

MEASURING JOB CANDIDATES' REACTION TO PASSIVE RECRUITMENT STRATEGIES

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Abstract: Passive recruitment means finding and creating a pool of candidates who are not currently looking for a job, mostly because they are satisfied in their current position. They are considered as best candidates as they are proved professionals considered as valuable assets by their current employer. Currently more and more companies are focusing on targeting these passive candidates to reduce the risk of a false hire. Failure to strategize for this is even considered as a competitive threat. Empirical study has not yet been done to explore this area of passive recruitment from a job candidates' perspective. This research paper examines the variation of job candidate's intentions to apply depending on the passive recruitment methods. The paper deals with mainly three recruitment methods: direct method, employee referral and staffing agency. The study focuses on finding the job candidates' attitude towards passive recruitment method, recruitment message specificity in the methods, perception of privacy in passive recruitment methods and impact of these on candidates' intention to apply.

Keywords: Passive recruitment, recruitment message specificity, perception of privacy, intention to apply.

1. Introduction

The recruiting landscape is changing very rapidly that it is becoming crucial that employers update to this change to attract the best of talents. To attract these top performers in the industry and to be competitive, companies have to develop strategy for targeting and recruiting best candidates.

Nowadays to target these best candidates companies are focusing on targeting passive job candidates as they are successful professionals who have proved their value in their professional space. But studies have not yet found what these passive candidates are looking for from the companies. This study aims at finding job candidates attitude towards passive recruitment methods and its relation to the candidates intention to apply.

A study on 2015 global recruiting trends showed that only 61% of the companies use passive recruitment in spite of the fact that three quarter of the professionals

consider themselves as passive candidates. A study by Talent Rise in 2014 showed that 49% of the job candidates in social media are either semi passive or passive candidates. 45% of the employers report that lack of targeted strategies to engage with passive talent as a competitive threat (Aon Hewitt people matters study 2016). Experts say that it requires sourcing techniques and persuasion to effectively engage passive candidates compared to active candidates. But this hard work is found to pay off in the long run considering these candidates contribution to the organization as employees. (Roy Maurer, 2016).

2. Literature Review

The literature review is divided into 4 parts. First is on recruiting passive job candidates, second on recruitment message specificity according to passive recruitment method, third on job candidates' perception of privacy of their information and fourth on job candidates' attitude towards passive recruitment method.

A. Recruiting passive job candidates

Passive candidates are successful professionals, satisfied at their job, not looking for other opportunities, so even if right opportunity come to them they are less likely to be open to learn more about it (Maury Hanigan, 2015). Whereas active job seekers are not necessarily working and they will be easier to find mostly because their resumes will be available in various job boards as they are exploring opportunities in employment. But this doesn't mean that active candidates have less skill or are worse than passive candidates it is just that they are in different points in their employment cycle (Evan Cohen, 2009).

Valisa Hedrick et.al. in 2017 explained Passive recruitment strategies from an organizations perspective as those that did not include direct person-to-person interaction with potential participants. These strategies included community flyers, newspapers ads, targeted postcard mailings, and email list serves. Another article included job announcement on agency website, career website, job boards, etc., Job

fairs/hiring events, Billboards, newspaper ads, or other advertisements seen by a non-specific, non-targeted, general audience, on-campus events such as, career events etc as passive sourcing strategies. Whereas active sourcing strategies include intern to hire, professional associations in field of interest, academic institutions and referrals.

Roy Maurer in 2016 said that employers focus on passive candidates is one of the reasons for increasing time to hire. Companies using LinkedIn and other social media tools to find already employed and proved candidates who aren't currently looking for job change is increasing in spite of the fact that the conversion ratio of these candidates is low compared to active job seekers. Other reasons mentioned for increasing time to hire were longer interviews with people and more number of prospective candidates.

A study by Sam DeKay, 2009 showed that 94.5% of the selected LinkedIn members wants or expects to be called for job opportunities, consulting offers, job inquiries or business deals. Among that 60% specified three or four of the above reasons and only 5.5% of the selected members choose reasons unrelated to employment options. This study showed that only a small percentage of individuals registered with LinkedIn are truly passive job seekers, that small percentage would only want to be contacted for expert discussion or to just keep in touch whereas the other majority are semi passive job seekers looking for opportunities to advance their career.

B. Recruitment Message Specificity According to Passive Recruitment Method

Passive candidates include young, old, all generations, all backgrounds and all businesses and industries. To reach them, employers have to be creative and show their efforts through emails and online, everywhere their potential candidate's eye might reach. Show the company culture through videos or updates in company blog. Also it is important that recruiters focus their attention and efforts on the candidates who are technically passive candidates but also willing to consider the opportunity if the time and message are permits. (MauryHanigan, 2015).

