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LINKED INTO A JOB?: THE ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS OF RECRUITING THROUGH LINKEDIN

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LINKED INTO A JOB?: THE ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS OF RECRUITING THROUGH LINKEDIN

ABSTRACT

LinkedIn's goal is to help business professionals meet, make business deals, inquire about jobs, and find careers through connections with people that members already know. This research study will investigate the ethical practices of LinkedIn recruitment. Students' awareness of the methods for effective use, as well as the damaging elements of a LinkedIn profile will be examined. LinkedIn is an effective, helpful tool for recruiting candidates and for job searching; however, the best results will come to those who use LinkedIn professionally and with caution. Our findings indicate that despite its risks, jobseekers and employers can benefit from using LinkedIn.

INTRODUCTION

LinkedIn has come a long way since it began in co-founder Reid Hoffman's living room in 2002, becoming the "world's largest" professional network with more than "175 million members in over 200 countries and territories as of August 2012" (About Us..., 2012). LinkedIn is a social networking site that operates based on Frigyes Karinthy's idea of six degrees of separation. Karinthy claims that every person is approximately six steps/people away from any other person via mutual contacts; however, LinkedIn uses "three" as the magic number of degrees, instead of six. LinkedIn's goal is to help business professionals meet, make business deals, inquire about jobs, and find careers, all through connections that members already know. In addition to information about individuals, the site also has company pages used to seek prospective recruits and provide organizational information.

LinkedIn's popularity with the public increases daily; "professionals are signing up to join LinkedIn at a rate of approximately two new members per second" (About Us..., 2012). LinkedIn's fastest growing demographics are college students and recent college graduates (About Us..., 2012). The economic downturn and struggling job market may be reasons why soon-to-be graduates and recently graduated students turn to LinkedIn for help in the job search process. Since the network has had "more than 2 million companies" start a LinkedIn Company Page, which allows them to recruit and provide information about their company (About Us..., 2012), it provides a ready source of potential employers for these individuals. In addition, as of August 2012, LinkedIn has succeeded in the global marketplace with more than sixty-two percent of LinkedIn members located outside of the United States (About Us..., 2012). Many business professionals are realizing the benefits of LinkedIn as the number of users continues to grow.

Although resumes, as well as preformatted applications, are still commonly used by human resource professionals to prescreen applicants, “nearly 50% of resumes contain factual errors” (Snell, 2007). Therefore, employers are now using online searches as an alternative way to prescreen applicants (Jones, Schuckman & Watson, n.d). Traditional formal background checks allow employers to cross-reference information such as employment history, credit reports, and criminal activity. However, these checks require time and money to perform. Companies would benefit from using online social networks like LinkedIn, Facebook and other social media sites that offer companies a fast, free outlet through which to cross-reference the accuracy of the vast amount of applicant information. Human Resource (HR) professionals can verify an applicant’s age, employment history, expected graduation date, email address, and other relevant information by browsing their profile pages (Connell, 2008). A 2009 survey conducted by Career Builder concludes that because of the ability to cross-reference applicant’s profiles on-line, 45 percent of employers have successfully hired a candidate through social networks, an increase of 23 percent from the previous year (Haefner, 2009).

The challenge for human resource professionals is how to properly evaluate applicants’ information in an ethical and reasonable manner (Waring, & Buchanan, 2010). It becomes critical for managers to set clear parameters when using social media sites as an investigative tool. It is also necessary to train human resource professionals on how to decipher what information is obtained from these sites. By establishing strict policies, professionals may be better equipped to demonstrate compliance with ethical policies.

DEMOGRAPHICS OF LINKEDIN MEMBERS

LinkedIn has managed to capture a diverse user population. The gender categorization of the site is 42.1% female and 57.9% male (LinkedIn Advertising, 2012). The graph below (Figure 1) illustrates the LinkedIn population by gender as of January 2012.

