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Local social media statistics insufficient to source top executive talent

PUBLISHED ON 23 SEP 2013 BY ZINHLE MATENTJI



The trend of recruiting employees via social media has emerged over the past few years, changing the talent search landscape. However, this channel should only ever serve as a tool and not replace the valuable human element of the employment process.

MCI Consultants recently announced the results of their 2013 SA HR Recruitment Trend Survey, which found that while 87% of organisations attempt to source and place candidates internally before they approach recruitment agencies. Overall, recruitment agencies gave the best-quality candidates.

Many corporates turn to social

media first before considering headhunters

However, because of the poor success rate, time-consuming search practices and disappointing candidates, these companies eventually approach highly specialised, reputable executive search companies. Their unique skills and research methodology then come into play to identify and find hard-to-come-by talent.

The most glaring problem for corporates are 'bulked up' CVs

These are CVs from individuals who pad their experience and qualifications with an eye to landing a bigger salary. Executive search companies are in a position to run thorough background checks on individuals - social media can fall within this category - giving corporates peace of mind about the candidates that are shortlisted for them.

Global recruitment agencies are increasingly using LinkedIn as a resource to identify specific candidates. However, going up the ranks of the corporate ladder, this platform begins to wear thin in terms of the executives, particularly in the SADC region:

While the US has 77 million members on the business-to-business social network, in South Africa the talent pool is significantly smaller: LinkedIn has 2.3 million members but headhunters are quick to point out that there is a distinct lack of top managerial profiles on network with only about 5 to 10% of candidates being at executive level, depending on their specialisation.

They also say corporates are adamant about the top-level skills they require. The focus is on getting people who are the right fit for the company, not individuals with transferrable skills. For instance, mining companies are not interested in hiring a CFO from the retail sector; they want a CFO who already has experience in the mining industry.

Other pitfalls of LinkedIn include that:

Members do not update their profiles, making it frustrating for headhunters who have identified a candidate and attempt to contact them only to find they have changed industries or are untraceable because they have left the company.



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Ultimately, matching skills and personalities to a company's requirements and culture successfully cannot be done without a face-to-face process. This can often be lengthy and complex but is critical to ensure the right fit.

So regardless of where technology and social media takes us, there are certain industries and situations where the value of the human element will always remain crucial, and executive talent search is one of them.



Zinhle Matentji is the founder and MD of the head-hunting firm Search Specifics.

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