

Big data and social media: The new normal for HR

By  Phil de Kock

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Big data and social media are buzzwords reverberating throughout the business world today, and for good reason. Information technology and its supporting devices have moved beyond integrating the supply chain, to tracking, analysing and sharing all aspects related to the production process, human behaviour inside and beyond organizational boundaries.



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Estimations are that no less than 6,400 organisations with 100 staff or more will have accomplished big data analytics by 2018, according to a 2013 SAS study of more than 1,200 businesses. A recent Towers Watson survey of more than 1,000 organizations found HR data and analytics are among the top three areas for HR technology expenditure.

The applications of big data and social media in HR are vast. For example, companies like The Container Store use wearable tech, designed to track communication patterns and preferences of employees, accumulate performance data and monitor communication trends with customers. This enables them to tailor communication with staff in different stores, deal with customer complaints more effectively and target key messages for staff as well as customers.

Xerox estimates that, with the use of big data analytics, it was able to cut its staff attrition rate at call centres by 20%. By analysing various sources of employee information, HR could more accurately identify issues that lead to lower employee engagement, and based on this, were able to target interventions to improve this.

With the use of big data and analytics, HR has an opportunity to become more analytical and strategic in acquiring candidates. 27% of employers indicate a bad hire cost them more than \$50,000, according to a 2013 CareerBuilder survey of more than 6,000 HR professionals. Big data prevents big mistakes!

Because cost per hire is a key metric to monitor and control, big data and analytics can make a measurable impact in this area. Rather than relying on standardised advertising, response handling and repetitive resumes, hiring managers can utilise the following analytics to great advantage:

- a. Learn more about potential hires through their various social media profiles, online resume databases, records of employment (in this regard, LinkedIn is becoming the gold standard).
- b. LinkedIn Groups can for example, become a precursor to the establishment of external talent pools, and in a practical way to communicate with future potential candidates.
- c. Many of these social media platforms already provide the functionality to verify credentials and qualifications.
- d. Intelligent use of online challenge-based games or contests can provide a basis to assess skills and aptitudes (like Google's Code Jam, a global, online software-writing contest that attracts over 7,500 people each year).
- e. Provision of bridging learning and teaching to career upstarts through MOOC's (Coursera, OpenSAP, Edx etc.) The cost of utilising these, even to obtain verified credentials, is minimal.
- f. Linking these mechanisms with established cross functional HCM Suites like SAP Successfactors creates not only a supply chain but also an ecosystem where administrative and transactional cost are devolved and lowered, while the HR practitioner becomes the analyst, advisor and partner.

Given these developments the focus, skills and functions for in-house as well as outsourced HR practitioners keep changing, and it is indeed relevant to ask whether your hiring managers and staff can afford to be bogged down with repetitive, bureaucratic and paper-based methods of recruiting.

Reference

[The Huffington Post](#)

[Top 5 HR Trends for 2016.](#)

[Why You Need to Embrace the Big Data Trend in HR.](#) - Matt Straz

ABOUT PHIL DE KOCK

Philip is an HRIS project and organizational change manager, with experience in the mining, construction and petrochemical industries. He lectures part-time and have interests in the role of big data and social media in the management of human resources.

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