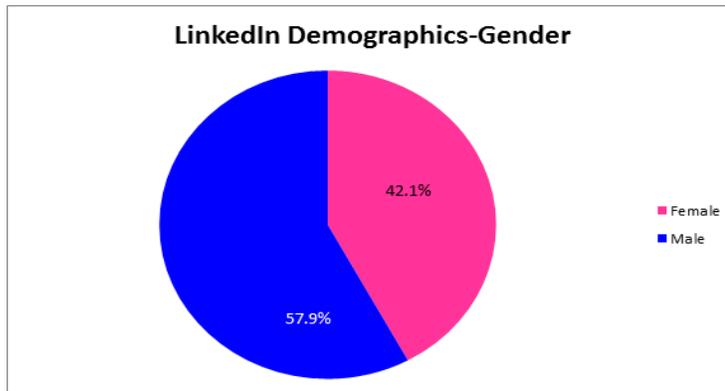


Figure 1. LinkedIn Advertising (2012)

Though the current generation is said to be more technologically advanced compared to previous generations, LinkedIn members are distributed among the four generations in the workplace. Figure 2 below shows the age demographics for LinkedIn with 25.8% of users ages 18-24, 34.3% ages 25-34, 33.4% ages 35-54 and 6.6% ages 54 and older (LinkedIn Advertising, 2012).

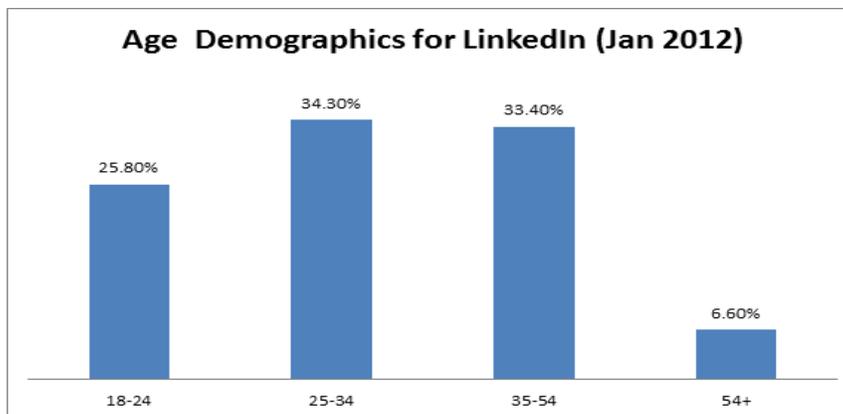


Figure 2. Age Demographics LinkedIn

The fastest growing demographic of LinkedIn members, college students, represent slightly less than half of all LinkedIn users, 47%. Graduate students make up the next largest percentage of members with 27%. The membership of individuals according to educational level, can be seen below in Figure 3.

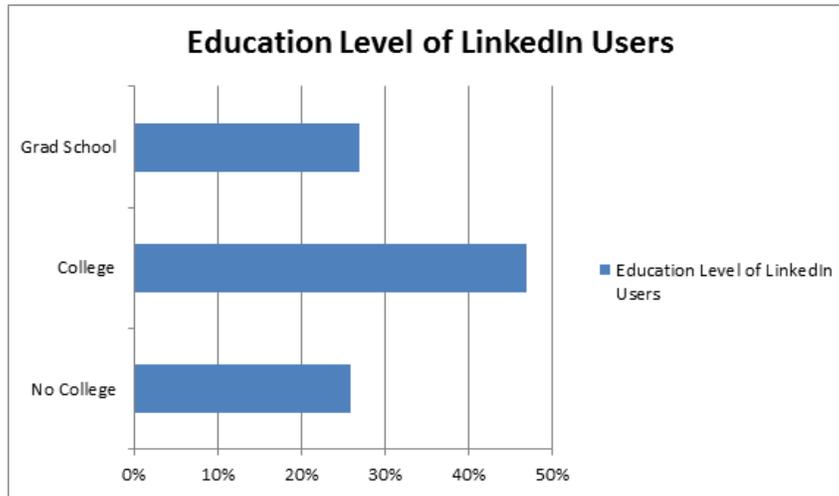


Figure 3. Education Levels LinkedIn Users

LINKEDIN TOOLS TO HELP THE JOB SEARCH

LinkedIn is more than just a job board; one does not use it only to search and apply for jobs. Companies post information about their organization and interact with candidates via discussion groups, polls and more. Job-seekers benefit from this interaction because they have the opportunity to build upon their network as they apply for positions. They can also use the LinkedIn search tool to find current employees of a particular company. The jobseeker can then contact that employee to ask about their personal experiences and gain more insight into the organization.

LinkedIn offers a newly implemented tool directed at their fastest growing demographic of college students. LinkedIn partnered with PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) to create Career Explorer, which allows “college students to chart potential career paths, build a professional network and gather valuable insights into the careers they are interested in pursuing” (Canfield,

2010). This tool is currently available to only 60 colleges across the United States, but in the future may be available to all college students on LinkedIn.

