



Presented by DeVry University

CAREER SERVICES USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA TECHNOLOGIES

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. Future trend reports conducted by NACE in 2007 and 2009 suggested considerable concern among career center professionals that the application of social media could have a destabilizing impact on college recruiting in general and their offices in particular.¹ Given the growth of social media in the ensuing 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.

Overall, the survey results indicate a growing acceptance of the role that social media technologies can play in college recruiting and in career center operations. This is further corroborated by an impressive growth in the use of these technologies over the past three years. However, there is still considerable room for growth in how these technologies are applied. The survey shows that social media are being used by career center professionals in a relatively limited fashion. This limited application may be the result of privacy concerns connected with the use of social media in a sensitive interpersonal situation, such as career counseling. It may also stem from a lack of knowledge of the available tools and how these tools work and can be applied. All this points to even further growth in the use of social media among an accepting universe of career center professionals provided that concerns about privacy in the use of social media can be overcome and knowledge gaps in the use of these technologies can be closed.

¹NACE, *Through the Looking Glass: The Future of College Recruiting*, Bethlehem, PA: National Association of Colleges and Employers, 2007



Sentiment toward the use of social media

A series of questions was directed at respondents concerning attitudes toward the use of social media. These questions probed the position of the career center office toward the application of these technologies, the change in the office position from what respondents could recall of office sentiments dating back five years, and the personal attitudes of the responding professional toward using social media.

As figure 1 shows, career center professionals regard their offices as overwhelmingly accepting of the role social media can play in college recruiting. Over 63 percent of respondents reported that their offices are “enthusiastic about using social media and its role in college recruiting” with another 33 percent characterizing the office attitude as “accepting of social media.”

Figure 1. Current office sentiment re: social media, all respondents

Current Office Sentiment	Responses	% of Responses
Enthusiastic about using social media and its role in college recruiting	656	63.1%
Accepting but not really enthusiastic	350	33.7%
Concerned about the implications for the future for career centers	31	3.0%
Opposed to the use of social media	2	0.2%

This perspective on the career center’s sentiment toward the use of social media was essentially universally shared among respondents regardless of their position within the office or their years of service in college counseling. The proportion of respondents who characterized the office sentiment as enthusiastic ranged from a high of 66.4% among Associate/Assistant Directors to a low of 61.7 percent among Directors. The differences among professionals based on years of service in the profession were only slightly greater as reflected in figure 2.

Figure 2. Current office sentiment re: social media, by years of career services experience

	Enthusiastic about using social media and its role in college recruiting	Accepting but not really enthusiastic	Concerned about the implications for the future for career centers	Opposed to the use of social media
Years of Experience	% of Responses			
4 or less	65.9%	32.1%	2.1%	0.0%
4.1 - 8	62.4%	36.3%	1.2%	0.0%
8.1 - 15	64.9%	31.1%	4.0%	0.0%
More than 15	59.4%	35.2%	4.5%	0.8%

The personal disposition of career center professionals toward the use of social media is no less enthusiastic. Figure 3 indicates that the percentage of respondents who are enthusiastic about using social media and its role in college recruiting is even a bit greater than the number who perceived their office sentiment as enthusiastic. Fully two-thirds of all respondents identified themselves as enthusiastic about the use of social media. However, figure 3 also points out that the number of respondents who express a personal concern or opposition to social media is also a bit higher. Over 8 percent of respondents identified themselves as concerned or opposed to use of social media in college recruiting. This compares with only 3 percent of respondents who felt that the career center's position was concern or opposition.

Figure 3. Personal sentiment re: social media, all respondents

Personal Sentiment	Responses	% of Responses
Enthusiastic about using social media and its role in college recruiting	693	67.5%
Accepting but not really enthusiastic	248	24.1%
Concerned about the implications for the future for career centers	59	5.7%
Opposed to the use of social media	27	2.6%

There is much more division among respondents based on job function and years of service on their personal positions regarding the use of social media than on the perception of the office position. Figures 4 and 5 show that career Center Directors are considerably less likely to be enthusiastic about using social media and much more concerned about the consequences for career centers than are either Associate/Assistant Directors or Career Counselors. These differences based on function are highly correlated with similar differences evident based on years of service in career counseling. There is a relatively clear-cut inverse relationship between the amount of time spent in career counseling and the percentage of respondents who feel enthusiastic about the use and role of social media in college recruiting. Those with the least amount of career center experience are likely to be the most enthusiastic while those with the most experience are likely to be the most concerned or opposed to using social media.

