

CORPORATE WEBSITE AS A TOOL FOR ATTRACTING AND RECRUITING MILLENNIAL TALENT

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Abstract:

In recent years, the use of corporate websites to recruit potential job applicants has increased steadily. It is also evident that company websites are considered as one of the major tools for attracting and selecting Millennial generation. Despite this trend, the empirical research on the use of corporate websites for recruitment processes is still limited. The paper reports the findings from the survey focused on evaluation of 116 company websites with the aim to better understand how these companies use their own web space for recruiting and selection of potential job applicants, specifically talented Millennials. 18 items broken down into three sections were used for evaluation of corporate websites. On the one hand, the findings of the study show that most companies provide explicit organisational related information and available information regarding job characteristics. On the other hand, the findings highlight that most companies do not communicate elements regarding their culture and do not provide content specifically targeting college or university candidates. Moreover, only a minority of companies in this survey uses social media as a part of their recruitment efforts. The practical implications of the survey results are discussed. This survey may provide guidance for the future research and practice in the area of company recruitment website design.

Key words:

Recruiting, attracting, corporate websites, job seeker, Millennial talent

JEL Classification: M12, M15, L62

1 Introduction

In the current global, dynamic and uncertain business environment the talent has become one of the key factors of organisational success. It has become also obvious that companies face the war for talents and human resource professionals are under increasing pressure to attract, develop and retain talents to meet current and future organisational needs. Thus, finding and retaining talented employees have become more critical for most of the companies worldwide.

Today, an increasing role in retaining talent has played technology. Technology advancement has caused shifts in the practice of talent management acquisition process and will continue to do so. The current trends point that the Internet has emerged as a growing and high-potential recruitment medium for recruiting and selecting employees (Cober et al., 2004b). The Internet provides companies and human resources professionals with a tool to convey a large amount of information about the company to job seeker. Among the many e-recruiting methods company websites are considered one of the best tool for recruiting potential applicants and an important means by which job-seeker initially gather information about future employers (Williamson et al., 2010b). We argue, that the starting point to attract new talent, specifically talented Millennials should be its own corporate website and the attached career site.

The growing significance of corporate websites in the field of talent recruitment is proved by many surveys (Llopis, Gonzales and Gasco, 2010; Mauer and Cook, 2011; CIPD, 2015). To compare with other e-recruiting methods and forms such as job boards, specialized job sites, etc. organisational recruitment

websites are less costly and can exchange more information about both employee and the employer. They allow companies not only to offer prospective applicants job descriptions and other information about the company but they also allow to integrate features such as images, sound, video and animations (Cober et al. 2004b; Braddy, Meade and Kroustalis, 2006). Generally, the company websites offer a more dynamic a rich platform, more instant and personal communication and more informational design options for employee recruitment to compare with other e-recruiting methods. In the end they give companies greater opportunity to provide content that matters to job seekers (Cober, Brown and Levy, 2004a).

Despite the growing popularity of the company recruitment websites the empirical research on this topic is relatively still limited. Thus, the present study aims to contribute to the research on this area. Specifically, the study explores the extent to which companies use their own websites for attracting and recruiting potential employees, specifically Millennial talents.

The structure of the paper is as follows. First, a brief literature review about the surveyed subject is provided. Then, the scope and methodology of the study is explained. Next, the results are presented and discussed. The paper concludes with a summary and discussion of main findings and the study's limitations.

2 Literature review

2.1 Company recruitment websites and the content

Surveys show that companies more and more have utilized websites that are primarily dedicated to communicating recruitment information to job seekers (Cober et al. 2004b). It is also evident that corporate websites play a central role in terms of providing a variety of information about a company to job seeker which can be communicated in a different ways such as text, images, interactive links etc. (Allen et al., 2012).