LinkedIn has also recently launched another tool called “LinkedIn Today”, which provides news directed at business professionals. The news provided is the daily news, tailored to each LinkedIn user’s preferences by using one’s current “industry” to suggest articles. The news can be used to initiate interesting conversations with other users and show potential employers that one is aware of current events, has strong written communication skills, and possesses analytical skills. As evidenced, the benefits of using LinkedIn numerous. There are many tools to help individuals achieve their desired purpose, whether it be networking or finding the perfect job.

USING LINKEDIN FOR RECRUITMENT

The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) estimates that there are nearly one million human resource professionals in America and this number is estimated to increase by an additional 200,000 by 2018 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012). These positions categorized within the human resource area include: recruiters, trainers, diversity managers, and global managers. Human resource professionals are becoming more efficient in the use of social media and have developed a greater appreciation of how these tools can impact on their business. Achievers, an online survey provider, conducted a survey from May through June 2011 from which they compiled responses from 527 HR professionals regarding their use of social media and HR practices. The findings suggested that a large number of HR professionals believe that social networking can reduce the cost of recruiting, reduce communication costs, and improve opportunities for career management. “More importantly, HR professionals saw an opportunity

for social networking to enhance opportunities around employee engagement, employee satisfaction and employee retention” (Ruettimann, 2011). One of the leading recruitment platforms, Jobvite, polled over 1,000 HR and recruitment professionals on their recruiting experiences. Their responses indicate that they planned on continuously using social media sites for hiring purposes in the future. The survey, *Social Recruiting Survey 2012*, traces social recruiting trends since 2008. This data confirms that social recruiting has become an essential tool for human resource professionals. For example, nearly all (93%) of recruiters are using LinkedIn to discover talent. Furthermore, 89% of recruiters have hired through LinkedIn (Jobvite social recruiting, 2012). Devin Blanks, of DB Search Group in Minneapolis, MN, a staffing and recruiting firm, explained how LinkedIn has benefitted its recruitment process as follows:

“I have personally been a part of the LinkedIn community since my early career. Currently I have been using it frequently to connect with many hard-to-find professionals whom we may not have had the opportunity to connect with using more conventional means. Most recently, we wanted to fill a Senior Director of HR position. As this position was more complex than usual and called for a very specific skill set, I used two different approaches to using LinkedIn.’

‘First, we posted the position, and second, we viewed potential candidates through second and third party connections via my immediate contacts and requesting an introduction. I got great response, met with a few candidates, and filled the position with a LinkedIn member.’

‘Most of our candidates come from either our own internal database, referrals, cold-calling, and non-online networking associations. However, when I can't find a very specific candidate through those means, I will definitely keep LinkedIn as a serious recruit networking source’” (Heathfield, 2011).

USE OF INACCURATE INFORMATION

LinkedIn and other forms of social media offer no guarantees as to the validity of the information they provide. Michael Jones, Adam Schuckman and Kelly Watson, the authors of *The Ethics of Pre-Employment Screening through the Use of the Internet*, state: “Information found on the internet is not entirely factual, even factual information on the internet can be taken

out of context” (Jones, Schuckman & Watson, n.d). Lack of training of the human resource professional could result in the acquisition and use of faulty information. These mistakes could lead the employer to make a hire based on wrong information.

THE LINKEDIN PROFILE

According to LinkedIn’s company profile, it currently has more than 175 million users, including executives from all 2011 Fortune 500 companies, and an excess of 130,000 recruiters (www.Linkedin.com). Because of its purpose, a LinkedIn profile must be professional. It is not only important to have a profile, but to have content that is a valuable for employers. The profile should contain everything that would be included on a traditional resume: current job, past experiences, and education. Since it is used to develop professional connections, it is valuable to indicate links to people in the industry and those who would be worthwhile to have as contacts. The recommendation section of one’s profile should refer to the work performed in a particular position. Recommendations on LinkedIn serve the same purpose as reference letters and can be provided by co-workers, fellow alumni, and other networking contacts who also have LinkedIn profiles.

