Attracting Job-Seekers Through Online Job Advertisements: Application of RJPs, Blogs and Video Podcasts

Pratyush Banerjee, Department of HRM & Soft Skills, IBS Hyderabad, IFHE University, Hyderabad, India

ABSTRACT

Online recruitment research has time and again addressed the issue of lack of credibility of online job advertising media compared to traditional media such as newspapers and the issue of poor quality web design in E-recruitment. In this paper, the issues of lack of credibility and quality of E-recruitment channels have been addressed through the introduction of a) realistic job previews (RJP), b) company independent channels for advertising jobs online (for example Blogs), and c) podcasts for corporate previews in online job website design. Final year post-graduate students about to enter job market (N=457) took part in a 2x2x2 factorial experiment. The findings give distinct indications of the advantage of use of the above mentioned web design features on applicant perception of quality, credibility, and their subsequent development of organizational attractiveness and intention to apply for a job in the firm. Recommendations for practitioners have been highlighted through illustrated examples.

KEYWORDS

E-recruitment, Media Credibility, Online Job Seekers, RJP, Web 2.0

INTRODUCTION

The rise of the internet has revolutionized the traditional human resource (HR) function of recruitment of employees. Electronic recruitment (henceforth, E-recruitment), the application of internet technologies in recruitment related activities, has developed into a cost and time efficient proposition for HR departments for searching and hiring potential talent (Maurer & Liu, 2007; Tyagi, 2012). There are different platforms of E-recruitment– the company career website, classified advertisements in online newspaper, through third party E-recruitment service providers/ job boards/ E-recruitment portals (henceforth referred to as E-recruitment portals) and henceforth (Borstorff, Marker & Bennett, 2005).

E-recruitment is rapidly developing into a cost-effective proposition for HR managers but it is not without its drawbacks. One of the major concerns of E-recruitment is how to enhance the credibility of online job advertisements since traditional advertising media are considered more credible than electronic media (Cable, Aiman-Smith, Mulvey & Edwards, 2000; Young & Foot, 2005). Recruiters have sometimes tried to enhance credibility of their recruitment message by providing employee testimonials in job advertisements to give the applicants an insider view as to what it feels like to work.
in that organization (Dineen, Ash & Noe, 2002; Cable et al., 2000). But job seekers may consider such information as attempt to glorify corporate image by the firms (Young & Foot, 2005).

To address such misinterpretation, providing job-seekers with realistic job previews (RJPs) through newspaper advertisements can lead to enhanced trust and commitment among employees. Sadly, studies focusing on RJP has been restricted mainly to traditional recruitment channels (newspapers, employment bulletin etc.), and so far neglected in E-recruitment research (Breaugh & Starke, 2000; Strohmeyer, 2007).

It is still not known whether RJPs should be presented through company owned websites such as corporate career portals or should they be posted in neutral cyber platforms? In recent years, some revolutionary technical advances have been made in Web 2.0 technology (Russell, 2008). Such technologies comprise of blogs, internet chat rooms and social networking sites which have steadily gained popularity in recent years. In E-recruitment’s context, this technology may have significant influence in increasing credibility of the information provided due to the interactive unbiased nature of the medium of communication. However, there is a dearth of research studies in this domain to conclusively strengthen such claim.

Studies have also shown that poor design of E-recruitment websites can have negative impression on job seeker’s attitude towards the portals and may lead to their reluctance to apply for the jobs posted in such websites (Maurer & Liu, 2007). There is strong empirical evidence about the impact of website design features such as color, layout, and page loading time and customized search options on perceptions about quality of the website (Kuhn & Skuterud, 2000). It has also been empirically tested in advertisement research that information delivered in audio-visual mode is considered to be more engaging and enriching than that delivered in text mode (Walker, Field, Giles, Armenakis & Bernerth, 2009). In context of E-recruitment, the application of audio-visual mode of information delivery has not received any serious attention so far. The purpose of this study is to test these claims empirically.

APPLICATION OF RJPS TO ENHANCE CREDIBILITY OF ONLINE JOB ADVERTISEMENTS

One way of enhancing credibility of E-recruitment message may be through use of realistic job previews. Popovich and Wanous (1982) define a realistic job preview (RJP) as a ‘persuasive communication that is designed to change attitudes about the job and the organization’. RJPs have developed based on the assumptions of the realistic information hypothesis (Meglino, Ravlin & Denisi, 1997; Breaugh & Starke, 2000), which states that people recruited through certain sources (e.g. employee referrals) are likely to possess more accurate information about the job and the organization compared to other sources of job information (for e.g. campus placement officers, newspaper ads etc).

However, use of testimonials in online recruitment practices has been limited to using only positive feedback about the workplace from the employees (Breaugh & Starke, 2000; Van Hoye & Lievens, 2007). In fact, HR practitioners have hardly utilized the potential of RJPs while posting jobs through E-recruitment channels. If positive as well as negative information about the job is shared with the job seekers, it may induce a sense of authenticity and credibility about the company and the job in the minds of job seekers (Braugh & Starke, 2000). It has been found in information and communication research that people consider any information as trustworthy if they receive information which appears to be unexpected / spontaneous and does not seem to be fabricated to impress the receiver (Popovich & Wanous, 1982; Meglino et al., 1997). In this regard, RJPs definitely provide unexpected information about a job which do not exclusively glorify the employer. It can be deduced from past studies that the source of the message and the message content both are crucial elements of persuasive communication to be effective. Hence it is essential that the persuasive message comes from a credible source and with a believable content.

Another critical property of an RJP is that it contains important information about the job and the organization being considered by the applicant from a neutral point of view (Fisher, Ilgen & Hoyer,
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