To attract top performing passive professional, they have to communicate the right information with right frequency so that it remains in the top of their mind that they should consider it first when they are exploring for a shift in job. Long term benefits should be emphasized and the team should be introduced, the demand for the position should be presented and emphasize that the candidate is best fit for the role because the best performing professionals in any industry are found mostly among the ranks of passive candidates than active candidates (Evan Cohen, 2009). Most high performing recruiters understands what

individual motivators of various candidates are and based on that they approach them and connect in an individual and personal level (MauryHanigan, 2015).

Explicit recruitment information affect the perception of organizational attributes and in turn influence intention to apply for the job, whereas implicit recruitment information affects the attractiveness and fit perception and thus influence decision to apply (Roberson Q et. al., 2005). When organizations provide specific information about an organization's work environment and attributes, job candidates gets an impression that organization provides desired positive outcomes compared to an organization that offers general company information. Studies also say that viewer's perception on the organizational culture is affected by the company website design feature as well as the information they provide during recruitment like organizational values, policies, awards, and goals. (Braddy, P.W., et. al., 2006).

C. Job Candidates' Perception of Privacy of their Information

The concern of citizens and state in the issue of privacy of information has been always increasing and this has been impacting organizations in both public and private sector. (Richard W. Woodman, 1982). The availability of employee's information is important for the functioning of organizations in most cases. But mostly there will be conflict between this need of the organization and the need of individuals to have privacy in certain information. This survey by W. Woodman indicated that 76 percent of the sample wanted their permission to be sought for internal disclosure of their information and a full 92 percent so replied for external disclosure.

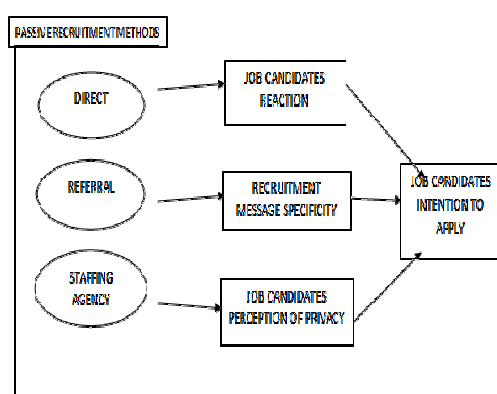
A study says that America's workers post content on the social networking sites that may not be considered suitable by the employers. Many of these are expected by the employees to be private and not to reach the employers. But a majority is using social networking sites to verify the background of job candidates like discipline, but the ethicality in this remains a question (Gina L Genova, 2009). Findings say that 63% of employers have rejected candidates based on the information found on social networking site profiles. This can also question the privacy invasion and terms of service of those sites. Supporting this many law firms advise not to refer these content to avoid risk to the firms side (Davis, 2006). The author highlights 3 main issues in using online sources for recruitment purpose. That is, inaccurate, irrelevant and false information could lead to unfair employment decisions, illegal employment decisions due to low accountability and disclosure of information and violation of employee's legitimate expectation of

privacy information as employee's social life is misused.

D. Job Candidates' Attitude Towards Passive Recruitment Method.

This is a major research gap in this study as this area has not yet been explored. Here we try to understand job candidates' attitude on the passive recruitment that are direct method, referral and staffing agency and its role in the candidates' intention to apply.

3. Conceptual Model



4. Hypothesis

Understanding the candidates' reaction to various recruiting strategies and what they are looking for in the company is crucial for the organizations and the recruitment industry in order to attract the best talents. Hence the following hypotheses are formulated. These are intended to measure job candidates' reaction towards passive recruitment methods. The passive recruitment methods considered in this study are direct method (that includes phone call, email and LinkedIn), employee referrals and staffing agencies. Proposed hypothesis are:

H1 a: Job candidate's intention to apply through direct method will have a significant relationship with their attitude towards direct method.

H1 b: Job candidate's intention to apply through referral method will have a significant relationship with their attitude towards referral method.

H1 c: Job candidate's intention to apply through staffing agency will have a significant relationship with their attitude towards recruitment through staffing agencies.

H2 a: Job candidate's intention to apply through direct method will have a significant relationship with the recruitment message specificity associated with that method.

H2 b: Job candidate's intention to apply through referral method will have a significant relationship with the recruitment message specificity associated with that method.

H2 c: Job candidate's intention to apply through staffing agency will have a significant relationship with the recruitment message specificity associated with that method.

H3 a: Job candidate's intention to apply through direct method will have a significant relationship with their perception of privacy associated with the method.

H3 b: Job candidate's intention to apply through referral method will have a significant relationship with their perception of privacy associated with the method.

H3 c: Job candidate's intention to apply through staffing agency will have a significant relationship with their perception of privacy associated with the method.

5. Methodology

A. Sample

This study is focused on measuring job candidates reaction to passive recruitment methods, so the participants of this survey are currently working employees with at least six months of work experience. Convenience sampling was used. 230 respondents participated in the survey. Respondents from any industry, function or age group was eligible for the survey. Table 1 shows the demographic profile of the samples.

