

ANALYSIS OF THE INFLUENCE OF INTERNET SOCIAL NETWORKS ON EMPLOYEE SELECTION PROCESS IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

Tomáš Martínek
*** Petr Hanzlík**

Czech University of Life Sciences Prague
Faculty of Economics and Management
Department of Information Engineering
Kamýcká 961/129, 165 00, Praha 6 - Suchbát, Czech Republic
martinek@pef.czu.cz

* Czech University of Life Sciences Prague
Faculty of Economics and Management
Department of Information Engineering
Kamýcká 961/129, 165 00, Praha 6 - Suchbát, Czech Republic
hanzlikp@pef.czu.cz

Abstract

The increasing popularity of social networks is constantly extending their influence, lately even to such specific fields as human resource management. The major part of the HR employees uses social networks for evaluating job applicants. This article provides a statistical analysis of quantitative data gathered from a targeted survey describing the current situation in social networks use among persons responsible for hiring new employees in the Czech Republic. The results obtained from this survey will be a subject of comparative analysis together with findings from the research study conducted in other developed countries serving as a benchmark. The overall results suggest that the influence of social networks on HR will further increase in the near future.

Introduction

The online social networks gradually gain new active users, which increases their impact on various aspects of our daily life. The screening of job applicants using online social platforms has become substantive in work of majority of HR professionals in the United States. They can thus verify the truthfulness of the information provided by job candidates, identify their references from other parties, or create an approximate image of a job seeker's personality. On the other hand, recruiters who do so move on the edge of ethics, because they can base their decision on information they are not legally eligible to consider. Given the growing popularity of social networks in the Czech Republic, a similar tendency can be expected to be occurring on the Czech Labour market too.

The main aim of this article is to analyse in details the use of social networking sites among Czech HR practitioners in the process of selecting new employees. This article will also study available research data from developed countries, and based on gathered findings provide a comprehensive comparison with the actual situation in the Czech Republic. This can be especially helpful in estimating possible future development.

The main basis for researching the subject was a targeted survey conducted in the Czech Republic between 19th April 2013 and 22nd May 2013. It had a form of an online questionnaire with key protected access available at Dotaznik.czu.cz. 15,744 persons from all the counties of the Czech Republic who demanded employees at the Labour Office last year and were registered on the job portal Nabidka-prace.czin.eu at the same time were sent an

email invitation to join the poll. The questionnaire was actually attended by 849 individual visitors, 35 of them however failed to complete it, and their answers were not considered any further. The actual sample thus includes 814 respondents responsible for hiring new employees. Of these, 374 were employed as HR specialists, 210 worked outside an HR department, 201 were company owners, and 29 were employees of personal agencies. The sample included various organisation sizes too. 9 persons with authority to hire new employees were from businesses currently without any additional staff, 151 worked in companies with less than 10 employees, 261 belonged to enterprises having between 10 and 49 workers, 244 claimed to work for companies employing 50-250 people, and 149 respondents came from an organisation with more than 250 employees. The surveyed HR practitioners also covered variety of business domains: 27 persons claimed to work in transportation, 38 in finances, 21 in information technology, 3 in culture and sport, 113 in the trade and tourism, 15 in defence and protection, 4 in the law field, 58 in the construction industry, 9 in research and science, 37 in education and training, 235 in manufacturing and operations, 33 in the health sector, 17 in agriculture and forestry, and eventually 204 operating outside these categories.

The gathered results of this survey were consequently compared with the United States nationwide research study by Harris Interactive from February 9 to March 2, 2012, which included 2,303 hiring managers and human resource professionals across industries and company sizes [2]. Other considered materials include a targeted survey carried out between May and June 2012 by the JobVite Company, which analysed answers from more than 1000 HR professional from all around the world [3], and a similar study by TrustedID Reppler from October 2011, based on answers from more than 300 US HR professionals [8]. It must be noted, that both Reppler and JobVite are portals focusing primarily at the HR specialists, and both offer services related to utilization of Internet social networks in recruiting. A poll conducted among members of these portals is therefore likely to be significantly biased towards the use of these technologies for prosperous employees screening. Independent researches from the field are however scarce.

The comparative studies between the Czech Republic and the United States are in a sense quite uncommon, because of the completely different cultural settings and different patterns of the HR management. On the other hand, the influence of the ongoing globalisation and actual carrying out of employee screening throughout online internet technologies mitigates the differences between individual countries. Nevertheless, all the major online social networks have been founded and spread to the world from the United States, so logically the rest of the world slightly falls behind in their use. While the usage of certain social networks (Facebook) has reached its top and is currently slowly on a decline in the United States, in the Czech Republic is the absolute number of its users still gradually growing [14]. Taking into account that Facebook is available in the Czech mutation since 2009, while in the United States operates since 2004, it can be assumed that certain development patterns in utilizing the social networks will be similar.

