaining credibility<sup>40</sup>**



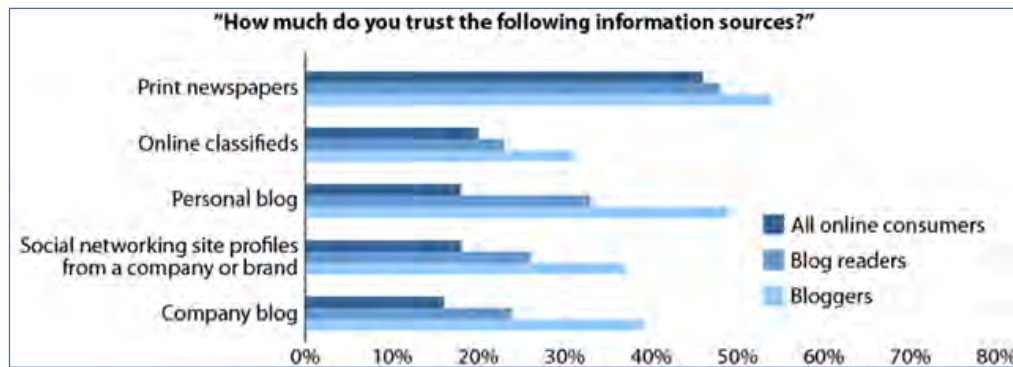
<sup>37</sup> <http://www.technorati.com/blogging/state-of-the-blogosphere/brands-enter-the-blogosphere/>

<sup>38</sup> <http://www.quasifictionalviews.blogspot.com/2007/07/which-type-of-blogger-are-you.html>

<sup>39</sup> <http://www.forrester.com/Research/Document/Excerpt/0,7211,47575,00.html>

<sup>40</sup> <http://www.technorati.com/blogging/state-of-the-blogosphere/brands-enter-the-blogosphere/>

**Figure 7.5 Trustworthiness of information sources**



### 7.3.2 Recruitment applications

As was already highlighted in chapter four, there are a lot of blogs and story exchanges within the blogosphere. This also holds for each (large) employer, since the online conversations via blogs can influence the employer brand. As such, the application of blogs has to be taken in consideration by each recruitment team. This paragraph will not explain how to write good blogs and increase blog traffic, but it will show the value of using blogs for recruitment activities. Blogs can be used to spread a viral or to increase the employer brand. Three forms of blogs and their strategies will be described: corporate blogs, independent blogs and microblogs.

#### Corporate blogs

Corporate blogs are seen as less trustworthy compared to independent blogs, as stated in the previous paragraph. The reason for this is that they are often blogs of the CEO or other managers with a mainly positive message, instead of a regular authentic and passionate posting with the possibility to comment and to develop a conversation. Blogging can be valuable for the brand awareness if the postings show the human side of the organization. That the application of corporate blogs for PR seems valuable but yet difficult to apply can be seen from a study of Porter Novelli (2008), which included a survey by 76 corporate communication managers. The (by these managers mentioned) advantages were 'a personal way of communication', 'giving insides of management to third persons' and 'receiving feedback from stakeholders'. Mentioned disadvantages were 'labor-intensive', 'it needs professionalism' and 'the maintenance of a corporate blog makes the company vulnerable'. What can be concluded is that there are only few applications where corporate blogs are used for PR (such as employer branding).

Yet, corporate blogs have much potential. A great example is Robert Scoble, who gave Microsoft a human face. Scoble created the platform Channel 9, a place where he talked about his job and often judged his employer. He showed that Microsoft is a company of humans where passionate professionals try to perform maximal, but where also some

mistakes are being made. The open and authentic communication led to a better brand image of Microsoft. Together with Shel Israel, Scoble wrote the book *Naked conversation: how blogs are changing the way business talks with customers*, where some valuable basic tips are stated for corporate blogs (Bloem et al., 2008):

**Choose a good name.** A good name will be remembered more easily and it can help to get it stated on top of the search lists.

**Read a couple of blogs.** By reading other blogs, a blogger can check if he/she can add something to the discussion.

**Keep it simple.** Readers are scanning blogs very fast, so focus on the message.

**Show passion and authority.** Passion can be showed by posting regularly and authority will follow from the content of the blog.

**Allow comments.** As stated before, conversations are the centre of social media. By allowing comments, conversations can develop which can help building stronger relationships with the readers.

