

IBM® Smarter Workforce Institute

Recruiting via social media: International research insights

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Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram... Social media is very much part of our everyday lives. Today two thirds of adults (65 percent) in the U.S. use social networking sites, compared to 7 percent in 2005, a nearly ten-fold increase in 10 years.¹ In view of the rising popularity of social media, HR and hiring managers have inevitably turned to social media to look for talented job candidates.

Using data from the recent global IBM WorkTrends™ survey, the IBM Smarter Workforce Institute investigated how both potential job-seekers and HR and hiring managers are using social media for recruitment.

About the analyses

Analyses presented in this white paper are based on a sample of over 5,000 HR professionals and hiring managers and over 10,000 workers from the WorkTrends™ survey, administered by the IBM Smarter Workforce Institute in 2015 in 23 countries, in a cross-section of industries, thousands of different organizations and all major job families.

In the analyses, potential job seekers are those who agree or strongly agree with the statement “I am seriously considering leaving my organization within the next six months”. Non-job seekers are those who disagree or strongly disagree with the statement.

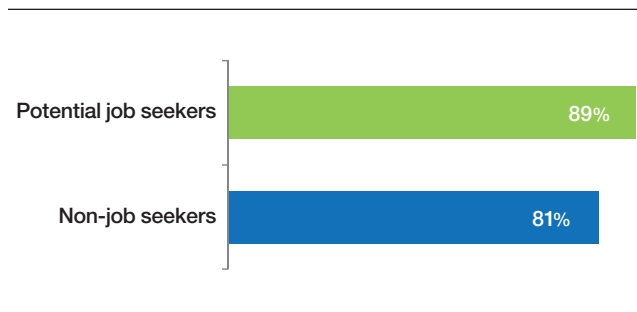
Executive summary

- The vast majority of workers are users of social media. Most workers, whether potential job seekers (89 percent) or non-job seekers (81 percent), say they use social networking sites.
- Potential job seekers are more likely to be active users of social media (updating their online profiles, making new connections, and writing blogs/posts), whereas non-job seekers tend to be more passive (reading others' posts).
- Three quarters of HR and hiring managers (77 percent) use social media in recruiting. They use it not only for sourcing but also for screening and attracting talent.
- Which social media sites are used for recruiting varies by country; LinkedIn is the most popular in several countries, Facebook is number one or two for many, and regional sites are far more popular in Germany, Switzerland and China.

Job seekers are engaged in more active online activities

You might expect potential job seekers to be bigger users of social media than other workers. In fact our analyses reveal that the difference between potential job seekers and other workers is small. Most survey participants, whether they are potential job seekers or not, use social networking sites (89 percent and 81 percent) (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Use of social media



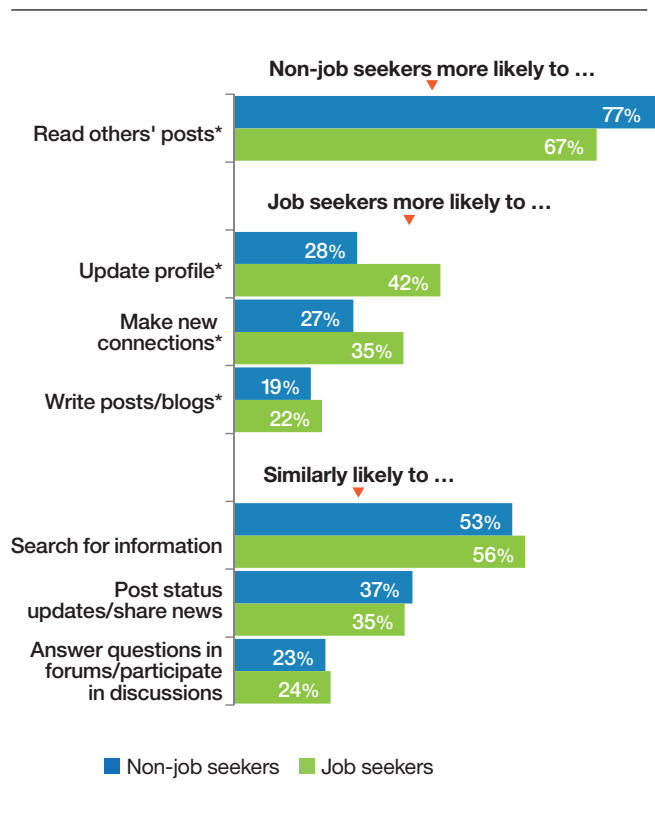
Source: WorkTrends™ 2015 global survey (Non-job seekers N=5,864, Potential job seekers N=2,301).

