

## **'We-find-you' or 'You-find-us'? - Internet Recruitment and Selection in the United Kingdom**

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*This paper reports on a study into the use of Internet recruitment tools by employers in the United Kingdom. It explores the different tools available to recruiters and establishes user patterns for these tools. The results suggest that the distinction between traditional and alternative source still seems appropriate as some tools within Internet recruitment are more established than others and that employers underutilise the 'we-find-you' approaches to Internet recruitment.*

**Field of Research:** Human Resource Management

### **1. Introduction**

The adoption of Internet technology is transforming (Veger 2006) the way in which HR departments recruit. The company's website is one of the most well-known tools (Baillie 1996; Greengard 1998) and in the past the use of organisational websites was almost synonymous with Internet recruitment. A clear overview of the acceptance and use of the various Internet recruitment and selection tools is not available. This paper seeks to identify the different Internet recruitment tools available to Internet recruiters and aims to establish the level of adoption of the tools in the Internet recruitment and selection process of employers in the United Kingdom.

### **2. Literature review**

Literature both academic and practitioner has been identified which attempts to provide an overview of the available Internet recruitment and selection tools. Galanaki (2002, p. 243) suggests in this respect, for example, that "the most common ways to use the Internet as a means to recruit are: To add recruitment pages to the existing organisation site . (...) To use Web sites specialised in recruiting employees (...) To use a media site". Furthermore, Galanaki (2002, p. 243) suggests that it also involves "the possibility to conduct remote interviews and assessments (...) and using banner advertisements and smart agents to search the Web". Beside these, Galanaki (2001) identifies interactive tools like search engines, interactive application forms, e-mail auto-responders and electronic mailing lists as Internet recruitment and selection tools. However, the discussion of these tools lacks depth and the list of identified tools and methods seems far from complete. For example it excludes tools such as 'flipping' (using the logic behind website addresses to dig out employee lists or telephone lists), webcam and webradio.

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More recent work by Veger (2006) provides another overview of Internet recruitment methods available. However, this work does not include Internet selection tools as such. Rather than just identifying the tool, Veger provides short descriptions of what the different methods encompass. As can be seen in Table 1, Veger uses Harris' distinction (2005) between we-find-you approaches and you-find-us approaches. Veger (2006, p. 3) states that "We-find-you approaches refer to methods where the organizational recruiter searches for applicants, you-find-us approaches refer to methods where the organization places a job ad and the initiative to apply lies with the potential job applicant". It was suggested that Internet recruitment methods distinguish between 'we-find-you approaches' and 'You-find-us approaches' (Harris 2005) and that Internet recruitment, by using the 'we-find-you' approaches can reach the more passive jobseeker. This distinction is analogous with the distinction in 'push technology' and 'pull technology' described by Hopkins and Markham (2003).

Table 1: Identified Internet recruitment methods

<b>We-find-you approaches</b>	<b>You-find-us approaches</b>
Searching through resumes on a job board	Posting jobs on a job board
Searching through resumes on the organizational career website	Posting jobs on the organizational career website
Generating names using search engines or chat rooms	Advertising jobs online
Using the service of name generating firms (A firm which generates names of potential candidates and sells these lists to organisations)	Putting jobs on computers in physical kiosks e.g. in employment offices
Web-event recruiting (Identifying and analysing candidates in for example online conferences)	Participating in online job fairs
Using the service of aggregator sites (A firm which screens incoming resumes and job postings and then redirect them to appropriate employers)	
Relationship recruiting (Develop a long-term relationship with passive candidate. Based on profiling visitors and surf behaviour and sending e-mail updates)	

Source: Adapted from Veger (2006)

Literature seemingly fails to provide an overview of the different Internet recruitment and selection tools in the two categories. However, at the same time literature and practice suggests that HR practitioners have a large range of Internet recruitment and selection tools available. The range of Internet recruitment and selection tools encompass the use of newspapers on-line, flashy banners and pop-up links (Crispin and Mehler 1997; Greengard 1998), web-radio, web-camera, virtual career fairs, e-mail facilities, on-line applications or interactive on-line applications (Dysart 1999), mailing list (Dysart 1999), on-line interviews (Dysart 1999), on-line testing (Richards 1999), commercial recruitment organisations (Arkin 1999; Baillie 1996; Brooke 1998; Crispin and Mehler 1997), application service providers (ONREC 2001), viral messages, flipping (Capelli 2001; Feldman and Klaas 2002) use of chatrooms, discussion, interest and newsgroups, organisational websites (Baillie 1996; Bartram

2000), personal webpages (Baillie 1996), free/fee résumé searches (Galanaki 2002; Schreyer and McCarter 1998; Weddle 2001) and online auctions (Chen 2000).

