

## CHANGES IN APPLICATION AND RECRUITMENT PROCESSES DUE TO BEHAVIORAL CHANGES RESULTING FROM THE USE OF SOCIAL NETWORKS AND MEDIA

DEWALDT, ELISABETH

State University for Library Studies and Information Technologies, Sofia, Bulgaria

### ABSTRACT

Particularly until the 1960s, it was common for employees to spend their entire working life in one company. The meanwhile frequent change of jobs is made possible on the one hand by modern methods of personnel recruitment, on the other hand by the fact that workers can easily compare different companies with each other. Communication between companies and potential applicants will be further optimized, as will the reconciliation of work and family life. The workplace and working hours will also become more flexible in the future. The importance of teamwork, the joint solving of difficult issues, will increase. In particular, the attitudinal patterns of job applicants towards these changes using social media for job application processes were investigated by using a questionnaire for American respondents and a similar questionnaire for German respondents. The respondents include professionals in both countries without age restrictions. The key findings are that in the U.S., the amount of time spent using social media is much more extensive than in Germany. Americans cite fewer technical difficulties and use private social media more frequently for application processes. In Germany, the behavior of job applicants towards social media in future will be like the current behavior in the USA.

**KEYWORDS:** Employer Branding; Human Resources; Application; Recruitment; Social Media

### INTRODUCTION

In professional networks, employees communicate primarily with their current or former work colleagues, customers and business partners, and companies under consideration. Private information is not published in professional networks (cf. Schmidt, 2018, p. 33). 75 % of companies use *Xing* or *LinkedIn* to publish their own job offers (cf. Graf, 2014, p. 350). Drawing on the expertise of online job exchanges is less complicated than having your own employees create and maintain a career website. *Xing* has a total of 5.3 million users in the D-A-CH region and *LinkedIn* a total of two million, whereas *LinkedIn* has more than 150 million users worldwide in more than 200 countries and *Xing* only 11.7 million. This makes *LinkedIn* the most important professional network worldwide (cf. Bärmann, 2012, p. 48). The advantage of using professional networks for companies is that they have access to several million profiles (cf. Gärtner/Heinrich, 2018, p. 131). Companies that enable application processes via social media experience cost savings, efficiency gains, and shorter response times (cf. Schönenberg, 2010, p. 11). The success of online job exchanges and professional social networks is also due to the fact that applicants actively search for job offers and use other media as a secondary option (cf. Kanning, 2017, p. 77).

The term social media generally covers two core areas: the technology that enables the exchange of ideas between people with similar interests and the people who are interested in the exchange (cf. Rath/Salmen, 2012, p. 35). Companies use social media more slowly and to a more limited extent than private individuals (cf. Arnold, 2015, p. 15 f.). Although the use of social media for recruiting still has development potential, it could become a future trend (cf. Dannhäuser, 2017, p.

422). Job offers on the Internet and social media can simplify or automate a large number of process steps in personnel selection (cf. Berkelaar, 2017, p. 1127). The use of social media supports companies in this area in establishing contact with applicants and creating a positive corporate image (cf. Lumma/Rippler/Woischwill, 2015, p. 47). As a result, some companies are sticking to the tried-and-true, e.g., print media, but are also using new media, resulting in a mixture of traditional and digital media (cf. Keuper/Schomann/Sikora, 2018, p. 197). Social media recruiting is already quantitatively and qualitatively successful in the USA. Companies there are therefore currently considering paying employees bonuses or cash rewards for successfully recruiting a suitable new employee (cf. Rath/Salmen, 2012, p. 286).

In the literature, comparisons have so far only been available for Germany, Austria and Switzerland. The labor law bases are similar in these countries and data collection is simpler than conducting the survey from German-speaking countries in the USA. The survey sought to answer the question of what differences and similarities exist in the use of social media for the application process in Germany and the United States. In order to meet the challenges of the increasing use of social media in application processes, recommendations for action could be derived for companies from the answers of the respondents. The fact that social media is used to a greater extent in the USA than in Germany enabled future developments to be derived from the situation in the USA.