1 Employee Selection Process

Employee Selection is the process of putting the right men on right job. It is a procedure of matching organizational requirements with the skills and qualifications of people. Effective selection can be achieved only through effective matching. By selecting the best possible candidate for the demanded job, the organization will most likely achieve quality performance. Moreover, the employee turnover and absenteeism problems can be reduced and thus time and money saved. Proper screening of candidates takes place during selection procedure, when all the potential candidates who apply for the given job are tested. [7]

1.1 Employee selection phases

Koubek distinguishes two consequent phases of the employee selection process – preliminary phase and evaluation phase. [5]

1.1.1 Preliminary phase

The main aim of the preliminary phase is to define the free or potentially vacant position. It consists of three basic steps:

1. Defining the basic working conditions, and the detailed and clear description of the job.
2. Analysing the knowledge, skills, and personal qualities that a candidate should possess to fill the vacant position
3. Setting the specific requirements for qualification, education, length of experience, special skills, and other characteristics. An applicant who meets these requirements is a suitable candidate for a particular job. These requirements often become part of a published job offer. [5]

1.1.2 Evaluation phase

The preliminary phase is successfully concluded when a sufficient number of prosperous employees' resumes is gathered to choose from. The actual evaluation phase that closely follows typically consists of several steps; in practice is the most common a combination of two or three of the following options:

1. Examination of questionnaires and other documents submitted by an applicant.,
2. Preliminary interview, aiming to supplement some of the facts contained in the questionnaire and in written documents,
3. Testing of applicants using employment eligibility tests or with the help of specialized assessment centres (diagnostic program),
4. Selection interview,
5. Researching candidate's references,
6. Medical examination,
7. Decision on the selection of a particular candidate,
8. Informing applicants of the decision. [5]

Screening of applicants with assistance of online social networks can be integrated as a separate step in the candidate evaluation phase. It may support the applicants' references, and complement in creating their personal profiles and thus enhance the quality in recruitment processes.

2 Internet social networks used for screening job candidates

The survey distributed among 7,944 university and college students in 2012 in the United States discovered that almost one half of respondents' plans to use the social networks, like Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn, to look for a job. This means a fourfold increase over the past two years [1]. According to the research study carried out in 2011 on behalf of the Jobvite recruiting platform has about 16% of employees in the United States found their present job thanks to Internet social networks, compared with only 11% in 2010 [4].

2.1 Facebook

Facebook is the most popular Internet social network in the world. Its users can create profiles, which can be used for sharing personal information, and communication with other members of the social network, both privately and publicly. More than 3,900,000 registered users have a Facebook account in the Czech Republic [14], what presents approximately 37% of the Czech population, compared to 158,800,000 registered users, approximately 50% of the population, in the United States [14, 13]. It is also the most popular platform for looking for job opportunities in both countries. According to the Jobvites analysis from 2011, 48% of all job applicants searching for a job have used this platform at least once. The same study shows that more than 18 million of US citizens state they found their present job using Facebook. Index Kelly confirms this network as the main platform for seeking a job among the Y generation. Facebook has also gradually been working on establishing own tools for job search and job opportunities advertising [4].

2.2 Twitter

Twitter is a social platform, which enables its members to publish messages of maximum length of 140 characters. It has more than 175,000 users (approximately 1% of the Czech population), who publish their posts in Czech or Slovak language [12]. In the US use the Twitter social network more than 141,800,000 users (45% of the US population) [9]. The vast majority of Twitter users in the Czech Republic are IT or marketing professionals, which presents taunting opportunity for job offering entities.

