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Recruiters who fail to tailor their social media initiatives to candidates with the specific skillsets they're targeting simply won't reap the rewards they seek, says recruitment strategy advisor David Als.

"It's Marketing 101," he says. "If you get the right message to the right market, you're going to see the rewards. Get it wrong and you're not successful; it can also negatively affect the brand."

Als, a talent attraction consultant at Human Capital Management Solutions (HCMS), says most recruiters use social media channels reactively. "They don't have the time and they don't have the resources to sit back and say, 'let's think laterally about this; let's strategise'."

That's a problem, he says, because to use social media most effectively recruiters should take a step back and look at, for example, where they are likely to be talent-short in six months' time, rather than "we've got to fill these roles in the next three weeks".

This requires determining the job positions that are essential to business growth - their criticality and scarcity - and segmenting and prioritising the right ones.

Als says that although on face value internal recruiters have an advantage in being able to strategise and identify key roles that will need to be filled, there is nothing stopping agency recruiters from attempting to do the same.

"A good agency recruiter is going to actually try and engage with the business, or try and understand the business strategy as well, so that they can be better armed going forward."

Workshop with talent families

Once the critical roles are identified recruiters should create small workshop groups comprising people from those talent families, to understand which sites they use, and what communities are already in existence.

"The social media sites you assume are most apt might not necessarily be the correct ones," Als says. "And that's why the importance of workshopping, with both internal and external staff... can't be underestimated."

Most organisations have an employer value proposition, he adds, but the candidate value proposition (CVP) is narrower and related to the specific skillset you're targeting.

This is because, "the drivers and motivators of, say, a Java script programmer are going to be very different from [those of] a tax accountant". Once the CVP is clear, it should be incorporated into the tone and content of communication via social media, and also used to determine future engagement activities to enthuse the talent community and drive interest in the company, he says.

Als, who trains recruiters to develop and deploy social media recruiting strategies, says that when he was working with financial planners, for example, "one of the things that was very relevant to them was ongoing education. Also, we learnt that a lot of them were trying to understand how to market themselves more effectively. With that in mind, what we did was we implemented a social media strategy where we tried to touch on those nuances and those points. And we developed value-adding activities - where they could get accreditation, and additionally they could also learn to build their profile as well."

Overcome challenges

Als says there are hurdles to overcome when attempting to implement a proactive, CVP-aligned social media strategy, but they're not significantly greater than those a recruiter encounters with any similar initiative.

"By that I mean you're going to engage and seek approval from legal, compliance, IT, risk, marketing and communications, branding, but when you're doing segmentation, when you're targeting specific job families, this process can become even more elaborate, especially if you're working at a large corporate where the different families are very siloed.

"The approval process may take twice as long, as approval needs to be sought from a company-wide perspective and often again, from our experience, within the business areas within which you're focusing."

Recruiters should take steps early to overcome these barriers he says. This means identifying all potential stakeholders before beginning, and engaging and communicating with them regularly. "They're less prone to halt proceedings if they're confident in the strategy and understand the potential outcomes," he says.

HCMS and InSpecht are providing training on social media for recruitment in the coming months, in [Melbourne](#) and [Sydney](#).