

Apps for applicants

Smartphone technology revolutionizes recruitment

BY MAURICE FERNANDES

Over the past few years, there's been a dramatic shift in how HR finds, selects and hires employees. An increasing demand for new skills from a rapidly shrinking pool of specialized talent has turned the world of recruiting on its head. Instead of individuals approaching companies for jobs, companies are approaching individuals with jobs. Instead of organizations receiving dozens of resumés from prospective employees, prospective employees — especially those with highly specific and in-demand skills — are receiving dozens of job postings from hopeful organizations.

And it's all being done in cyberspace. Corporate recruiters are adapting existing technologies and jumping on emerging ones to attract top talent. And central to their efforts is the cellphone.

There are 4.6 billion cellphones in use worldwide, according to a 2010 Wilson Electronics report. That's significantly more than the number of personal computers in use, which will reach 1.78 billion units by 2013, according to a 2010 report by Garner.

In addition, the number of text messages sent in 2010 was 6.1 trillion, according to the International Telecommunications Union.

Many people carry a cellphone 24-7. These devices are no longer just phones, they're portable computers that allow access to the Internet from anywhere at any time. They also al-

low recruiters access to a vast population of potential employees through a variety of means, including:

Quick Response (QR) bar codes: When a person checks out of a grocery store, a scanner reads the bar code on each product and prices are displayed on the register. QR codes have taken this principle one step further. They are black and white squares of hieroglyphics that can be used on a print ad, poster, website or even a business card. A person simply uses a smartphone to launch a reader on the device that scans the code. He's then taken to an Internet site providing further information about a product or company. Recruiters are starting to use these bar codes at job fairs, in company ads placed in industry-specific publications and on their social networking pages.

The beauty of these is people can scan the QR code, be directed to a company's job site and send their resumé and cover letter — all from their smartphones.

Apps: Companies are offering free apps to attract people with specific skill sets. An individual simply goes to an organization's job site, enters her specific skills and the kind of position she's interested in, downloads an app onto her mobile device and requests job alerts that meet the criteria. When a new posting matches those skill sets, interests or titles, the prospective candidate receives an immediate notification via her mobile device and can submit a resumé via the same app.

It's immediate, targeted and

effective. And the easier employers make it for jobseekers to view job postings on their mobile devices, the more qualified candidates they'll attract.

Global positioning systems (GPS): Location-aware social networking applications such as Foursquare, Facebook Places and Loopt are enabling recruiters to facilitate impromptu face-to-face meetings with potential candidates at job fairs, their office or even a local coffee shop. The scenario goes like this: You've let your network of potential candidates know you'll be at a job fair or convention and will be accessible via your smartphone. When there, you activate your GPS and those interested in touching base with you will receive your exact location in real time.

Recruiters can also, at any time, check out one or more location-based social networking apps to see if any of the out-of-town talent they've been courting happen to be in the area. Within seconds, recruiters may find out a candidate they've been talking to for months is at a hotel just three blocks away. They can then send a quick text or instant message and arrange a meeting.

Talent technology: Social recruiting has taken the field of talent acquisition by storm, affecting the way recruiters source, track and measure potential hires as well as the way they collaborate and stay on top of emerging trends. Software created specifically for recruitment specialists enables users to perform a wide variety of tasks, such as analytic functions, from one customizable platform. These platforms also allow a user to integrate social media and other sites, internal databases and web pages and online communities.

Recruiters are constantly finding new ways to use non-recruitment applications to help them with talent acquisition ini-

tiatives. A weather app, for example, shows recruiters the weather conditions around the world — which is handy if they're arranging interviews in Winnipeg in January from Toronto.

There are even software programs that let recruiters broadcast openings and match, profile, apply and connect talent to an organization's hiring and applicant tracking process in a matter of seconds. The programs also provide a single method to post a position on the Internet, corporate job board or an internal employee portal. The matching application enables a user to search and rank candidates among millions of resumés across various networks, as well as save records of these efforts for auditing and compliance purposes.

And what's coming? Thanks to online video-sharing sites such as YouTube, the video resumé is already here. While the written resumé is still king, as more and more members of generation Y and their younger siblings enter the workforce, the video resumé will become the norm — opening up new challenges and new frontiers for the corporate recruiter.

While technology has made a huge impact on the recruiting process, it shouldn't be completely relied upon and does not replace the human touch. Recruiters are often the first points of contact for a candidate and represent the company for which they are recruiting. The goal is to provide all applicants, regardless of whether or not they become successful candidates, with a consistent and positive experience.

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