The non-Internet recruitment and selection practice, makes a categorisation between 'traditional sources and alternative sources'. Traditional sources include "employee referrals, employment agencies, newspaper or radio advertisements and unsolicited applications or 'walk-ins'", while alternative sources include sources such as "on-line (Internet) hiring services, job fairs, and competitors' layoffs/outsourcing programmes as a means of identifying candidates" (Glickstein and Ramer 1988).

Traditional sources mainly include those sources that have an established track record, while the alternative category includes the more recently discovered sources. This implies that all alternative sources will become traditional sources sometime in the future. Alternative sources then will be the sources that are not used at the moment or not widely used, as they are not developed yet or not accessible to a broader public. The idea is thus that the distinction between alternative and traditional sources is based on the principle of 'time'. So far, no literature has been identified which reflects on the use of 'we-find-you' and 'you-find-us' approaches in the UK and neither literature which establishes whether or not the distinction in 'alternative sources and traditional' sources can also be applied to Internet recruitment.

### **3. Methodology and Research Design**

This study draws its data from a survey (questionnaire) conducted for PhD-research purposes and forms part of a larger study into establishing practices and perceptions of Internet recruitment. The questionnaire contained mainly closed-ended questions and a few open-ended questions which only required short answers (e.g. list services provided or state country of origin). The closed-ended questions are either of the list type or the scale type (Saunders et al. 2003).

The research used a convenience sample, which made it easier to obtain but at the same time also made the research more prone to bias. The original research used a postal questionnaire and was followed by an administered questionnaire. Initially, 385 organisations were selected from the University of Gloucestershire's Development Centre Database for the UK. The first round of questionnaires gave a return of 31 questionnaires in the United Kingdom. As this response was too low, additional questionnaires were administered.

In the UK 3 groups of the University of Gloucestershire's Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development students were surveyed, which resulted in 52 additional questionnaires and thus delivered a total number of 83 responses. The students in these groups are working HR professionals attempting to develop their professional qualifications. As such, surveying these groups gave direct access to a large number of personnel practitioners involved and/or aware of the recruitment and selection practices in their organisation. From the 83 organisation, 69 organisations indicated the use of the Internet in the Recruitment process.

#### 4. Discussion of findings

The discussion of findings will follow the role of the different tools in the Internet recruitment and selection process. It seems that the tools can be categorised in a number of groups. First there are tools which are used to attract candidates or make candidates aware of the organisation as a possible employer. The second group of tools provides the jobseekers with the opportunity to learn more about the organisation, while the third group encompasses tools used in the selection process. The fourth group of tools are tools which help the organisation to identify potential candidates and lastly a group of tools that are multi-purpose in its use.

Tools in group 1, which are used to attract candidates, encompass banners/links, webradio, online newspapers, and the use of commercial online recruitment organisations. In the 'traditional' recruitment practice, the use of radio advertising is linked with 'target group difficulties' and has limitations on the amount of job and organisational information (Corbridge and Pilbeam 1998). However, the tool has been seen to spark interest amongst jobseekers. It is believed that web-radio has similar limitations and therefore it was anticipated that the use of web radio in the Internet recruitment process would be low. The findings confirm this view. 93 Percent of employers indicate that they sporadically (rarely/never) use the tool.

The use of banners and links, like web-radio, most often focuses on directing jobseekers' attention to the organisational homepage. The figures show that respectively only 8 percent of employers regularly (always/mostly) use the tool. The high sporadic use, combined with the high irregular use, implies that the tool is not fully incorporated into the Internet recruitment practice. The figures (Table 2) further suggest that the majority of organisations indicated that they only use a small number (1 to 5) banners.

Table 2: Numbers of banners/links used by organisations

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	5/8	10	15	20
UK	19	3	3	2	2	1		1	2		

Another tool which can be used to draw attention to the vacancy section of the organisational website is the use of viral messages. The technique uses IP-recognition to send recruitment related messages to visitors at the website. It was anticipated that the use of viral messages would be an alternative internet recruitment tool. The current findings confirm this, only 1 percent of employers irregularly send viral messages.

