A Future of Human Resources Social Media and its Strategies

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Abstract

The growth of social networking platforms has been phenomenal. Millions of people around the world with access to the Internet are members of one or more social networks. The time spent using social networking applications is one reason why many businesses are reluctant to allow employees to use sites like Facebook, MySpace and LinkedIn during office hours. Add the time spent on non work related browsing, and employers have a point. At the same time, however, businesses are starting to appreciate that social networking has its advantages, and there are many companies that have adopted social networking as another vehicle to gain a better presence online and a wider audience. This research mainly focus on socializes online duration, a digital divide has been created between a generation of young and generation of managers and executives for work, and the benefits.

Introduction

(A) Executive Summary

Social networking once meant going to a social function such as a cocktail party, conference, or business luncheon. Today, much social networking is achieved through Web sites such as MySpace, FaceBook, or LinkedIn. Many individuals use these sites to meet new friends, make connections, and upload personal information. On social networking Web sites (SNWs) that focus more on business connections, such as LinkedIn, individuals upload job qualifications and application information. These SNWs are now being used as reference checks by human resource (HR) personnel. For this reason, SNW users, particularly university students and other soon-to-be job applicants, should ask the following questions: Am I loading information that I want the world to see? Is this really a picture that shows me in the best light? What impression would another person have of me if he or she went through my site? Although SNWs are a great way to be connected with friends, family, and friends-to-be, they can present problems when potential employers begin to search through them for information concerning job applicants. Many potential employees would be mortified to learn that employers could potentially read the personal information posted on MySpace, Facebook, LinkedIn, or other SNWs.

Searches on SNWs allow employers to look into what is done 'after hours,' socially or privately, by the applicant. A resume may be just a snapshot of a job applicant, while other personal information may be found online. Many job applicants have learned the hard way that what they post may come back to haunt them (Rodriquez, 2006). Human Resources and SNWs Many companies that recruit on college campuses look up applicants on MySpace, Facebook, LinkedIn, and other SNWs. What they find on these sites presents a dilemma for the recruiters. Students post comments that they may think are private but can be read by many. These posts can be provocative comments on any subject from drinking to recreational drugs to sexual exploits. Although they may seem innocent enough to the students who have posted them, college recruiters or graduate admission officers may look at these postings as immature and unprofessional. Recruiters are warning universities' career resource centers that they are looking at SNWs and that it would be best to work with students about how they are presenting themselves on these sites. The lifestyle the students are presenting online may not be what corporate recruiters or graduate school admission officers want in potential applicants.

(B) Methodology

Research into the perceptions of risk associated with online social network (OSNs) began in 2010.The researcher used the information gained from these groups to develop and refine a quantitative instrument. The resulting 122 item, self-complete questionnaire contained a series of mainly closed ended questions relating to demographics, attitudes, beliefs and behaviors around online socializing and the perceptions of risk associated with this activity.

