



Network your way into a new job

Javed Anwer | September 15, 2012

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In February, Shubhendu Sharma was looking for a software engineer with app development experience in Android. Given the frugal budget of his start-up Tofu Technologies, running an advertisement in a newspaper or hiring a recruitment agency wasn't an option.

"I had used Twitter when I was at IIM Ahmedabad to successfully seek and hire two managers for the institute's Centre of Innovation, Incubation and Entrepreneurship," Sharma says. "So I decided to use it again to find the right person for my company."

A few weeks later - after his tweet was re-tweeted several times - Sharma recruited Avinash Bhatnagar, a software engineer with the right qualifications who got in touch with him after seeing the posts.

Similarly, on August 18, MP Shashi Tharoor, known for his social media savvy, tweeted an opening at his office: "Looking for an intern, Delhi-based, with computer skills & writing ability to assist busy MP from end August. Please email office[at]tharoor. in."

A JOB SEEKER'S ASSET

Tharoor, Sharma and Bhatnagar are not alone in using Google+, Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter to find the right recruits or to land new jobs. A survey by US-based e-recruitment provider Jobvite revealed that nearly 73 per cent of firms had successfully hired people using social media, and nearly 90 per cent would be using these sites to spread the word about job vacancies in the future.

On the flip side, 86 per cent of active and passive job seekers have a social profile and 16 per cent used social networks to find their most recent employment. The study also found that while LinkedIn was extremely popular among recruiters, near 75 per cent were also using Facebook and 54 per cent were using Twitter to find the right people.

In India, the numbers are not that big, but there has been a change in the way that jobs are advertised and how they are being applied for. A survey by recruitment consultancy Kelly Services in July found that around 54 per cent of respondents were more inclined to search for jobs via social media than through traditional methods such as newspapers, online job boards and recruitment firms.

"Given the connectivity that social networking offers, it is an obvious asset for any job seeker and human resource company," says Sangeeta Lala of headhunting firm TeamLease Services. "Besides, the sheer number of people on these sites improves the chances of finding good talent and placements."

Lala's opinion is echoed by Gautam Ghosh, a social media evangelist whose blog ([www. gautamblogs. com](http://www.gautamblogs.com)) was ranked among the top 25 HR blogs globally by HRWorld.

"The people that you are likely to follow on Twitter are usually your industry peers; some seniors and some juniors. Over a period of time, you are bound to use this community - where almost everyone is net-savvy, smart and well-connected - to seek a job or a 'hard working' employee because you know your message will reach the people who are interested in your industry and your work," he says.

CORPORATE PLUNGE

Ghosh also speaks of a trend where job openings are now automatically posted onto social networks. "As soon as a firm posts a job vacancy on its website, the entry is now automatically pushed to Twitter and Facebook through specialized apps. In India, for instance, companies have begun to use My Parichay - an app that manages their recruitment efforts on social media."

My Parichay can create company specific pages that can be used advertise jobs and hire people. It can tap into the friend circle of existing employees of a company to shortlist talented people. And it can allow recruiters a peek into the database of professionals who use Facebook.

Currently, the service is used by several companies including Genpact, People Strong and Kotak Life Insurance.

With over 3, 14, 000 followers on LinkedIN alone, Dell is another such company that actively uses social media to find employees. Its Facebook page for Asia Pacific careers has more than 27, 000 followers and Careers@Dell on Twitter has more than 1, 650 followers. Whenever the company needs new people, it taps into this community to find the right candidates.

"More than 50 per cent of the people in our India Talent Acquisition team have been introduced to social media as a platform and they've been trained to leverage its benefits. Specifically, they've been given training on building relationships and communities on LinkedIN, Facebook and Twitter, " says Savneet Shergill, Director (Talent Acquisition) at Dell India.

"Dell very effectively uses social media for new talent attraction. For example, on Facebook, we have region-specific career pages and specific job search to optimize talent acquisition. "

Yet, despite the booming job market on social sites, Ghosh advises patience.

"Don't jump onto these networks thinking you are going to get a job through it. Do it to build connections, make virtual friends and talk to peers. Most importantly, exercise caution in what you post and the online persona you create. You never know who'll be looking at your profile. "

EXPERT ADVICE

Potential employers are prone to checking out social media profiles before hiring. So update your LinkedIN profile, don't tweet rubbish on Twitter and be careful about what you share on Facebook. When you create a profile on LinkedIN, try to get as many references as possible. Your LinkedIN profile

should be up to date. Jazz up your resume, but do not lie. Use professional-looking display pictures. Also, it is a good idea to use your own picture. A real photo adds to the authenticity of the profile. Social media is a great platform to reach out to people. Use it to 'follow' and network with the right people in your industry or the industry you are seeking a job in. If ever you find yourself replying to a post made by someone important, think it out and be careful with how you word it. Your reply will also be read by other important people. If your point is going to take a contrarian view, you can be forceful, but remember to be polite. Your behavior should be professional and respectable. When talking to your peers, be careful of what you say. Refrain from criticizing your current employer, work or boss on social media. Do a Google search for your name from time to time and see what comes up.

It should be something that is not likely to affect your career in an adverse way. Also, check out the images that crop up when you search using your name.