Figure 4. Personal sentiment re: social media, by job function

	Enthusiastic about using social media and its role in college recruiting	Accepting but not really enthusiastic	Concerned about the implications for the future for career centers	Opposed to the use of social media
Job Function	% of Responses			
Director of the Career Center	57.9%	31.0%	7.7%	3.4%
Associate/Assistant Director	71.0%	21.0%	6.3%	1.6%
Career Counselor	77.9%	17.4%	3.4%	1.3%

Figure 5. Personal sentiment re: social media, by years in career services

	Enthusiastic about using social media and its role in college recruiting	Accepting but not really enthusiastic	Concerned about the implications for the future for career centers	Opposed to the use of social media
Years of Experience	% of Responses			
4 or less	79.0%	17.1%	2.1%	1.7%
4.1 - 8	71.3%	20.1%	5.3%	3.3%
8.1 - 15	66.9%	27.8%	4.4%	0.8%
More than 15	51.5%	32.2%	11.7%	4.6%

The current enthusiasm for the use of social media both in career centers and in college recruiting in general among career center professionals is a significant change from the perceptions these individuals have of career center attitudes toward social media five years ago. When asked how they viewed the career center's attitude toward the use of social media five years ago, only 16 percent of respondents felt they could characterize that attitude as enthusiastic while just over 36 percent felt there was considerable concern or even opposition to the use of social media (figure 6).

Figure 6. Office sentiment re: social media five years ago, all respondents

Office Sentiment - five years ago	Responses	% of Responses
Enthusiastic about using social media and its role in college recruiting	157	15.7%
Accepting but not really enthusiastic	481	48.0%
Concerned about the implications for the future for career centers	247	24.7%
Opposed to the use of social media	117	11.7%

Some of this perceived difference between the current situation and that from five years ago may be attributed to a bit of an age bias. As figure 7 shows, the perception that career center offices were opposed to the use of social media is more widely held by those who were not directly involved with career center operations at the time – respondents with four years or less of career center experience. Nevertheless, the figure also makes it abundantly clear that even among those most experienced in the profession there is a considerable perceived difference in how open career centers are to the use of social media in college recruiting today than they were five years ago.

Figure 7. Office sentiment re: social media five years ago, by years in career services

	Enthusiastic about using social media and its role in college recruiting	Accepting but not really enthusiastic	Concerned about the implications for the future for career centers	Opposed to the use of social media
Years of Experience	% of Responses			
4 or less	9.9%	48.5%	24.8%	16.8%
4.1 - 8	17.5%	41.7%	28.3%	12.5%
8.1 - 15	15.7%	51.0%	25.7%	7.6%
More than 15	20.2%	51.7%	19.0%	9.1%

The perception that there has been a growing acceptance of social media in career center operations is made more concrete by respondents' view of the current trend in the usage of social media in their offices. It is the nearly universally held assessment that the use of social media has increased in their career centers over the past three years. Over 93 percent of respondents stated that there was an increase in the use of social media over the past three years with over 50 percent assessing that increase as significant growth (figure 8).

Figure 8. Trend in the use of social media, all respondents

Use Trend	Responses	% of Responses
Significantly increased the use of social media	522	50.4%
Increased the use of social media	443	42.8%
No change in the use of social media	43	4.2%
Decreased the use of social media	9	0.9%
Have never implemented the use of social media in our office	18	1.7%

As figure 8 shows, social media technologies are a component of career center operations in nearly all universities in the United States – only 1.7 percent of respondents reported that their institution had never implemented the use of social media in career center operations.

Interestingly, career services professionals perceive their students to be less enthusiastic about the use of social media as a valuable tool in the student's pursuit of a job after graduation. The basic perception of respondents regarding the position of their students is that students accept the notion of applying social media to their job search but students are not particularly enthusiastic about doing so. Sixty percent of respondents saw students as accepting the use of social media technologies as part of college recruiting, but only 20 percent felt they could describe their students' attitudes toward using social media as part of their job search as enthusiastic (figure 9).

