

Is LinkedIn Suitable for Recruitment in Higher Education in the Czech Republic?

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Abstract: Internet marketing is used in all walks of life nowadays. It found its way also into recruitment. The article aims to investigate whether recruitment through LinkedIn and Academia is a viable option of recruitment for higher education positions in the Czech Republic. LinkedIn is a general portal for openings, and Academia is specific for higher education professionals, i.e. two different types of sites are covered. It was an associate/full professor opening. The fields were business administration and management because they are fairly broad. The location was Prague, the number of relevant academics should be the largest within the Czech Republic. The experiment yielded zero applicants enrolled because of LinkedIn or Academia. Overall, there were two applicants, they both learned about the opening from members of the department which announced the opening. It seems that for now, such portals are not suitable for attracting higher education professionals in the Czech Republic, while word-of-mouth information may be more efficient.

Keywords: internet marketing; recruitment; higher education; experiment; LinkedIn

JEL Classification: O15; O35; O33

1. Introduction

In the era of the Internet, everybody is expected to be able to provide rapid responses, the time for decision-making is getting shorter, the production time is getting shorter and the time for which employees remain in companies is shorter as well. Therefore, it is quite logical that the selection procedure must be quicker, and this is probably most evident in recruitment.

Posting an advertisement in printed media and waiting for applicants to read it is inefficient. The advertiser, i.e. the employer who is looking for new employees, loses control over the published advertisement and does not know how many people have seen it, and is unable to estimate how many people are likely to apply. There is required a more interactive tool. Some such tools are offered by social networking sites, professional ones like LinkedIn, academic like Academia and Research Gate, and more recently also Facebook.

The mentioned tools are not commonly used by universities in the Czech Republic yet. Our research aims to investigate whether placing job openings on LinkedIn and Academia is a viable option of recruitment for a higher education position in the Czech Republic. It is not possible to try all sites, all fields, all towns, so some decisions needed to be done to limit the scope. LinkedIn.com was chosen as a representative of professional networking sites meant

for hiring in general, and Academia.edu was chosen as a representative of an academic networking site. Facebook did not offer a relevant service at the time of experimenting. The field for the experiment was chosen to be business administration, and the location of the opening was chosen to be Prague. The result of the experiment can be then discounted for a less popular field and a smaller city. In this line of reasoning, if there are no applicants found this way in the capital city (which has by far the largest number of inhabitants and universities) in a very popular field, it is very unlikely that any applicants would be found in a smaller city or for a smaller field. If there are no applicants in jobs that often use the internet and on-line applications, it is very unlikely that any applicants would be found in jobs with smaller usage of internet and IT tools.

It turns out, that e-recruitment has become a common phenomenon due to the increasing use of information and communication technology by HR. Lately we can expect inclusion (although limited) of social networking sites such as LinkedIn as a part of e-recruitment.

Our article is structured traditionally: section literature review is followed by methodology, the penultimate section describes results, and the final section offers discussion with some conclusions.

1.1. Literature Review

With the advent of information technology, a possibility has originated to use servers with job offers. Sites with job offers are still considered as modern. Zajac (2012) claimed that two-thirds of European companies use recruitment portals. It is possible to place an advertisement on a site with job offers, where it is possible to modify it, use hyperlinks, and retract it if a suitable applicant has already been found and hired. However, this approach cannot also control the number of applicants, and ensuring that the selected group of potential candidates in particular response to the advertisement can only be done with difficulty. A certain possibility is to prioritize placement of the advertisement on a server on which certain groups search for job offers. However, this method is already outdated as well, and it virtually cannot be used for the selection of candidates for higher management positions in particular. According to Ramar and Sivaram (2010), only one out of every 120 applicants who get in touch themselves is suitable to be interviewed, while one out of every 20 applicants selected through active recruitment is suitable. Faliagka et al. (2012) recommend the introduction of an automated system that would exclude unsuitable candidates and it would, therefore, bring significant benefits and cost savings. The application published on Bayt.com, for example, provides 33 filters to distinguish candidates (Wolfswinke et al., 2016), and there are certainly other such systems.