The most important advice from web-sites devoted to social media recruitment is to include details that set one apart from the other users. "We are searching through tens of millions of people on LinkedIn, so include the thing that makes you different and unique," says Steven Raz, managing partner of Cornerstone Search Group (Shellenbarger, 2011). The use of LinkedIn allows recruiters to search all over the world for the most qualified job candidate. Because most recruiters will not spend much time looking at a LinkedIn profile, the user’s top priority should be capturing the attention of recruiters. Raz states that it is acceptable to add some personal

information as long as the activity is appropriate. He recommends having a professional picture. This picture should exude maturity and confidence with a pleasant smile and appropriate attire. William Arruda the founder of Reach Personal Branding and author of "Career Distinction" agrees that a picture is necessary and states, "Your headshot is an important element of your online personal brand. It allows people to connect a face with a virtual identity" (Arruda, 2009). Though it is common not to include a picture with a traditional resume due to concerns about possible discrimination, there are several reasons these recruiters provide for doing so online. Arruda feels that a picture makes the user's profile more credible. The reason for this belief is that, because internet users have total anonymity, there is an increased likelihood for information to be misleading. Arruda also claims that because of this anonymity people are more likely to lie, exaggerate the truth and lack authenticity. Therefore, the inclusion of a picture makes the user more likely to be honest because the picture makes the profile more personal (Arruda, 2009). Arruda further suggests using several professional pictures to allow recruiters to know different sides of one's personality and make search results more interesting (Arruda, 2009).

Because it is important for the picture to match the person, the user should update their profile regularly, so that when he/she is interviewed, the image is consistent. Ladders, a premier online job-matching service, conducted a study and found that "recruiters spend more time examining a LinkedIn user's picture than actually reviewing the person's qualifications" (Shontell, 2012). Studies have shown that LinkedIn profiles that include a picture get clicked more often than those that do not, increasing the likelihood that a profile will be viewed by a potential employee (Shontell, 2012). In addition to updating the site, members should check their groups and connections frequently (Job seekers, 2012). These should all reflect the professional side of a member – leave one's social life for Facebook. The use of social networking sites

should not be overdone, however. "... 'don't rely exclusively on LinkedIn and neglect face-to-face networking', recruiters say" (Shellenbarger, 2011). Although "LinkedIn is the go-to site for professional social networking," Raz says, "nothing replaces the old-fashioned calling people up and meeting with them" (Shellenbarger, 2011).

If profiles are not crafted well, they may create more harm than good for a job candidate. Some members, for example, do not filter their profiles appropriately, therefore a potential employer could obtain full access to anyone the applicant knows, including casual acquaintances, families and even other prospective employers (Waring, & Buchanan, 2010). In order to enhance the likelihood that a job-seeker would be recruited via LinkedIn, the user should ask impartial friends or professional contacts to review their profile to look for errors.

A LinkedIn profile will be among the first links to pop up when someone searches a name in a search engine. Pete Leibman, a Career Expert and President of *Idealize Enterprises*, offers advice to first time users, "When someone checks out your profile, they should think 'Wow, this is someone I definitely want to get to know'" (Leibman, 2012). Most employers want a better idea of who the candidate really is; however, Leibman has found that most people do not take the time to design LinkedIn profiles that put their best foot forward. He identifies several mistakes most users make:

- The user's profile is incomplete.
- The user uploads a resume filled with spelling mistakes.
- The user's profile picture is not professional or missing completely.
- The user has no contact information: email or mailing address, or even a disconnected phone number.
- The user fails to make connections or be involved in any groups.

- The user does not utilize all the page options available on LinkedIn such as groups, hobbies, and recommendations.

According to a survey conducted by Career Builder from February 9th to March 2nd, 2012 (Thirty-seven percent of companies, 2012) 37% of employers researched job candidates on social media before making a hiring decision. The survey found that 63% of employers who use this method of candidate evaluation use LinkedIn for the following reasons:

- We want to see if the job seeker presents himself or herself professionally (65%).
- We want to see if the candidate is a good fit for our company culture (51%)
- We want to learn more about his or her qualifications (45%)
- We didn't offer candidates the job if we found provocative or inappropriate photos and information on the profile (49%).
- We have decided not to hire someone because of information about him or her drinking or using drugs (45%)

Based on this information, candidates should avoid posting inappropriate information, images and negatively discussing management on LinkedIn and other social media sites.