A closer look (Figure 2) at what people are doing on social media reveals that job seekers are more likely than other workers to use social media to update their online profiles (42 percent vs. 28 percent), make new connections (35 percent vs. 27 percent), and write blogs or posts (22 percent vs. 19 percent). Non-job seekers are more likely to use social media for reading others' posts than potential job seekers (77 percent vs. 67 percent).

For both job seekers and non-job seekers, half of them search for information (56 percent and 53 percent), over one third (35 percent and 37 percent) post status updates or share news, and nearly one quarter (24 percent and 23 percent) answer questions or participate in discussions in various forums.

These insights into how social media is used by job seekers could help HR and hiring managers identify potential job applicants.

Figure 2: Social media behaviors of potential job seekers and non-job seekers



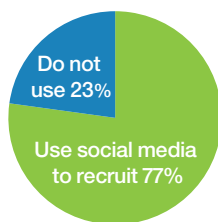
Source: WorkTrends™ 2015 global survey (Non-job seekers N=5,864, Potential job seekers N=2,301).

Note: *Differences between job seekers and non-job seekers are statistically significant (p<0.01).

HR and hiring managers use social media for many purposes

Just as most job seekers use social media, so do HR and hiring managers. Three quarters of HR and hiring managers (77 percent) say they use social media for recruiting (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Most HR and hiring managers use social media to recruit



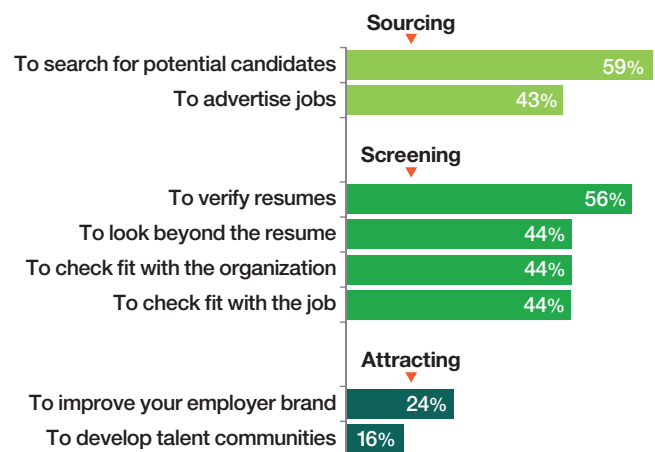
Source: WorkTrends™ 2015 global survey (N=5,727).

Understandably, social media is used for very particular purposes among HR and hiring managers, specifically talent sourcing, screening and attracting (Figure 4).

Other research has shown that traditional hiring methods, such as referral or on-campus recruiting, are being combined with social media and that has the advantage of allowing organizations to connect to a larger pool of potential job candidates.² Our research supports this as it demonstrates just how extensive the use of social recruitment is. Among those HR and hiring managers who use social media for recruiting, a majority (59 percent) search for potential candidates and over 40 percent advertise jobs on social networking sites (Figure 4).

HR and hiring managers are not only looking for potential job candidates on social networking websites, they are also using those sites to check up on applicants. In fact, the footprint a job candidate leaves online can tell HR and hiring managers a lot about a person (e.g. work experience, writing skills).³ However, it should be noted that using social media profiles has not been established as a reliable

Figure 4: How HR and hiring managers use social media



Source: WorkTrends™ 2015 global survey (HR and hiring managers who use social media for recruiting N=4,017).

and valid assessment method.⁴ Despite this lack of validation, among those HR and hiring managers who use social media for recruiting, over half (56 percent) verify resumes on social media, and 44 percent search for more information beyond what is presented in the resume. Many (44 percent) even check whether candidates are likely to match the job requirements and fit in with the culture of the recruiting organization.

While much of the sourcing and attracting activity undertaken by HR and hiring managers is highly targeted, many organizations recognize the importance of building a good employer brand to help attract the best talent. Social media has a clear role to play in communicating the employer brand and our survey results support this. Among those HR and hiring managers who use social media for recruiting, a quarter (24 percent) use social media to improve their employer brand and one in six (16 percent) develop talent communities to build relationships with future candidates.

The use of social networking sites varies across countries

As the table below shows, HR and hiring managers are not using the same social media sites the world over. In addition to professional networking sites like LinkedIn, personal networking sites like Facebook are also targeted. For most of the surveyed countries, including the U.S. and UK, LinkedIn and Facebook are the most popular social networking sites for recruitment, followed by other sites such as Twitter and YouTube. The top two (or three, when there is no statistical difference) social media sites used for recruiting are highlighted in blue in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Popular social recruiting sites vary by country