**Tell a story.** Corporate blogs do not have to tell marketing messages, but real stories about working for the organization. Some sources for these stories can be conflicts, meetings or cases.

**Link to others.** A good and objective blog links to other relevant blogs, even if they critic the organization. In this way, the corporate blog itself will be more linked with others as well.

**Join the real world.** The blogosphere only exists online. By meeting readers of blogs and telling about the blog at conferences, a more authentic picture will be formed by the audience.

The brand image of an employer can as such be increased by showing the human side of the organization via corporate blogs. Employees who engage in discussions can improve the positive appearance of the brand. The recruitment team can apply the corporate blogs in two ways.

First of all, there can already be multiple corporate weblogs of the organization in place. Other weblogs of employees can be found by searching Technorati<sup>41</sup> for instance. By integrating these blogs within the recruitment communications, a more human side can be expressed and as such, can attract new candidates by employer brand improvements. The existing blogs of employees also provide some potential for increasing awareness about new jobs or possibilities within the organization. By combining a referral program with the existing blogs, some recruitment synergies can be established. One example is the placement of a recruitment banner on the blog, where the employee blogger can be rewarded if the

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<sup>41</sup> <http://technorati.com/>



candidate applies via this banner. This can of course only be implemented by approval of the blogger; otherwise it would not be authentic and regarded as a push communication.

A second recruitment opportunity is the setup of new blogs. These blogs can be maintained by new hires, interns, recruiters etc. For instance, blogs of young graduates who just started working at the organization are valuable for potential candidates, since they reflect the authentic starter experience. When this application will be used, some basic guidelines have to be present: the employee really wants to do it, the blog must be authentic, relevant and valuable, and blogs have to be maintained on a regular basis. Chris Brogan, a US blog expert has made the following basic business blogging suggestions<sup>42</sup>:

**Above else, be human.** The blog should reflect the human side of being an employee. Commenting is just as important. Comment on other blogs.

**Blogging policies.** The blogging policy should not be too restricting.

**Does this tie to strategy at all?** Focus on the goal of the blog and pay attention to its derived strategy.

**Mix it up.** Do not only talk about you and the company, but also reflect on larger things such as the industry.

**Don't sell, but don't be shy.** A blog can help increase awareness, but it is not a selling communication method.

**Link out.** Valuable links can improve the authority of the blog.

**Frequency is how often you have value to add.** Next to content, frequency is key for blogs to attract and retain traffic.

**Encourage conversation.** Conversations are the centre of social media. Only by using this power the blog will last.

It is important to apply blog monitoring to see which conversations are taking place about the employer brand image.

### **Approaching independent bloggers**

As such, corporate blogs can be used for recruitment awareness due to their human reflection of the employer. Yet, corporate weblogs are perceived as less trustworthy and valuable as independent blogs. Consequently, independent blogs bring much potential for improving the employer brand and placement on independent blogs of professionals and non-professionals can be a goal for the recruitment team. Some Dutch corporate communication managers already highlighted that they contact professional webloggers (Porter Novelli, 2008). By getting in touch with relevant independent bloggers, the

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<sup>42</sup> <http://www.chrisbrogan.com/basic-business-blogging-suggestions/>

organization's online presence for starters can be increased. Initially, because the trustworthiness of independent bloggers is high, secondly because independent blogs can also hold some high positions within search engines (if candidates are searching for experiences within/of the organizations, some independent blogs can come up on top of the results). The first action that has to be taken is to identify bloggers who are relevant for the target group.

By approaching independent bloggers, one concept is important: respect. Social media is focused on conversations, not about one-way directed messages. Independent bloggers have to see the value of the received information to communicate and discuss it within the Blogosphere. It is not primarily about the blogger, but also about his/her audience. Ogilvy, a global advertising partner of various multinationals, for instance, has developed its own code of ethics of approaching independent bloggers<sup>43</sup>. Jason Falls, director of social media for Doe-Anderson and blogger on [socialmediaexplorer.com](http://socialmediaexplorer.com), about how to get placement on blogs<sup>44</sup>.

"Pitch bloggers the way you would primary targets within traditional media. Do your homework. Personalize your pitch. Reach out in a manner that suggests (hopefully honestly) that you're trying to build a relationship and provide something valuable to his or her audience. If you truly are, the blogger will respond just like the *Wall Street Journal* editor or nightly news correspondent would."

