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“Recruiter's Guide: Online Social Networking” By Shally Steckerl

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"Recruiter's Guide: Online Social Networking" By Shally Steckerl

About the Author

Shally got his start in research in 1996 when he realized that as a contingency recruiter he could beat the competition and make more money by finding people who were not easily available in mainstream sources. Since then he has built several centralized sourcing and research organizations from the ground up for large multinational organizations like Cisco, Motorola, Coke, Google and Microsoft. Shally now spends his time consulting with organizations on how to build research teams and develop their advanced sourcing skills. Visit: <http://www.jobmachine.net/shally> for a complete bio, and to learn more about what Shally has to offer recruiters check out: <http://jobmachine.net/career>.

Although the hackneyed phrase 'it's who you know' has been abused by companies touting their latest and greatest flavour of social networking software, it's not far off the mark. The truth is that in today's over-informed digital business world, where bloated data moves at the speed of thought, it is not who you know that really counts, but who knows you. Professional online social networking tools are invaluable to recruiters for finding new workers, but also in creating personal brand equity and raising awareness about who you are.

Social networking is not a new concept. Because the media has been giving it much attention lately, these online networks are beginning to grow in popularity and are becoming increasingly useful. Before social networking software we would gather at meetings, conferences, symposiums and trade shows to share leads and make new connections. Online, people meet in discussion forums and discover each other by reading profiles. Online social networking software adds another set of tools to our network-building tool bag by allowing us to find out who our friends already know.

Recruiter relevance

How does this relate to recruiting? Networking is something all good recruiters do. Like with face-to-face meetings, we find common areas of interest with potential candidates and interact with them to build relationships. This can result in new placements, or new business.

Why does it work? Talented people have two things in common:

1. They easily relate with people they already know; and
2. They love to talk about themselves.

Getting started

With most services, the initial sign up is free. Users begin by filling out a form with personal data and then inviting friends. Some networks allow for uploading current contacts, but others ask users to invite contacts directly through the application's interface. The connections then invite their own contacts, and that's how the network grows.

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There are hundreds of online social networking sites. Most of the applications competing for your attention offer a combination of professional and personal networking. Some are better suited to find a date while others are more serious oriented to business. After joining and reviewing the top 20 players, three of them stand out:

LinkedIn.com

- Profiles look very much like a resume, excellent mix of people from different levels in the organisation, and many industries
- Endorsements set trusted people apart
- Search for: industry experts, potential employees, hiring managers, deal-makers, people from specific geographies, or people with particular keywords in their profiles
- Particular focus on business networking. Over 8.5 Million members.

Plaxo.com

- Keeps all of your current contacts' information updated automatically thus is extremely useful in rekindling old relationships and staying in touch.
- Not a tool to build your network, yet, though it does have a very useful 'mini blog' feature to help you keep friends informed. About 15 million people use Plaxo.

Spoke.com

- Focused on providing sales prospects. Large database but not very recruiter friendly.
- Deeply integrated, extracts contact data from enterprise applications (eg, Outlook, Notes, etc) to establish and leverage connections. About 30 million contacts.

More choice

While there is a long list of social networking sites with a business focus, there are only a few with large enough populations to be of use in recruitment. In fact there are some many social networks that they are too numerous to list in this article. A majority of them, like friendster.com, flickr.com and orkut.com among hundreds of others tend to revolve around strictly social categories like dating, common interests, finding friends, and photo sharing.

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Here are some other notable networks with a decidedly business or professional purpose, ranked by size:

- Hi5.com – 50 million users. General social networking and business.
- Passado.com – 4.7 million users. Europe’s largest business network.
- Xing.com – 'Crossing' has 1 million users. Was OpenBC. Business networking.
- Ryze.com – 250,000 users. Business networking.
- Ecademy.com – 100,000 users. Business networking.

Stay connected

Don't be afraid to connect, stay connected, share, participate, be vulnerable, open yourself to the world. Being connected in this way is an incredible leverage that will prove invaluable in your business development. Connections can have many unexpected positive results.

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