Figure 9. Perceived student sentiment re: social media in the job search, all respondents

	Responses	% of Responses
Enthusiastic and use social media heavily in their job search	203	19.7%
Accepting and use some social media	623	60.4%
Would prefer to interact with employers through more traditional venues	128	12.4%
Rarely use social media in their job search	77	7.5%

There was a slight difference among respondents based on years of experience in how they saw student attitudes toward the use of social media. Basically, respondents were cut into two groups those with 8 years or less in career centers and those with more than eight years of experience. Figure 10 shows those with eight years or less of experience tended to see students as less enthusiastic about the use of social media in the college recruiting process than did those with more than eight years of experience, which is the exact opposite of the differences in their personal views about using social media.

Figure 10. Perceived student sentiment re: social media in the job search, by years in career services

	Enthusiastic about using social media in their job search	Accepting and use some social media	Would prefer to interact with employers through more traditional venues	Rarely use of social media in their job search
Years of Experience	% of Responses			
4 or less	15.4%	62.8%	12.6%	9.1%
4.1 - 8	14.4%	64.6%	14.4%	6.6%
8.1 - 15	24.4%	58.0%	11.2%	6.4%
More than 15	24.9%	56.0%	11.2%	7.9%

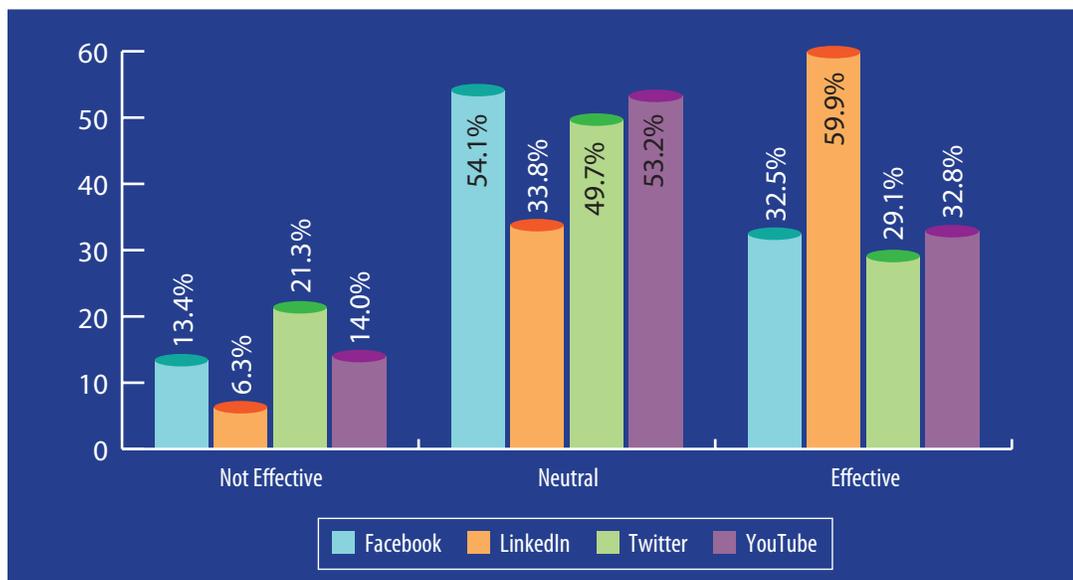
The Use of Social Media Technologies

Now that career centers and career center professionals are open and enthusiastic about using social media, what social media technologies are used and how are they being employed by career center professionals? The dominant social media technologies employed in career centers are the dominant ones in the marketplace in general. A majority of career centers employ Facebook (91.6 percent); LinkedIn (88.7 percent); and Twitter (72.2 percent). There is another large group that uses YouTube – 44.6 percent of reporting schools. No other social media technology is used by as much as 20 percent of our respondents (Figure 11).