Country	LinkedIn	Facebook	Twitter	YouTube	Google+	Xing
India	78%	67%	46%	26%	41%	4%
South Africa	72%	45%	18%	10%	25%	1%
Netherlands	68%	51%	20%	10%	12%	1%
Singapore	68%	50%	18%	13%	15%	4%
Brazil	64%	71%	36%	34%	41%	7%
Canada	64%	58%	23%	17%	26%	5%
UK	64%	57%	32%	20%	22%	2%
US	61%	64%	36%	24%	29%	4%
Italy	61%	56%	24%	20%	22%	3%
Australia	60%	54%	21%	26%	27%	1%
Indonesia	53%	62%	42%	17%	34%	2%
Mexico	52%	59%	26%	16%	30%	2%
France	51%	49%	29%	20%	20%	2%
Switzerland	46%	37%	10%	12%	21%	35%
Germany	26%	60%	29%	19%	21%	49%
Japan	8%	50%	31%	27%	15%	3%

Source: WorkTrendsTM 2015 global survey (HR and hiring managers who use social media for recruiting N=3,368).

Note: The percentage refers to the proportion of HR and hiring managers saying they use a specific site for recruiting. The top two social recruiting sites in each country are highlighted in blue. No significant difference between Facebook (37 percent, 35 percent) and Xing in Switzerland; no significant difference between Twitter and YouTube (31 percent, 27 percent) in Japan.

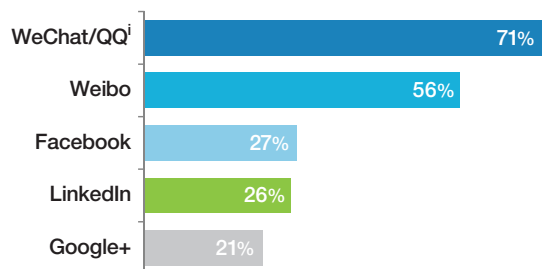
In contrast to many western countries, LinkedIn is far less popular than Facebook in Japan. There are only about 1 million Japanese LinkedIn users,⁵ compared to 22 million Facebook users in Japan.⁶ LinkedIn, as a professional networking site, has not attracted a large number of users in Japan, perhaps because of the Japanese culture in which self-promotion is discouraged and job hopping is frowned upon.⁷ Given the relatively small number of LinkedIn users in Japan, therefore, it is not

surprising that only 8 percent of HR and hiring managers use it for recruitment. Instead they have turned to other social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube.

Two other countries reveal different patterns of use: Germany and Switzerland. Perhaps unsurprisingly, German-based Xing is one of the most popular professional networking sites in both countries. It is considered to be the German alternative to LinkedIn.^{8,9} Nearly half of HR and hiring managers in Germany (49 percent) and one third in Switzerland (35 percent) rely on Xing for recruiting.

Local preferences also reveal themselves in China where WeChat and QQ are the most popular social networking sites, with 650 million users of WeChat and 850 million users of QQ.¹⁰ No wonder that most of HR and hiring managers (71 percent) in China use WeChat/QQ for recruiting (Figure 5). Another local social networking site, Weibo, has become the second most popular social networking site for HR and hiring managers. Over half of HR and hiring managers in China (56 percent) use it in recruitment.

Figure 5: Popular social recruiting sites in China



Source: WorkTrends™ 2015 global survey (HR and Hiring Managers in China who use social media for recruiting N=305).

Conclusions

The use of social media is gaining popularity for both job seekers and non-job seekers. Job seekers actively use social media to update online profiles, make new connections and write posts, whereas non-job seekers tend to be more passive in reading others' posts. Meanwhile, a majority of HR and hiring managers use social media for recruiting. They not only use it for talent sourcing but also for screening and attracting.

Social recruiting can be a useful strategy for HR and hiring managers looking for passive candidates (those not actively looking for a job). However, when making any job-related decisions, it is important to note that the validity and legality of using social media for recruiting has not been clearly established.¹¹ We recommend that organizations develop and communicate guidelines on social recruiting. As discussed in our white paper '[Could social media mischief cost you that new job](#)', guidelines can help avoid mistakes in hiring decisions based on social media profiles.

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ⁱ WeChat and QQ are two separate sites from the same company, Tencent. QQ has both desktop and mobile versions and WeChat is designed only for mobile.

If you'd like to learn more about new Recruitment Marketing Techniques on IBM Talent Acquisition Suite, [click here](#).

About the Author

Haiyan Zhang Ph.D. is an Industrial-Organizational Psychologist with the IBM Smarter Workforce Institute. Her areas of expertise include qualitative and quantitative methods, recruitment and selection, performance management, employee motivation, and cross-cultural research. She is particularly interested in how research evidence can be used to inform HR practices. Her current research focuses on the impacts of technology-enabled HR transformation on employee attraction, engagement and performance. She has presented and published research findings at various conferences and peer-reviewed journals. She has also served as a reviewer for a number of conferences and journals, and is a member of Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology (SIOP). Haiyan received her Ph.D. in Human Resource Management from the DeGroote School of Business at McMaster University, Canada.

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