Recently, e-recruiting platforms, which are used both by employers and job-seekers, are currently widespread (Sharma, 2014). Job offers are collected on the platforms and people can choose from them. If the job-seeker creates his profile on the platform, he receives primarily offers that agree with his competencies and requirements (Enăchescu, 2016). According to Doherty (2010), thanks to social media, it is possible to effectively attract the current workforce of Generation Y. This generation, called also Millennium Generation, is not unequivocally defined. There are people born between 1977-1994 (Kotler & Keller, 2006)

or 1976-2000 (Kopecký, 2013). This generation represents or will represent the majority of employees and potential employees. These people are also called digital natives (Lewis, Thomas, & James, 2015) and their retaining is very difficult. Huizing (2012, In Lewis et al., 2015) suggests that Y Generation is well educated, which stresses organizations recruiting and retaining them. When seeking a job, they go online, first recruitment sites, followed by social media. These people are self-confident, they seek interesting conditions and do not feel big loyalty to their current employer. Generation Y requires an immediate reaction, fast feedback which can be observed in the preferred work style and also in the job-seeking (Trézlová, 2015). It is suitable to aim at them with particularly active recruitment, it means recruitment focused on passive potential candidates (i.e. those who are not currently looking for a job but meet the conditions of the company recruiting).

So, HR professionals are discovering new possibilities in the use of Facebook, LinkedIn (Caers & Castelyns, 2011), or other social networks, including YouTube users or groups playing selected online games. Wright (2011) suggests that companies should follow potential employees to engage them in the recruitment. However, users are not ready for it. According to Pavlíček (2013), most job seekers tend not to pay sufficient attention to their online profile. On one hand, it is an advantage because recruiters receive unbiased information about the potential employee. On the other hand, it is also a disadvantage because it is difficult to create a complex profile and to offer appropriate job position. For effective use of social networking sites is important to create e-HR strategy (Quast, 2013). There are numerous studies covering e-recruiting area (Kashi & Zheng, 2013; Dery et al., 2006) proving that lack of user acceptance is an important barrier for companies aiming to reach benefits of e-recruiting other than time efficiency and lowered operational cost and. (Maier et al., 2013) finds that higher fluctuation and low work satisfaction can be linked to a lack of system acceptance on the part of recruiters.

In general, any social network on which individuals present information about themselves (including information on what videos they produce or view or what games they prefer) can be used for recruitment purposes. However, it greatly depends on the recruiter. According to the research of Caers and Castelyns (2011), roughly half of the HR specialists use LinkedIn to search for suitable candidates. According to the authors, as much as 82% of HR specialists do not use Facebook for active recruitment. The unwillingness or inability to use social networking sites for recruitment confirms also Kietzmann et al. (2011). On the other hand, Böhmová and Pavlíček (2015) reported that HR specialists use information from public Facebook profiles regularly, and Madera (2012) and Chauhan, Buckley, and Har et al. (2013) write about the growing trend of using social networks for active recruitment. Lewis et al. (2015) claim that LinkedIn is recruiters' most popular social media, 60% of surveyed companies claimed successful intake of the new employee through social media such as Facebook, Twitter, or LinkedIn. This is underlined by research from 2010, according to which, 83% of respondents confirmed that they have used or plan to use social networks for hiring (Lumesse, 2011). Lewis et al. (2015) found that 92% of employers use, or plan to use, social networking as a recruitment tool and that the use of these platforms will continue to be on

the rise in the immediate future. Wawer and Muryjas (2011) found that 27% of employers in the poor region of Poland used social networking sites for e-recruitment.

Recruiters who use e-recruiting websites can directly acquire a large number of job seekers (Rosoiu & Popescu, 2016) faster and cheaper (Matta & Sardana, 2012; Depardieu & Islam, 2008 (In Nasreem et al., 2016); Smith & Rupp, 2004). But it is not always an advantage because it requires only a little effort to submit a job application on these sites, so applicants are often unsuitable.