Figure 11. Social media technologies used by career centers, all respondents

	Responses	% of Responses
Facebook	937	91.6%
LinkedIn	907	88.7%
Twitter	739	72.2%
Brazen Careerist	26	2.5%
StumbleUpon	8	0.8%
University forum	117	11.4%
Zumeo	4	0.4%
YouTube	456	44.6%
Meetup	16	1.6%
Glassdoor	178	17.4%

Although our respondents report themselves as being enthusiastic in using social media technologies, that enthusiasm does not appear to be based on the view that any of the broadly employed technologies are particularly effective. We asked our respondents to rate each of the social media technologies on a five-point scale (Not at all effective to Extremely effective). We counted the two top markers of the scale (Very effective and Extremely effective) as indicating that the respondent felt that the technology could be classified as highly effective overall. We then analyzed the results for each of the dominant technologies based on respondents who reported actually using the technology. Figure 12 displays the results.

Figure 12. Individual social media effectiveness ratings

Only LinkedIn was rated as highly effective by a majority of users. Nearly 60 percent of LinkedIn users among our college career center professionals rated the service as either very or extremely effective. By contrast, less than a third of users for Facebook, Twitter, or YouTube found those services to be very or extremely effective – 32.5 percent for Facebook; 29.1 percent for Twitter; and 32.8 percent for YouTube.

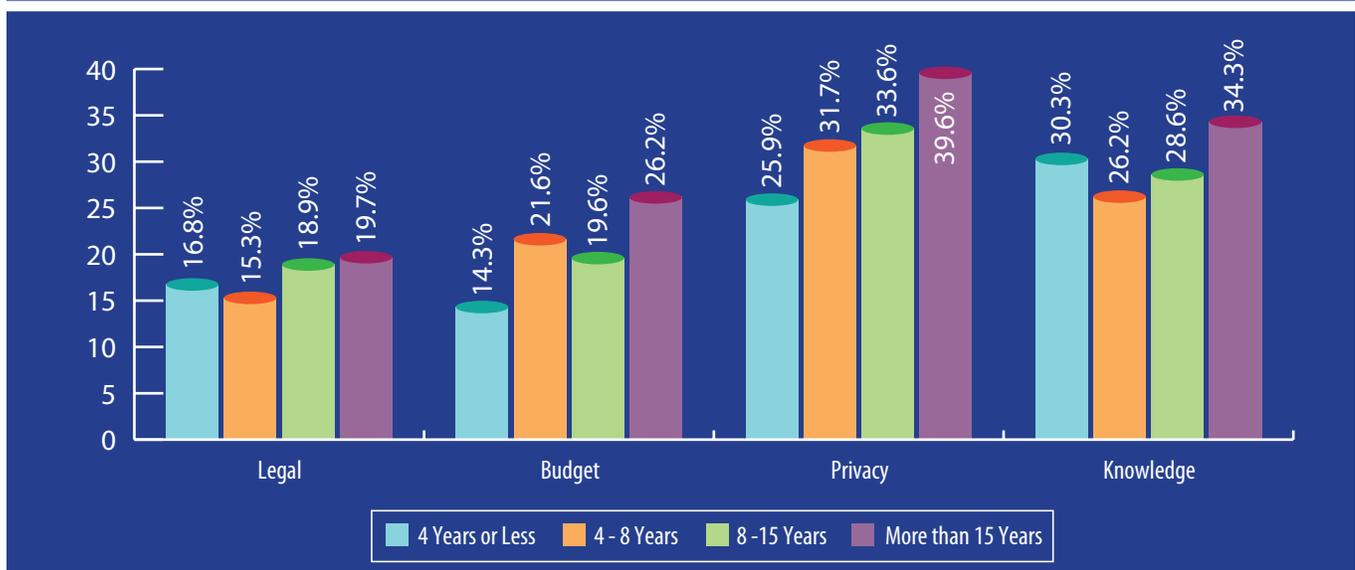
Are there barriers or constraints that might explain the relatively poor effectiveness ratings for these social media technologies? We asked respondents to assess a series of possible barriers to the effective use of social media. Most respondents felt that there were not any “serious” barriers to the effective use of social media technologies in their offices. The most widespread concerns involved privacy issues and the knowledge of social media technologies. Approximately one-third rated privacy concerns as a serious or extreme barrier to the effective use of social media and 30.0 percent felt the same way about the knowledge of social media technologies. Focusing on ratings assessing serious barriers may understate the real concern respondents have regarding the limitations on the use of social media. If we include those respondents that see privacy as at least a moderate barrier then the percentage that sees privacy issues as a barrier to the effective use of social media rises to two-thirds of all respondents. Similarly, the percentage of respondents who view a lack of knowledge regarding the use of social media as a barrier jumps from 30 percent to 58 percent (figure 13).

