

Human resources, social media already inextricably entwined

Harpaul Sambhi's unequivocal message to organizations that want to be at the forefront is they must move their HR practices into the social media age now.

To do so effectively, they first need to clarify:

- the rationale for incorporating social media into these practices
- how doing so connects to the broader organizational strategy
- whom specifically they want to target
- what social networks the target groups are using.

It is essential an organization's social HR strategy reflects its culture. Copying the social media approach used by a competitor does not work.

Sambhi uses the term social HR — also the name of his book — to broadly refer to an HR strategy that enhances productivity within an organization through social media and, hence, collaboration and connectivity.

While social media is in its infancy, Sambhi asserts HR and social media are already inextricably entwined due to the intrinsic potential of social media as a communications tool for managing talent inside and outside an organization.

There is clearly opportunity for organizations to develop unique social media strategies now as research indicates one-third of HR professionals don't yet understand its return on investment (ROI) and are skeptical about its value — an attitude



ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

BARB KOFMAN

often reflected in limitations on its use by employees. Sambhi astutely points to the futility of this mindset. Policies and firewalls curbing social media access don't prevent employees from using smartphones to get around restrictions.

Examples of companies that have leveraged social media to enhance their overall organizational effectiveness were particularly insightful. Pitney Bowes launched its own internal social media vehicle — Ideanet — as an electronic employee innovation tool and meeting place.

It has been used to successfully cut across the common organizational barriers of function, location and level to create a climate of engagement, collaboration and diversity of thought by openly enabling employees to provide input on specific challenges.

Warner Brothers has tapped into a variety of social media to create a targeted recruitment brand and has seen impressive savings on its recruitment costs.

Siemens has developed an online game called Plantville to enable users to mimic the real world of Siemens and, through it, has been able to identify people it wants to hire.

While these big organizations have the resources to implement a social HR strategy, it follows that smaller, more nimble organizations would equally benefit from — and possibly be more adept at — doing so.

Sambhi urged employers to not rely on old paradigms in determining social media strategy. To implement an effective strategy, it would be wise to consider his advice to identify a central media lead in HR, start small, employ a range of social media tools, keep on top of the ever-evolving nature of social media, and identify out-of-the-box ways, in alignment with corporate culture, to be innovative and build a unique social media presence.

Barbara Kofman is SCNetwork's lead commentator on organizational effectiveness and founding principal of CareerTrails, focused on enabling individuals and organizations to resolve career-related challenges. She has held senior roles in resourcing, strategy and outplacement, and taught at the university and college level. She can be reached at bkofman@careertrails.com.