LINKEDIN PARTNERSHIPS

Twitter is an online social networking service that enables its users to communicate and stay connected through the exchange of quick, frequent posts. Twitter posts, known as “tweets”, are text-based messages of no more than 140 characters (“What is Twitter,” n.d.). In 2009, Twitter and LinkedIn started a partnership allowing consumers to link their two networking accounts. This allowed “tweets” to be automatically posted to LinkedIn and LinkedIn statuses to be posted to Twitter. The goal of this feature is to allow users to save time updating their social

media accounts. Customers are able to control which tweets and/or statuses are posted at each place; however, the LinkedIn and Twitter partnership was one major change that many LinkedIn users were not aware of, therefore they did not realize that their tweets/statuses were posting to the other site automatically. This is one example of why it is important for users to remain aware of privacy and security settings for each social media service. Despite the apparent lack of awareness by some, there were those who intentionally employed this tool. Unfortunately, problems stemmed from the fact that some users did not know what was appropriate to post online to LinkedIn. Consumers were frustrated to see unprofessional, unrelated tweets on LinkedIn because LinkedIn is meant to be a professional networking site.

When the partnership increased in popularity, articles and discussion forums responded. In one of the articles, “Are facebook and twitter trying to annoy users?” the author, Niall Kitson, discusses his own disregard for the partnership. He stated, “LinkedIn news feeds (sic) tend to be populated primarily by connection notifications and shared links...Scanning through my own news feed the small number of automated tweets I came across proved there is a time and a place for personal disclosure...” (Kitson, 2012). Kitson is just one of numerous users who found the automatic linking frustrating. Because one cannot know who will be looking at a LinkedIn profile or when they will view it, LinkedIn job-seekers should review their links and settings before posting them to either site. Posts on LinkedIn should be appropriate and business related, as recruiters and employers are among the ranks of disgruntled users who do not like unprofessional links, statuses or posts.

In July 2012, Twitter and LinkedIn announced an alteration in their relationship. Though tweets and statuses were previously allowed to be posted automatically from one to the other, this recent change will allow users to post from LinkedIn with the option to send the LinkedIn

status to Twitter and not vice versa. Kitson seems happy with the end of the original reciprocal relationship and says that for LinkedIn, “removing inappropriate or indiscreet conversations helps create a more formal, businesslike tone...” (Kitson, 2012).

Another relationship established by LinkedIn allows jobseekers on certain job search engines to “log in” with their LinkedIn account. This feature permits convenience and time savings for the user and provides the employer with information from the user’s LinkedIn profile. Because this feature feeds information to the employer directly from the user’s LinkedIn profile, it increases the need for users to be aware of their privacy and security settings, regularly access the site to assure their information is accurate and up-to-date, and remain knowledgeable about LinkedIn as a company and as a site. In order to enhance the likelihood of being recruited via LinkedIn, job seekers should refrain from posting unrelated or indecent posts, and images on LinkedIn or any social media profile.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS OF RECRUITING THROUGH LINKEDIN

Human Resource professionals have always performed a variation of background checks as a part of the interviewing process. Legal protection exists for the use of more traditional forms of recruitment such as the resume; however, protection from implicit prejudice that may occur from the use of LinkedIn is still an issue. For instance, certain characteristics about a person including beliefs, social status, political stance and more, may be inferred by one’s profile (Donath, & Boyd, 2004). Though a recruiter or prospective employer may think he/she is looking at an applicant’s profile in an unbiased manner, one is not always conscious of prejudice. This bias presents a challenge when recruiters use social media that reveals characteristics that may not otherwise be known about an applicant.

One of the two major concerns facing employers who use internet searches to screen applicants is the potential for a claim of discrimination. Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 makes it unlawful for any employer to make employment decisions based on color, race, religion, sex, and national origin (Darragh, 2012). It also prohibits employers from retaliating against an applicant or employee who asserts his or her rights under the law. There is a lack of legal guidance and legislation; however, when considering discrimination that may occur in the area of recruitment performed via social media, therefore, employers must be cautious.

According to Lawyer Matthew Effland the author of *Workforce Management*, there has been no decision thus far which states that the use of information available on web sites is a violation of employee rights. The internet is considered public domain, but Effland warns that laws will soon need to address the use of information gathered on a potential employee using social media sites (Effland, 2010). For instance, there may be a valid reason to dismiss someone from the recruitment process based on lack of experience or qualifications, but the discovery of this information through social media may open a legal loophole that would allow an applicant to sue the employer for discrimination. Because of this risk, employers should have a policy describing the purpose of internet searches and a statement that it does not base its hiring decision on demographic data that would not appear on a traditional resume or application form. In order to legally protect themselves, companies should document all source material used in making employment decisions and also document all reasoning processes as to why applicants were rejected.

