



# **SURVEY REPORT**

## **HR EXECUTIVES AND SOCIAL MEDIA**

2013

## **INTRODUCTION:**

Social media is the collective term for all internet based applications that allow users to exchange information with each other on a real-time basis. Starting in the 1990s with early instant messaging services the concept really took off with the launch of Facebook in 2004 and Twitter in 2006 with many, many more in the following years. Recent developments have seen social media move away from a purely personal format into the business world where it has enabled business professionals to exchange information and ideas about themselves, and the business world in a more open and direct way.

We at Carter Morris were keen to understand both the degree to which social media is a part of a HR professional's life and the impact it has on their career planning

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF FINDINGS:**

From the HR community we surveyed, LinkedIn is the most popular social media platform and it is used both actively and passively by almost all our respondents. There is a degree of competition from the major social media platforms, Facebook and Twitter, but whether this challenge will be met by LinkedIn becoming more 'social' or the others becoming more business focussed remains to be seen.

Whilst LinkedIn is the most popular platform for job searches a significant number of respondents are looking for HR jobs by accessing potential employer job sites directly, rather than through commercial job boards. If employers want to take advantage of this trend they will need to ensure their recruitment processes are appropriate, that they manage their candidates effectively and that the entire candidate experience is in line with, and reinforces, their brand values.

## **METHODOLOGY:**

The survey was sent to 2,797 individuals in the HR profession across multiple countries. These were a very select community within the Carter Morris international network, typically with "Head of", Director or VP job titles. Some 14% of the target group responded.

The survey was emailed to the community who had to complete their responses online, and in confidence. All responses were received over a 3 week period during October/November 2013.

## SURVEY RESULTS IN DETAIL AND WITH NARRATIVE

### Q1. Do you use any social media sites?

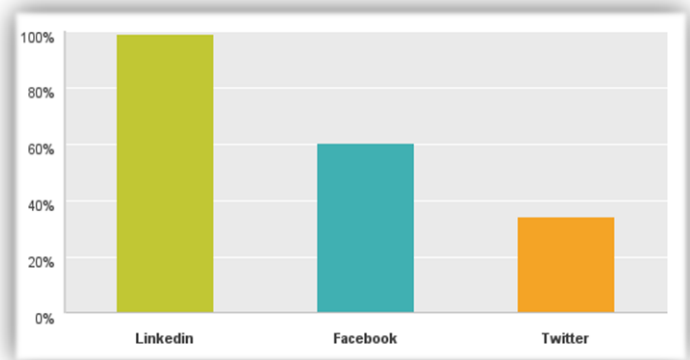
Almost everyone who responded uses social media sites although a small minority (3%) use no social media at all.

With the rapid proliferation of social media sites it is no surprise that the overwhelming majority of those who responded are users of these services. It would be interesting to follow up on the 3% who don't use social media to understand what the reason is for opting out (or not opting in).

### Q2. Which of the following social media sites do you use?

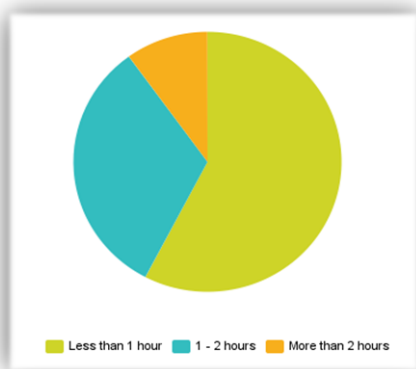
LinkedIn is the most popular social media site with almost every HR respondent using it (99%). Twitter is used by a third of these HR professionals with just over 60% using Facebook.

It is not unexpected that LinkedIn is the most popular site for our respondent group – it is the principal professional social media site in the world (Digital Insights 2013). It is curious to note how few people currently use Twitter despite its high profile as a medium for news, debate and controversy. It will be interesting to see whether Twitter's usage rate increases at the expense of other social media sites.



### Q3. How much time per day, on average, do you spend on social media sites?

Well over half of respondents spend an hour or less on social media sites, a third spend up to two hours and a minority 10% spend more than two hours.