Two tools which have a traditional equivalent in the recruitment and selection practice are online newspapers and the use of online commercial recruitment organisations. The findings suggest that 51 percent of UK employers sporadically use online newspaper, while 26 percent of UK employers indicate that they regularly (always/mostly) use the tool. Thus, one out of every four employers makes frequent use of the tool. Over half of all employers surveyed (56 percent) indicates that they sporadically make use of commercial recruitment organisations, while only 12 percent employers indicated regular use.

The next group of Internet recruitment and selection tools are those which provide potential applicants with the opportunity to learn about the organisation and include the use of web camera, career fairs and organisational websites.

The use of web-camera gives potential applicants the opportunity to get a 'feel' for the organisation and as such can be used for Realistic Job Previewing (Wanous1992). The use of webcam is subject to law and its use was therefore anticipated to be low. The findings confirm this prediction. Only 2 percent of UK employers indicate that they use a web camera for recruitment and selection purposes. Online career fairs give potential candidates another opportunity to learn more about the organisation. The findings suggest that 83 per cent of employers do not use the tool at all. The online career fair focuses on providing information on a number of organisations, while the organisational website can be used for providing information for their own company. The user rate figures suggest the importance of this tool for the Internet recruitment and selection process. Forty two percent of employers indicated to always use the website to advertise vacancies, while 7 percent indicated to do so mostly. Only, 22 percent (just over 1 in every 5 employers) indicated to never use the tool. The findings suggest that the use of the organisational websites is high amongst employers.

The third group of tools are those used in the selection process and encompasses online applications, interviewing and testing. It was predicted that the use of online application forms would be one of the most often used Internet recruitment and selection tool. However, the figures suggest that classifying them as traditional rather than alternative is premature. Only 31 percent of employers indicated the use on-line application forms. The findings suggested that in the majority of cases the on-line application form is not a standard application form and that the form is hardly interactive. The majority of surveyed employers (84 percent) indicated that they sporadically (rarely/never) use online tests, while only 3 percent indicated regular use. Similarly, on-line interviews are hardly used with only 1 percent of employers indicating regular use.

The fourth group of tools are those tools used by the organisation to identify potential candidates.

A way to come across personal websites is by actively searching the Internet with the purpose of finding CVs on personal websites. The majority of employers (93 percent), indicated that they sporadically (never/rarely) search for CVs on the Internet. Forty five percent of employers do not agree with the statement that "the use of search engines has been found to provide my organisation with suitable candidates". Even when given personal website addresses by jobseekers only 1 percent of employers indicated that they check them, while 52 percent do not.

Another way to find candidates is by monitoring and participating in discussion groups and electronic forums or by participating in online auctions. The figures suggest that 94 percent of all employers indicated that they sporadically participate in a discussion groups/electronic forums/chatrooms for recruitment purposes. The use of on-line auctions is even lower, with 99 percent of UK employers indicating sporadic use.

Thus, it seems that UK employers are not actively searching for candidates on the Internet but wait for applicants to approach them instead and rely on the 'you-find-us' approaches.

A number of tools can, like the organisational websites, serve different purposes during the Internet recruitment and selection process. For example, text messages can be used to inform candidates of selection outcomes but also to maintain interest in the organisation.

The use of mailing lists can be beneficial for building up and maintaining relationships with potential applicants. However, the figures indicate that 79 percent of UK employers only make sporadic use of the tool, while respectively 9 percent of employers report regular use and 13 percent of employers indicate irregular. Rather than using email, employers can also use text messages to maintain a link with their jobseekers. The figures suggest that 98 % of UK employers sporadically uses text messages to inform jobseekers about new vacancies. Beside its role in maintaining the relationship, text messages can also be used in the actual selection process. Ninety eight percent of all UK employers indicated that they sporadically (never/rarely) invite jobseekers for an interview by text message. Besides using text messages to invite candidates to attend interviews, they can also be used to inform candidates about the outcome of interviews. However, ninety five percent of all employers indicated that they sporadically use text messages to do so. This low usage might be linked to 'level' and 'age' of potential applicants.