The other ethical concern is invasion of privacy. Anyone who chooses to create a LinkedIn profile must be aware that this information can and will be looked at by HR professionals, recruiters and any other users. Because laws in the area of social media privacy are

not fully established, employees should take defensive measures when using these sites. One such measure is to utilize privacy settings. Although in a 2009 study conducted by Deloitte, 53% of employees considered it none of the company's business what was on their sites, their current or potential employers could gather information from candidates' profiles that could hurt their chances of being recruited or employed (Davison, Maraist & Bing, 2011). According to The Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), social media sites, especially LinkedIn, are accessed by employers to perform pre-employment screening checks. These employers do look extensively at prospective candidates' profiles without them having any knowledge of these occurrences. It is a fast, cheap, informal way to gather complete and thorough information on a prospective employee, prior to an offer of employment.

LinkedIn, however, claims it is not responsible for content entered into their system. In fact, users must sign a legally binding agreement in order to use the site. When the applicant registers on LinkedIn, he/she agrees to the Terms of Service document that states, "By providing information to us, you represent and warrant that you are entitled to submit the information and that the information is accurate, not confidential, and not in violation of any contractual restrictions or other third party rights. It is your responsibility to keep your LinkedIn profile information accurate and updated" (LinkedIn User Agreement, 2011). "Being part of LinkedIn means sharing information about yourself with other professionals, communicating with them, as well as working privately on your own. By default, your account is set up to share the information that we have found the vast majority of our Users are interested in sharing. But the amount and type of information you decide to share, and with whom you share it, is up to you" (LinkedIn Privacy Policy, 2011). Once a user agrees to the conditions set forth by LinkedIn, the information becomes public. The ethical question regarding privacy concerns is whether

employers should conduct a search on employees and non-employees with the intent of gaining information.

Human resource management practices and policies have not kept pace with the rapid use and abuse of social networking websites used for job searches, background checks and employee surveillance. With the high unemployment rates, employers are faced with a significant number of job applications for open positions. Because there are such a large number of applications for any given position, many employers cannot find the time to conduct lengthy searches of every candidate. Because of the time constraints, many employers are turning to internet searches to find out as much about potential employees as possible in a timely manner.

There is great disparity in the ways these sites are used from company to company. For example, some simply use Google by typing an applicant's name into their search engine and examining the results, while other employers fully subscribe to online social networks in order to have access to delve deeper into an applicant's life (Jones, Schuckman & Watson, n.d). The Society of Human Resource Management (SHRM) has been monitoring the intensifying debate on the national, state, legislative and regulatory levels regarding efforts to restrict an employer's ability in the employment process. A recent survey conducted by Jobvite Source titled "Social Recruiting 2012" included responses from 1,000 human resource and recruiting professionals. Respondents answered questions by using an online survey tool. The purpose of the survey was to determine how social media sites such as LinkedIn have changed the way employers find and hire talented applicants. The survey found that:

"The increase in social media use for recruiting is a direct result of the number of quality candidates seen from social channels. As social networks become commonplace in recruiting, the need for stricter laws regarding the use of information obtained through the internet on these candidates needs to make sure both employer and employee are protected" (Jobvite social recruiting survey results, 2012).

The survey, *Social Recruiting Survey 2012*, suggests that social recruiting is essential in universal hiring strategies, and in particular, there is growing interest in reviewing candidate's profiles during the hiring process. Of those surveyed, 92% use or plan to use social media for recruiting (Jobvite social recruiting results, 2012). Participants in this survey also stated that LinkedIn was their most used social media site (Jobvite social recruiting results, 2012). The survey revealed that even if a candidate applied through traditional means, either the recruiter or the human resource professional still performed an internet check on the candidate. More than half the participants said it was a standard practice.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Because the fastest growing demographic of LinkedIn users is college students, this study focused on that population. Our questions addressed major areas of LinkedIn used by employers for recruiting. Specifically, this study asked the following research questions:

Research Question 1 – How do college students use LinkedIn?

Research Question 2 – Do college students view the use of LinkedIn by recruiters as ethical?

Research Question 3 – What is the nature of contact that college students receive through employers on LinkedIn?

METHODOLOGY

This study used a survey distributed via email and paper. It was approved by the Human Subjects Review Board of the organization. Student respondents were solicited through snowball sampling. Human Resource professionals were solicited through a member of the Society for Human Resource Managers.

RESULTS

There were 145 undergraduate student respondents, with a mean age of 21. Half were women and half men. There were an insufficient number of responses from Human Resource Professionals; therefore, no analyses were done for that data.

