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Online Social Networking: Rolodex Meets Cyberspace

By Marc Marlin and Martin O'Brien

Government contractors are increasingly looking to Online Social Networking as a cost effective way to augment recruiting resources and broaden outreach efforts. Finding and attracting talented professionals remains a challenging, top priority for hiring managers. The right clearances, technical expertise, experience, and/or client relationship can quickly narrow the applicant pool for that next growth opportunity or tip the scale in a heated contract competition. Social Networking websites such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Craigslist help employers overcome such challenges. For talent, these sites allow professionals to market themselves to a broader universe of potential employers and geographies.

In practice, Online Social Networking has taken traditional "networking" into cyberspace. "Having spent the last 15 years in the recruiting business space in support of DoD contracts, online social networking sites have drastically changed the way I do business" says Sandy Corbett, IntelX Technologies Chief Operations Officer and former Chief Human Resource Officer of Oberon Associates. Recruitment professionals such as Ms. Corbett now have an alternative to the traditional time consuming, costly and cumbersome efforts needed to track down candidates and former colleagues. Social networking sites enable professionals to keep in touch with a larger rolodex of previous colleagues, friends and business associates regardless of relocations, jobs and email address and phone number changes and with minimal effort. Furthermore, these sites allow recruiters to discover previously unknown connections within their network as well as reach acquaintances with the same ease as longtime, closer contacts. These advantages make a larger network seem smaller and considerably more accessible.

Beyond talent identification, contractors are leveraging social networking sites to reduce hiring risk. Some companies use these sites to facilitate/perform background checks. Pictures, opinion posts and recommendations can provide unfiltered candidate perspectives outside an interview setting in which participants are on often their best

Select Web 2.0 Websites

Hired! On Facebook

www.facebook.com/urhired

A weekly column that profiles lessons learned of individual job seekers along with commentary from career experts. Venue to post jobs, seek jobs and discuss job markets. The site is hosted by *cnnmoney.com* with a link to *cnn.com*'s jobs section. The site has 2,393 "fans".

Tweetmyjobs

www.tweetmyjobs.com

Brings recruiters, hiring managers and job seekers together on Twitter. The only job board that provides instant notification of open positions via text messaging. The site has 5700+ vertical Job Channels on Twitter which allow recruiters and hiring companies to specifically target job seekers in cities and job types across the world. Job seekers can get instant notification of any new jobs as a text message on their cell phones and recruiters and companies have access to a cost effective and targeted social media job board. The network includes 300,000+ jobs, 90,000 followers+, 6,000+ companies. Most of the government services public companies and defense primes are use this site.

behavior. It shouldn't be lost that the power of social networking in this regard can cut both ways, especially as sites blur professional and personal experiences and interactions.

Is Online Social Networking a “disruptive technology”? Debatable. However, one could argue that it is not the technology that has motivated its rapid adoption, but rather the communities these networking sites promote. The government contracting space is characterized by camaraderie, especially across the DoD and Intel Community where service-turned-contractor professionals have often forged bonds operating in high-pressure, and sometimes life threatening situations. All else equal technically, most people would rather hire a friend, acquaintance or a referral from a friend, rather than an unknown commodity. Online Social Networking makes it easier to access these preferred candidates.

Moreover, Online Social Networking affords similar benefits of in-person networking, without the small talk or downside risk of time-consuming unproductive conversations. A simple profile change or Tweet along the lines of “looking for a new opportunity” can set off a chain of unsolicited inquiries and suggestions from the network. Not to mention, what's worse than the uncomfortable situation of sitting down at an industry luncheon to find out your fellow tablemates are not the teaming partner or client you were hoping for?

While Online Social Networking is unlikely to represent billions of available contracted dollar opportunities, representative website and internet communities have become key enablers to contractors' talent acquisition and overall operations, and professionals' new little black book. Recognizing that people (incl. capabilities and relationships), processes, and proprietary technologies drive value within an organization, Online Social networking represents an accessible, low investment avenue to enhance the “people” aspect of this value equation.

GovLoop.com

www.govloop.com

Social networking site for the government community allowing contractors, government employees, and academics to connect, blog, post on forums, find events and network. The site has approximately 14,500 members, including many of the larger government and defense firms.

LinkedIn

www.linkedin.com

Online network facilitator allows users to update status, proactively manage networks, and recommend colleagues. LinkedIn charges users a premium for some career-related services and companies for the use of proprietary software that helps them identify potential candidates. Most public government and defense players have profiles on the site. The website has over 44 million members in 200 countries.

Craigslist

www.craigslist.com

Widely-distributed, mostly-free online classifieds site, organized by location that allows employers and potential employees to post and seek jobs. There are over 1 million job posts every month and 50 million users in the U.S. A majority of larger government and defense companies are listed in job fair ads, but no ads directly from the companies.