The effective company communication via corporate website is regarded as a crucial determinant of a company's ability to successfully attract qualified applicants (Cappelli, 2001, Williamson, Lepak, and King, 2003a). The importance of recruitment communication is specifically evident in the early stages of the recruitment process, when applicants are involved in a series of decisions about their future employer. From the potential applicant point of view the early stages of recruitment can be viewed as a form of information search whereby an applicant gathers information to build a mental representation of what it would be like to work in a given company (Allen et al., 2012).

An explanatory framework for why a corporate website and career websites affect an applicant's perception of the organisation provides signalling theory (Spence, 1974). According to this theory, when job seekers do not have complete and accurate information about the organisation, or is uncertain about the vacant position, they typically draw inferences from observable attributes, using available information as signals about the organisation (Zamparini, Calegari and Lurati, 2010). Thus, organisation needs to take care about information provided on their corporate websites.

The vital factors of the first reaction and subsequent attitudes of applicants, both towards organisation and vacant position are the content and the appearance of a corporate websites and communication features (Cober et al., 2004b). According to these authors the recruitment website effectiveness is influenced by the design of the websites and by the manner in which the information is displayed. Also evidence from recruitment literature suggest that website content such as organisational and job-related information and website stylistic features can enhance the job seekers fit perception and attraction to the organisation (Chen, Ch-Ch, Lin and Chen, Ch-M, 2012). Similarly, Roberson, Collins and Oreg (2005) suggest that the individual's application intention is affected by the content of recruitment messages.

According to Chen, Ch-Ch, Lin and Chen and Ch-M (2012) the most important design factor is the amount and type of information provided. Thus, applicants' perception of the company and his intention to apply for vacancy is influenced by the quantity and quality of information. Findings of studies indicate a positive relationship between the amount of content in recruitment materials and attraction to an

employer. In addition to the quantity of content (information) an important role in determining job seeker interest in employment pursuing plays the type of content. Several other studies also showed that providing explicit or detailed recruitment information effects more applicants' intentions to seek employment with company to compare with general or vague information (Roberson, Collins and Oreg, 2005).

Furthermore, Allen et al. (2012) argue that clear and comprehensive information about job opportunities and the company are more important than design characteristics or detailed information about other company characteristics. According to many authors (Roberson, Collins and Oreg, 2005; Cober, Brown and Levy, 2004a) content related to organisational goals, mission statements, culture and values, training and career development, benefits and employment opportunity have received a great attention in job-seeker evaluations of an employment opportunity. Thus, corporate and career websites should include and communicate the right amount of real, authentic and relevant information.

2.2 Company recruitment websites and the target recruitment communication

The ability to target and attract different applicant groups explicitly is one of the important benefits of corporate websites. There are some research studies suggesting that targeted messages have a positive effect on applicant perceptions of the company and job vacancy (Cober, Brown and Levy, 2004a). Thus, clearly defined target job applicants and knowing their behaviour, motivation and job product knowledge should be a useful starting point for the company to design websites. In addition, different target groups/generations have different expectations and may look for different things when considering an employer. These are important predictors of applicants interesting in a job. (Eger, Egerová and Mičík, 2015). For this reason, company websites need to provide relevant message content, vividness, and interactivity required to effect different targeted job applicants (Mauer, Liu, 2007).

As the Millennials (born between 1980 and 2000) enter the workforce and their role in the workplace has increased significantly, more and more organisations concerned about attracting this generation group. It is assumed that by 2020, Millennials will form 50 % of the global workforce (PwC, 2011). It is evident that Millennials will be a powerful generation of workers and that to attract the talented Millennials will be critical for the future success of the companies.

There is widespread agreement that this generation have their own set of values, attitudes and different expectations to work and workplace compared to the previous generations. According to many surveys the most important factors to this generation are opportunities for development and career progression, strong organisational culture and good reputation (PwC, 2011; Eger, Egerová a Mičík, 2015). Furthermore, they prefer communicate electronically than face-to-face, want to work for companies that have vision, seek meaningful work, personal fulfilment and work-life balance (Park and Cursoy, 2012). The studies also show that Millennials rely strongly on online resources and build personal relationships through social media. Therefore, if companies want to attract Millennials and specifically Millennial talent they must consider their specific characteristics, wants and needs when creating corporate websites and when communicate with this generation.