To answer Research Question 1, we asked students to select from a list of common uses of LinkedIn as presented in the literature. They could choose multiple items. According to our survey results, 56 percent of these students have a LinkedIn profile, 44 percent do not. Of 145 respondents, 103 (71%) answered that the number one reason they use LinkedIn is to search for job openings or to look for information on careers. The next highest usage category, totaling 99 (68%) respondents, answered that they use LinkedIn for networking opportunities. Lastly, only 31 (21%) respondents use LinkedIn to actively seek a job or career opportunities. The frequencies for each use are shown below in figure 4.

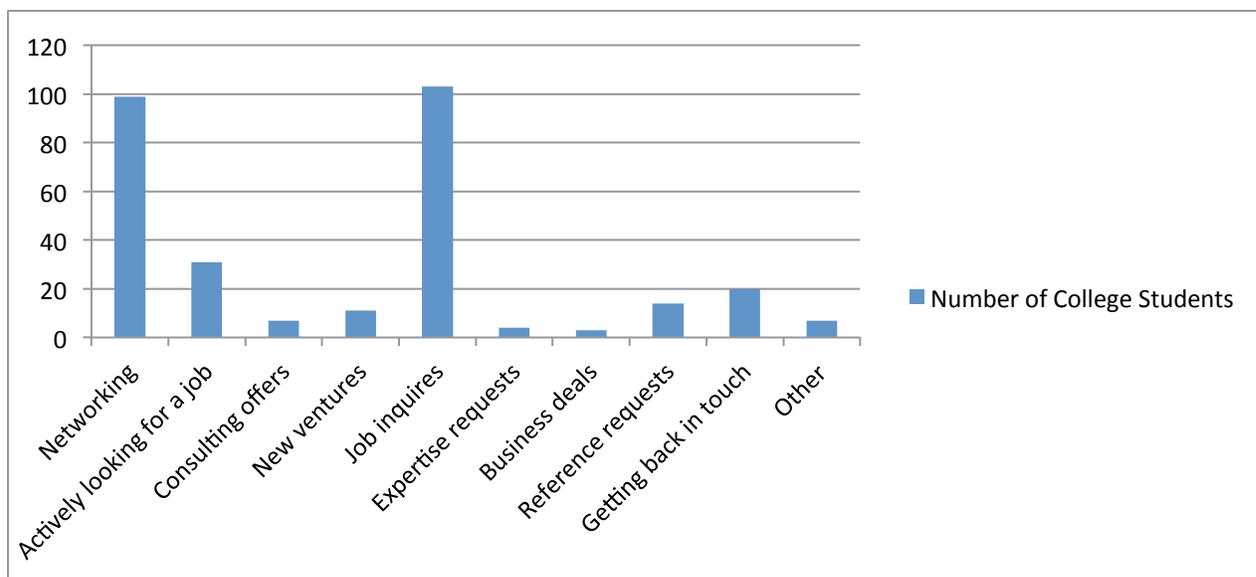


Figure 4. Frequencies for Uses of LinkedIn

Our second Research Question asked whether students view the use of LinkedIn by recruiters as ethical. The data indicated that the majority of college students, 75.2%, believe

LinkedIn and the LinkedIn recruitment process to be ethical, whereas 17% were unsure and 3.7% view it as unethical. The reasons given by students for their answers varied. Examples of responses are:

- The professional networking site is exposing no extra information than does the traditional resume and that “it does not reveal as much as Facebook.”
- LinkedIn is “meant to be a professional profile, not a social site”
- You agree to the terms and conditions, [therefore] you are agreeing to post true things [on LinkedIn].
- Members choose to have a LinkedIn profile and thus, give consent that the information provided on a profile is true and for public use.
- Information on someone’s profile could be used against them;
- People lie about information found on their profile.

Our final Research Question sought to determine the nature of the contact that students have with employers on LinkedIn. The findings show that just over 51 percent have made connections with prospective employers. The next highest contact type was referring a connection; this means that 21% of college students in this survey referred a connection to a third party or were referred by a connection to a third party. Lastly, approximately 15% of survey respondents sent connection requests to employers. The breakdown of the nature of interactions between employers and students is shown below in Figure 5.