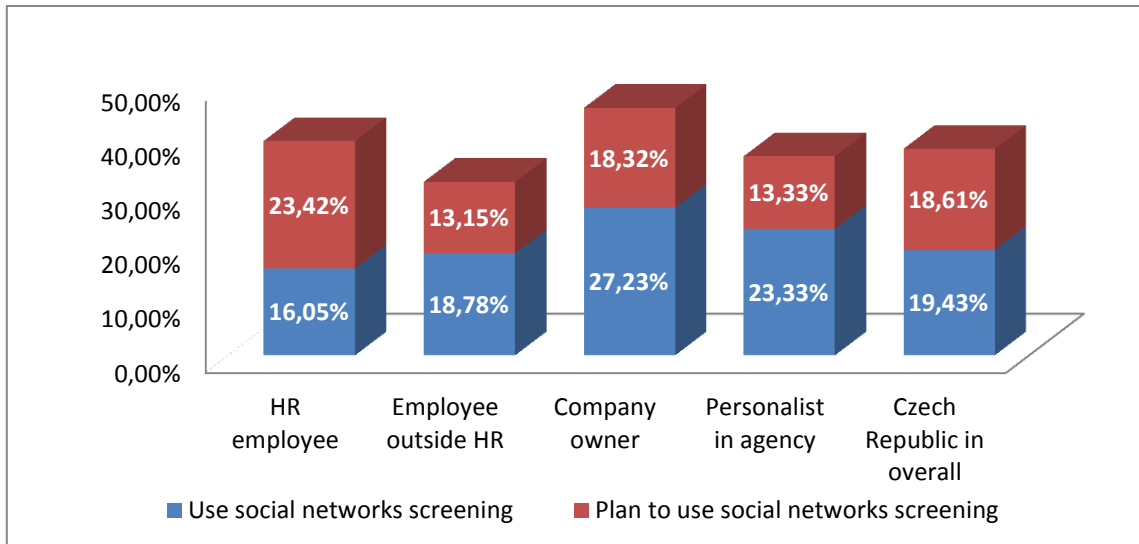
2.3 LinkedIn

LinkedIn is the biggest social network for professional users. The members can write their resumes, communicate with other people working in the same domain, and present themselves to their business partners. Keeping the personal profile on LinkedIn helps its owner to be seen on the labour market. LinkedIn platform has a module, which is dedicated directly to advertising job offers. More than 240,000 users (approximately 2% of the population) from the Czech Republic are currently registered [10], compared to more than 91,400,000 users (29% of the population) from the USA [11, 13].

3 Internet social networks use among HR practitioners

Recent research studies show significant variation in the relative share of those who use internet social networks for recruiting. Often quoted 2012 studies by Reppler and JobVite agreed that more than 90% of HR professionals screen the job applicants on social networks or plan to begin with this practice [3, 8]. The sample selection of these studies can however be hardly considered random, as was already mentioned before. In direct comparison stands nationwide research conducted by Harris Interactive in United States. According to it, 37% of HR practitioners screen candidates on Internet social networks, and 11% plan to begin with this practice [2]. It also points out that in 15% of US organisations is screening of candidates on internet social networks already forbidden by internal policies, mainly for ethical, and legal reasons [2].

This practice is on the verge of dawn in the Czech Republic even in 2013. In the conducted research have 19.43% of respondents confirmed they have actively screened the job applicants on an Internet social network. Another 18.61% of HR practitioners have claimed to be planning to adopt this technique. The detailed results are represented in the following figure, with special emphasis to the actual positions of respective respondents within an organization.

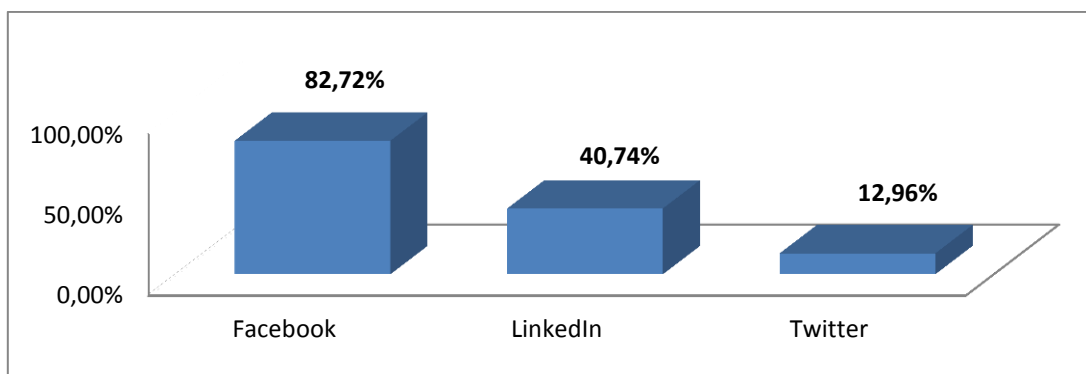


Source: Own

Fig. 1: Internet social networks screening in the Czech Republic among the various parties involved in hiring new employees

The results show the most interested in their future employees' behaviour on social networks are the hiring organization owners, naturally under the condition they are directly involved in the recruitment process. HR professionals plan to adopt this practice broadly. The candidates' behaviour on social networks is more likely to be examined when applying for a job in education (78% of surveyed recruiters from this field actually screens the prosperous employees), in bank and financial sector (52%), and information technologies (38%).

The CarrerBuilder research suggests that the prime position among social networks used for job candidate screening have Facebook, used by 65% of those who adapted this practice in the employee selection phase, closely followed by LinkedIn with 63% a Twitter used by 16% of recruiters [2]. When screening the applicants on Internet social networks, Czech HR practitioners use mainly Facebook; even at a much higher rate than their US counterparts. This is the logical consequence of Facebook being by far the most popular social network in the Czech republic, and relatively insignificant user base of both studied alternatives. Popularity of LinkedIn can be explained by its presentation as a professional network.