(i) Respondent Age

CHART – I
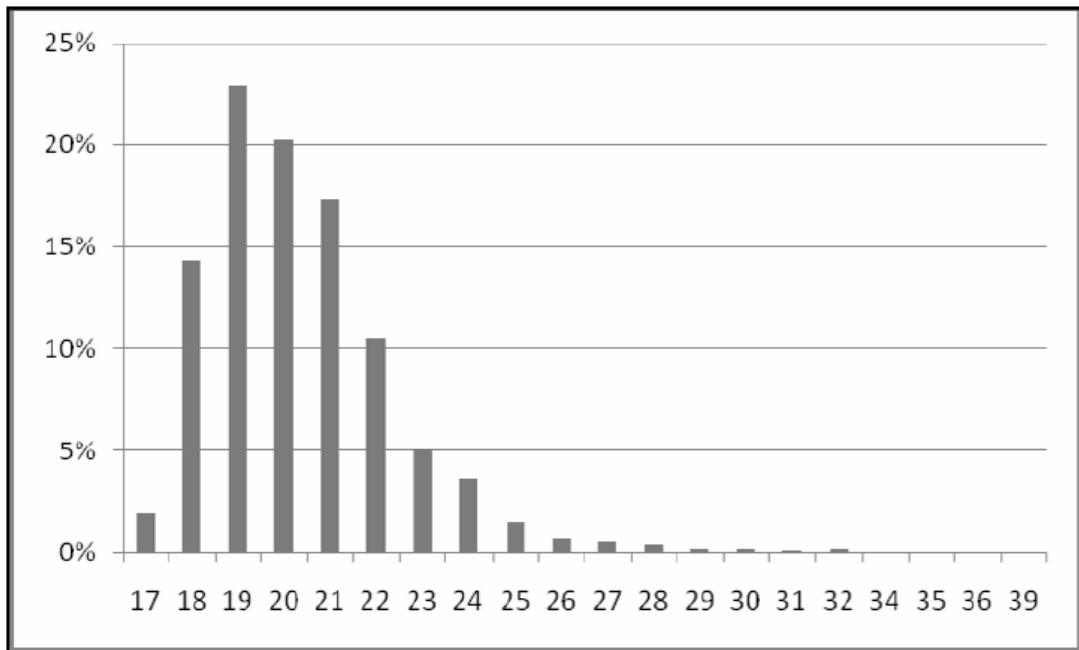
(ii) The Sample

A total of 230 questionnaires were distributed during the research resulting in a total 206 questionnaires that were used for the final analysis.

As chart 1 shows respondents ranged in age from 17 to 39 with over 94% falling into the 18 to 24 category. The researcher used a quota sampling framework to reflect actual enrolment proportions across the entire respondents. Furthermore, as shown, in Chart II, the majority of respondents (70%) work in paid employment on average for at least a few hours per week while going to work.

**(iii) Respondent Weekly Work Hours**

CHART - II
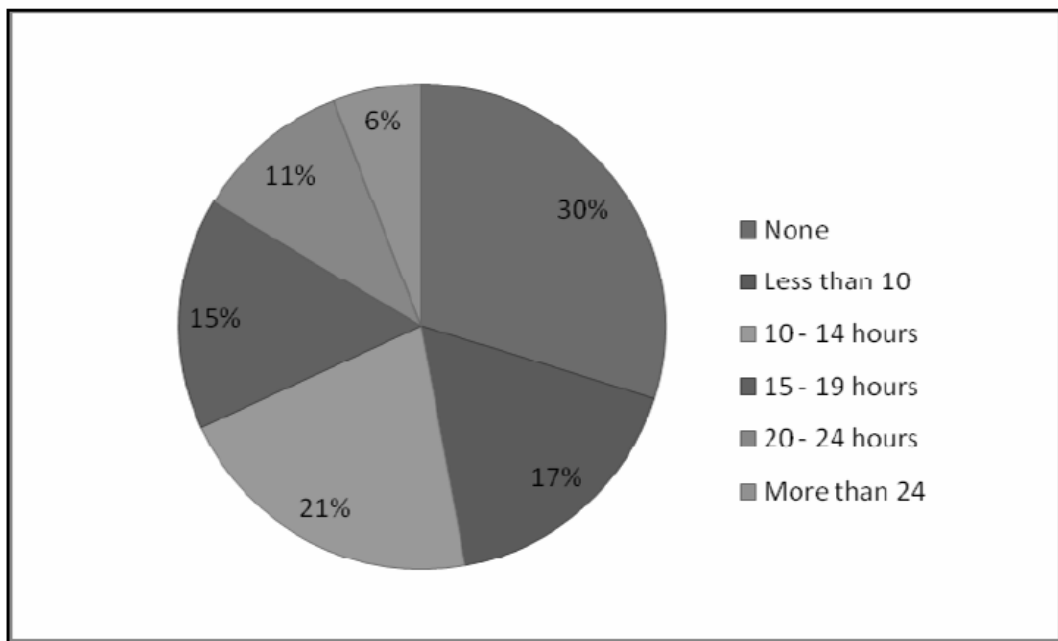
(C) Research Objectives

   (i)   To determine the forms of online social networking currently in use by the targets.

   (ii) To review the nature of risk associated with the use of the internet for online social networking

   (iii) To determine the levels of awareness to various risks associated with the availability of personal information online among respondents

   (iv) To explore whether the concept of privacy is understood by online socializes as protecting dignity or expressing personal control.

