

# Tips from the Social Recruitment Trenches

*Posted by Ann All*

Talent recruiting seems like an inherently social activity, so it makes perfect sense to take recruiting efforts to social channels like Facebook and Twitter, right? The recruiters I interviewed for a recent story agree these channels are packed with potential, although not all of them think the channels' benefits outweigh the potential risks.

Shafiq Lokhandwala, CEO of NuView Systems, for instance, thinks such channels simply contain too much "noise," much of it a distraction or possibly even information that could adversely influence a recruiter. He told me:

There's a mix of social and professional information that can be counterproductive to recruiting. The traditional channels still yield a better fit.

As with many emerging technologies, the problem is too much hype, said Peter Weddle, former CEO of Job Bank USA and author of several books, including "Work Strong: Your Personal Career Fitness System." Recruiters that focus too much on social channels may neglect more proven methods of recruiting, he said.

Despite these concerns, a number of companies are already recruiting employees via social channels. I interviewed four of them, who generously shared their experiences with social recruitment.

Among the strengths they mentioned: Channels like Facebook and Twitter are a great way to connect with folks who may not be actively searching for work, a largely untapped market widely coveted by recruiters. They allow companies to use their employees' connections to find potential hires, a concept that makes sense since employee referrals have long been a prized commodity. Such channels are a good place to promote your company culture, which yields more qualified candidates than those attracted through job boards or other more traditional means.

One of my sources, digital advertising agency Organic, offered six great tips for using Twitter as a recruitment tool in a Workforce Management article. (Free site registration is required.) Much of the advice makes sense whether you use Twitter for recruiting, branding or other business communication. The tips:

- Create a branded company profile and assign a dedicated person to monitor it. Consider automating tweets so job posts appear on Twitter as they become available. Not dedicating personnel to social channels is a gaffe mentioned in a Deloitte research study on online communities. The author of the report, published last summer, said it was "critical someone is there to mediate and moderate what happens online."
- Don't just push out job postings. Engage in conversations with your followers.
- Create a protocol for your job Tweets. Consider searchability by using hash marks (#) around key words. Include a trackable URL to your job posting so you can monitor the number of click-throughs generated through Twitter.
- Take advantage of third-party applications like TweetBeep, which alerts you to tweets relevant to your search.
- Encourage your staff to retweet job openings by providing incentives such as a referral bonus for candidates sourced through tweeting.
- Share industry expertise and other relevant information in addition to job postings. It's OK to include some personal tweets. (Although the business-oriented messages should outnumber those, I'd add.)

I found another half-dozen social recruitment tips in an article on [examiner.com](http://examiner.com). They echoed some of the good advice offered by the recruiters whom I interviewed for my story, so I thought I'd share them here:

- Figure out which sites your target applicants frequent and focus on those. Lots of community college students, for instance, can be found on MySpace, said James Durbin of Durbin Media, one of my sources. Although folks in the construction industry typically haven't spent much time online, Durbin said that's changing, thanks to Twitter. "A lot of those folks have smartphones now, so Twitter can be a good way to reach them."
- As you would in any social setting, employ good manners and good common sense.
- Experiment with different sites to find the ones you like. Ask folks questions about the methods that have worked best for them. Such sharing is a staple of social sites.
- Consider your company's level of exposure. You want to seem savvy but not overpowering.
- Make sure you monitor sites to see what people are saying about you and to provide quick responses when merited.
- Be patient. It takes a while to build the kinds of relationships that will yield results on social sites. A big don't, mentioned by another of my sources, Paul DeBettignies, managing partner for Nerd Search LLC and author of The MN Headhunter Blog: "Some recruiters on Twitter or Facebook are a lot like the creepy sales guy during happy hour who walks in, hands out business cards, gives a quick pitch and is out the door. There's no sense of making any kind of real connection."