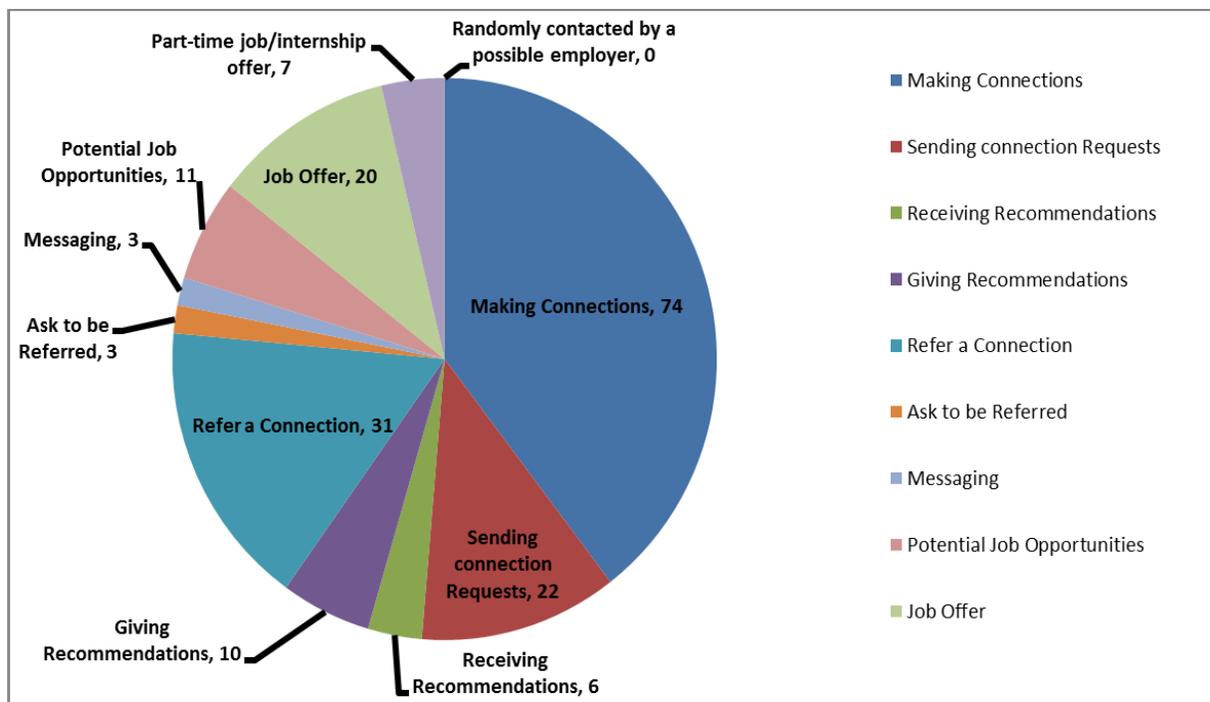


Figure 5. Frequencies for Levels of Contact with LinkedIn

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As our survey results indicate, college students use LinkedIn for many different reasons. Based on the data, students are not properly employing all the resources available on LinkedIn. For instance, only 21 percent of college students are actively looking for a job, and even less are requesting references (12%), getting back in touch (14%), and asking for expertise requests (3%). In order to be more successful in their job search, college students, especially those looking for a job, should maximize on these opportunities. They should also make use of those lesser employed features such as seeking expertise, actively looking for a job, and reference requests. Each of these actions promotes further network development, one of the strengths that LinkedIn has to offer.

As one can see, college students have had varying types of interaction with employers who are on LinkedIn. There is a large discrepancy between the frequencies of these interactions

as reported by recruiters and those reported by students. It would appear from this result that employers using LinkedIn to screen students are finding negative information; therefore, the recruiter doesn't follow up with the student, resulting in a lower number of contacts from the student's side. We can infer from this data that college students will need to be more proactive in initiating contact with potential employers through LinkedIn. We also recommend that college students take caution in what they post on LinkedIn; so that a recruiter does not abandon their inquiry due to inappropriate content.

In summary, many college students use LinkedIn, but they do not utilize the many beneficial features that LinkedIn offers to help them succeed. The trend of recruiting via social media sites is here to stay, thus students must learn how to properly utilize all the resources at their disposal. Jobseekers are unlikely to receive contact from the employer first; thus students should help themselves by initiating a relationship with the employer via LinkedIn. Also, although we found references to ethical considerations in the use of social media sites for recruitment, students did not exhibit these concerns. It may be helpful for employers to know that the majority of college students view LinkedIn recruitment as ethical as it may reinforce the continuing use of these resources. This is not to say that a company should not protect themselves or remain aware of the potential that exists for discrimination when reviewing candidates; however, our findings support the recommendation that college students and employers can ultimately benefit from using LinkedIn.

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