



Presented by DeVry University

# CAREER SERVICES USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA TECHNOLOGIES

## Executive Summary

### Introduction

In conjunction with the Career Advisory Board (CAB), the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) conducted a survey of college career center professionals about their sentiments toward and their use of social media technologies in college recruiting and as part of career center operations. For some years now there has been considerable speculation about how the rise of social media could transform the college recruiting process and seriously impact college career center operations. Given the growth of social media in recent years, it was deemed appropriate to see if sentiments toward social media had changed, and, most especially, to document whether and how social media is being employed by college career center professionals.

### Methodology

The 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 20.5 percent. The respondents occupied a number of roles within career center operations but three functions predominated: Career center directors represented 43.4 percent of the survey's respondents; associate or assistant directors accounted for 26.1 percent; and career counselors accounted for 15.6 percent. The remaining 14.9 percent were made of various specialist functions within career center operations, ranging from employer relations specialists to technology specialists.



## Social media technologies are overwhelmingly accepted as valuable tools in the career services office.

It is both the official position of the career services office and the individual outlook of the professionals working in those offices that social media technologies serve a useful and valuable function in college recruiting:

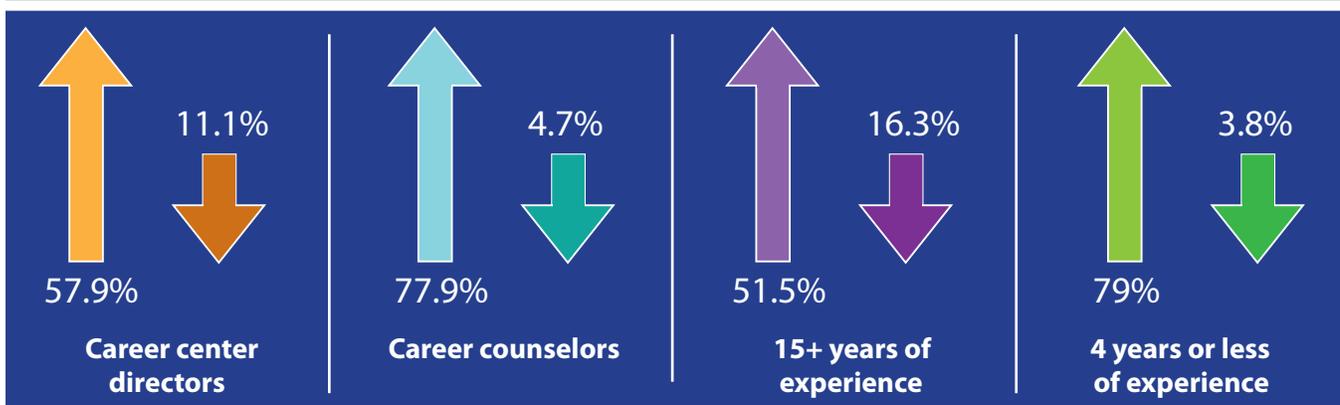
- 63.1 percent of respondents report their offices as enthusiastic about using social media in college recruiting; only 3 percent characterize their offices as being concerned or opposed to the use of social media in college recruiting.
- 67.5 percent report that they are personally enthusiastic about using social media; only 8.3 percent express serious reservations or are opposed to the use of social media.

These perspectives are broadly held by the professionals working in career services regardless of the function they perform or the amount of years they have been active in the profession.

That is not to say there are no differences in personal perspectives regarding the use of social media: The percentage of career services directors and staff who specialize in internship and co-op assistance expressing concern or opposition to the use of social media, while relatively small overall, is noticeably greater than among the other professional functions in the career services office. The same is true for the most experienced staff members—those with more than 15 years of service at college career centers—are more likely to express concern than their less-seasoned counterparts.

- Overall, 57.9 percent of career center directors characterize themselves as enthusiastic about the use of social media while 11.1 percent are concerned or opposed to the using social media in college recruiting. By contrast, 77.9 percent of career counselors are enthusiastic about using social media and only 4.7 percent express either serious concern or opposition.
- By level of experience, 51.5 percent of respondents with more than 15 years' experience in career services report being enthusiastic about using social media while 16.3 percent express reservations or opposition to its use. By contrast, 79 percent of respondents with four years or less in career services are personally enthusiastic about using the technologies while 3.8 percent express reservations or opposition.