Figure 13. Barriers to the effective use of social media, all respondents

	No Barrier	Little Barrier	Moderate Barrier	Barrier	Extreme Barrier
	% of Responses				
Legal concerns	18.7%	30.7%	32.8%	12.7%	5.1%
Budgetary constraints	41.0%	21.8%	17.2%	13.0%	7.1%
Privacy issues	10.4%	24.2%	32.8%	23.4%	9.2%
Knowledge of social media technologies	15.7%	25.9%	28.4%	22.8%	7.2%
Interest in the use of social media	33.2%	25.9%	24.3%	13.1%	3.5%
Administration opposition to the use of social media	50.9%	28.4%	13.4%	4.8%	2.4%

Concern over privacy issues connected with the use of social media is directly related to the amount of experience within career centers. The most experienced career center professionals are considerably more likely to find privacy issues a serious barrier to the effective use of social media than are those most recent to the profession. Nearly 40 percent of respondents with more than 15 years in career services felt that privacy issues presented a serious barrier to the effective use of social media. By contrast, only 26 percent of respondents in career services for four years or less saw privacy concerns as a serious issue (figure 14). The same was not true of knowledge as a barrier.

Figure 14. Percent identifying selected issues as high barriers to the effective use of social media, by years in career services



One thing that is clear from the preceding figures is that there is very little concern among respondents concerning either budgetary limitations in implementing social media or facing administration opposition to the use of these technologies. The survey suggests that career center professionals face very few barriers in their use of social media. For example, we asked respondents if they dealt with any restrictions on whom they could interact with on social media. The overwhelming response was that there were no restrictions. Nearly 91 percent of respondents reported that they were free to determine with whom they could contact and exchange messages with when using social media (figure 15).

Figure 15. Rules for counselor interactions through social media, all respondents

	Responses	% of Responses
Career counselors are only allowed interact with external groups	62	6.1%
Career counselors are only allowed interact with the college/university community	31	3.0%
Career counselors determine which groups they interact with	928	90.9%

While there is no perceived administration hostility to the use of social media and virtually no external constraints on career center professionals employing social media, there appears to be little overt support for promoting its use. Figure 16 shows that only a quarter of respondents report receiving any university-supported training on how to use social media technologies. This may be why the current perceived effectiveness of these technologies rate so low and why a good number of respondents rate the knowledge of social media as a barrier to effective implementation.

When we asked respondents how they used social media in their career center operations, one thing became quite clear. 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. As figure 17 shows, nearly 98 percent of respondents use social media to inform students about upcoming career center events. No other student-related activity is conducted through social media by even a third of respondents.

Figure 16. Received training in the use of social media, all respondents

	Responses	% of Responses
Yes	257	25.1%
No	767	74.9%

Figure 17. Informing student of career center activities through social media, all respondents

	Responses	% of Responses
Informing/attracting student to career events	970	97.9%
Reviewing/revising resumes	97	9.8%
Discussing career objectives	195	19.7%
Job-search strategies and activities	308	31.1%

Social media technologies are still not viewed by the majority of career center professionals as potential tools in counseling students. When we asked our respondents if they used social media in directly counseling their students, only about a quarter reported that they did (figure 18). Overall, the level of interaction with students through social media is relatively infrequent. Less than 20 percent of respondents report spending some time each day communicating with students through social media. This does rise when the respondent universe is restricted to those who use social media to counsel students. Approximately 29 percent of those respondents reported spending some time each day with students on social media. The level of interaction is also affected by the experience level of the counselor. Younger (less experienced) counselors who use social media to counsel their students are more likely to be communicating with their students on a daily basis. Over 36 percent of these respondents spent some time each day communicating with students through social media compared with less than 20 percent of the most experienced career center professionals who use social media to counsel students – see figures 19 through 21.

