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Nearly 94 percent of recruiters used social media in 2014 for recruitment purposes, Capterra statistics show. The millennial generation is starting to change the workforce and the manner in which traditional recruitment processes are taking place. LinkedIn members performed 5.7 billion professional searches during the year and 59 percent of recruiters said that the candidates found via a social media channel had the highest quality.

The importance of social media in the field of recruitment can't be underestimated but can such channels be used to attract top talent and high level executives to an organisation? For some businesses, websites like LinkedIn and Facebook are the key to doing efficient pre-employment screening and making sure that candidates for executive positions are a good match in terms of corporate culture and values. For others, social media executive recruitment goes a step further.

### ***The importance of social media screening***

When it comes to the acquisition of top level managers and executives, social media channels can be used to assess the reputation of these professionals.

Everybody has a digital footprint in today's world. Blog posts, articles written by professionals, tweets and LinkedIn updates can be used to determine what kinds of interests a particular expert has and whether their specialisation is a good match for the specific company.

When it comes to employing workers, social media screening can be used to see whether there's anything troublesome in the life or the background of the candidates. The screening for key managerial positions is somewhat different. If reliable and up to date, it can provide information about the active engagement, past experiences and practices that a certain manager approves of. Social media screening can be used to determine an individual's online persona, which will speak a lot about professionalism and communication style.

### ***The LinkedIn phenomenon***

Few corporations can afford to ignore LinkedIn and the impact that the professional social network has had on talent acquisition at all levels.

LinkedIn gives recruiters access to the so-called passive job seekers. These are professionals that aren't looking for a job change but remain open to the possibilities. The professional social network has more

than 400 million members with 2 new members signing up per second. According to 2013 statistics, LinkedIn is the social media of preference for top executives (individuals at a Director or above level). Nearly 86 percent of the top level executives say that they will use social media when looking for a new job, Forbes reported.

The average number of LinkedIn connections that CEO's have is 930 and nearly 65 percent of top executives use social media on a daily basis. They spend anywhere between 30 minutes and 1 hour checking updates and communicating via social media. What do these figures mean for recruiters? Even if managers aren't actively looking for a new job, these professionals can easily be contacted through channels like LinkedIn. Since the purpose of LinkedIn is professional communication, executives will be open to receiving messages about new professional opportunities and giving those some consideration.

### ***Several other important facts and figures***

When it comes to ROI, social media recruitment processes are unparalleled. It is not necessary to have a premium LinkedIn profile in order to contact top executives. Even if a free account is chosen, it will still come with all of the essential communication tools.

Some studies suggest that bringing the recruitment process in-house and relying on the power of social networks can lead to a 75 per cent reduction in the cost of hiring executives, Recruiter.com reported. Still, many companies are incapable of making this change happen because of limited resources or experience in the field of top managerial talent acquisition.

Social media makes it easier to identify the best candidates for each position. The level of targeting is also unparalleled, which boosts the effectiveness of such executive recruitment efforts even further. By analysing the online persona before sending a proposal to a potential candidate, organisations will be making sure that the professional is a good match, thus increasing the overall quality of the candidacies.

There are more than 17 million UK profiles in LinkedIn alone. Of these users, 25% were aged 35-44 in April 2015. The ratio of candidates to recruiters is 9 to 1, giving companies a nice pool of potential candidates to communicate with.

### ***Are we over reliant?***

Though the popularity of such channels is growing all the time, there are still some limitations that websites like LinkedIn cannot overcome. Social media is great for doing the preliminary research and trying to establish some contact but it must be remembered that not every person is on LinkedIn for example. Some users are fed up with calls and simply opt out and many countries, particularly in Africa and some parts of the Middle East, still have a very small number of users. Users also tend to be industry related, for example a large proportion of the IT industry are LinkedIn users, compared with very few from the Agricultural industry.

It doesn't necessarily allow you to access the whole passive candidate market because most people with strong profiles are looking for a job - by focussing on these profiles, are better candidates being missed? Profiles can be accessed easily but as mentioned earlier, reliability is important and many can be out of date, limited or hidden and as profiles are self-created, they can be inaccurate or economical with the truth.

It is all about balance and social media is an excellent part of a diverse approach to talent acquisition. But when it comes to executive hiring, the assistance of professionals that specialise in the field is still crucial and the entire process can rarely be completed internally. Professionals in the field of executive recruitment have the skills necessary to assess leadership capabilities and to convince the passive candidate to consider a new option. Executive recruitment professionals will remain an integral part of the process but the use of social media can decrease the amount of time needed to identify candidates, contact very busy executives and narrow it down to just a few great matches.

## ***The Future?***

What does the future have to hold for companies looking for the best managers and top-level executives?

Social media could be wonderful for recruitment in highly specialised markets where the talent pool is limited. The access to information about professionals in the future will become even easier as digitalisation starts impacting nearly every aspect of one's professional existence. When this information is combined with the right assessment skills, executive talent acquisition through the use of social channels will become a much easier task.

Is it possible to use social media as an effective executive recruitment tool? Absolutely! All organisations, regardless of their size can succeed in the war for talent by adopting an innovative approach. Only the future will tell whether the scope of websites like LinkedIn is going to increase, facilitating corporate communication and making top managers even more accessible than they are right now.