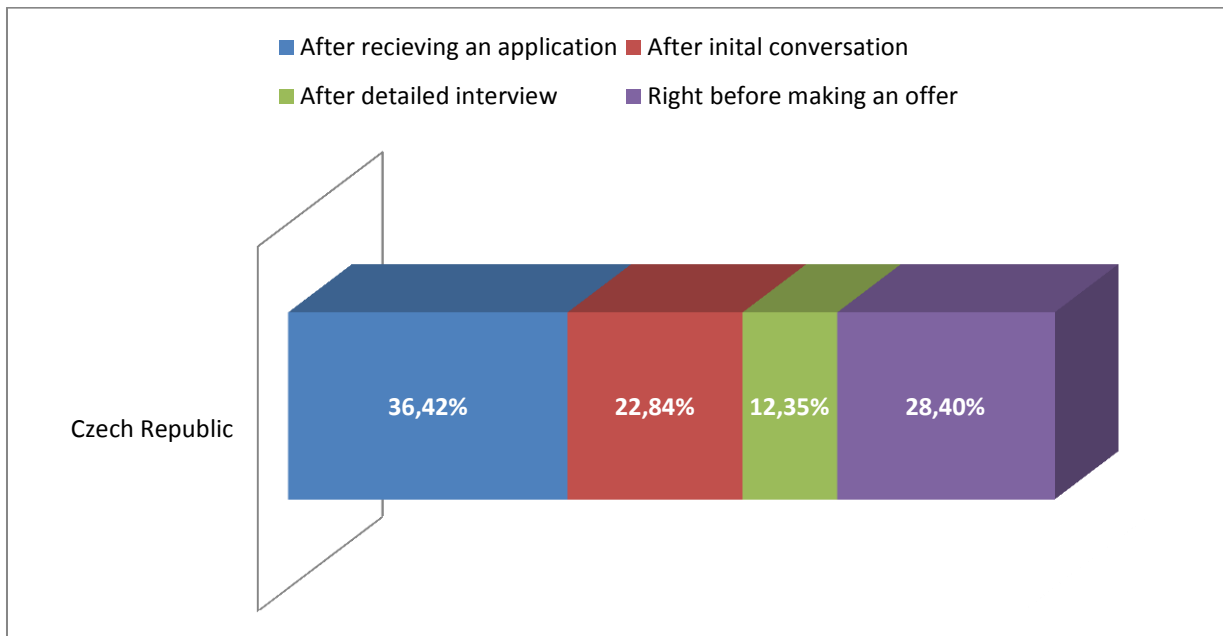


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Fig. 2: Internet social network use by HR specialists in the Czech Republic

Various HR specialists use the social networks for the first time at different stages of the evaluation phase of the recruiting process. US HR assess candidate on social networks in 47% right after receiving an application, in 27% after the initial conversation, in 15% after a thorough interview, and in 4% before making an actual offer of employment [8]. Figure 3

describes when Czech recruiters examine social networks for information about a prospective employee for the first time.

