



LEARNING  IN 360°



In the fast-paced world of **SOCIAL Networking** in general and Facebook specifically, the question is not whether changes are coming. Instead, it's **"What's next?"**



One answer is using the massive people-connector to link workers and jobs.



SOCIAL Networking STRATEGIES

by Barbara Elmore



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Research that Dr. Hope Koch's Management Information Systems (MIS) Leadership class conducted in early 2009 for Wal-Mart reveals that at least for students, sites like Facebook are the preferable way to find jobs. Students said they

trust **SOcial**
Networking

more than they trust company websites. And with a vast shortage of information systems workers nationwide, companies need to find new professionals by doing what recruiters have always done—go hunting where the workers are.

Facebook could be a brand-new hunting ground. Eighteen-to-25-year-olds are the typical users, making up 59 percent of the total. And student researchers in Koch's class discovered that 66 out of 76 students they interviewed said they would take seriously a recruiter approaching them via Facebook. "When we asked students in the survey their preferred way to find a job, most said they would much rather look at a social networking site like Facebook than to go through a more traditional method," said Chasidy Griffin, a senior MIS major and 2009 ConocoPhillips intern.

Another student researcher, MIS major Steven Follis, believes that finding jobs on Facebook is "certainly coming, but not enough companies have adopted it yet as an important tool for recruitment." Follis, who interned with Protiviti in Dallas during the summer, got the job when a recruiter visited Baylor. He views social networking sites as an opportunity for recruiters. "The fundamental need to know people and where they are and be able to contact them will be important the next several decades if not longer," he predicted.

This is the second year for Koch's Management Information Systems Leadership class, and the program earned recognition in June with the Bobby G. Bizzell Innovative Achievement Award from the Southwestern Business Deans' Association. In addition to working in a service-based learning environment, this year they added consulting to the mix by working with Wal-Mart to investigate how the company could use social networking as a tool to recruit IS workers, Koch said. "That field has a big shortage of workers. It ties into why we have the class and why we did the project."

Between now and 2016, Koch said, IS fields will be among the fastest growing in the United States. That growth comes at a time when workers are scarce thanks to the dotcom bust about 10 years ago. Few students entered the area after that, and many universities closed their programs. Those remaining programs have problems attracting students. "We have to work hard to recruit students," Koch said. "But at graduation, they are the best paid and get jobs." Baylor graduates about 20 IS majors annually.

In a conference call with Baylor students, a Wal-Mart IT strategy chief laid out his vision for the student project. Their approach included traditional academic research, with the students first reading the book *Groundswell -- Winning in a World Transformed by Social Technologies*.

"The students found what they could about social networking and recruiting, but they did not really find anything," Koch said. So they started interviewing other Baylor students to discover how companies could use social networking in recruiting. "The real thing that my students brought to Wal-Mart is access to 20-year-old Information Systems majors," she added. "They brought information to Wal-Mart that it could not get otherwise."

The students presented their findings at corporate headquarters in Bentonville, Ark., with everyone from the students to Koch to the Wal-Mart executives surprised at what the research revealed. "I knew Facebook was very popular, but I had not realized how prevalent it was and how many college students were using it," Follis said.

Griffin said the most surprising finding was that students overwhelmingly prefer social networking to search for jobs. The survey revealed that:

73% of the students had used social networking to search for internships or jobs

43% wanted to use social networking to search for a job, compared to 8 percent who preferred a company website and 13 percent who would rather use a career fair

61 of 76 students surveyed said they would research a recruiter's overture on a social networking site further; five said they would follow through with that approach

84% would join a company-established social networking group.

The students also interviewed company recruiters to find out if they were using social networking. Some are using it as an evaluation tool rather than a recruiting tool, Griffin said, which can create image and credibility problems for students.

"Your friends can write comments and put pictures on your profile. We told Wal-Mart they needed to be careful about judging students on things students cannot control. They can take things off (the profile) but sometimes can't get to it quick enough."

Corey Thompson, a 2002 Baylor graduate who is a manager of an applications development team for Wal-Mart Merchandising Systems, agreed that such information could create an inaccurate picture of job candidates. Because of privacy issues, Wal-Mart uses social networking sites "as a way to tell our story and engage potential candidates in a career opportunity with Wal-Mart." The company uses LinkedIn, a business-oriented site, as a recruiting tool, he added.

Sites like Facebook can give employers a way to reach candidates they might not have encountered through traditional means, Thompson added. "It also provides potential candidates an easy way to stay up-to-date on recruiting events without having to go to a different website. Wal-Mart is working to create a Facebook fan page."

Eventually, he said, more companies will combine social networking with traditional recruitment methods. "Both are important tools to engage and recruit talent. Social networking can help attract a larger, more diverse talent pool, but cannot replace traditional face-to-face interactions."

No matter what tools students use, IS graduates have few worries about finding jobs. "It's more resilient than other degrees," said Follis, who will graduate in 2010. "We had a short supply of MIS majors for years, and it's still not as popular now as it was 10 years ago. There are not enough workers to fill the need. It's simple supply and demand."

For Koch, whose students gained consulting experience with Wal-Mart and made recruiting suggestions that the company is considering, the picture is also rosy. "Now my students are friends with Wal-Mart recruiters. It was a very timely project."

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