### Who Is Enthusiastic About Social Media?



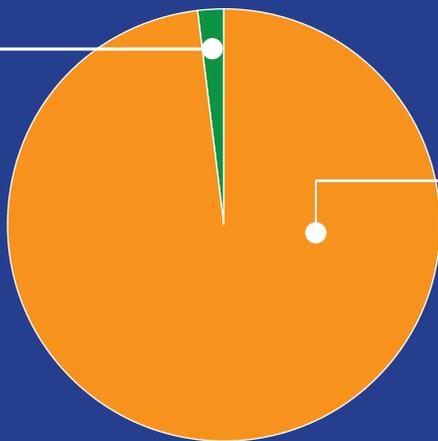
## Positive sentiment toward and the use of social media have grown significantly over the past several years.

This sentiment has evolved from the point five years ago when most respondents were not particularly enthusiastic about implementing social media technologies. The positive sentiment is also reflected in the trend in using social media within the career services office over the past five years. Respondents overwhelmingly report an increased or significantly increased use in social media over the past three years.

- Only 15.7 percent of respondents report that the office sentiment toward social media was enthusiastic five years ago; 48 percent characterize the office position five years ago as accepting, but not enthusiastic; 36.4 percent believe their offices had serious reservations or were opposed to use of social media five years ago.
- More than 90 percent of respondents report an increased use of social media in their offices over the past three years; 50.4 percent characterize the change as a significant increase.
- Only 1.7 percent of respondents report that their office has not yet implemented social media as part of their office operations.

### Career Centers Use of Social Media

Don't use... 1.7%



Use... 98.3%

Increased use  
in past three years... 90%

## Career services professionals perceive their students to be less enthusiastic about the use of social media as a tool in the job search.

The basic perception of respondents is that their students accept the notion of applying social media to the job search but are not particularly enthusiastic about doing so.

- Among respondents, 60 percent see students as accepting of and using some social media in their job search; the remaining 40 percent are equally split between seeing students as enthusiastic about using social media or preferring to deal with employers through more traditional venues.
- There was a slight difference among respondents about student attitudes toward social media based on years in career services. More experienced respondents (those with eight or more years of service) are more likely to view students as more enthusiastic about the use of social media in the job search than were “younger” career services professionals.
  - 25 percent of “experienced” professionals rate student attitudes toward social media as enthusiastic; 15 percent of “younger” professionals feel that students are enthusiastic about social media in the job search.

## Serious barriers to the use of social media in career centers are few—privacy and lack of knowledge are the biggest concerns.

Most respondents feel that there are not any serious barriers to the effective use of social media technologies in their offices. The most widespread concerns involve privacy issues and knowledge of social media technologies. While there is no perceived administration hostility to the use of social media, there also is no apparent support for promoting its use, which may be why many users see a knowledge gap as a serious barrier to effective use.

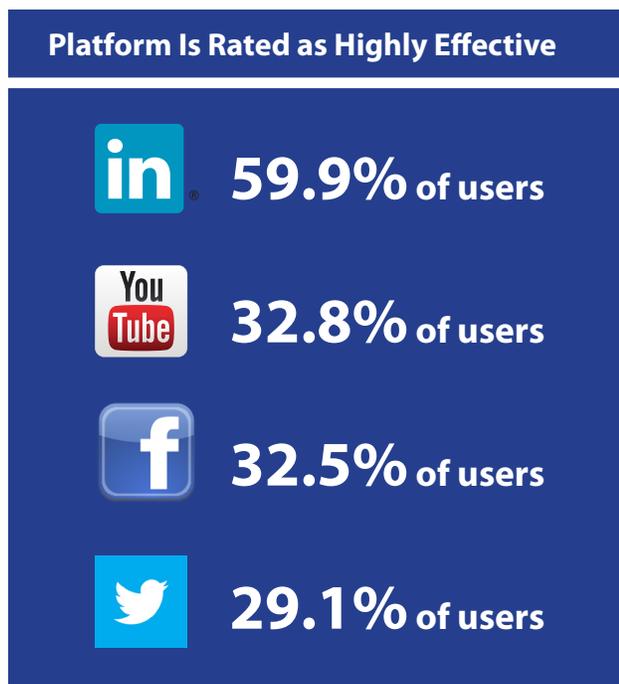
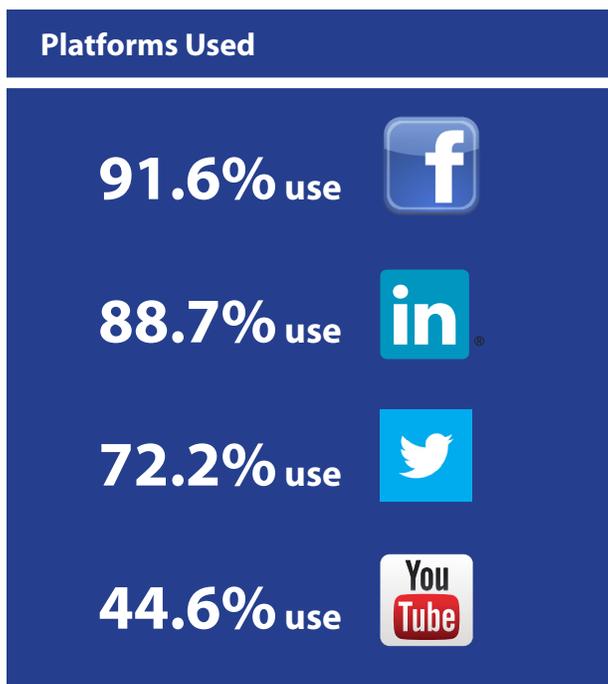
- Nearly one-third—32.6 percent—rate privacy concerns as a serious or extreme barrier to the effective use of social media; 30 percent feel the same way about their knowledge of social media technologies. Only 20.1 percent see budget issues as a serious barrier while 7.2 percent rate administration opposition to the use of social media as a serious constraint.
  - Privacy concerns are considered more serious by more experienced respondents than they are by those more recent to the profession. Among respondents with more than 15 years in career services, 39.6 percent feel that privacy issues present a serious barrier to the effective use of social media. By contrast, only 25.9 percent of respondents in career services for four years or less see privacy concerns as a serious issue.
- Only 25.1 percent of respondents report ever receiving any university-supported training in how to use social media technologies.