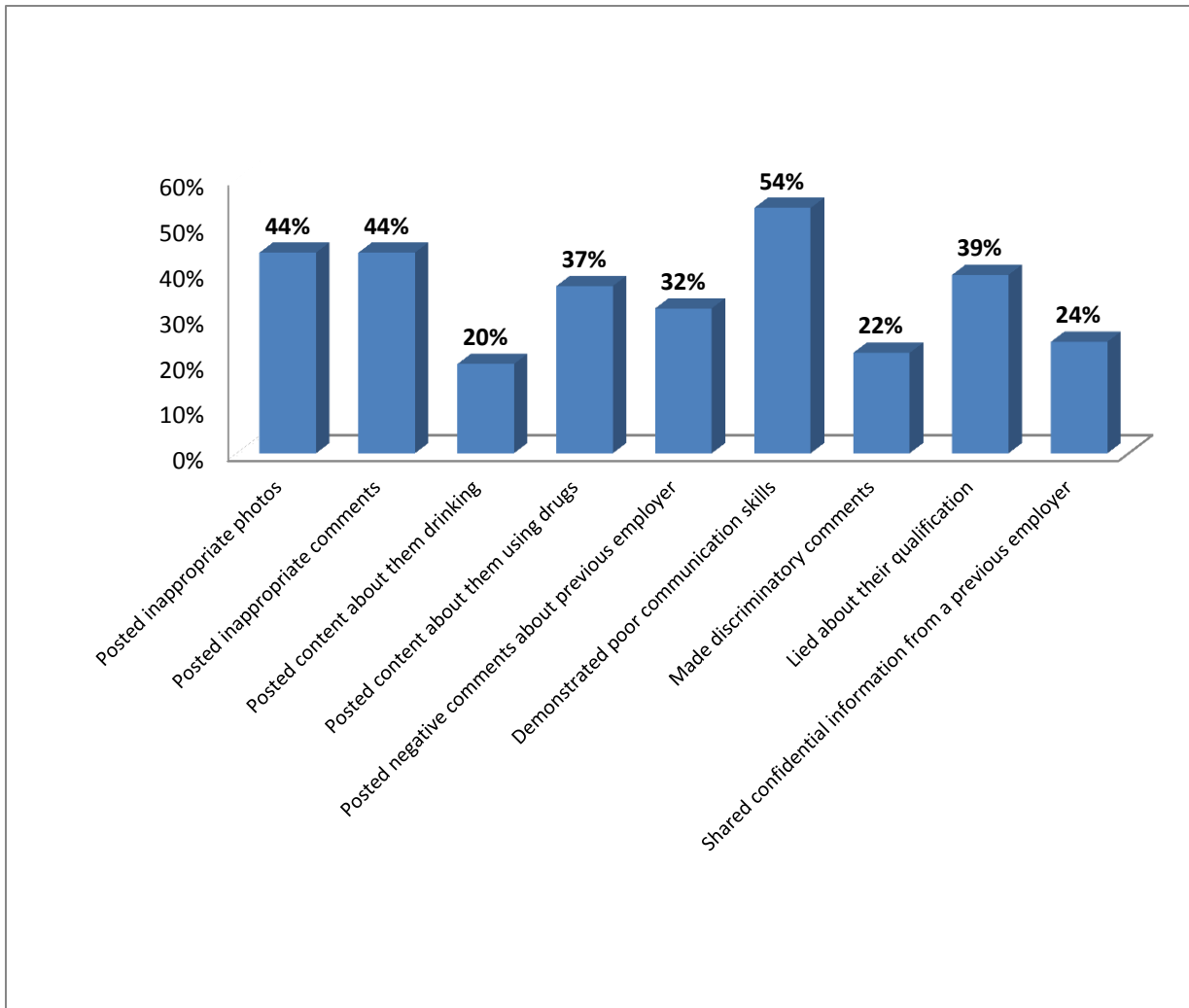


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Fig. 3: The first screening of a candidate on social networks according to the stage of the recruitment process.

The difference between HR generalists in both countries is significant, especially in the last phase of the hiring process. That means applicants are actually screened on social networks mainly after successfully passing through a detailed interview in the Czech Republic. 65% of recruiters claimed to do so to find out if a candidate presents himself/herself professionally, 51% to evaluate if the candidate is a good fit for the company culture, 45% to learn more about the candidate's qualifications, 35% to see if the candidate is well-rounded, and eventually 12% actively look for reasons not to hire a candidate [2].

34% of the US recruiters confirmed to reject an applicant because of what they saw about them on social networking site [2]. Only 25.3% of the Czech HR professionals, who actually use the social networks screening, refused to hire an applicant based on the information they gathered on social networks. Their main reasons for doing so are presented in following overview.

