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Social Media Use Explodes Among College Career Services Professionals, yet Proficiency Remains Elusive

Survey by Career Advisory Board highlights major shifts in attitudes, acceptance

DOWNERS GROVE, Ill., May 30, 2013 – Career services professionals at colleges and universities nationwide have embraced the use of social media to communicate with students and employers, yet privacy concerns and limited training impede full use of the platforms, according to a survey conducted by the [National Association of Colleges and Employers \(NACE\)](#) on behalf of the [Career Advisory Board](#), established by DeVry University.

According to the “Career Services Use of Social Media Technologies” findings, more than 90 percent of respondents report an increased use of social media technologies in the past three years, of which 51 percent characterize the change as a significant increase. The survey also revealed that barriers remain in implementing effective social media communications between career services, students and employers. Nearly 98 percent of respondents report using social media for one-way communications to publicize career center events to students; however, just under 28 percent use social media to counsel students about job searches.

"It's clear that college career services centers have made the shift to the online environment, yet there are a number of areas where they can be more effective and efficient in the use of social technologies," said Alexandra Levit, business and workplace consultant and Career Advisory Board member. "Career services professionals who understand how to harness the power of social media will have a major advantage in matching job-seeking students with coveted career opportunities."

Growing acceptance by career services professionals

According to the Career Advisory Board survey, 63 percent reported that their career services offices are enthusiastic about using social media to communicate with students and only 3 percent responded as being concerned or opposed. This sentiment is in sharp contrast to how the respondents felt about using social media five years ago, when only 15 percent said their departments were enthusiastic and 35 percent expressed serious reservations.

Still a monologue

While social media platforms are often cited for their ability to generate dialogue and interaction, this survey found that social media technologies are used mostly as one-way communication

channels by college career services departments. While nearly all respondents reported using social media to post career-related event information, only 27.9 percent use social media to counsel students about their job searches.

“Social media is the biggest change in communications for career services departments since email,” said Ed Koc, director of strategic and foundation research at the National Association of Colleges and Employers. “Now that social media has gained widespread acceptance, the next step for career services professionals is to use these platforms as two-way channels to expand their networks and deepen relationships with students and employers.”

Top platforms

Facebook topped the list of most popular platforms among career services centers with 91 percent of respondents actively using the social network to support their professional efforts. Others included LinkedIn (88 percent), Twitter (72 percent) and YouTube (44 percent).

Although Facebook was the most commonly used platform, LinkedIn received the highest marks in terms of its perceived effectiveness with nearly 60 percent rating it as “highly effective.” YouTube ranked second (33 percent) followed by Facebook (32 percent) and Twitter (29 percent).

Privacy issues

While many of the concerns about using social media have dissipated, privacy still remains a worry for some career services professionals, despite the new privacy controls offered by leading social media platforms. According to the survey, 32 percent listed privacy as a serious barrier to effective, two-way communications when counseling students during their job searches.

Interestingly, nearly 40 percent of career services professionals with 15 or more years of experience listed privacy as a major concern, compared with only 25 percent of professionals with four or fewer years of experience. The responses demonstrate a generational divide about social media privacy concerns.

A training gap

Lack of knowledge about social media technologies among career services professionals was cited as the second largest barrier to using the platforms for two-way communications with students. Thirty percent of respondents believe they do not possess the know-how to use social media platforms effectively. While 77 percent of respondents reported that their career services departments offer coaching to students on how to use social media in job searches, only 25 percent of career services professionals receive university-sponsored social media training.

“Colleges and universities should help their career services professionals to better leverage social media by providing specific training in areas such as online relationship building and identity management,” said Levit. “It's imperative that career services professionals stay ahead of the curve in social media to best position their students in the current job market.”

To read the full NACE/Career Advisory Board report “Career Services Use of Social Media Technologies,” visit www.careeradvisoryboard.org. The survey was conducted in spring 2013.

About the Career Advisory Board

Established in 2010 by DeVry University, the Career Advisory Board is a panel of leading career experts and authors from business and academia who provide actionable advice for job seekers. The Career Advisory Board generates proprietary research and commentary, and creates tools, insights and resources to prepare job seekers for success. Its members include executives from DeVry University, Hewlett-Packard, IBM, LinkedIn, Microsoft Corporation and Quintiles, as well as nationally recognized career experts. For more information, visit www.careeradvisoryboard.org.

About the National Association of Colleges and Employers

Established in 1956, the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) is the leading source of information on the employment of the college educated. The professional association connects more than 5,200 college career services professionals at nearly 2,000 colleges and universities nationwide and more than 3,000 HR/staffing professionals focused on college relations and recruiting.

Survey methodology

“The Career Services Use of Social Media Technologies” survey was conducted from February 21, 2013 to March 31, 2013. The questionnaire was distributed to 5,073 college career center professionals and 1,041 responses were received – a response rate of 20 percent. For more information on survey methodology please visit www.careeradvisoryboard.org.

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