Using independent blogs can be very useful in building the online employer brand image, but approaching these bloggers has to be done in an optimal manner. Figure 7.6 gives an example of a good PR blogger pitch<sup>45</sup>.

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<sup>43</sup> <http://blog.ogilvypr.com/?p=243>

<sup>44</sup> <http://www.socialmediaexplorer.com/2008/04/28/how-do-i-get-placement-on-blogs/>

<sup>45</sup> <http://www.chrisbrogan.com/example-of-a-great-pr-pitch/>

**Figure 7.6**

**PR pitch to independent blogger**

Hi Chris:

As I read your (and lots of other blogs), it's clear that bloggers don't like to be blindly pitched by PR Firms. (As a (not prominent) blogger myself, I think I'd welcome the attention – but I digress.)

So, here's my own pitch, I hope it isn't too spammy.

1. MotiveQuest has developed a tool to measure brand advocacy in social media
2. This measure has been proven as a leading indicator of sales.
3. We have just announced it – the Online Promoter Score™

Given the continuous debate about social media metrics around here, I think this is big news. And this is my Social Media Release.

If you would like to learn more and perhaps write about this you can:

1. Schedule a brief call with me at MotiveQuest (tobrien@xxxxxxxxx.com)
2. Here's the press release
3. Here's the Brand Advocacy landing page with the how, what and why of Online Promoter Score
4. Here's the AdAge article about it: Linking Web Buzz to Mini Sales
5. Here's my blog post about it Brand Advocacy Matters
6. Here's our del.icio.us page with lots of articles about brand advocacy and related topics.

If you can't stand to get any more email from me, just let me know and I won't do this again.

The reaction of the receiver, Chris Brogan, showed the importance of personalization and value added information:

"Tom did everything right here. He started by identifying with me on a personal level, and letting me know within the first paragraph that he knew my perspective. He went on to tell me why this might be pertinent to me. He went into very brief, simple, bulleted lists, showing me how I could pursue the opportunity to write about this. He finished with a human offer of opting out."

## Twitter

As already described in the previous paragraph, Twitter combines blogging with instant messaging. One basic question guides the conversations of maximal 140 characters: *What are you doing?* Twitter's impact on the social media landscape is enormous. Twitter is used by millions of people around the world, with more than 100.000 exchanged messages each day. The power of Twitter is arranged by its simplicity and the production of an open API so other applications can use the Twitter applications. For instance, there are already Twitter applications that can be embedded in the social networking sites Hyves and Facebook. As such, conversations and online presences via Twitter do not always be present at the Twitter website, but also on other websites, forums, mobile telephones, etc. Twitter is mainly used by the social media entrepreneurs, but it is further becoming mainstream.

There are a lot of conversations happening within the Twitter network, and this can be used for increasing the online presence as an employer – but only if the information is valuable for the users and for sharing it with their social network. Getting placements within Twitter requires the same strategy as getting placement on independent blogs: approach them in a personal and conversational way, and provide information which can be useful for them and for their audience.

### 7.3.3 Recommendations for weblogs

Some general recommendations can be listed for recruitment teams to use weblogs. More extensive and specific activities can be applied after setting up a consistent strategy and identification of target groups.

- Make an inventory of all existing presences of the organization within weblogs and integrate the useful blogs in the recruitment communications.
- Maximize these presences by providing valuable information for potential candidates.
- Do not transform the presences as traditional push communications, since they will lower the authenticity (and as such the employer brand).
- Contact the employees who coordinate the existing presences and involve them in the recruitment communications.
- Use the employees to learn which blogs they read and what information they look for.
- Learn about competitors' weblogs.
- Identify relevant independent bloggers and try to attract their attention (in a positive way).
- Use blog monitoring to see which discussions are taking place about the organization as an employer.

- Become an active Twitter participant and integrate it with other online presences (e.g. Facebook).
- Develop new blogs to increase the employer brand image.