Figure 18. Use social media to counsel students

	Responses	% of Responses
Yes	285	27.6%
No	748	72.4%

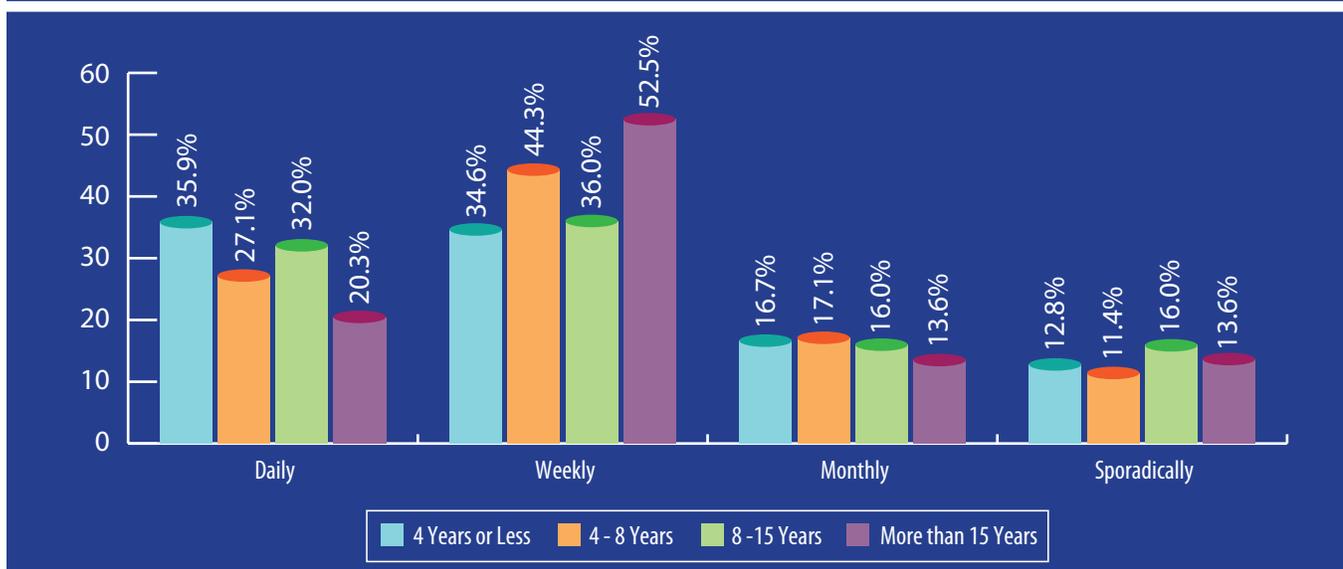
Figure 19. Level of interaction with students, all respondents

Level of Counseling Interaction	Responses	% of Responses
I spend upwards of 25 percent or more of each day talking with students on social media	15	2.7%
I spend a portion of each day talking with students on social media	80	14.6%
I spend some time each week talking with students on social media	175	31.9%
I talk with students a couple of times each month on social media	79	14.4%
My interaction with students on social media is sporadic at best	200	36.4%

Figure 20. Level of interaction with students, respondents who counsel students with social media

Level of Counseling Interaction	Responses	% of Responses
I spend upwards of 25 percent or more of each day talking with students on social media	15	5.3%
I spend a portion of each day talking with students on social media	68	24.0%
I spend some time each week talking with students on social media	117	41.3%
I talk with students a couple of times each month on social media	45	15.9%
My interaction with students on social media is sporadic at best	38	13.4%

Figure 21. Frequency communicating with students through social media, respondents who counsel students with social media , by years in career services



Although relatively few career service professionals have received university-sponsored training in social media technologies, they are nevertheless aware that their students need to be versed in these technologies and to know how to use social media properly to be competitive in today's job market. As a result, the overwhelming majority of career centers provide students with training in social media and an even greater number educate their students on the proper professional appearance when using these technologies. Seventy-seven percent of responding career centers reported that they provide training to students on the use of social media in the job search (figure 22) and 94 percent advise their students on developing a professional profile when using social media technologies (figure 23).

If the interaction with students through social media is somewhat limited, it is even less so with employer clients of the career center. Approximately 59 percent of career center respondents reported reaching out to employers through social media (figure 24). However, the level of interaction among those that do communicate with employers through social media is quite modest. Figure 25 shows that only 11 percent of those that use social media to contact employers communicate with employers on a daily basis and about a third describe their level of interaction with employers as sporadic at best.