## Four specific social media are widely used, but only one is seen as effective.

Three specific technologies (Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter) are employed by a majority of respondents, with a fourth (YouTube) in use by nearly half of respondents.

However, only one technology (LinkedIn) received high marks for effectiveness. Users of the other dominant technologies are generally ambivalent about their effectiveness in college recruiting, with virtually the same percentage of respondents rating these technologies as ineffective as effective.

- Overall, 91.6 percent of respondents report using Facebook; 88.7 percent use LinkedIn; 72.2 percent use Twitter; and 44.6 percent use YouTube. No other technology is used by at least 20 percent of respondents.
- LinkedIn is rated as highly effective by 59.9 percent of LinkedIn users. In contrast, 32.8 percent of YouTube users rate YouTube as highly effective, 32.5 percent of Facebook users rate Facebook as highly effective, and only 29.1 percent of Twitter users see Twitter as highly effective.



## Social media are used by career centers to transmit information broadly; interactivity is very limited.

Social media technologies are used in career centers as asynchronous communications devices, i.e., they are used principally to transmit information in one direction (from the career center to students or employers or alumni) about events.

Only about one-quarter of respondents use social media to counsel students, and approximately 30 percent of these respondents engage with students on a daily basis on social media. This is where privacy concerns are felt the most. Respondents indicated that they did not use social media in job-search counseling because social media did not have adequate privacy controls.

The level of interaction with employers (reciprocal communications) is even less than with students. Only about 11 percent of respondents spend some time each day communicating with employers via social media.

- Nearly all respondents (97.9 percent) report using social media to inform/attract students to career events.
- Similarly, most (89 percent) use social media to inform employers about career center events.
- Approximately 40 percent of career center offices use social media to market students as either potential employees or interns to employers, and 31 percent of offices use social media to distribute job-search information to students.
- Less than 20 percent of offices use social media to review resumes or discuss career planning with students.
- More than one-quarter of respondents (27.6 percent) state that they use social media to counsel students about the job search.
- Among those who use social media to counsel students, 29.9 percent spend at least some time each day interacting with students on social media. An almost equal number (29.4 percent) interact with their students only sporadically during the month.
  - The frequency with which the respondent will interact with students on social media is somewhat a function of years in career services. The newest group of counselors, those with four years or less of experience, tend to interact with students on social media on a more frequent basis while the most experienced group of counselors, those with more than 15 years in career services, tend to interact with students on the least frequent basis:
    - 36.4 percent of counselors with four years or less of experience who counsel students through social media spend at least a portion of each day interacting with students on social media.
    - 20.3 percent of counselors with more than 15 years of experience who counsel students through social media spend at least a portion of each day interacting with students on social media.

- More than three-quarters (77.2 percent) report that their career centers provide training to students on how to use social media in the job search.
- Most (94 percent) provide advice to students about professional appearance related to their social media profiles.
- Overall, 58.7 percent of career centers use social media to reach out to employers.
- Among those that use social media to communicate with employers, 11.1 percent interact with employers through social media daily; 57.5 percent communicate with employers through social media on less than a weekly basis.
- Overall, 45.9 percent report using social media to market students in relation to potential internship positions; 42.3 percent market their graduates to employers as potential job recruits.

## **Currently, the perceived impacts of social media are quite limited, particularly with those outside the immediate university population.**

The major impact perceived by career center respondents to the application of social media in their offices is to reach more students with information about career events, and, as a result, to increase the number of students attending these events. As for using social media with employers, the majority of respondents saw no real impact from the application of social media.