#### Do's and don'ts for weblogs<sup>46</sup>:

##### Do's

- post on a regular schedule
- encourage conversation by asking questions
- respond to candidates' questions and concerns
- use a few bloggers from the organization for more viewpoints

##### Don'ts

- write press releases – be real about why something is exciting
- let complaints go unanswered
- make users register to comment – they won't bother
- delete fair but critical comments

#### Do's and don'ts for microblogs<sup>47</sup>:

##### Do's

- sound like someone who just happens to work at the organization
- pose and answer questions
- announce news, updates, and build buzz for events

##### Don'ts

- sound like a press release
- spam with constant links to the website, either in tweets or private messages
- make users register to comment – they won't bother

<sup>46</sup> Based on 'The conversation – An introduction to social media', see: [http://www.slideshare.net/tactica\\_inc/the-conversation-an-introduction-to-social-media-presentation](http://www.slideshare.net/tactica_inc/the-conversation-an-introduction-to-social-media-presentation)

<sup>47</sup> Based on 'The conversation – An introduction to social media', see: [http://www.slideshare.net/tactica\\_inc/the-conversation-an-introduction-to-social-media-presentation](http://www.slideshare.net/tactica_inc/the-conversation-an-introduction-to-social-media-presentation)

## 7.4 CORPORATE RECRUITMENT WEBSITE

### 7.4.1 Description

Websites consist of codes and data and offer possibilities to represent information in a fashionable way and it has the potential to reach a big audience without a large budget. Recruitment applications of the corporate website were mainly used to list the vacancies and general information about the company. Within the massive rise of the World Wide Web and its new forms of social media, recruitment websites have more to offer than only a list of jobs; more and more requirements are needed since every organization has its own recruitment website and as such, there is competition from each organization. This paragraph will describe general recruitment applications for a recruitment website. Although a website consists of data and technical implementations, this paragraph will exclusively focus on the implications for the experience of the potential candidate – that should be the focus of every good recruitment website.

### 7.4.2 Recruitment applications and recommendations

The organization's recruitment website is the only space within social media where almost full control is available. It should be the core of the online employer presence of the organization. 90% of all potential candidates visit the corporate recruitment website before a possible application by him/her<sup>48</sup>. That's a high visitor's percentage, but it also creates a lot of challenges. The main challenge lays in the fact that there is no general profile of the potential candidate. In fact, three different candidate profiles can be divided: the searcher, the doubter and the knower. The searcher wants to have some hard information (information about the function, core business, profile, salary, etc); the doubter wants to be convinced (information about the atmosphere, culture, colleagues); and the knower just wants to apply as soon as possible (information about the application procedures).

The corporate recruitment website has to integrate the information needs of all three different visitors. The importance of a recruitment website is overwhelming: where 90% of potential candidates visit the website, 76% of them state that a poor company website deters them from applying for a job<sup>49</sup>. The challenge becomes even harder when it becomes clear that a good recruitment website has to fulfill the demands of three major areas – hr/recruitment, design and usability. To make the challenge even harder: a visitor only looks at the recruitment website for 2 seconds before deciding if he/she will close the website or

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<sup>48</sup> Statistics by Bas van de Haterd's presentation during Otys Recruitment Event in Arnhem, May 8 2008.  
<http://www.vandehaterd.nl/> (Dutch)

<sup>49</sup> [http://www.staffing.org/library\\_ViewArticle.asp?articleid=384](http://www.staffing.org/library_ViewArticle.asp?articleid=384)

continues the visit<sup>50</sup>. As becomes clear, a corporate recruitment website includes more than a list of jobs. This paragraph will give a broad overview of relevant concepts for a recruitment website.

## Integration

The corporate recruitment website has to be the online portal where all other recruitment applications come together. Interesting online presences of the employer brand image have to be present or be linked to have an integrative online presence. Besides that, the recruitment website has to be well-integrated within the corporate website.

## Domain name redirections

Not only needs the recruitment website considering integration with all other social media presences online, but also integration with the offline world. Examples are brochures, conversations and event stands. All three presences have one thing in common: a need for a sticky domain name which is easy recognized and easy to remember. No new webpages have to be developed; only a redirect of the URL can be sufficient. When choosing an appropriate URL, the candidate should be the focus. Since this candidate visits multiple recruitment websites, recruitment domain names have to be chosen on basis of standard market domain names. A couple of examples:

- [www.\[name\].nl/career](http://www.[name].nl/career)
- [www.\[name\].nl/internship](http://www.[name].nl/internship)
- [www.\[name\].nl/jobs](http://www.[name].nl/jobs)
- [www.werkenbij\[name\].nl](http://www.werkenbij[name].nl)

Domain names with a unique URL can also be set up around special events or themes (e.g. inhouse day, a day at the job, sneak preview), or for special recruitment actions.

## Design

Web designing within recruitment websites should reflect the organization's atmosphere and employer brand. A recruitment website does not differ from any other websites, seen from a design point of view. As such, some standard guidelines can be applied for recruitment websites such as: use many pictures; put the information in the centre of the screen; use strong colors; use readable text; etc.