On October 19, 2019, the questionnaire was published in Germany and a link was sent via Facebook, WhatsApp and email. The author's contacts were asked to share the link and respond to the questionnaire. A total of 498 completed German-language questionnaires were collected by December 15, 2019. The same survey was conducted simultaneously in the USA using the SurveyMonkey survey tool with the identical questions translated into English.

## **METHODS**

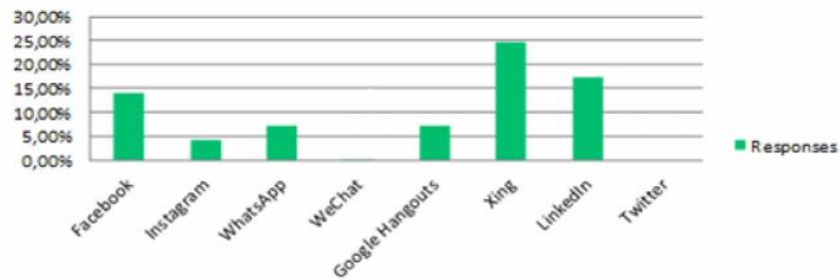
A German-language and an English-language questionnaire with 17 identical questions were created to ensure comparability of the answers. The answer options differ slightly, e.g., due to the different number of states and types of schools in both countries. The questionnaire consists of four parts. Questions one to five ask about the respondent's personal usage behavior with regard to information and communications technology (ICT) and social media. Questions six to eight deal with the employment situation of the respondent. Questions nine to 13 ask about the application process and the use of social media. Questions 14 to 17 are socio-statistical questions, which are intended to classify the respondents on the one hand and to test the hypotheses on the basis of these characteristics; on the other hand, these socio-statistical questions are intended to determine the composition of the group of respondents. Respondents include dependent and independent workers, retirees, students in Germany and the U.S. without age restrictions, among others. In both countries, the questionnaires were answered by people with an affinity for the Internet, as no paper responses were possible.

First of all, it was tested on personal computer, tablet, and smartphone whether it is technically possible to answer the questionnaires, whether the person answering can scroll back to a previous question or whether the questionnaire stops when questions are skipped. When using a questionnaire as a research method, it is therefore advisable to present the questionnaire to a smaller group of respondents. A pretest is particularly useful if there is no direct control of the survey because, amongst other things, it is anonymous. Pretesting is carried out to ensure the quality of the methodology. Some respondents to both questionnaires did not want to answer every question in detail and skipped some questions, which means less analyzable data was collected for the survey. The answers to the respective questions of both questionnaires

could then be compared to determine the similarities and differences between the two countries. In the overall table, the answers were shown in one row for each respondent. The questions were presented in columns. The results were summarized in separate Excel sheets. In the summary, percentages were calculated for the absolute values in order to be able to compare the categories.