Figure 22. Career center provides training to students on social media, all respondents

	Responses	% of Responses
Yes	798	77.3%
No	234	22.7%

Figure 23. Career center advises students on professional appearance, all respondents

	Responses	% of Responses
Yes	966	94.0%
No	62	6.0%

Figure 24. Reach out to employers through social media

	Responses	% of Responses
Yes	606	58.7%
No	427	41.3%

Figure 25. Level of interaction with employers, those using social media

	Responses	% of Responses
I spend upwards of 20 percent or more of each day talking with students on social media	5	0.8%
I spend a portion of each day talking with employers on social media	61	10.1%
I spend some time each week talking with employers on social media	191	31.8%
I talk with employers a couple of times each month on social media	158	26.3%
My interaction with employers on social media is sporadic at best	186	30.9%

When career center professionals use social media to communicate with employers, it is predominantly for the same reason that they communicate with students. Over 90 percent of our respondents reported that their offices use social media to inform employers about upcoming career center events. Fewer than 50 percent employ the technologies to discuss potential job opportunities for students (i.e., to market their students to employers) for either full-time positions or internships (figure 26).

Figure 26. Uses of social media with employers

	Responses	% of Responses
Informing/attracting employers to career events	476	90.3%
Marketing graduates to employers	223	42.3%
Marketing students for internships	242	45.9%

Impact of Social Media

Rather than being transformative on the operations of career centers, the impact of social media technologies is a reflection of their limited use. The impacts have been modest at best whether with students or employers. First, career centers have done relatively little to actually measure impact. Approximately 57 percent report attempting to measure student activity on the career center's social media sites, but only about 25 percent have taken steps to quantify employer involvement with the career center's social media locations (figures 27 and 28).

When asked to describe the impact career center use of social media has had on students, the dominant response reflected the way social media is used by most career centers – more students were being informed about career center events. Nearly 71 percent of respondents found this to be an impact. For a number, this broader communication of career center opportunities also resulted in drawing more students to the center's events. Thirty-two percent of respondents reported more student activity with the career center to be a consequence of using social media. However, nearly 27 percent of all respondents found no appreciable impact on students from the use of social media technologies by their career centers (figure 29).

Figure 27. Measure amount of student activity on social media, all respondents

	Responses	% of Responses
Yes	587	57.1%
No	441	42.9%

Figure 28. Measure employer activity on social networks

	Responses	% of Responses
Yes	153	25.5%
No	448	74.5%

Figure 29. Impact of social media on students

	Responses	% of Responses
Inform more students about career events	691	70.9%
Increase number of students attending events	312	32.0%
Job search advice to a greater proportion of the student body	163	16.7%
Shorter response times for job search issues	48	4.9%
No impact on counseling students	258	26.5%

In assessing the impact of social media on students, the position held by the career center professional and their relative experience level had an effect. Directors were far less likely to see any impact from social media than were their career counselors, and newer professionals were much more confident that social media was making a difference with their students than were more experienced professional staff. Approximately 32 percent of career center directors felt that the use of social media had made no difference on their students (figure 30) compared with under 20 percent of career counselors working in career center offices (figure 31). Similarly, only 18 percent career center professionals with 4 years or less of experience felt that the use of social media by their career center was absent of any impact on students (figure 32) compared with 31 percent of professionals with more than 15 years of experience (figure 33). Though there are differences among professionals at different levels, the overall evaluation is still that the implementation of social media technologies by career centers has had a fairly limited impact on their students.

Figure 30. Impact of social media on students, by job function—Director of the Career Center

	Responses	% of Responses
Inform more students about career events	263	65.1%
Increase number of students attending events	125	30.9%
Job search advice to a greater proportion of the student body	70	17.3%
Shorter response times for job search issues	24	5.9%
No impact on counseling students	129	31.9%

Figure 31. Impact of social media on students, by job function—Career Center

	Responses	% of Responses
Inform more students about career events	108	76.1%
Increase number of students attending events	49	34.5%
Job search advice to a greater proportion of the student body	26	18.3%
Shorter response times for job search issues	7	4.9%
No impact on counseling students	28	19.7%

