

# Human Resource Recruiting and Selection Using Cellphone Apps

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## INTRODUCTION

Human Resource (HR) management issues can present challenges to organizations. One set of challenges involves recruiting and personnel selection, because hiring competent people can significantly enhance profitability (Casco & Boudreau, 2008). Securing appropriate human capital through new information technology may be a viable way to address these challenges (Ghuri, 2011). Over the past two decades, companies have leveraged the growth of the Internet to change the way that they recruit (e.g., Backhaus, 2004) and evaluate (e.g., Tippins, 2009) job applicants. Since the release of the first iPhone in 2007, there has been an exponential growth in the number of individuals using Internet-connected portable devices, such as iPads, Android-based devices, and cellular telephones. Today, there are over 6.8 billion mobile telephone subscriptions for over 4.5 billion customers (Global Mobile Statistics, 2013). Over 46% of the adult U.S. population owns an Internet-connected smartphone (Miller-Merrell, 2012). The purpose of this chapter is to examine how mobile computing's growth is changing HR management in the areas of recruitment and selection.

Mobile computing differs from traditional computing in several ways. First, people can access wireless ("Wi-Fi") or cellular networks to conduct personal business, such as shopping and

banking, in a variety of locations. This is relevant for HR. For example, a dissatisfied employee on her lunch break can enter a nearby café offering Wi-Fi and, within minutes, apply for a new job. Second, mobile computing, with its small touch screens and tiny keyboards, is well served with a limited number of drop-down menus relative to traditional computing. An HR website that was designed around desktop computers may need to be redesigned for use with smartphones. Third, many firms have created applications (apps); these are simplified versions of computer software specifically (re-)designed for portable devices. Apps may be unique to companies; thus, not only do the apps facilitate mobile computing, they may also promote 'brand loyalty.' (Specific apps may be mentioned; this is merely for illustrative purposes and not as endorsements).

Several technological trends are converging to enhance the attractiveness of mobile computing. These include: (1) low-cost Internet-based computing platforms and storage ("cloud" computing), (2) the fact that many HR microcomputer software applications have limited lifespans and many now need to be upgraded or replaced, (3) the desire of many firms to extract information from large-scale databases ("big data" analytics), and (4) consumers seek more convenient, compelling, and easier-to-use computing interfaces (Bersin, 2013). Some users and developers find additional features attractive, including (1) the ability to "al-

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ways connect” because users carry their devices with them, (2) location-based services, allowing programmers to tailor apps to the user’s geographic position, (3) convenience, allowing applicants to search for jobs from any location, and (4) the ability to customize features for different demographic groups, based on the fact that mobile devices are typically used by only one person (Jabeur, Zeadally, & Sayed, 2013; Mahatanankoon, Wen, & Lim, 2005). Consequently, 10% of U.S.-based organizations now have at least one mobile HR application (“Recruiting, payroll...” 2013).

Despite the growth in mobile computing, some HR managers have been slow to embrace these technologies. One reason for this is the knowledge gap between HR managers and mobile application developers; HR managers often do not appreciate the technical complexities of choosing between creating a mobile version of a firm’s existing website and creating a stand-alone app. There are also decisions regarding reciprocity vs. one-way information communication with mobile apps, data storage and security issues, the terms and conditions of using mobile applications (e.g., create vs. purchase vs. subscription-based apps), and whether (and how) to automate responses (Lauby, 2011). Uncertainty about the return on investment from these technologies also hinders adoption (Cyr, Head, & Ivanov, 2006; Mahatanankoon et al., 2005). Additionally, will an app be developed for just one platform, such as an iPhone? Or will it be developed for multiple platforms? This can be a challenge, as costs involve not only initial development, but also ongoing support. An independent developer may be able to support an app for just one type of device, but the client’s Information Technology (IT) department may be expected to support all types of devices. Some firms are not prepared to hire additional staff to maintain such software (Ghauri, 2011). This means that organizations must consider multiple approaches to creating and maintaining mobile applications and/or interactive, mobile-friendly websites, and

staff should be familiar with a variety of devices, in order to successfully reach different groups of job applicants (Charland & Leroux, 2011).

The Internet allows employers unprecedented access to prospective job applicants as they seek to fill vacant positions. With developing cellphone technology, new forums are now available to recruiters and individuals seeking jobs. These include third-party placement websites that have been adapted for Internet-enabled phones (e.g., CareerBuilder.com; Monster.com), virtual job fairs, Social Networking Websites, and Massively multiplayer online games (MMOGs) such as Second Life.

Organizations also use their own websites and apps to both attract and to evaluate job candidates. Increasingly, firms are incorporating Internet testing into their application procedures. Some organizations also conduct video interviews with candidates in distant locations (e.g., some camera-enabled phones use mobile app versions of software such as Skype to facilitate video interviews). These trends for evaluating candidates will be briefly described. Directions for future research will also be identified.

This is a new area for scholarly research. Dr. Neil Anderson (2003) then at the University of Amsterdam (now at Brunel University) wrote an early and important review article examining the role of technology on recruiting processes, including a discussion of research investigating similarities and differences among telephone-, video-, and in-person interviews. Dave Bartram (2000) provided an early review of the growth of the Internet and its implications for recruitment and selection. Currently, Dr. Tracy Kantrowitz (Kantrowitz & Reddock, 2014) at Michigan State University, and Dr. Neil Morelli (Morelli, Illingworth, Scott, & Lance, 2012) are among the current experts in the area of Internet-enabled mobile telephone selection, having organized symposia on these topics at leading conferences. Dr. Theodore Kinney and associates at Select

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