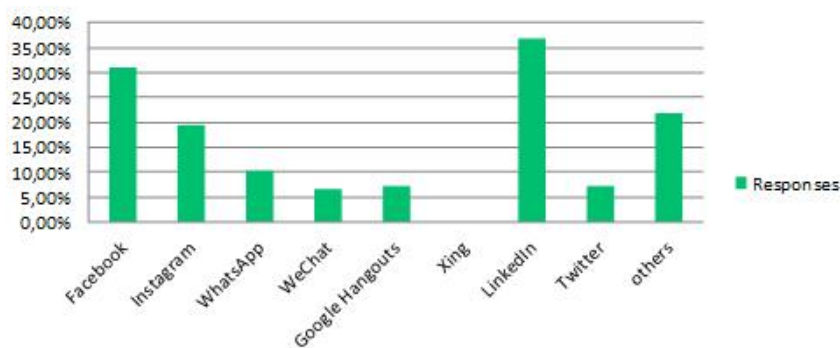
**RESULTS**

In the German-language questionnaire, no respondent stated that they use social media for more than ten hours a day. The average daily usage time of all respondents in the German-language questionnaire is two hours. In the English-language questionnaire, no respondent reported using social media for more than 16 hours a day. The average daily usage time of all respondents in the English-language questionnaire is nine hours. Although the majority of respondents in Germany last applied a few years ago, 70.88% of respondents in question 9 stated that they do not use or have not used social media for job applications. 84 % of respondents in the U.S. have applied within the last ten years according to question 8, but only 49.3 1% currently use or have used social media for the application process. Accordingly, 50.69 % of respondents to question 9 indicated that they do not use or have not used social media for the application process. In question 10 as illustrated in Figure 1 14 % of respondents in Germany said they had used *Facebook*, 24.57 % *Xing*, 17.44 % *LinkedIn* for the application process. Other social networks were used by less than 10 % of respondents. This result is consistent with the responses from question 9, as some respondents used multiple social media.



**Figure 1: The use of social media for the application process in Germany**

As presented in Figure 2 31,16 % of respondents in the U.S. said they had already used *Facebook* for job applications, 19,57 % used *Instagram*, and 10.14 % used *WhatsApp*. 36.96 % used *LinkedIn*. Other social media are in the single-digit percentage range and the total of other social media was 21,74 %.



**Figure 2: The use of social media for the application process in the United States**

Question 12 asked about negative experiences in using social media for the application process. The following aspects were mentioned by respondents in Germany:

- Technical problems (Internet connection).
- Recruiters and headhunters are not well-versed in the use of social media
- Long processing time and lack of feedback as well as lack of transparency
- Filter functions that weed out unsuitable applicants from the outset and worsen the applicant experience
- The application form is structured in such a way that submission is only possible if all documents are uploaded in full, in the maximum size and in the desired form.
- Outdated job ads that are not updated or maintained
- Interpersonal contact is missing, applicants cannot draw conclusions about their answers by gestures and facial expressions.
- Applicants have the feeling that recruiters only skim the application via social media and do not show any serious interest in the applicant.
- Technical challenge for applicants (e.g., scanning certificates and signatures).
- Concerns about the security of personal data
- behavior of headhunters who are initially sociable but not interested in building a network in the long term
- no contact person specified in the company
- Some companies still expect applications in written form
- inappropriate approach, which some applicants find unpleasant
- depending on the industry, applying via social media is unusual
- temporary employment agencies that are difficult to recognize as such
- Companies are dishonest in their external presentation.

Respondents in the U.S. cited the following aspects as negative experiences when using social media during the application process:

- LinkedIn is used to varying degrees to build a network and the interaction is sometimes perceived as unprofessional by respondents.
- Social media and the anonymity of the Internet enable unpunished insults or fraudulent intentions
- Lack of feedback from companies
- Impersonal interaction

- Concerns regarding the handling of personal data.

37.95 % of respondents in Germany stated in question 13 that social media should be used more for application processes, 62.05 % were against. 45.2 % of the respondents from the USA were of the opinion that social media should be used more frequently in the application process, 54.8 % voted against.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

In their private lives, respondents in Germany and the USA are equally well versed in ICT and social media, as they use them on a daily basis. Respondents in both questionnaires who are neither well-versed in the use of tablets and computers nor use ICT on a daily basis represent a minority. Due to the requirements of everyday life and the technical possibilities of using ICT, the number of people who do not use these technologies will decrease in the future. Furthermore, the concerns and negative experiences of the respondents in Germany and the USA predominate. In both countries, the unemployment rate among respondents is very low, which in turn, extended to the population of both countries, may mean that in the U.S., as in Germany, few employees are available on the labor market.