3 Methodology

The present study focused on evaluation of company websites with the aim to better understand how companies use their own websites to retain potential employees specifically Millennial talents. More specifically, the study provides the answers to the following research questions:

1. To what extend companies provide organisational related information to the job seeker on their websites?
2. To what extend companies provide job related information to the job seeker on their websites?
3. How companies communicate with potential applicants with an emphasis on social media communication?

3.1 Research method and tool

As a research method and instrument for data gathering we used „unobtrusive measures“. Unobtrusive measures are data collection techniques that involve the use of non-reactive resources, so that information is obtained without the subject's prior knowledge. (Miller, Brewer, 2003). According to Gray (2009) unobtrusive measures can offer flexible, creative and imaginative way of collecting data. The data were analysed and accessed using heuristic analysis which are used in internet marketing, in our survey specifically focused on corporate websites and career websites.

Drawing from literature and surveys on corporate websites with the focus on online recruitment communication and talent management (Williamson, Lepak and King, 2003a; Llopis, Gonzales and Gasco, 2010; PwC, 2011; Jobvite, 2013) 18 items broken down into three sections were used for evaluation of the corporate websites. Section one was devoted to general organisational information from corporate websites and included the following six items information about organisation, mission and goals, product portfolio, organisational culture (values), corporate social responsibility and currency of web sites. Section two assessed the websites with the focus on job offer including the following seven items link to career websites, job description, job requirement, possible benefits associated with a given job opportunity, opportunities for college/university candidates, opportunities for training and personal development and link to the contact person or human resource department. Section three was focused on communication and interaction and included five following items ability to provide rapid answer and immediate feedback, possibility to create a personal profile, links to social and professional media, organisational profile on Facebook and LinkedIn and currency of social network on social media.

All items were rated on a dichotomous yes-no basis by two independent experts. Key websites were in accordance with early mentioned methodology archived. Once assessment was completed, the experts met to compare findings and reconcile discrepancies.

The survey was carried out in June 2015 followed by outputs control in July 2015.

3.2 Sample

We conducted a study of the websites of the 116 companies. Four companies did not have employment websites and were excluded from survey. Companies for this study were selected randomly. They represent the companies that are members of Automotive Industry Association (AIA). The AIA is an industrial association of the Czech manufacturers of vehicles, suppliers and other companies and institutions involved in the Czech automotive industry. The aim of this Association is to develop the automotive industry as a specific manufacturing sector. We chose this companies because of their importance in the Czech economy. The automotive industry belongs to the most important sectors in the Czech Republic (CR) and represents one of the traditional drivers of the Czech national economy. Enterprises associated in the AIA participated by 21,3% on total industrial output of the CR and by 20,1% on total export in 2014. The total number of employees within AIA members in 2014 was 112 877 employees (AutoSAP, 2015). The important reason for choosing given companies were also declared problems with retaining talented employees within this industry.

4 Results and discussion

In this part that follows we report and discuss findings for the given sections and items.

4.1 Section 1 – Essential company attributes

In this section we evaluated six items. The results are presented in Table 1. To evaluate item Company general information (e.g. revenues, number of employees, locations etc.) the more emphasis was played on the comprehensiveness and “richness” of information provided on websites such as about

us, about company etc. For evaluation the item Vision, mission, goals were used both websites provided explicitly information about organizational vision, mission and goals and also company documents referred to these issues if they were expressed in visible form. To asses the item Production portfolio the emphasis was put mainly on the presence of actual information about company's production. Referring to the items Organisational culture and corporate social responsibility we assessed the amount of information related to the organisational culture and corporate social responsibility. Concerning the item Currency of websites we evaluated whether the information, sources and links are current and working.