Figure 32. Impact of social media on students, by years in career services—four or less years

	Responses	% of Responses
Inform more students about career events	207	78.1%
Increase number of students attending events	93	35.1%
Job search advice to a greater proportion of the student body	41	15.5%
Shorter response times for job search issues	14	5.3%
No impact on counseling students	48	18.1%

Figure 33. Impact of social media on students, by years in career services—more than 15 years

	Responses	% of Responses
Inform more students about career events	154	67.5%
Increase number of students attending events	67	29.4%
Job search advice to a greater proportion of the student body	41	18.0%
Shorter response times for job search issues	11	4.8%
No impact on counseling students	71	31.1%

As for the impact on career center relationships with employers, if the impact of social media on students was weak, it was perceived to be nearly non-existent with employers. A majority of our respondents found no discernible impact from the use of social media on career center relationships with employers. Somewhat less than one-fourth of respondents did feel that social media provided employers with more direct interaction with their students and approximately one-fifth felt that messaging employers through social media increased organizational attendance at career fairs (figure 34). However, the net result must be characterized as little to no impact on career center interaction with employers through the use of social media.

Figure 34. Impact of social media on employer relations

	Responses	% of Responses
Increased number of employer recruiters	139	17.7%
Increased number of employers at career events	159	20.3%
Mix of employers recruiting has changed	140	17.9%
More immediate interaction between employers & students	191	24.4%
Employer/recruiter satisfaction with school has increased	102	13.0%
No impact on employers	421	53.7%

To probe impact a bit deeper, the survey asked a series of open-ended questions asking respondents to identify the advantages that using social media technologies had provided them, the expectations they held about improvements that social media would provide that were not fulfilled when they implemented the technologies, and the improvements they sought in future development of these technologies.

Advantages

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 a faster 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. Nearly 39 percent of respondents providing input on this question identified reaching a broader audience in a faster period of time as an advantage provided by social media. A somewhat similar advantage was cited by nearly 27 percent of respondents to the question suggesting that social media made marketing the career center easier. Finally, 19 percent emphasized the advantages social media posed for networking.

In addition to these dominantly identified advantages, individual respondents suggested other advantages that social media provided:

- The ability to maintain contact with alumni
- The ability to teach students networking skills
- A better understanding of current trends
- An increase in the amount of time (hours) the career center had to help students
- A better perspective of employers

Disappointments

To the open-ended question of what social media does not do to improve performance that you expected it to do, respondent answers fell into two predominant areas: (1) using social media did not increase the career center's engagement with students; (2) social media did not lessen the time and effort required to do the professional jobs in the career center – social media did not improve the efficiency of office operations. An almost similar percentage of respondents (just fewer than 39 percent) identified each of these conditions as somewhat disappointing results from the use of social media technologies by their career centers.

In addition, the other “disappointments” identified by some respondents were:

- No improvement in networking
- No ability to track program effectiveness with social media
- The need for face-to-face meetings was not lessened with social media
- Social media did not improve marketing outcomes
- Social media did nothing to entice employers to come on campus
- Social media did not replace the need for e-mail communications
- Social media lessened the level of privacy

Improvements

To the open-ended question of what would an improved social media platform 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. Twenty-nine percent of respondents want to see improved privacy features in social media technologies. This stands to reason since privacy is seen as the principal barrier to the effective use of social media in counseling students. In addition, 15 percent of respondents would like a feature that would integrate messaging across the variety of social media platforms currently available. This relates to the current principal use of social media – messaging about career center events – and one of the principal disappointments found by a number of respondents – the time it takes to create effective messaging through social media.

The other suggestions for improvements offered by respondents include:

- An engagement analysis tool
- A program that will match students with employers seeking candidates
- Topic subfolders to organize information
- A platform specifically designed for internship issues

- A professional communications tool including document exchange, scheduling, etc.
- A job search “tip of the day” feature that can be embedded in the program
- A private communications log
- A video chat feature
- The capability to automatically import student data
- A job-shadowing option
- Incorporating career assessment tools in the program
- The ability of LinkedIn to pull from an individual school’s jobs database

Conclusions

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 among career professionals in how to use the technologies. 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. 

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 another 26.1 percent; and Career Counselors 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.

Find more information on the survey at 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.



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