The hypothesis that despite the existence of a current employment, applicants seek a more attractive job, but mainly use traditional application methods for the application, could be confirmed. The number of respondents who did not use social media for application purposes confirms that social media was largely dispensed with not only for applications made some time ago, but also for current applications. In the USA, social media are actually used to a greater extent for application procedures than in Germany. Hypothesis 9 can therefore be confirmed by the answers to question 9. The reason for this could be that social media have been used in the USA for longer than in Germany and are therefore already established in the USA, whereas they have not yet become comprehensively established in Germany.

Not only the extent of use overall, but also the social media used differ. In the USA, private social media are used more for application procedures than in Germany. This confirms hypothesis 10 that different social media are used for application processes in the USA and Germany. Hypothesis 12, that respondents in Germany had more extensive negative experiences than respondents in the USA, was confirmed. One explanation for the technical difficulties may be that although Germany is an industrialized country, the importance of the Internet and the expansion of the broadband network are not recognized in Germany. The U.S. has a faster mobile and bandwidth network. From these concerns of the German respondents, it can be deduced that the HR specialists in the companies in the U.S. are more versed in dealing with social media than in Germany and that the respondents also feel more confident in using it.

The results of the survey show the high potential of social media for HR, and the relevance of these social networks and media is steadily increasing. Companies should create a profile in social media and build their own employer brand. Through appreciative communication with potential applicants, companies can gain experience in this area at an early stage and learn from their mistakes. They can compare cost and benefit aspects in a test field in which they document social media activities on an ongoing basis.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I would like to thank my former supervisor, Professor Dr. Eberhard Grein at Diploma University for Applied Sciences, for his guidance through each stage of the process of my master thesis and for inspiring my interest in the use of innovative

technologies in human resources. Additionally, I would like to thank my parents for many good advice during my studies. Finally, I would like to thank my former fellow student and valuable friend, Jessica Mensch, for many common learning hours, the exceptionally successful cooperation in our learning group and the constant motivation.

## REFERENCES

1. *Arnold, Hermann* (2015): *Einsichten zu social media recruiting: Wie Sie Netzwerke wirklich richtig nutzen*, 2. ed., Freiburg/München: Haufe Group, 2015
2. *Bärmann, Frank* (2012): *Social Media im Personalmanagement: Facebook, Xing, Blogs, Mobile Recruiting und Co. erfolgreich einsetzen*, Heidelberg/Hamburg: mitp Publishing Group Hüthig Jehle Rehm, 2012
3. *Berkelaar, Brenda L.* (2017): *Different ways new information technologies influence conventional organizational practices and employment relationships: The case of cybervetting for personnel selection*, in: *Human Relations* 70 (2017), S. 1115–1140, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0018726716686400>
4. *Dannhäuser, Ralph* (Hrsg.) (2017): *Praxishandbuch Social Media Recruiting: Experten Know-How, Praxistipps, Rechtshinweise*, 3. ed., Wiesbaden: Springer Gabler, 2017
5. *Gärtner, Christian/Heinrich, Christian* (Hrsg.) (2018): *Fallstudien zur Digitalen Transformation: Case Studies für die Lehre und praktische Anwendung*, Wiesbaden: Springer Gabler, 2018
6. *Graf, Nele* (Hrsg.) (2014): *Innovationen im Personalmanagement: Die spannendsten Entwicklungen aus der HR-Szene und ihr Nutzen für Unternehmen*, Wiesbaden: Springer Gabler, 2014
7. *Kanning, Uwe Peter* (2017): *Personalmarketing, Employer Branding und Mitarbeiterbindung: Forschungsbefunde und Praxistipps aus der Personalpsychologie*, Berlin/Heidelberg: Springer, 2017
8. *Keuper, Frank/Schomann, Marc/Sikora, Linda Isabell* (2018): *Homo Connectus: Einblicke in Die Post-Solo-Ära des Kunden*, Wiesbaden: Gabler, 2018
9. *Lumma, Nico/Rippler, Stefan/Woischwill, Branko* (2015): *Berufsziel Social Media: Wie Karrieren im Web 2.0 funktionieren*, 2. ed., Wiesbaden: Springer Gabler, 2015
10. *Rath, Bernd H./Salmen, Sonja* (Hrsg.) (2012): *Recruiting im Social Web: Talentmanagement 2.0 - So begeistern Sie Netzwerker für Ihr Mitmach-Unternehmen!*, Göttingen: BusinessVillage, 2012
11. *Schmidt, Jan-Hinrik* (2018): *Social Media*, 2. ed., Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2018
12. *Schönenberg, Ulrich* (2010): *Prozessexzellenz im HR-Management: Professionelle Prozesse mit dem HR-Management Maturity Model*, Berlin, Heidelberg: Springer-Publishing house Berlin Heidelberg, 2010