(iv) Use of the Internet and Online Tools

**CHART – III (usage of online tools)**
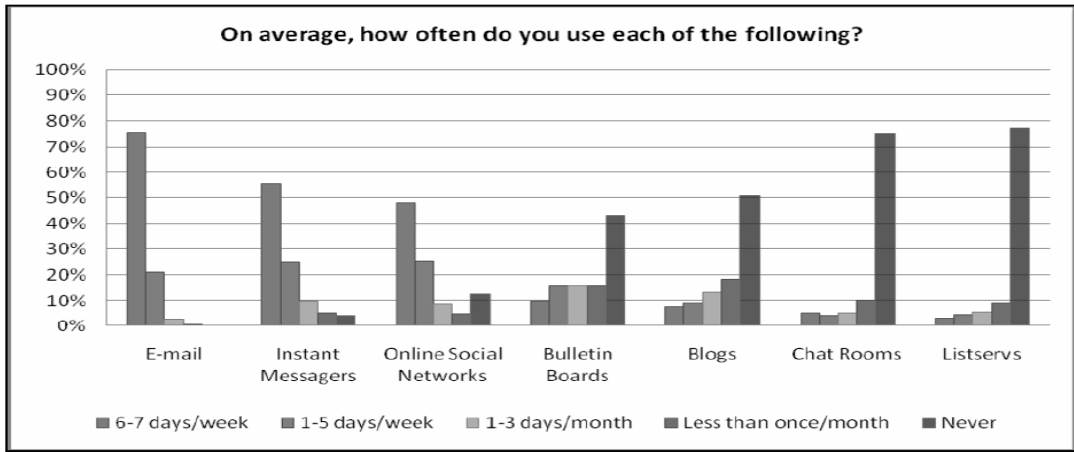
Results of Quantitative Survey:

The quantitative phase of the research provides critical insights into the use of OSNs by respondents and their perceptions of risks and privacy. Usage patterns of technology tools continue to evolve. As chart III shows the respondents report using e-mail, instant messaging and online social networks most frequently. E-mail has the highest usage rate, with 97% logging to e-mail at least once per week. Instant messaging sites are second in popularity; followed closely by OSN sites (81% and 74% respectively use these at least weekly). Other technologies, such as chat rooms, listservs and bulletin boards are used much less often. Despite much media attention to blogs, they are not currently used much by respondents.

(v) Online Social Networks

CHART – IV
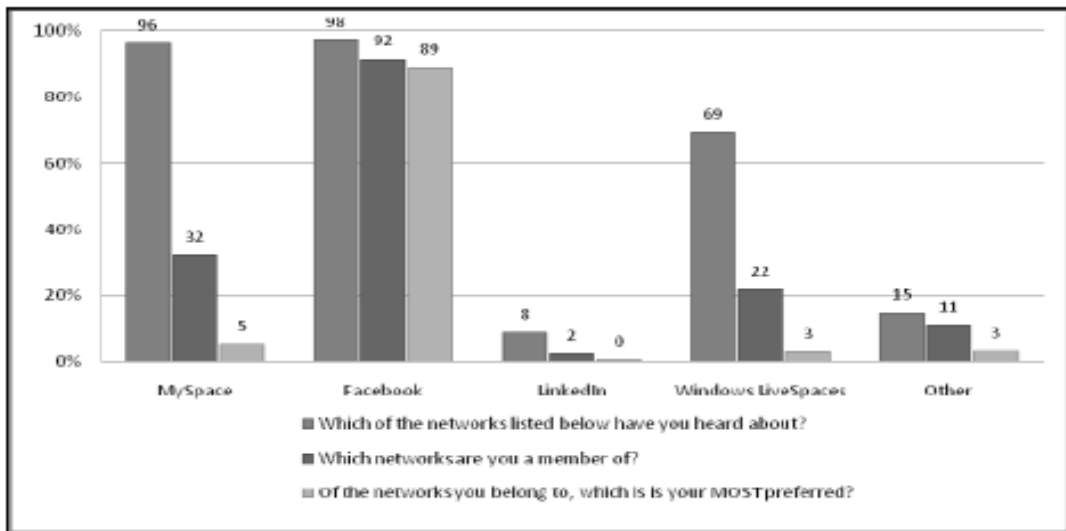
As chart IV suggests, Facebook is the most popular social network among the respondents. Ninety eight percent of respondents have heard of it; 92% are members of Facebook; and 89% report it as their most preferred network. As a result, most of the subsequent questions in this section have been answered in the context of Facebook.