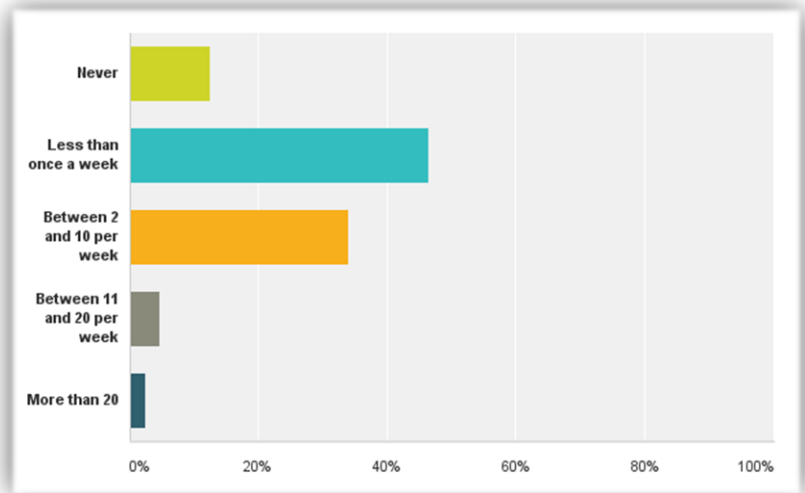


Recent figures from the USA (GlobalWebindex 2013) suggest that, across all ages, people are spending on average around 3 hours per day on social media sites. These usage rates include all traffic, both personal and professional, and it is likely that the majority of it is personal. The majority of our respondents use social media platforms much more sparingly and this might indicate that their use of social media is more.

#### Q4. How often do you post on any social media site?

Posting less than once a week is the most common (46%) with between 2 and 10 posts (34%) coming next. Around 12% never post and an even smaller number, just over 2%, post more than 20 times.

There are no comparative statistics that give these responses any context but they feel, anecdotally, a little on the light side. It is likely, but not evident from the figures, that individuals will post more frequently on Twitter and Facebook because of the essentially personal nature of those sites where the whole point is to be actively engaged. LinkedIn's content might also encourage a more passive relationship insofar as it's possible to be engaged with it, to view it regularly, access job posts and other content without making any direct contribution.



#### Q5. Do you have separate and independent profiles for personal and business purposes?

Having a separate personal and professional profile shows a preference (56%) compared to those who don't (44%).

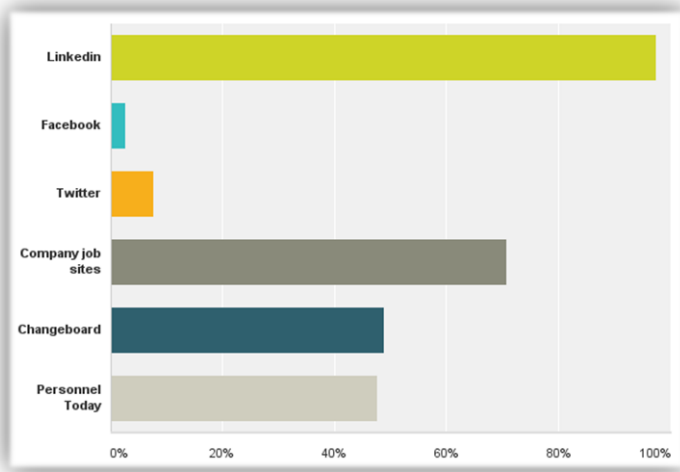
If an individual wants to present two versions of themselves to two distinct target groups then it makes sense to have two profiles. It might be difficult to separate these two entirely and it is likely that an interested employer might want to view both profiles to get a complete picture.

#### Q6. Do you maintain a separation between your personal and business profiles?

For those who maintain a separate personal and professional profile the most popular site to do this is LinkedIn (78%) but with a substantial number (68%) doing so on Facebook. Twitter is some way behind (23%).

Having a purely personal profile of LinkedIn is an interesting decision given the historic professional purpose of such a site. Those who do maintain two profiles should ensure that the content of one doesn't contradict the content of the other or contain anything that might be open to misinterpretation or embarrassment, including inappropriate email addresses and photos.

**Q7. Do you search for HR jobs using LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, Company job sites, Changeboard, Personnel Today or other means?**



Almost everyone (97%) uses LinkedIn for job hunting with very small numbers using Twitter (8%) and Facebook (3%). Many respondents use company websites directly (71%) compared to commercial job boards like Changeboard (49) and Personnel Today (48 %) as two examples.

It is interesting that respondents are using Facebook and Twitter at all to find jobs and probably points the way to a development opportunity for these two platforms.

Particularly noteworthy is that almost three quarters of respondents access company sites directly. This suggests that candidates are targeting specific organisations in their job search and that companies need to make sure, more than ever, that their websites and any direct hiring processes reflect their brand values. It would be worth future exploration to ascertain whether it is only the “household brand” companies who are receiving direct applications.

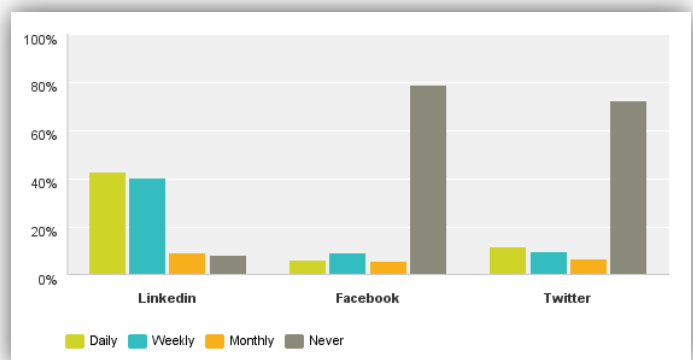
**Q8. How do you find job ads via social media?**

Around half of all respondents find job ads by chance, that is either by referral from another site (16%) or via an automatic feed or update (36%). Just over 40% still do a manual search and a small number (8%) don’t look for job ads on social media at all.