Appendices

#application - The use of social media for the application procedure

I have made this questionnaire for my master thesis and each answer will be helpful.

Please answer the questions below: I totally agree= a "strong" yes I agree= a "simple" yes I don't agree= a "simple" no I totally disagree= a "strong" no The answers to this questionnaire will be compared to a similar german questionnaire.

\* 1. I am used to handle smartphones and computer easily. (Please select only one answer.)

- I totally agree.
- I agree.
- I don't agree.
- I totally disagree.

\* 2. I use my smartphone, tablet or computer daily.

- I totally agree.
- I agree.
- I don't agree.
- I totally disagree.

\* 3. I use the internet generally for: (Please select one to four answers.)

- research (work, school, university)
- entertainment (e.g. movies, music, games)
- communication
- online shopping

\* 4. I mainly use social media apps and websites (e.g. Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp). (Please select only one answer.)

- I totally agree.
- I agree.
- I don't agree.
- I totally disagree.

\* 5. I use social media \_\_\_\_ hours daily

\* 6. At the moment I am... (Please select only one answer.)

- employed
- student
- non-working
- searching for an employment

\* 7. I (would like to) work in the following industry/ I have worked in the following industry:

\* 8. I have made my last application \_\_\_\_ years ago.

\* 9. I have used social media for application in the past or I currently use social media for application purpose. (Please select only one answer.)

- I totally agree.  
 I agree.  
 I don't agree.  
 I totally disagree.

10. I have used \_\_\_\_ for the application procedure. (Please select the correct answer.)

- |  |                                   |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Facebook        | <input type="checkbox"/> Xing     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Instagram       | <input type="checkbox"/> LinkedIn |
| <input type="checkbox"/> WhatsApp        | <input type="checkbox"/> Twitter  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> WeChat          | <input type="checkbox"/> others   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Google Hangouts |                                   |

others = (Please name other social media.)

\* 11. My application via social media has been successful (e.g. employment, job interview). (Please select only one answer.)

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> I totally agree. | <input type="checkbox"/> totally disagree.                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I agree.         | <input type="checkbox"/> haven't used social media for application. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I don't agree.   |   |

12. Have you made any negative experiences by using social media for application? (No answer is required.)

\* 13. In my opinion social media should be used more often for application. (Please select only one answer.)

- I totally agree.  
 I agree.  
 I don't agree.  
 I totally disagree.

\* 14. I am \_\_\_\_\_. (Please select only one answer.)

- female  
 male  
 diverse

\* 15. How old are you? (Please select only one answer.)

- |                                   |                                  |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> under 19 | <input type="checkbox"/> 44 - 48 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 19 - 23  | <input type="checkbox"/> 49 - 53 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 24 - 28  | <input type="checkbox"/> 54 - 58 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 29 - 33  | <input type="checkbox"/> 59 - 63 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 34 - 38  | <input type="checkbox"/> 64 - 68 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 39 - 43  |                                  |



\* 16. Please select your highest degree. (Please select only one answer.)

elementary school

bachelor

secondary school

master

associate degree or certificate

Ph.D or advanced professional degree

other (Please name your degree.)

\* 17. In which federal state do you live currently? (Please select only one answer.)

---

**Appendix 1: English-language questionnaire**