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<sup>50</sup> Statistics by Bas van de Haterd's presentation during Otys Recruitment Event in Arnhem, May 8 2008.  
<http://www.vandehaterd.nl/> (Dutch)



## Content<sup>51</sup>

One of the critical elements of a recruitment website is its content. This is valid for each visitor and candidate profile. The next aspects should not be absent on a recruitment website, and have to be considered when designing a recruitment website.

### The vacancies

An optimal webpage of a vacancy has to include at least the following aspects:

- Headline:
  - The function: what, where (and eventual how much).
- An extensive profile:
  - The function: what, where, when and how much.
  - The person: who, what, why.
  - The company: who, where, why.
- Call to action (application of the candidate) and more information.

### The terms of employment and salary

Significant information for candidates is the terms of employment and salary.

### Critical recruitment factors

Next to the terms of employment and salary, an organization can also distinguish itself with some critical recruitment factors. Examples are the statements of career development, diversity, climate, compensation & benefits, articles and awards, corporate social responsibility and business values.

### Information about the application procedure.

Before applying online, candidates want to know how the applications procedure works. Relevant information for instance can be the length of the application process, the amount of interviews, the existence of a test and the next steps in the application process.

### Actuality

To improve the employer brand, the recruitment website can link to the actuality. Examples are placements of news items, awards and an agenda with upcoming events relevant for candidates. Other interesting linkages are items on the web which are relevant and can stimulate the employer brand.

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<sup>51</sup> Based on Bas van de Haterd's presentation during Otys Recruitment Event in Arnhem, May 8 2008.  
<http://www.vandehaterd.nl/> (Dutch)

## Newsletters

Newsletters can be a good solution to keep potential candidates informed about vacancies, upcoming events, and other interesting information. A lot is written about setting up digital newsletters. Two general recommendations can be derived from that: do not spam (only send e-mail if the young graduate indicated that he/she wants to receive a newsletter); and test the whole sending and delivery process (from spelling and grammar checks to a webpage of thanks). Little mistakes can often already have a big negative impact on the employer brand.

## RSS feeds

RSS feeds are potential sources to keep candidates informed as well, since it is becoming more and more mainstream for the digital natives to read websites in a RSS reader (e.g. Google Reader). A lot is written about setting up RSS feeds. Two general recommendations can be derived from that: let the complete page be displayed within the RSS reader (instead of only a fraction of the page where candidates still have to click through); and test the look of the RSS feeds.

## Referrals: send a friend

Social media obtains its power from social interactions and sharing. Why not let the potential candidate's social connections be interested by their own connection? This can be done via a referral.

## Personal / Social Touch – building up a relationship

In addition to hard information, it is also important to build up a personal relation since potential candidates are interested in the atmosphere, culture and colleagues. This can be established by, among other things, using the following concepts:

- Testimonials, stories, photos, LinkedIn profiles and blogs of real employees.
- A picture of the buildings.
- Corporate weblogs.
- Clear contact information and personal information of the recruiters (e.g. photo, LinkedIn profile).
- Agenda.
- Links to all other social media applications (e.g. Hyves, Facebook, blogs, Twitter, websites).
- Alumni.

## Games

Games can be effective recruitment applications, since they can establish a personal connection due to its interaction. Yet, most recruitment games have the opposite outcome: a negative employer assessment. As such, creating games seems to be a good recruitment opportunity, but it is harder than it looks. From a recruitment perspective, there are two important aspects: providing value (fun) and a clear link with the relevant vacancies / jobs.

## Search Engine Optimization

Google is undisputed the Dutch market leader of search engines with a market share of 93%<sup>52</sup>. Only by using Google to look up vacancies, recruiters and other relevant employer brand aspects, it becomes clear that “your image is what Google says it is”<sup>53</sup>. For this reason, websites have to be optimized for search engines: search engine optimization (SEO) improves the ranking of a website in the organic results of the search engines. Another application is search engine marketing (SEM), which also involves paid advertisements within search engines. This can be done for instance for special vacancies where little candidates are applying for.

## Usability and application process

AS stated before, the candidate experience needs to be the focus of the recruitment website. This experience is heavily influenced by the website’s usability and the application process itself. The response time is highly important within this process. Research by digitaal-werven indicated that in 2007, 50% of the Dutch sample applications were not answered. In 2008, this was decreased to 15%<sup>54</sup>.