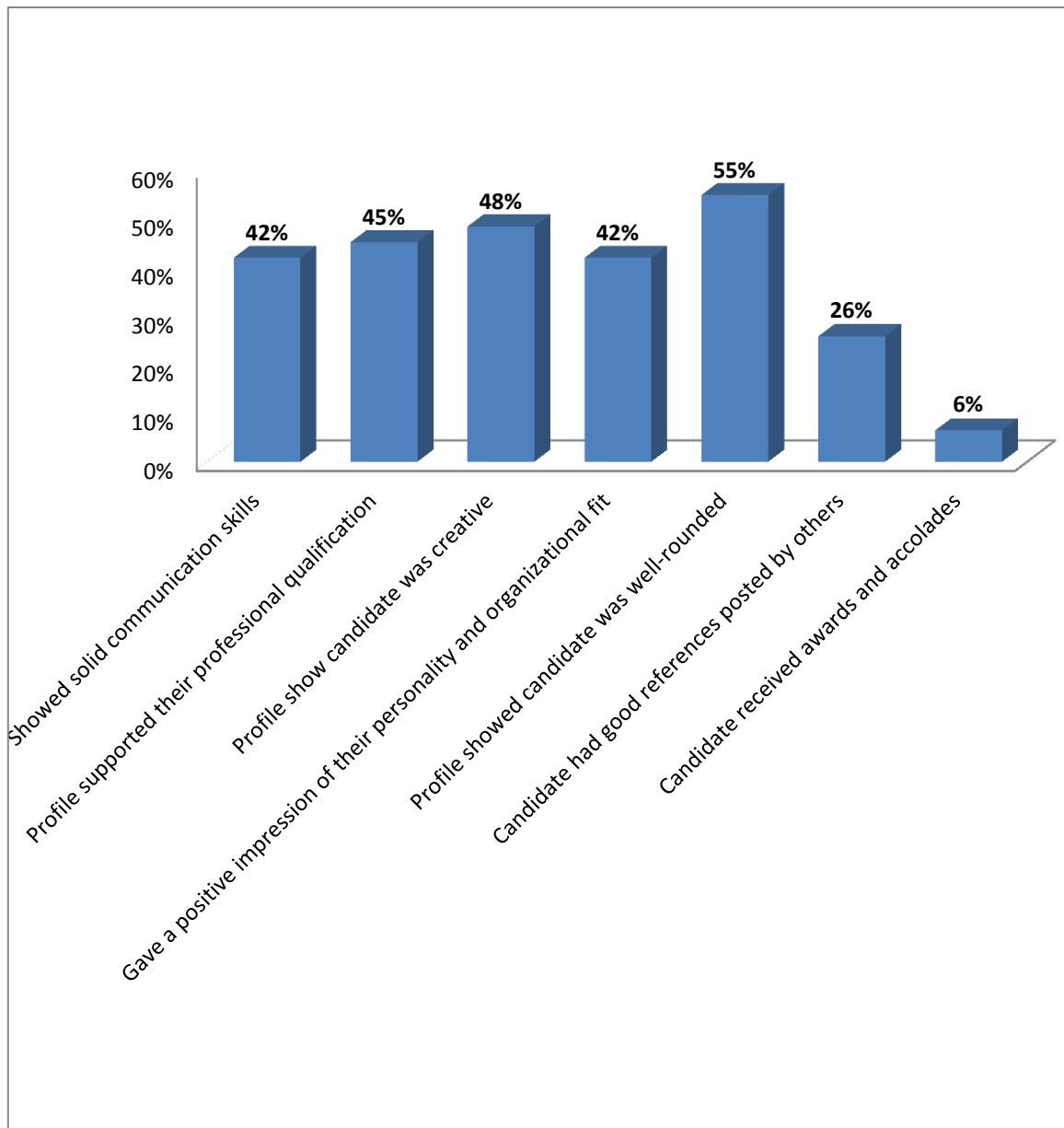


Source: Own

Fig. 4: Reasons for rejecting a candidate based on the findings from social networking sites

In the USA HR practitioners penalize a job candidate the most when they find out that they have a different qualification than claimed to have reached [8]. When asked to name the factors that can jeopardize the chances of an applicant to be hired, 49% of HR generalists mentioned provocative/inappropriate photos/info, 45% candidate drinking or using drugs, 35% poor communication skills. 33% bad mouthing previous employer, 28% discriminatory comments related to race, gender, or religion [2]. In the Czech Republic the most abundant reason for rejecting an applicant is a demonstration of poor communication skills on Internet social networks.

29% of the US recruiters on the other hand claimed to accept an applicant based on what they learned about her/him on an Internet social network [2]. When asking those HR practitioners to mark the main reasons for doing so, 58% selected a good feel for the candidate's personality, 55% candidate's professional image, 54% background information supporting a candidate's professional qualifications, 51% the overall candidate's well-rounded, 49% great communication skills, 44% creativity, 34% positive references about the candidate [2]. In the Czech Republic a prospective employee has been accepted because of what they saw about them on social networks by only 19.3% of HR practitioners. The actual reasons that made the Czech HR to hire an applicant based on the findings from social networks are presented and quantified in the following graph.