Tab. 1 Section 1

Outputs of evaluation of websites related to essential organisational attributes							
Items	Company general information	Vision, mission, goals	Company's production portfolio	Corporate culture. (values)	Corporate social responsibility	Currency of websites	N - total number of companies
Frequency	111	65	112	54	61	98	112
%	99.1	58	100	48.2	54.5	87.5	100

Source: Own

As can be seen in Table 1 all surveyed companies provided information about production portfolio on their websites. The findings nevertheless show that the quality of these information varied quite widely among the companies. Referring to the item Company general information all companies except one included essential information about the company on their websites. In terms of website currency, a significant majority of the companies (87.5 %) had updated websites and the content including links was current and working. Findings show that 54.5 % of the companies displayed information explicitly referring interest in implementing corporate social responsibility activities and 58 % of them provided information related to their vision, mission and goals on their websites. A lower percentage of companies provided job seekers with information concerning corporate culture (48.2 %). This finding we consider as negative especially to the fact that individuals seek for companies with corporate cultures that matches their own beliefs, attitudes and values (De Goede, Van Vianen and Klehe, 2011). Thus, the more information about corporate culture is available the more attractive the company is for job-seeker. This implies that companies need to pay close attention to communicate their culture relevant information.

4.2 Section 2 – Job related attributes

In this section we assessed seven items. The results are presented in Table 2. The item Link to career site was rated yes if there was link to career site and the career site exists. Referring to the items Job description and Job requirement we evaluate the presence of essential information regarding these areas. To asses the item Benefits the emphasis was put mainly on the content of information. It was difficult to assess this item due to information were being fragmented in different sections and parts of corporate websites. To asses the items Opportunities for college/university candidates (e.g. offer internships, mentorships programmes etc.) and Opportunities for training and development the emphasis was put mainly on the presence of actual and available information. Similarly to the previous item, there were occurred difficulties to assess these items due the fragmentation of related information on corporate websites. The item Link to contact person career site was rated yes if the company websites contained visible link to the contact person or human resource department.

Tab. 2 Section 2

Outputs of evaluation of websites related to job related attributes								
Items	Link to career website/ Existence of career website	Job description	Job requirements	Benefits associated with given position	Opportunities for colleague /university candidates	Training and development Opportunities	Contact person /HR	N - total number of companies
Frequency	88	82	73	63	38	59	72	112
%	78.6	73.2	65.2	56.3	33.9	52.7	64.3	100

Source: own

As can be seen from the Table 2 most employers (78.6 %) provided prospective candidates link to career website and had career websites. More than 73 % companies included explicit job description information on their websites. Results show that 65.2 % of the employers 'employment websites included information about job requirements and 64,3 % about contact person. However, only 56,4 % of companies communicated possible benefits associated with a given job opportunity and 52,7 % of companies included information about training and development opportunities on their websites. These findings prove that these two areas are not pursued very intensively by organisations although the past survey indicated that including information regarding benefits and development opportunities may improve applicant perceptions of company attractiveness and thus influenced his/her decisions (Roberson, Collins and Oreg 2005). Only a minority of the companies (33,9 %) provided section targeting college or university candidates, although they represent the largest pool of talent for many companies. Furthermore, some surveys found that information regarding graduate opportunities is very important criterion for deciding generation of Millennials (ČeSU¹ & ASA², 2015; Jobvite, 2013; PwC, 2011).

4.3 Section 3 – Communication and interaction

This section was focused on communication and interaction companies with potential applicants. The results are presented in Table 3. The items in this section were selected mostly with the emphasises on specific characteristics and expectations of Millennial generation. In this section we evaluated five items.

Referring to the item Ability to provide rapid response and immediate feedback we evaluated the access to rapid communication (evaluation of this item can be subjective). The item Opportunity to create candidates profile or possibility to send information from applicants was rated positively if the company allowed job seeker to complete it's profile or upload and copy applicants Curriculum Vitae (CV) through their websites. To asses item Links to social media sites the emphasis was put mainly on connection corporate website to social or professional network. We focused primary on most frequently used social networks in the Czech Republic such as Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube, Google+ and also Twitter that is frequently used by foreign companies. Referring to the item Organisational profile we primary followed whether the company had it's profile on Facebook and LinkedIn. The item Currency of social media sites were assessed with the regard to Facebook that is the most frequently used social media network in the Czech Republic.