## Analytics and monitoring

Probably the most important aspects within online acting which are often overlooked, are monitoring, analyzing and eventual adapting the website. Just as every marketing and communication activity, ‘one-shots’ are not effective and obtaining knowledge about the target group is key.

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<sup>52</sup> <http://www.checkit.nl/nationalsearchenginemonitor.html> (Dutch)

<sup>53</sup> <http://www.intermediairpw.nl/artikel.jsp?id=1325389> (Dutch)

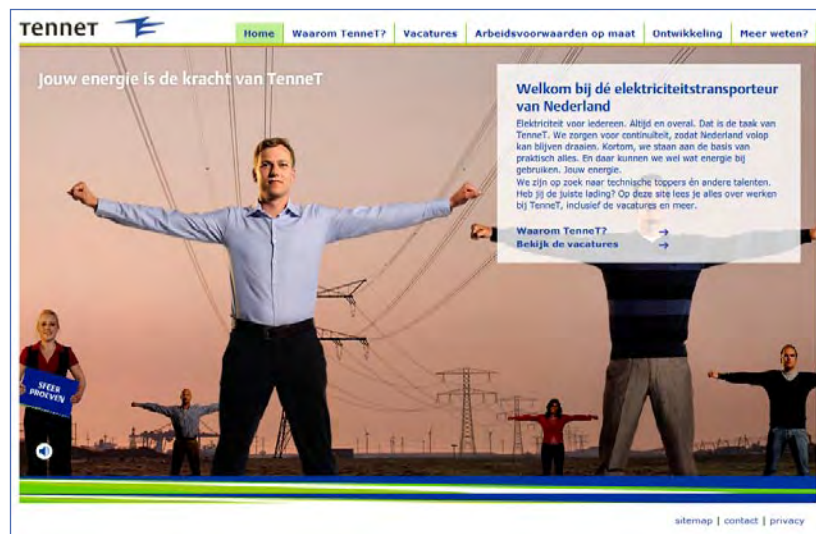
<sup>54</sup> <http://digitaal-werven.nl/14/Weblog/#http://digitaal-werven.blogspot.com/2008/11/in-het-nieuws-snelheid-van.html> (Dutch)

### 7.4.3 Examples

Considering the aspects from the previous paragraph, there are some examples of organizations which are using their corporate recruitment website in an effective way.

The first example is the corporate recruitment website of TenneT, which won the price of the best application experience of 2008 within the Netherlands by the digitaal-werven competition<sup>55</sup>. Their recruitment website [www.werkenbijtennet.nl](http://www.werkenbijtennet.nl) is illustrated in figure 7.7.

**Figure 7.7 Recruitment website of TenneT ([www.werkenbijtennet.nl](http://www.werkenbijtennet.nl))**



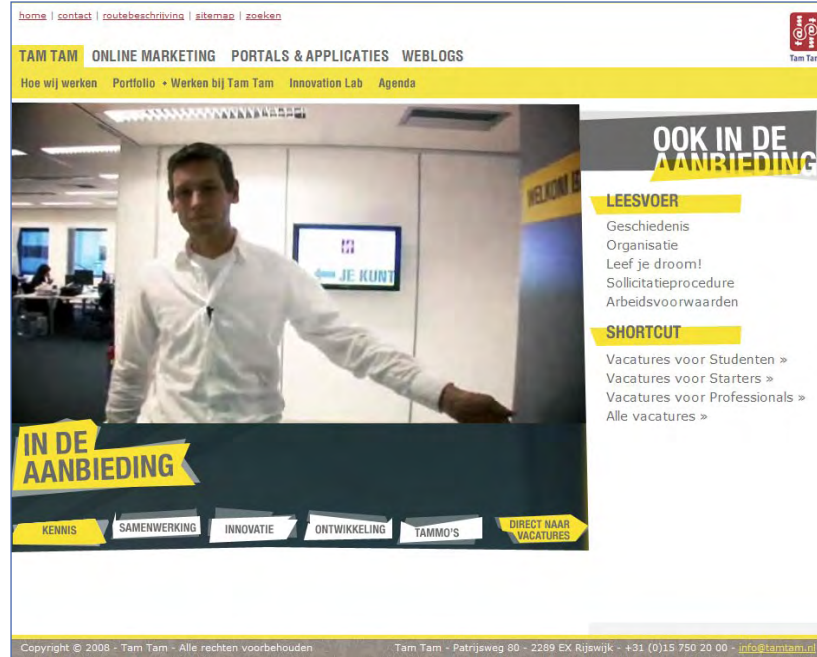
TenneT's recruitment website was praised for its personal touch showed by a large organization by using real people with real stories. In addition, the use of videos and display of the critical recruitment factors which distinguishes TenneT were also praised.

