

Social media recruiting and Online Personal Reputation evaluation by Recruiters in Israel / Yohanan S. Ouaknine

Abstract

Online Reputation (OR) is the public evaluation of an individual, based on his behavior and the information published online by himself or shared by others. The elements of a person's online reputation may include pictures and movies, online résumé and posts or comments in blogs. Online Reputation is an important element when recruiters gather relevant and credible personal information in order to evaluate and screen candidates. Evaluation and screening with Online Reputation is widely used by recruiters in USA and Europe (Haefner, 2009; Cross-Tab, 2010; Madden & Smith, 2010). However, such a study was never performed in Israel.

This research examines the attitudes of recruiters and HR professionals concerning online reputation information in their candidate evaluation processes by asking the following questions: Do Israeli recruiters use online reputation in the recruitment process? To what extent online reputation components are perceived as relevant, credible and affecting the

decision to screen candidates? What are the goals and online resources used by recruiters in Online Reputation search? Are recruiters willing to pay for such and information? Do organizations use Online Reputation in their formal procedure of recruitment?

An innovative approach was required to recruit randomly selected Israeli recruiters through connections within the LinkedIn Network. This method resulted in a 31.3% (N=104) participation rate (valid answers only). The participants (age: 25 to 58, 87 women) filled an online questionnaire, mainly about the impact of online reputation on candidate screening, the relevance and the credibility of online reputation information, free and paid sources used in their tasks and their goals in social media recruiting.

Highlights of the study's findings show that 85% of the Israeli recruiters use Online Reputation Search in the recruitment process. Means of relevancy and credibility of professional values and norms (like writing about a previous employer or being a member of professional community) were high (M=3.9, SD=0.9) on a Lickert scale of 1-5, compared to pictures and hobbies which were unexpectedly low (M=2.6, SD=1.0). While a positive correlation was found between credibility and relevancy ($r=0.32$, $p < .001$, $n=97$), no significant correlation was found between these variables and the impact on the decision to screen candidates. Other findings show that recruiters use principally free resources like Google (79%) and LinkedIn (96%) for online reputation search and are only 9% are willing

to pay for information about candidates (N=8). This study also indicates that only a small number of Israeli companies have made online reputation screening a formal requirement of their hiring process (13%).

The conclusions of this research show that Israeli recruiters, like their colleagues in other countries, use Online Reputation to fill the gap of information in the recruitment process. Another conclusion is that Online Reputation has a major impact on the screening process but integration of this activity in a formal hiring process is still low when compared to other countries. The fact that recruiters are not willing to pay for information could be explained by the works of Shapiro & Varian (1999) where the perceived value of information is decided after use and not before. The findings about the absence of correlation between relevancy, credibility and impact could be explained by the works of Feldman & March (1981) "Information in Organizations as Signal and Symbol". Their study suggest that organizations gather more information than they need as they work in a surveillance mode rather than a decision mode, where information is only needed to reduce uncertainties and not necessarily to decide. Another track could be cultural differences between Israeli and American or European recruiters about information gathered concerning a candidate.

A major limitation to this work is the exclusive use of the LinkedIn Network for participant's recruitment as one could reasonably assume that not all the Israeli recruiters are members of



this network. A second limitation is the descriptive quantitative methodology used to study this phenomenon.

This research contributes to the study of recruitment and Online Reputation fields by focusing on the Israeli recruiter point of view while most studies examines the phenomenon from a candidate's perspective. This research may also contribute to enrich recruiter training in candidate's screening and eventually, awareness of job seekers about personal information published online

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