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Diving into the Social Networking Pool? Here's What You Need to Know First

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These days you cannot have a conversation about external communication without the subject of social networking coming into play. For today's business world, effective use of social media can mean the difference between making the right hire, and having vacancies for critical positions.

The healthcare industry navigates through social networking options like any other industry, determining which sites are the most viable for finding qualified candidates and building a community interested in your organization.

But to embark on a social recruiting strategy that delivers true return on engagement, it is imperative for companies to understand how social networks can impact recruitment and retention, which communities are the best for attracting the right talent, and how your reputation is portrayed by these influential marketing channels.

Understanding Your Online Reputation

Your organization already has an online reputation. It exists in much the same way your employer brand

exists even without definition. Online communities allow people to engage in open and honest conversation about what they have read, what they know to be true, and in turn, sentiments about your organization are formed.

The first inclination is to jump in feet first and capitalize on positive conversations or combat negative ones. However assessing your reputation and share of voice is crucial. Understanding conversations and how the sentiments impact your online reputation is the first step in determining if your organization is prepared for a social recruiting initiative.

The Value of Social Networking

A recent Bernard Hodes Group/Campus RN survey of student nurses reveals that 83 percent mention online sources as their top resource for employment information. Additionally, 84 percent are spending part of their time on social networking sites, meaning employers need to consider establishing a presence on these sites to engage with potential candidates and influence the share of voice in employer related content.

The most effective social recruiting strategies, and subsequent activity, can yield measurable results over time. Establishing a return

on engagement allows your organization to see the influence your social strategy has on recruitment and retention efforts while also allowing you to measure your share of voice against your competitors.

Engage and Enable Your Ambassadors

Before developing content and eliciting conversation, you must understand the community you are entering. Social networking destinations are committed to honest and transparent conversation. Too often companies interject with aggressive sales speak or canned brand messages—these tactics are often rejected by the community and if not confronted directly, completely ignored.

It's important to understand your culture and identify ambassadors of your brand. Planning and preparation with key influencers enable you to incorporate brand messaging while also respecting the expectations of the community. Development and enactment of a social media policy empowers your brand ambassadors to engage in ways that contribute to your goals.

Enacting Your Social Recruiting Strategy

Your online reputation analysis

should shed light on the internal stakeholders that play a vital role in external perceptions. By working alongside these entities you can develop a social recruiting strategy that marries talent needs to your overall brand efforts. In addition to modifying existing assets, companies should also consider developing additional destinations for engagement. One of the most common places to start is a blog. Corporate blogs can be effective in attracting talent and driving them back to a career site, but an effective blog requires solid planning and constant nurturing.

Regular updates (three or four times a week), fresh content and enthusiastic contributors are critical

to success. Identifying a dedicated community manager or managers among your brand ambassadors will ensure your blog destination remains relevant. While also fueling interactions on your blog, your manager(s) can also monitor and assess activity on other social networking destinations included in your strategy.

Whether your company is established on LinkedIn, Facebook, MySpace or Twitter, or actively participating in discussions through other influential communities, every profile needs to be nurtured and monitored to ensure organizational involvement is upheld and contributing to your overall social recruiting strategy.

The Future of Healthcare Recruitment Communications is Now

Social networking is no longer part of generation next, it is generation now. By connecting your company with potential candidates online, not only are you making the one-on-one connections to attract potential candidates, but the networking aspects open your organization up to an endless pipeline of engaged candidates.

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