There was a honourable mention for the recruitment website of TamTam within the digitaal-werven competition. Their recruitment website is shown in figure 7.8. The reason for this mention was the usage of an interactive video, where personal information of the candidate was collected during the video and influenced the video in an interactive way. Next, Tam Tam offers a good user experience, where the candidate can easily find his/her way to the location he/she wants to go. As the jury further stated: "The vacancies have a short and long profile and also the fact that a recruiter is mentioned on the recruitment website with name, direct e-mail address and telephone number was praised."<sup>56</sup>

<sup>55</sup> <http://digitaal-werven.nl/14/Weblog/#http://digitaal-werven.blogspot.com/2008/12/persbericht-tennet-heeft-beste-digitale.html> (Dutch)

<sup>56</sup> <http://digitaal-werven.nl/14/Weblog/#http://digitaal-werven.blogspot.com/2008/12/persbericht-tennet-heeft-beste-digitale.html> (Dutch)

**Figure 7.8 Recruitment website of Tam Tam (www.tamtam.nl/vacatures)**



A third interesting corporate recruitment website is the website of Macaw (see figure 7.9). This website shows that there is clearly thought of the aspects of usability and information display.

**Figure 7.9 Recruitment website of Macaw (www.echtleukwerk.nl)**



#### 7.4.4 Recommendations for the recruitment website

Some general recommendations can be listed for a recruitment team to use the recruitment website in an effective way. More extensive and specific activities can be applied after setting up a consistent strategy and identification of the target groups. The recommendations are clustered via the strategy framework for recruitment websites (see figure 7.10). Three broad conclusions can be made: start with the basis (knowing what the target group wants), react and monitor.

**Figure 7.10** Strategy framework for corporate recruitment websites

	Findable	Information	Charisma / Personality	Applying	Returning
Direct applying	X	X		X	
Captivate			X		
Building up a relationship					X

##### Findable

- Use search engine optimization and search engine marketing.
- Change the domain name to a unique and easy to remember URL.
- Develop special domain names for recruitment themes and/or events.
- Link the social media presences with the corporate recruitment website and make sure it is one click away.
- Constantly monitor to see what kind of visitors the website attracts and which information they are searching for (and maybe did not find).

##### Information

- Integrate all social media applications.
- Long and short profile descriptions.
- Extend information about the application procedure.
- Agenda for events (no standard events, but relevant for starters).
- Displaying of awards and news items.

**Charisma / personality**

- First impression assessment.
- Attractiveness.
- Originality.
- Innovative.
- Fit with corporate image.
- Dynamic.

**Applying - Process**

- Check and optimize the applications forms and processes.
- State on the confirmation page and the auto reply e-mail information how the candidate can contact the organization and the next steps in the application process; be concrete with this.
- Make sure that the confirmation page and the auto reply e-mail state the same information.

**Returning → relationship building**

- Testimonials, stories, photos, LinkedIn profiles and blogs of real employees.
- A picture of the buildings.
- Links to all other social media applications (e.g. Hyves).
- Alumni.
- Polls.
- Corporate weblogs.
- RSS feeds.
- Relevant tests.
- Games. Only set up games if they provide value and are linked with relevant vacancies.
- Newsletter.



## 8. CONCLUSION AND GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

The significance of social media for recruitment communications is underlined by the fact that current and future starters can be typified as digital natives – youngsters which grew up with the Internet and who have fully embedded social media in their daily lives. This importance of social media will further increase as more social forms will establish within this interactive online platform and as it will provide more value for this generation. The relevance for organizations to have an online employer presence is enhanced, since each organization is already part of social media, whether they participate or not. If we talk about awareness of the organization as an employer, every online information source can act as a signal which potential candidates can use for an employer assessment. Consequently, each information and conversation about the organization within social media can be seen as job market communication. Examples are employer ratings, pictures, social networking sites, discussions within message boards, corporate recruitment websites and Twitter updates.

