

THE TRUTH ABOUT SOCIAL NETWORKING, WEB 2.0 AND RECRUITING

There's a reason why most third-party recruiters flounder when it comes to using the internet for their businesses, specifically the aspect of social networking, also called web 2.0. They believe that Linked-In, Google, MySpace, Facebook, Twitter, and all the other social media sites and blogs are the silver bullet of recruiting. These topics make for the hottest webinars and are the most-attended sessions at industry conferences. In the same way that my son wants to spend all his time playing with the newest toy, search firms and staffing agencies are investing a considerable amount of time and energy devoted to finding ways to make good use of this potentially powerful tool.

If the only tool you are using is a hammer, then every problem looks like a nail.

Web 2.0 brings with it not just new applications and uses, but a new way of thinking. Businesses who fail with the web ask questions like, "How can we use this tool for our business?" Instead they should be asking, "How can we re-shape our business model to use these tools?" Or one step further, "Can and should the web really help us with our business? And if not in every aspect, then where specifically can it help us?"

And that question leads to the most important question you can ask about your practice: **"What business am I really in?"**

When you finally get to that question, then you'll see that Web 2.0 is not the great solution that so many executive search firms and third-party recruiters were hoping it would be. It's a good tool, but it's just a hammer, not a fork lift or a high-rise crane or a bulldozer.

Here's what I mean.

Web 2.0 is about open connectedness and communication. People who want to communicate make themselves available with social media. That's why the great blogs for our industry offer value through learning, education, training, information, industry gossip, tips, industry intelligence, and building relationships with potential trading partners, and feeling a sense of camaraderie with your peers. (Check out www.recruitingblogs.com and the Fordyce Letter's social media site at <http://network.fordyceletter.com/>. In my opinion, these two sites offer the best value for the time you spend on them. Plus, they won't send you three emails a day trying to sell you stuff or offering free lists of candidates in every industry except for the one in which you recruit. They are real organically grown social media sites and weren't fabricated through email blasts of purchased lists).

Web 2.0 is built on permission marketing, meaning that people who want to hear from you will allow you to come into their world and even actively invite you into it. This is an amazing concept when it comes to recruiting, to know that some people want you to tell them about the opportunities you have to place them with one of your clients. It makes a lot of sense for active candidates who want to hear about opportunities and eagerly pursue them. But who else can get access to these types of candidates? Everyone with a computer, like your clients.



If you are a third party recruiter, you have to show value to your clients. That means that you have to be able to do things that they can't do on their own. Otherwise, what's the point of your existence? Can your clients surf the web and connect with these people? Yes. Can your client download resumes of active job seekers? Yes. Can your client open up portals of opportunities that active job seekers will find? Yes. If this is how you do business, then you are now irrelevant.

What value are you offering? What value does surfing the web and connecting with active job-seeking candidates and downloading resumes offer? If you believe this, then you will watch your own clients become your competitors and for many of you, it's already happened. Fortune 500 companies send their own internal recruiters to the same seminars that you attend on how to use the web to find resumes of passive candidates, how to use the job postings and how to use social media to find and connect with them.

So what's the point? Why should they use you? If they can do what you are trying to do, how can you bring value to them? If the only difference between what they do and what you do is that there's a big fee involved, then what's the point of having you around?

They should use you because you are able to reach those people who do not want to communicate about job opportunities and are not open to hearing about them. A big part of your business is based on interruption marketing. There's nothing wrong with that, if you do it properly. You have to interrupt people, engage them in a dialogue about opportunities, be persuasive in opening up their minds, and lead them down the scary path of interviews that is built on their greatest fear, the fear of change. And yes, it really can be done. This is why so many people fail and so many people make a fortune in our business: their single greatest core competency is to become an expert at building authentic relationships and to ethically influence other people to (1) make decisions based on the fear of change and (2) to take action.

What business are you really in?

If you think you are in the networking business, you are in the wrong business. If that's the case you might as well form a book club or a supper club. You are in the business of facilitating change in other peoples' lives through active engagement and that isn't going to happen just over the web. It can start there, but it won't end up there.

A few years ago I keynoted at the annual sales meeting for the International Cemetery and Funeral Association. (a big part of my business is to keynote at other industry conferences on sales and leadership through my other speaking brand). When talking with the attendees, the people who sell funeral services and pre-need cemetery lots, it became clear to me that the web will never replace a good sales person. Who the heck wants to consider or make a decision about their own death? You can buy life insurance from the web. But there are still thousands of life insurance sales people who are making six figure incomes because they are able to help people face the fear of change and the fear of death. That's also why there are no more travel agents (except those who specialize, such as in travel for people with special needs or to a particular destination like for religious tour groups). What's the fear in making a decision about which airport you should fly through? Unless, of course, you have to route through O'Hare.

As a third party recruiter, you offer value to your clients by getting candidates they can't access interested in opportunities that they originally are not open to. That's the business that you are in. You are a professional influencer.



Web 2.0 is a fantastic forum to network with people and begin to open up doors. You can build a large network quite easily with people in your niche, and you really should do that. You should be visible in your space. You should learn how to find information from the web. You should harness technology to make your life easier. But when it comes to prioritizing how you develop yourself and your team to master core competencies in your business, your efforts to become a master of influence will give you the greatest value and greatest return on investment.

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