We interpret this to be that many respondents are waiting passively to select from opportunities presented to them rather than going out to find them in a more proactive way. In fairness, this result may also be impacted by respondents not being in active job seeking mode. Nonetheless over a third of respondents do prefer to shop for themselves and are actively looking for opportunities that are perhaps not made immediately available to others.

**Q9. Do you search for HR news on LinkedIn, Facebook or Twitter (and how often)?**

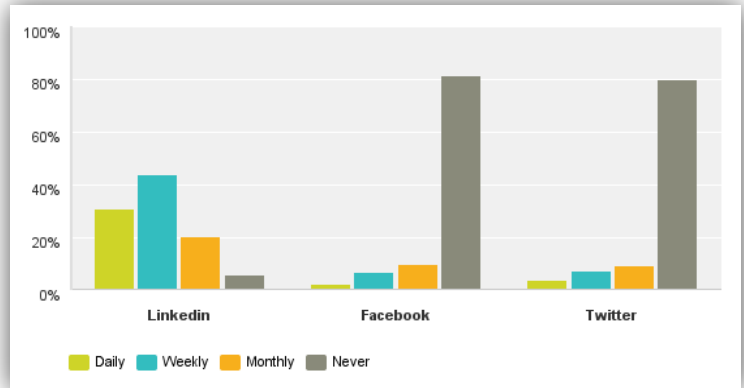
LinkedIn is the most popular site for daily and weekly searches for HR news whereas Twitter and Facebook are used much less (73% and 78% respectively don’t use either)



This may be a chicken and egg situation where candidates won't look for HR news on any site until that site becomes known for postings HR news, but the site won't post any HR news unless people are reading it. General news providers are becoming more aware of the potential of Facebook and Twitter in particular so it may only be a matter of time before we see more news posts on these two sites.

**Q10. Do you search for HR connections on LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter (and how often)?**

LinkedIn is the most used site and generally the same responses apply to HR connections as with HR news above



**Q11. Do you regularly read an HR blog?**

Over a third of respondents regularly read an HR blog.

Given the proliferation of HR blogs it is surprising how few people actually read them. If people choose not to read them because they are not interested or don't have time, and we suspect both are probably true, is writing a blog on a regular basis simply a vanity project for the authors? If it's not then how do they engage more readers on a more regular basis?

**Q12. Do you write an HR blog of your own?**

Just under 5% of respondents write their own blog.

If not many are reading blogs it seems even fewer are writing them. Whether this is because people don't know how to create a blog, have nothing to say or contribute (this seems unlikely) or lack the time is something we would need to explore further to properly understand.

## CONCLUSIONS

All of the social media platforms specified in this survey are designed to be multiple user environments but it is interesting how few of respondents actually use them in that way. There seems to be a higher proportion of users whose experience with social media is passive and the low frequency of postings/ tweets indicates a reluctance to adopt a more active approach. It may be that users have little to say or are shy about going public but all these platforms require a regular interaction between users if they are to be really valuable and useful.

The number of HR blog readers is smaller than expected and the number of blog writers even smaller. The overall number and range of blogs across all platforms may be part of the problem insofar as individuals have no way of knowing what is worth reading, and they don't have the time or interest to find out. This doesn't necessarily indicate any inherent lack of curiosity amongst the survey respondents, it may be that they get opinion and debate from more traditional sources like print, television or even face to face.

Regardless, it is certain that social media is a valid form of communication across our senior level, international HR community.

We would suggest to employers that embarking on the social media route requires as much time, effort and thought as any other medium. If you use any platform it has to be planned in advance, be regularly updated and refreshed, have content that is interesting and engaging, be appropriate and relevant to your intended audience, and has to reflect your brand values and properly represent your company. Just because the costs to communicate may be less than traditional methods, doesn't mean it should be treated as a cheap alternative.

We would recommend that prospective candidates be aware that any information about themselves will become public property and what you post, therefore, has to be appropriate and consistent with the image that employers would be seeking to attract for their teams.

Social media like the internet as a whole has tremendous power and influence. Used properly, social media can add value to your brand be it as a company or a potential employee, but used badly can destroy in minutes what it might have taken a lifetime to create.

**Carter Morris Talent Solutions**

t: +44 20 3287 3727

e: [solutions@cartermorris.com](mailto:solutions@cartermorris.com)

[www.cartermorris.com](http://www.cartermorris.com)