As a result, although some employer brands still have little online visibility, people are talking and discussing about these employer brands. Social media have made it extremely easy to share and discuss information. As such, a growing number of people are heavily influenced by online information about an organization. This is especially valid for the digital natives' generation. They place great value on this online information within social media, because this information is seen as authentic: it is from real people with real stories.

Social media differ completely from traditional media. Where traditional media could push their messages in a one-way approach to the customer, social media are focused on conversations and dialogues with a two-way communication method. Therefore, recruitment teams have to focus on the digital natives' perspective and should not treat social media the same way as traditional media. Instead, communication has to aim for authenticity and participation; becoming active users within social media. Social media are not introducing new strategies within this context; they only provide extra communication channels with much potential.

### Social media's basics

The ultimate effect of an effective employer brand within social media is the employer brand community. Within this online community, the online presence of the employer brand is established via a way that utilizes the power of viral marketing. Extra positive results are the long tail effect (reaching small communities on the web, instead of only aiming for the mass); connecting and building up relationships with people; keeping the employer brand

consequently positioned (instead of temporary offline branding); and generating more traffic for the corporate recruitment website.

Viral marketing includes the sharing of positive information and experiences across one's social network. This can be established within social media, where it powers viral marketing by flexibility. Information can take many forms and thus, it is easier to exchange this information. The content can take many different shapes, even without the organization's participation. This is due to people quoting, linking, track backing and sharing the information. Thus, guaranteeing a message is difficult within social media, since conversations are not organized, controlled and not about message dropping. As such, the basics of using social media for communication purposes are:

- Using an integrative and consistent strategy.
- Listening and participating instead of pushing messages.
- Providing value instead of social spam.
- Being real and authentic by expressing the passion for the organization.
- Connecting with people and establishing relationships.

### **Social media's Roadmap**

These basics seem easy, yet most marketers are merely engaging in cultural voyeurism at best, while social media's foundation is participation and having conversations. Before this active behavior within social media, social media's roadmap has to be understood (Solis, 2008):

- **Observation.** The basis for each conversation is listening. By online listening and reading, valuable information about young potentials and the social tools they use can be revealed.
- **Identification.** By involving employees and analyzing the observation process, a blueprint can be developed of all relevant social media tools which can be applied to increase the employer brand.
- **Participation.** The next step is active participation within the chosen social media tools. This should not only be done by the recruitment department, but it can also be done by passionate employees – they can become the organization's online ambassadors.
- **Join the conversation.** The next step within this participation is establishing conversations. Here the real of power of social media can be unleashed. The main principle within this phase is acting from perspective of the potential candidate.

- **Experiment and monitor.** Probably the most important continuous activity is experimenting with social tools, monitoring its results and modifying approaches if results are not good.

Social media are built to enhance the establishment of groups and communities. The easiest steps are maximizing the organization's current online presences and the presences of the recruiters in a consistent and sincere way. Examples can be recruiters' online profile and group pages of the organization within social networking sites. The next step is to use the organization's ambassadors to increase employer brand awareness; involve all current employees and their networks. Thereafter, new online presences can be developed by making use of social networking sites, blogs, microblogs, content communities and games. The key is to integrate all participations and conversation within the whole social platform. Parallel, the corporate recruitment website has to be the centre of the online recruitment presence. By fulfilling the information needs of all visitors and integrating demands from recruitment/design/usability, an effective recruitment presence can be established.

### **Next steps for using social media for recruitment purposes**

As such, social media offer much potential to enhance organizations' online presence. The logical next steps for a recruitment team are:

- Building bridges between recruitment, marketing and communications.
- Establishing a knowledge base of social media within the recruitment department, since social media differ tremendously from traditional media. Gaining knowledge can only be done via active participation.
- Setting up a consistent social media strategy.
- Involving employees with the communication process.
- Identifying target groups through research.
- Making an inventory of all possible social media tools.
- Experimenting with various tools and monitoring the results.
- Making adaptations if results are not satisfactory.

An excellent introduction in using social media tools for marketing is written by Chris Brogan<sup>57</sup>.

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<sup>57</sup> <http://www.chrisbrogan.com/50-ways-marketers-can-use-social-media-to-improve-their-marketing/>

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Stephan ten Kate received his Master degree in Business Studies (specialization Information Management) in April 2009 with his research on [trustworthiness within social networking sites](#). Becoming a social computing fanatic due to his research and internship at IBM, his interest in the topic grew. In September 2009 he started a second MSc. program called 'Knowledge and Information Management' and the VU University Amsterdam.

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