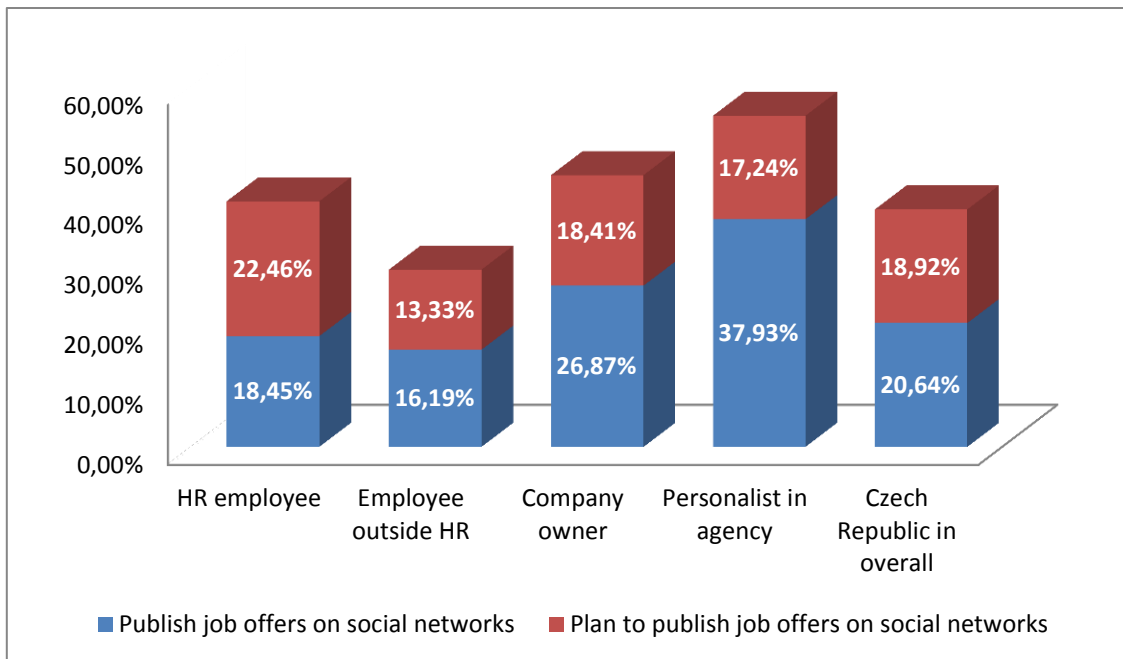


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Fig. 5: Reasons for hiring a prospective employee based on the findings from social networking sites

When hiring based on information from social networks, references from other users, awards, badges, certificates, and similar factors honouring the potential employee's work are important both in the USA and the Czech Republic. Both countries' recruiters also value positive impression from a profile, which complements the professional qualification, and demonstrates creativity and communication skills of its owner [8]. Of active social recruiting practitioners, 89% have made a hire through LinkedIn, 26% through Facebook, and 15% through Twitter according to the JobVite worldwide survey [3].

The Internet social networks can also serve as a platform for publishing job offers. The answer to the question whether the recruiters and HR specialists publish or plan to publish some job offers on an Internet social network is addressed in details by the next figure.

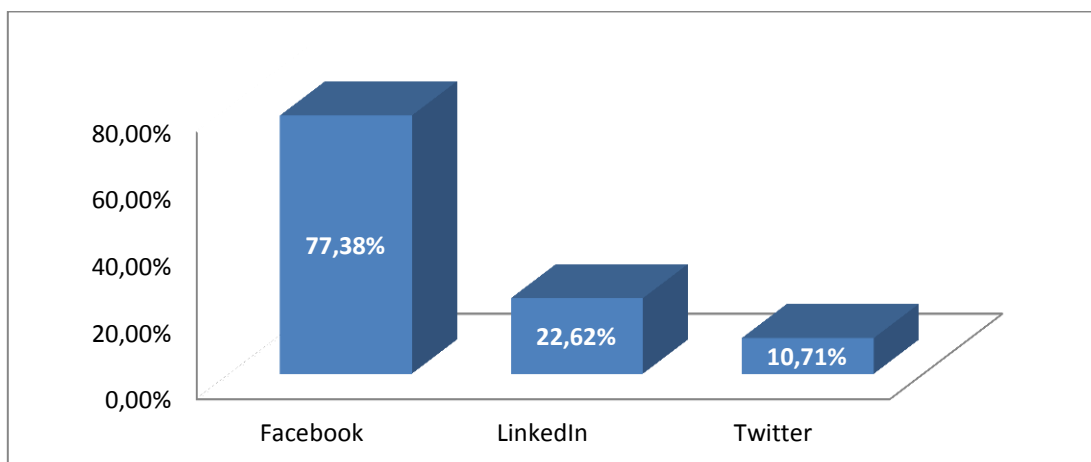


Source: Own

Fig. 6: HR use the Internet social networks for publishing job offers in the Czech Republic

The figure 6 shows that personal agencies are the most common users of Internet social networks for recruiting. Disseminating the awareness about an offered work position on the social networks is however more common among actual company owners.

People, who have already published some job offers on Internet social networks have in vast majority used Facebook, followed by LinkedIn, and Twitter. The detailed overview of the Internet social networks used among the 20.64% of surveyed HR professional, who confirmed to use this practice for presenting work offers, is shown in Figure 7.



Source: Own

Fig. 7: The proportion of social networks used by recruiters to publish job offers in the Czech Republic

Besides previously mentioned Internet social networks, Google Plus and Lide.cz have also been used, however, their absolute impact was minimal, and thus does not appear in the graphical overview.