¹ ČeSU is Czech student union,

² ASA is Association of students and graduates

Tab. 3 Section 3

Outputs of evaluation of websites related to Communication and interaction						
Items	Rapid response and immediate feedback	Opportunity to create candidates profile/ to send CV	Links to social media sites	Organisational profile on Facebook/LinkedIn	Currency of social media sites/Facebook	N – total number of companies
Frequency	52	45	34	47/36	37	112
%	46.4	40.1	30.3	41.9/32.1	78.7	100

Source: own

Table 3 shows that 46.4 % of companies provided rapid feedback allowed potential candidate to contact company if he/she had question. Results also show that less than fifty percent of companies allowed job-seeker to create profile or upload and copy Curriculum Vitae (CV) via company websites. Only 30.3 % of companies were connected to some of social or professional network. The findings also indicate that corporate websites are usually linked to Facebook. With regard to recruitment of talents is also interesting links to professional network LinkedIn. Most companies (78.7 %) that used Facebook as part of their recruitment efforts had updated sites on this network. Overall, findings from this section show that companies for communication with potential talents use modern technology and especially social networks in the low rate.

5 Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to provide an insight about how companies use their own websites to engage potential employees with the primary focus on Millennial talent. Specifically, based on prior recruitment research and studies on online recruitment the present study explore the extent to which companies provide organisational related content, job related content and how companies communicate with potential applicants with an emphasis on social media communication.

First, the findings suggest that most companies provide explicit organisational related information. In particular, significant majority of the companies provide information about the company and its production portfolio on their website and has up-to date websites. The majority of the companies communicate information referring their mission, vision and goals and CSR activities. Thus, potential candidates get basic and timely information necessary for their orientation and subsequent decisions. These findings are in line with the results of earlier surveys e.g. Cober, Brown and Levy, 2004a. However, the past research (De Goede, Van Vianen and Klehe, 2011) has shown the importance of culture relevant information that allowed potential applicants to assess their fit with companies' culture more than half of surveyed companies do not communicate their culture information.

Second, the survey demonstrate that most companies provide available information regarding job characteristics. In particular, the significant majority of surveyed companies has a link to the career pages, has career website, describe the job opportunity including requirements for vacant position and provide available contact link. Slightly more than half of companies provide job seeker with information concerning benefits and training and development opportunities. Although the companies can increase success in recruiting Millennial talents by forming relationships with potential candidates before they are on the job market only a minority of the companies provide section targeting college or university candidates.

Third, with regard to communication and interaction only less than fifty percent of companies provide interactive communication with applicants. Furthermore, findings indicate that only a minority of companies uses social media as a part of their recruitment efforts despite the previous studies (e.g. Laroche et al, 2012; JOBVITE, 2013) have demonstrated the importance of social media as recruitment and communication tool.

Therefore the shift towards to use of the more social media for recruitment is the important challenge for companies and the way how to increase success of retaining Millennial talents.

We argue that corporate websites will continue to have an increasing effect on employee recruitment in the coming years especially Millennial talents. Thus, this study represents important contributions to the growing knowledge about corporate online recruiting practices in the context of Czech companies. Moreover, findings identified in this survey may provide guidance both for future research and practice in the area of company recruitment website design.

6 Limitation of the study

This study has several limitations that call for further research. First, the study focuses in the first place on the content attributes, but less attention was paid to form and function attributes of corporate websites. Thus, more research on these attributes is needed. Second, the current study has taken in consideration the companies from only one industry, other target groups could be included in future research for comparison and better understanding online recruiting practices in other context. Third, while the findings of this study provide some evidence of using social media in their recruitment efforts we do not examine what factors influence organisations' ability to use social media.

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