Majority of the respondent organizations in Nasreem et al. (2016) study prefer digital recruitment for the publishing of openings in marketing and IT departments. Wroblowska and Ruda (2015) recommend the use of e-recruitment also for product managers. Fisher et al. (2014) claim that the use of social networks for recruitment depends on whether the recruiter himself is active on the social network, or he is only an occasional user. Also, Caers and Castelyns (2011) suggest that job seekers who frequently use LinkedIn may get benefits for an active e-recruitment setting. Otter (2009) suggests that hiring is the perfect place to start using social networks in HR management. According to Lewis et al. (2015), HR managers consider networking with similar professionals via LinkedIn as the biggest advantage of networking implementation in a company.

The above review shows that the current articles primarily discuss the use LinkedIn for obtaining information about applicants and about the potential problems it conceals - the influence of various stereotyping views which lead to a non-objective evaluation already before the actual interview (the applicant is often not even invited to the interview). The verification of candidates according to their Facebook profiles poses similar problems. Caers and Castelyns (2011) have, for example, presented several studies confirming that by searching for information about applicants on the Internet, potential employers may already be biased prior to the selection. They are often influenced by age, race, sexual orientation, attractiveness, maturity, obesity, tattoos, and more. Organizations thus rightfully face a risk of discrimination (Lewis et al., 2015). Also, Zide et al. (2014) have focused on determining which elements recruiters look for on the LinkedIn profile when recruiting.

It is possible to decrease some disadvantages. The literature also deals with the use of LinkedIn profiles to automatically evaluate the suitability of the enrolled applicants. To assess the applicants' personalities, the employers require a link to their blogs, on which they then use a linguistic analysis (Gill et al. 2009; Oberlander & Nowson, 2006; Caers & Castelyns, 2011). In particular, the degree of extroversion, education, practical experience, and loyalty are assessed. But online recruitment strategies may feel too detached. And it is important to think that further research expects the increasing use of mobile devices (tablets, smartphones) in e-recruiting transformation. It will be possible to reach applicants everywhere. But more information is required on applicants' daily behavioral patterns and locations (Eckhardt et al., 2014).

These articles show that recruitment is done on LinkedIn by searching for suitable potential candidates, to whom an offer for a position is then sent. Either individuals (more commonly in the case of active recruitment by a personnel agency) or groups of people are sought, depending on what groups they follow, who they have in the network, or what education they declare. It looks like headhunting to some extent – they reach out to a specific

person, regardless of whether he/she currently has a job and wants to change it. However, compared to headhunting, they reach out to much larger number of potential workers at the same time. Caers and Castelyns (2011) have reported that neither LinkedIn nor Facebook is suitable for internal recruitment with a small number of potential candidates. However, we did not find any sources that explain how e-recruitment works. The exception is the model offered by McCabe (2016).

Hosain et al. (2020) in his meta-analysis *E-recruitment: A Social Media Perspective* analyzed in detail the role of social media on e-recruitment process based on existing extensive literature. He concluded, that majority of the studies indicate that social media is not being used as the main source of e-recruitment, but rather just as one of the additional sources. It is in accordance with our findings. Furthermore, Hosain revealed that such use of social networking sites as complementary source gets quite popular due to the wide and cheap availability of data and information. His paper, similar to this one, may be beneficial for the scholars as a literature reference as well as for HR professionals for some practical guidelines (based on recommendations provided) regarding the use of social networking sites for e-recruitment. (Hosain et al., 2020)

Recruitment agencies have both the resources and staff to ensure the creation of the best personalized headhunting after selecting the suitable candidates, the majority of whom are people who are employed and are not actively searching for a new job. Candidates tend to not respond to emailed or posted offers that are not specifically targeted to them. We nevertheless decided to verify whether the candidates selected through software express an interest. We created an advertisement, which was placed on LinkedIn.com and Academia.edu, and sponsored these ads. This means that we have entered the requirement that the advertisement is sent to the selected groups of candidates.

Passive candidates who are not seeking a position themselves, but would consider the change if the offer seemed interesting to them are thus used. It is, of course, possible that other suitable candidates will come across the advertisement accidentally. However, this is unlikely if they themselves are not actively seeking a new job. We therefore mainly relied on software that should be able to find a suitable group for recruitment. There are all kinds of automated systems from simple ones that make a rough selection based on, for example, the email address of the candidate, to sophisticated systems that monitor the level of representation of keywords and their synonyms in the CV (Faliagka et al., 2012). Such programs could also be used for analyzing profiles on LinkedIn, but we have not used them in our research. The strengths and weaknesses of multiple professional social networks are discussed by Olexova (2010). In general, it seems that the analysis of the social media use is quite straightforward and there is no need for some advanced statistics (Malec, 2022).