- The majority of respondents (57.1 percent) report that their career center offices attempt to measure the amount of student activity on career center social media.
- Only 25.5 percent of respondents report that the career center tries to measure the amount of employer activity on career center social media.
- Among respondents, 70.9 percent identify informing more students about career center events as an impact social media has had on career center-student activity; 32 percent see it resulting in more students attending career center events.
- More than one-quarter (26.5 percent) feel that the use of social media has had no discernible impact on the career center - student relationship.
- More than half (53.7 percent) feel that the use of social media had no discernible impact on the relationship with employers.
- Among those that identified an impact, 24.4 percent report that social media produced a more immediate interaction between the employer and student candidates, and 20.3 percent say that social media was responsible for more employers attending career center events.

## The biggest advantage of using social media is reaching out to more people, more quickly.

To the open-ended question of what has social media done to make your job easier, respondents provided answers that could be categorized along three dominant lines: 1) social media technologies provide the ability to reach a broader audience in less time than traditional communication devices allow; 2) social media make marketing the career center, its events, and its students easier and cheaper; and 3) social media are a more efficient means of networking:

- 38.9 percent of respondents providing answers to this question cite the ability to reach a broader audience more quickly as an improvement resulting from the use of social media technologies.
- 26.9 percent of the responses focused on social media's ability to make marketing the career center easier and cheaper.
- 19.2 percent feel social media improved networking for the career center and its professionals.

## Career services' biggest disappointments—students are not more engaged, and the workload isn't lessened.

To an open-ended question regarding what social media has not accomplished as anticipated, two responses predominated: 1) using social media did not increase the career center's engagement with students; and 2) social media did not lessen the time and effort required to do the professional jobs in the career center; that is, social media did not improve the efficiency of office operations:

- 38.6 percent expressed disappointment with the fact that the level of student engagement did not increase after implementing career center social media technologies.
- 38.3 percent say that using social media did not result in any time savings for career centers and career center professionals. As one respondent reports, "it actually takes more time to produce the messaging that will attract students on social media to career center events than it used to do when they produced paper fliers."

## The most sought after improvement is better privacy features.

To the open-ended question of what an improved social media platform would contain, respondents provided a wide variety of answers, but two categories did stand out as core suggestions: 1) improved privacy features, especially the capacity to hold private "chats"; and 2) an integration feature that would allow messaging to occur across a variety of social media platforms.

- Among respondents, 37.6 percent would like to see improved privacy measures on social media, particularly the ability to engage in private “chats.”
- Nearly one-fifth (18.8 percent) want a messaging platform that can access any available social media technology.

## Conclusion

There is a significant growth in the use and acceptance of social media technologies among college career center professionals that has occurred in recent years.

This growth in use and acceptance has occurred among all levels of professionals and at all levels of experience, although it is particularly pronounced among the newest members of the profession. However, the implementation of social media technologies on most campuses appears to be fairly limited, restricted mostly to producing messages announcing career center events to students, employers, and alumni. This limited application may be related to concerns about privacy connected with social media and a limited knowledge of how to use the technologies among career center professionals. The result is that social media has had only a modest impact on career centers and college recruiting, at least from the perspective of career center professionals.

The use and the perceived impact from social media may change with the employment of younger professionals, who indicate they have a significantly lesser concern about the privacy implications connected with social media, and with the application of better training on the social media platforms themselves, which, to date, have been very limited for career center professionals.

## Appendix

<b>Respondents by Job Function</b>		
Job Function	Responses	% of Responses
Director of the Career Center	421	43.4%
Associate/Assistant Director	253	26.1%
Career Counselor	151	15.6%
Employer Relations Specialist	40	4.1%
Internship/Co-op Specialist	34	3.5%
Career Information Specialist	21	2.2%
Technology Specialist	11	1.1%
Marketing Specialist	39	4.0%

<b>Respondents by Years of Experience</b>		
Years of Experience	Responses	% of Responses
4 or less	287	27.9%
4.1 - 8	245	23.8%
8.1 - 15	251	24.4%
More than 15	245	23.8%

Find more information on the survey at [www.careeradvisoryboard.org](http://www.careeradvisoryboard.org)

**About 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](http://www.careeradvisoryboard.org).



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**About NACE:** Established in 1956, 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.

Through its research, NACE forecasts trends in the job market and tracks recruiting and hiring practices; salaries for new college graduates; college student attitudes, behaviors, and outcomes related to employment; and benchmarks for college and employer professionals.



NACE is headquartered in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. It maintains a website at [www.nacweb.org](http://www.nacweb.org).