(vi) Usage of Online Social Networks

CHART – V
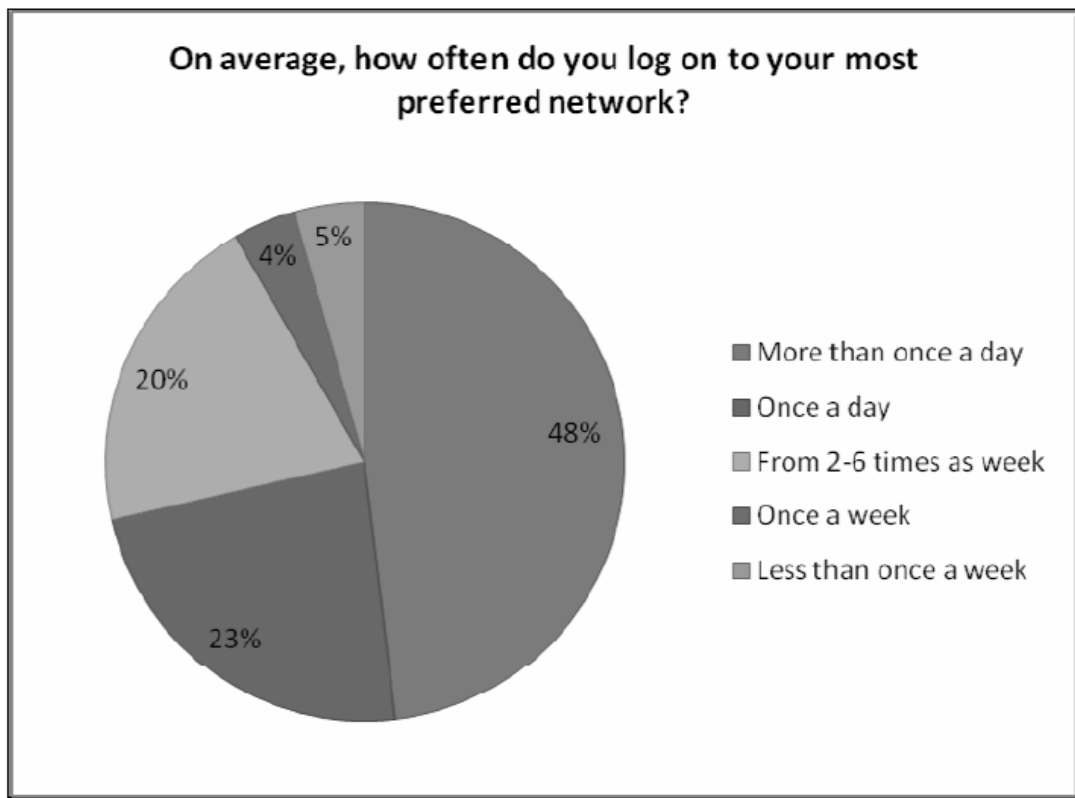
As chart V indicates, over 70% of respondents log onto Facebook at least once a day, and for almost half of respondents, there are multiple logins on a daily basis. Such use of Facebook among respondents appears similar to the use of e-mail. The level of activity reported specifically for Facebook use appears higher than that reported in chart III for OSN use in general. It appears that the term "online social network" may be somewhat unfamiliar to some respondents, until it is connected with concrete examples such as MySpace or Facebook. The reported usage levels suggest OSNs have become firmly integrated into the communication preferences of the respondents. As a result, the respondents face challenges with respect to managing the use of OSNs among this new generation of employees. As well, opportunities exist to leverage this new capacity to reach large numbers of individuals (employees, customers, general public).

(vii) Extent of Information Included on OSNs
CHART - VI
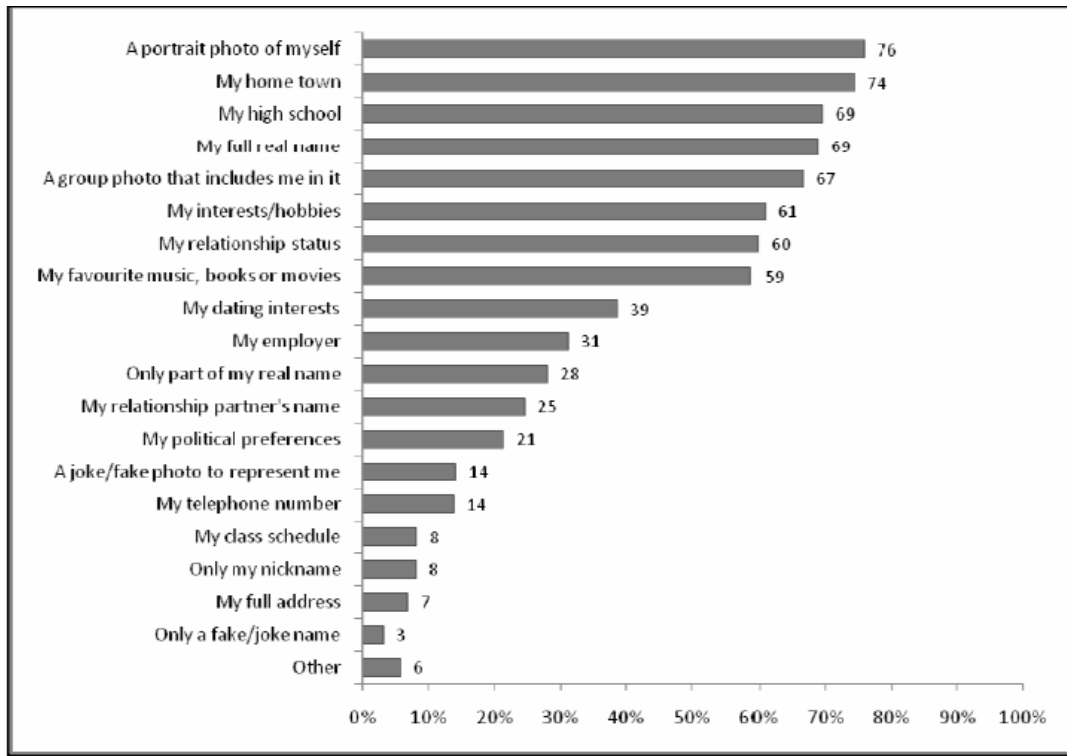
As chart VI indicates, the respondents appear very comfortable posting a large amount of what others might view as personal and private information on their OSN. For example, about 7 out of 10 respondents post their full real name on their home page. In addition, the majority of respondents have posted a portrait of themselves (76%) and/or a group photo that includes their picture (67%). There is also no hesitancy in providing information about their interests or hobbies (61%), favorite music, books, and movies (59%), and their relationship status (60%). While only a few include traditional contact information (7% provide a full address and 15% list a telephone number), indirect information that could allow others to trace someone's whereabouts is common. For example, social networks such as Facebook encourage members to identify their home town (74%) high school (69%) or even their employer (31%)

