

Chapter 20

IT HR and the Perceived Value of Networking Organizations

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this chapter is to explore how people and corporations perceive the value of networking organizations and social networking structures. Surveys were used to gather information about how networking organization members and staffing professionals alike view these networks in terms of their effectiveness and general value. This chapter will highlight the issues, controversies, and problems experienced by the modern day worker and staffing professionals, and it will examine the solutions and benefits realized through networking structures and look to the future as the trends uncovered persist. In conclusion, it will be shown that there are synergies in taking advantage of this relatively low investment and low risk way of connecting with communities of experts and corporate opportunities.

INTRODUCTION

The ever changing global business landscape continues to present new challenges for job seekers and employers alike. Global competition and economic pressure have reshaped the way that the workforce thinks about the management of business today. Traditional workforce structures are being compressed, flattened and reorganized

to take advantage of economies of scales and to eliminate waste and over compensation. A global workforce, very specific required skill sets, larger demands for work-life balance, diversity campaigns, evolving work values by generation and an aging workforce in general are just a few of the variables in the scheme of an ever changing complexity to our workforce. Companies around the globe have no choice but to realize that people are their greatest asset. Hiring and retaining the best talent requires both traditional and non-traditional

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-60960-535-3.ch020

methods. IT human resources must identify the best available candidates, hire them and retain these professionals if the organization is to be staffed optimally and not be under the pressures of constant employee turnover.

The purpose of this chapter is to explore how corporate IT human resources decision maker perceive the value of networking organizations and similar social networking structures. Surveys will be used to gather information about how networking organization members and staffing professionals alike view these networks in terms of their effectiveness and general value. This chapter will help readers to understand the experiences of the people involved in networking organizations, both internal to their jobs and external, traditional and neo-traditional. This chapter will also present a view of similar concepts from the perspective of the staffing organization and the challenges and benefits that they experience when sourcing through established networking organizations and structures.

NETWORK ORGANIZATION MEMBER INPUTS

The definition of a technology networking organization, in the context of this chapter, is a structure or association through which individuals in the area of technology are drawn together because of common goals or beliefs where knowledge, resources and relationships are leveraged to progress the agenda of the association. Members from various networking organizations were surveyed to find out what their individual experiences as members has been like for them. The first set of people that were surveyed belonged to internal corporate networking organizations and affinity groups and/or members of external volunteer non-profit organizations. The survey responders were of varying ages and degrees of experience, ranging from junior level technology professionals to senior management. The surveys conducted

contained questions that were both multiple choice and open response, based on the focus of the survey question asked. The survey was designed to allow participants to answer as freely and openly as they wished, conducted with the intention of keeping their identity anonymous.

The Networking Value Proposition

The first question asked was to find out whether or not the individual's believe that networking organizations bring value to the company's staffing organization. The question was posed with a yes or no response. As a result, 100% of the people that took the survey said that they do in fact believe that there is value derived by staffing organizations. For IT staffing, this is a strong indication that technology professionals have an expectation that there will be opportunities to seek out new opportunities of employment through membership in networking organizations.

As a direct follow up to the last question, participants were asked how they think that these networking organizations deliver value. The response was designed as an open comment box.

Survey participants shared that they believe that by being involved with networking organizations that individuals in human resources could develop a rapport with professionals through regular interaction. The survey subjects believed that by networking, staffing professionals gain access to highly skilled and experienced individuals, many of which they may have never met. Many of the members of these professional networking organizations do not respond to traditional advertisements for positions. Human Resources may not have otherwise met some of these people because many people that are employed do not search for new opportunities. Networking events and conferences bring people of like interest, skills, etcetera into one venue. This "collection" of individuals would be very expensive and costly in terms of time and effort to get to without networking organizations. The costs to meet, screen and

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