2. Methodology

The research was based on an experiment. Identical job advertisements were posted at LinkedIn.com and Academia.edu. LinkedIn.com was selected because it is a professional networking site meant for hiring in general. Academia.edu was chosen because it is a

networking site meant for academics. The aim was to compare the two sites in how many applicants they can attract.

The field chosen for the experiment was business administration because of its popularity among students. It can be argued that students, in general, prefer social sciences and humanities (compared to science and technology programs). So one could ask why not to choose e.g. social work; it grew rapidly in the last decade. Although it is correct, due to a high number of graduates and their limited applicability, and due to decreasing prestige of social work degrees among the general public, it is possible to expect the number of social work students to plummet in the near future and to stay low afterward. On the other hand, business administration graduates can find a position in a wide range of organizations (private, public, industrial, agricultural, social, etc.), and also start their own business.

Business administration or economic programs can be studied at multiple faculties of public and private universities. Many of those faculties are located in Prague. So conducting an experiment in Prague may be considered the most representative in the sense that if recruitment using LinkedIn.com and Academia.edu does not work there, it is even less likely to work in smaller cities.

For the experiment to be as inclusive as possible, two positions were announced in business administration and management. Such courses belong to the core of any curriculum. Moreover, even teachers researching other topics could easily teach these courses.

Although e.g. Horváthová et al. (2011) point out that "[m]odern education depends on how to utilize various possibilities of modern technology to improve learning and teaching", there was no requirement of skills related to software nor hardware.

On the other hand, it was an associate/full professor opening. There are two reasons for that:

1. Assistant professors are easy to find, both assistant professors with several years of practice and people who just defended their Ph.D. thesis.
2. It is full professors (and associate professors to some extent) who are needed for accreditation of study programs and for guaranteeing courses.

Information about the job opening was posted in Czech because this was the language in which the candidates would need to teach. This would be the case for most such openings in the Czech Republic.

The experiment was conducted in the first quarter of 2015, the campaign was active for 3 months, it was not specially promoted /only standard rules applied/, campaign was not targeted to any specific competing university. With regards to costs, about 160 USD was used for LinkedIn.com plus extra about 20 USD for sponsored ads; 300 USD was used for Academia.edu.

3. Results

The job advertisements posted at LinkedIn.com and Academia.edu did not attract any candidates. Overall, two candidates applied for the position, they did not notice the postings on LinkedIn.com nor on Academia.edu, though they knew about the opening and, therefore, would notice it in social networking sites more likely than other potential candidates.

In spite of this short main finding, there are several observations worth mentioning. With regards to LinkedIn.com, 70 unique users clicked on the job posting. Only 26% of them had a Ph.D. degree, 27% had a master's degree, 3% had a bachelor's degree, and 44% had other degree. Possibly not even all 26% with Ph.D. degree would qualify for the position.

With regards to Academia.edu, there were 1,199,993 mini-ad views, attributed to 496,536 unique users. Of these, 213,113 were registered Academia.edu users and 283,423 were not. These 1,199,993 mini-ad views led to 1,887 full-page ad views, to 719 unique users. Of these, 148 were registered Academia.edu users and 571 were not. It is unclear how Academia.edu investigates the uniqueness of non-registered users, so it is possible that the latter number was somewhat smaller.

But the really interesting observation is the geographical distribution of 1,887 full page ad views – top 5: 423 Hong Kong, 415 United States, 97 France, 84 India, 84 Morocco.

To sum up, it is almost impossible to estimate the success of a job ad based on the number of views – a vast majority of ad views, which were observed in this research, were irrelevant.

The results are limited to associate/full professor openings in business/economics in Prague these days. Since the two fields advertised (business administration and management) are general, the results would be at least as bad for a more specialized opening.