Conclusion

This research points out that the influence of Internet social networks is gradually shifting to such aspects of human life that are not directly related to online behaviour. Over 38% of HR practitioners in the Czech Republic screen job candidates on social networks or plan to adopt this practice in close future. The way people interact and communicate on social networks can thus become an important part of creating a personal image. Users can demonstrate their knowledge, abilities, education, and personal characteristics to potential employers and thus support their resumes on diverse social networks. Czech recruiters analyse a job candidate's profile at different stages of the evaluation phase in the recruiting process – 36% right after receiving an initial application, 29% at the very end, before making an actual job offer. The candidates, whose profiles are well-rounded, showed creativity, and supported their professional and communication skills are the most likely to benefit in the recruiting process. On the other hand, poor communication skills, inappropriate photographs and comments, and drug abuse can seriously jeopardize any job aspiration.

When comparing research studies conducted in the Czech Republic and the United States, the results clearly show that the screening of job candidates on online social networks is already a well established practice in the United States, with 48% of HR practitioners using it or planning to do so in the future. Another growth in use of assessing applicants through online social networks in the Czech Republic thus can be expected. Both countries' recruiters alike have very similar preferences of what helps an applicant to get a job over a social network; US ones however show much stronger reluctance to previous employer badmouthing, and discriminatory comments. Czech recruiters use mainly Facebook for prosperous employee screening, because of its dominant position in the country compared to other studied social networks. Over 39% of the Czech HR practitioners also use, or plan to use, the tools provided by these social web platforms for posting job offers. Therefore, it can be assumed that the current procedures of personnel search throughout traditional job portals, which advertise available job positions on their sites, will be virtually replaced by specialized tools, which will either cooperate with or be directly operated by social networks.

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ANALÝZA VLIVU INTERNETOVÝCH SOCIÁLNÍCH SÍTÍ NA VÝBĚR NOVÝCH ZAMĚSTNANCŮ V ČESKÉ REPUBLICE

Zvyšující se popularita sociálních sítí má za následek rozšiřování jejich vlivu i do specifických oborů, mezi které patří také lidské zdroje. V současné době využívá sociální sítě pro prověřování uchazečů o práci velká část pracovníků v HR. Tento článek statisticky analyzuje kvantitativní data o aktuální situaci využívání sociálních sítí při náboru nových zaměstnanců osobami odpovědnými za přijímání nových pracovníků v České republice zjištěná formou dotazníkového šetření. Dosažená zjištění budou předmětem komparativní analýzy spolu s poznatky z výzkumných studií provedených v některé z jiných vyspělých zemí. Shromážděné výsledky naznačují, že význam sociálních sítí v oboru HR bude nadále vzrůstat.

ANALYSE DES EINFLUSSES VON SOZIALEN NETZWERKEN IM INTERNET AUF DER AUSWAHL VON NEUEN MITARBEITERN IN DER TSCHECHISCHEN REPUBLIK

Die wachsende Popularität sozialer Netzwerke beeinflusst mittlerweile sogar spezifischer Bereich wie das Personalmanagement. Die Mehrheit der Personalmanager bereits auf soziale Netzwerke zu, um Bewerber besser einzuschätzen. Dieser Artikel enthält eine statistische Analyse von quantitativen Daten aus einer gezielten Befragung beschreiben die aktuelle Situation in den sozialen Netzwerken unter Verwendung der Verantwortlichen für die Einstellung neuer Mitarbeiter in der Tschechischen Republik gesammelt. Die Ergebnisse aus dieser Umfrage erhalten wird eine Thema der vergleichenden Analyse zusammen mit den Ergebnissen aus der Studie in anderen entwickelten Ländern, die als Benchmark durchgeführt. Die gesamten Ergebnisse deuten darauf hin, dass der Einfluss von sozialen Netzwerken auf HR weiter in naher Zukunft zu erhöhen.

ANALIZA WPŁYWU PORTALI SPOŁECZNOŚCIOWYCH NA WYBÓR NOWYCH PRACOWNIKÓW W CZECHACH

Rosnąca popularność portali społecznościowych rozszerza swoje wpływy nawet w na takie dziedziny jak zarządzanie zasobami ludzkimi. Większa część pracowników działu HR używa portali społecznościowych do oceny kandydatów do pracy. Ten artykuł zawiera analizę statystyczną danych ilościowych zebranych z ukierunkowanego badania opisującego aktualną sytuację społeczną użytkownika sieci wśród osób odpowiedzialnych za zatrudnianie nowych pracowników w Czechach. Wyniki uzyskane z tego badania będzie przedmiotem analizy porównawczej wraz z wynikami z badań przeprowadzonych w innych krajach rozwiniętych, służących jako punkt odniesienia. Ogólne wyniki wskazują, że wpływ sieci społecznościowych na HR/Zasoby Ludzkie będzie dalej wzrastał w najbliższym czasie.