(D) Key Findings

- Nine out of ten respondents socializes online regularly and frequently

- The respondents are largely aware of the risks of online socializing, and have attempted to control the release of their personal information online

- A new digital divide has been created between a generation of young and a generation of managers and executives for which they work

- The respondents have a unique perception of network privacy, according to which personal information is considered private as long as it is limited to their social network

- Organizations reject and do not recognize the notion of network privacy. Instead, they subscribe to the view that information posted online is public and deserves no protection

- Organizations do not have policies, practices or guidelines in place that explicitly govern the use of online social networks by their employees, or by the organizations themselves for marketing and for human resources purposes

- Online social networks, while benefiting greatly from the advertising revenue generated by their users' personal information, have successfully created a public image of their business as a passive conduit, pipeline or wall, on which personal information can be displayed, and have avoided responsibility in the public mind for any harm caused to the privacy or reputation of their users.

(E) Recommendations to Organizations

- Develop an understanding of online social networks and their role in the culture and communication behavior of the respondents – your customers and your employees.

- Develop clear rules and guidelines about the use of online social networks at work and at home based on principles that employees will accept

- Support these policies with appropriate tools and enforcement

- Do not actively seek information from online social networks for recruitment and selection processes, and if access to such information is obtained, refrain from using it

- Ensure that uses of online social networks or the information obtained from them to fulfill marketing goals and objectives are in compliance with PIPEDA (Personal information protection and Electronics documents act).

(F) Work Life / Personal Life Boundaries

The researcher asked respondents their view on the line between personal and work life and the impact of OSNs on this boundary. There is general agreement that "there is a fine line between the two". Respondents are also in general agreement that there is a generational aspect in that younger people "have different views about personal versus private life"; and that using Facebook "is part of the youth culture". For the under 30 group, "there is an underlying expectation…that what happens on Facebook stays on Facebook. People aren't posting things on there and expecting you to run back to their manager". Likewise, "people do things away from work that doesn't reflect on their personality at work, so if they create something with the expectation that it's not going to be viewed in the work context, then the researcher think it's difficult to put them in a place where we are going to say; now we are going to review it". Others see it as a "freedom of speech issue…If somebody wants to post something on a group or on their wall, the researcher don't think [the company] has a right to step in and say you can't say anything negative about us" .

(G) Recruitment and Selection: Human Resources Use of Online Social Networks

Respondents were asked to describe the current and proposed use of OSNs to assist with the human resources functions of recruitment and selection of candidates for positions. None of the respondents reports a strategic and targeted use of OSNs for recruitment. However, there are certainly isolated instances of its being used both for certain positions and for informal recruiting by those already on Facebook. For example, one technique is to set up a Facebook space and provide information to prospective applicants on "what it would be like to work at the company and an opportunity to ask questions of recruiters"

In general, OSNs may have potential for recruitment, but at this time probably only for the younger demographic and for entry level positions. In terms of using the information posted to gain insight into the character of the potential hire, there is no agreement among respondents about whether that is an ethical and appropriate use of technology as well as whether the information would ultimately provide any insight into job performance. Once again, the comments of respondents indicate that they see OSN as something very significant with the potential to impact how they do business, but at the moment they cannot articulate what form those impacts will take.

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