The results would likely be the same (no applicants) in other Czech cities at the same time because other cities are smaller than Prague and the relevant labor market is also smaller.

It is necessary to stress the time perspective as well. Since the experiment was conducted, there is a new university law in the Czech Republic and there was established a new accreditation committee. As of the time of writing the paper, the committee has not made any decisions, so it is not clear what expectations it will have. It is possible that the new accreditation committee will be less strict, fewer full and associate professors will be needed for each program, so there may be more of them available on the market. Or it can be that the new accreditation committee will be as strict or even stricter than the previous one and all programs will need the same or even higher number of associate and full professors. In a long run, it could also mean that some programs lose accreditation due to an inadequate number of associate and full professors and, therefore, there may be more of them available on the market.

Job ad views on LinkedIn.com were not surprising only because only 26% of users claimed to have a Ph.D., which was necessary but not sufficient for the job, but also because of their current employers. Some worked for AT&T, T-Systems, BBC, Orange, Victoria's Secret. Of course, it could be those with bachelor's, master or "other" degrees. The geographical distribution seems logical – 16% from Prague, 6% from Brno, 3% from Šumperk that is the approximately same distance from Prague as Brno is from Prague. Most of the identifiable views were from the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

The high number of mini-ad views at Academia.edu could be explained by a really low number of postings at Academia.edu in total. But the geographical distribution of full-page ad views is puzzling. It is possible (but not very likely) that there could have been 415 non-unique (let's say 158 unique) users from the United States (Czechs, Slovaks, and a small portion of Poles). But it is unlikely that there would 423 non-unique (let's say 161 unique) users from China (accessing the social network through a proxy server in Hong Kong). There is no history of people

from former Czechoslovakia fleeing to China, unlike to the United States. Moreover, there were only 84 views from India, which has a similarly large population as China. It is hard to judge 97 views from France; they are approximately in the same relation to the population of France and 415 views to the population of the United States. Morocco with 84 views is certainly suspicious. This is final version of the top 5 list. During the life of the job posting, even Indonesia and Turkey appeared on the top 5 list. They were pushed away by France and Morocco.

India, Egypt, Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines are known for fake likes on Facebook. Although it is unclear what economic advantage they would get from clicking on job ads on Academia.edu, it would still explain only India in the final top 5 list and Indonesia appearing there temporarily.

Comparing LinkedIn.com and Academia.edu, there were fewer views on LinkedIn.com but they were geographically more relevant (although probably only less than a quarter of users, who viewed the ad, would qualify).

4. Discussion

Internet has become the main source of information, also for job searches. The research aimed to investigate if placing job openings portals such on LinkedIn and Academia is a viable option of recruitment for higher education positions in the Czech Republic. Typically, there are enough applicants for Ph.D. positions. Often, there are not as many assistant professor openings as there are finishing doctoral students at a particular workplace. It is the recruitment of associate and full professor positions that require extra effort.

Currently, it seems that e-recruitment in higher education in the Czech Republic is not the best option. Since information about staff (including their titles and often also their list of publications) is public, it may be better to identify potential candidates by looking at the list of employees of relevant departments. The value of LinkedIn.com is in seeing common connections, so a recruiter can contact a potential candidate through a common connection rather than making a cold call. Traditional methods of word-of-mouth recruiting, and advertisement of open positions on university / departmental website seems to work better than e-recruitment.

We assume that when there were no applicants in a very popular field and a job with very frequent usage of the Internet in the capital, it is very unlikely that this way would help to recruit academics in other – narrower – fields who additionally spend a considerable amount of time outdoors or in the laboratory, such as forestry or food biology. Although we must admit, that the research was conducted some time ago, current situation with academic hiring over LinkedIn has not evolved much in the Czech market. Our finding, unfortunately, are still quite valid in regards of LinkedIn – it is still not a good tool in the Czech academic environment. However, recently a new trend has emerged – a dedicated website focusing exclusively on local research job opportunities has been launched (www.researchjobs.cz). It seems to be working well, contains job postings from various institutions across the Czech Republic and Bratislava. It could be the subject of further research, since its success can be a major game changer in the area of academic recruitment.

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