Table 1

GENDER	
Female	75
Male	154
AGE	
<25	102
>35	37
25 to 35	92
POSITION	
Entry level	87
Middle level	107
Senior level	26
Top Management	10
INDUSTRY	
Services	108
Manufacturing	49
IT/Ites	73
SIZE OF ORGANIZATION	
Between 200 &700 employees	21
Between 700 &1500 employees	19

Less than 200 employees	76
More than 1500 employees	114
OWNERSHIP	
Public sector	30
Private sector	128
Foreign multinational	44
Indian multinational	28

B. Measures

In passive recruitment 3 types of recruitment methods were considered. Direct method in which organizations contacts the job candidates directly, referral method in which current employees refer potential job candidates

and staffing agencies in which in which an external agency brings the pool of job candidates.

The perception of job candidates towards these three methods are measured in this study. Also the variation in job candidate intention to apply depending on variation in recruitment message specificity and privacy concern associated with the 3 types of recruitment methods considered.

6. Analysis

Regression analysis was done to test the significance in the hypothesis and to see if it holds true. Intention to apply based on various methods were considered as the dependant variables and the rest of the variables independent variables or predictor variables.

Table 2. Regression Analysis

	R ²	Adj R ²	Perception	Recruitment message specificity	Privacy concern
Intention to apply in direct method	0.108	0.097	p<0.001	p>0.05	p>0.05
Intention to apply in staffing agency	0.472	0.465	p<0.001	p<0.001	p<0.001
Intention to apply through referral	0.111	0.099	p<0.01	p<0.001	p>0.05

Table 3

	Intention to apply through Direct method	Intention to apply through referral method	intention to apply through staffing agencies
Perception			
Direct Method	p<0.001***	p<0.01**	p<0.05*
Staffing Agency	p>0.05	p>0.05	p<0.01**
Referral Method	p>0.05	p<0.001***	p<0.01**
Recruitment message specificity			
Direct Method	p>0.05	p>0.05	p>0.05
Staffing Agency	p>0.05	p>0.05	p<0.001***
Referral Method	p>0.05	p<0.001***	p>0.05
Privacy concern			
Direct Method	p>0.05	p<0.001***	p>0.05
Staffing Agency	p<0.01**	p>0.05	p>0.05
Referral Method	p>0.05	p<0.001***	p>0.05

7. Discussion of Results

Intention to apply as an outcome variable was found to be influenced by job candidate's attitude towards the passive recruitment method as mentioned in H1a and

H1c (ie. for direct method and through staffing agency) at a significance level of p<0.001 as shown in Table 2. As stated in H1b Job candidate's intention to apply through referral method is also found to have a significant relationship with their attitude towards

referral method at a significance level of $p < 0.01$. From Table 3 it can also be noted that perception on direct method is also significant for intention to apply through staffing agency ($p < 0.05$) and referral ($p < 0.01$). Intention to apply through staffing agency is influenced by the candidates perception on referral as well at a significance level of $p < 0.01$.

As stated in H2 b and H2c recruitment message specificity associated with referral method and staffing agency is found to be influencing the outcome variable, that is job candidates intention to apply ($p < 0.001$). But there was no significant relation between recruitment message specificity in direct method and job candidate's intention to apply as stated in H2a. This implies that in recruitment through direct method candidates intention to apply is not influenced by the message specificity.

Job candidate's intention to apply through referral method is found to have a significant relationship with their perception of privacy associated with the method at a significance level of $p < 0.001$ (H3b). The analysis shows that job candidates privacy concern is less in this case and they feel that their information will be used fairly in this method. Whereas it was found that there is no significant relationship between job candidates perception of privacy and their intention to apply as stated in H3a and H3c. This implies that most passive job candidates doubt the privacy associated with giving their personal information through these methods.

Demographic variables like age, experience, industry, size of the organization, ownership of the organization etc were also considered. But significant variations were not found in the analysis.

8. Implications for Future Research

The literature on passive recruitment is very minimal. There is a huge scope for research in this area. Experimental study can be done on the same. As well as recruiters or employers perspective on passive job candidates and efficiency in passive recruitment methods can be explored. A comparative study on active and passive recruitment strategies is also yet to be explored.

9. Conclusion

The existing literature, talks about the impact of the recruitment message on job candidates' perception of the organization and the job role. This study tried to find the influence of recruitment message in the area of passive recruitment. Studies measuring employee perception of privacy in personal information with employer, social media privacy invasion etc. exist but a job candidates perception on the same have not yet been studied. This study also tries to find the impact of

job candidates' perception of privacy during a passive recruitment and the candidates' intention to apply.

The study showed that across the 3 different passive recruitment methods job candidates reaction varied with respect to each variable. While intention to apply through direct method was influenced by attitude towards the method, recruitment message and privacy concern did not have any influence. Whereas in referral method attitude about the method did not influence but recruitment message and perception of privacy influenced candidates intention to apply. The empirical studies done in the area of passive recruitment is very limited. So this study contributes to the theory as well as practically for the organizations to understand job candidates' perception on various passive recruitment strategies by the organizations.

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