The use of E-mail can also have various purposes in the Internet recruitment and selection process. For example, it can be used to help build a relationship by answering jobseekers questions, while it can also be used as an aid in building a pool of applicants and as communication tool during the selection process. Respectively 36 % of UK employers regularly require jobseekers to send their CV by email and 19 per cent does so irregularly. Even though it might not be a requirement to send in CVs by e-mail, further analysis suggests that 47 percent of UK employers indicated that they regularly receiving CVs by e-mail, while 44 percent to irregularly (sometimes) receive them via this channel. The findings suggest that 34% of UK employers confirm receipt of applications by e-mail while 24 % only sporadically use e-mail confirmation. The use of e-mail to inform candidates that they are shortlisted is not a common practice, given the only 9% of employers indicating that they regularly use e-mails to inform candidates of shortlisting and 43 % of employers indicating irregular use. The regular use of e-mail to invite applicants for interviews is also low (12 percent of employers) while irregular use and sporadic use was respectively 42% and 46 percent. E-mail to reject applicants seems to be used very sporadically in the UK with a sporadic use of 80 percent and only 4 percent of UK employers indicating regular use.

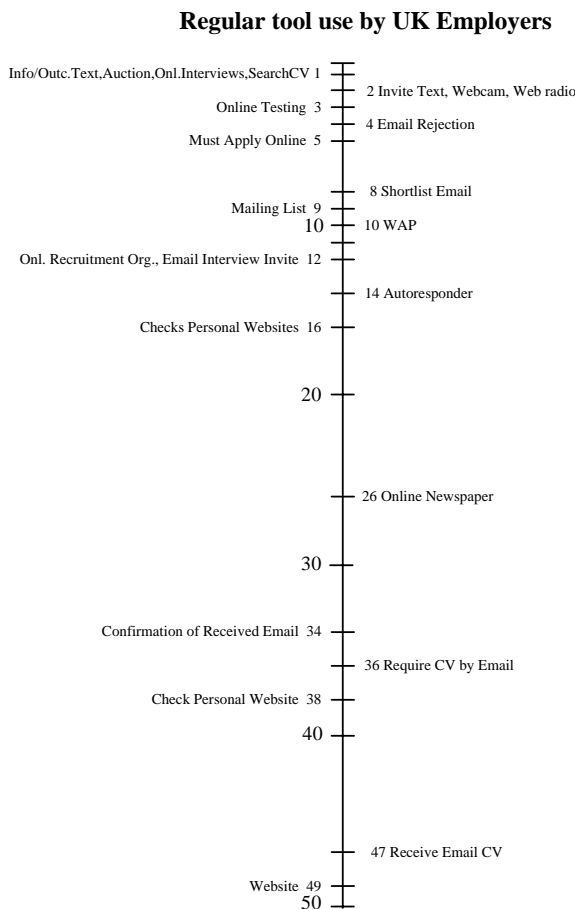
The last multi-functional tool is the use of Application Service Providers. Organisations can decide to use their services at various times during the recruitment process. However, the findings suggest low ASP use with respectively 3 percent of employers indicating irregular use and 97 percent indicating sporadic use.

The user-level findings have been compiled and visualised in Figure 1 (see overleaf), which shows regular use by UK employers of the various tools. It shows that tools

such as viral messages are not regularly used by UK employers at all, while a large group of tools, including webcam, WAP, auctions and mailing lists are only regularly used by 10 percent, or less, of UK employers. Tools such as e-mail and online newspapers are used more commonly amongst them. However, the most regularly used tool of all is the organisational website, with 49 percent of employers indicating regular use.

The chart suggests that there is a large group of Internet recruitment tools which is not frequently used by employers. This group includes tools such as viral messages, webcam and webradio. Therefore, the main conclusion which can be drawn concerns the 'status' of the tools. The fact that not many users use this group of Internet recruitment tools regularly confirms the 'alternative' character of these tools. It can be predicted that, over time, the currently low-usage tools will be adopted by more organisations and make a shift from the lower end of the continuum to the higher end, leaving space at the lower end for the adoption of more recently developed Internet recruitment tools. However, the development of some of the tools, such as webradio and WAP seems only possible if these tools are able to overcome practical problems associated with its use (e.g. being able to reach target audience).

Figure 1: Regular use of the various Internet recruitment and selection tools by UK employers



Viewing the current user levels of the tools in respect of the 'we-find-you' and the 'you-find-us' approaches (see Table 2), gives a first indication that organisations make low use of the 'we-find-you' approaches. However, it needs to be noted that the current study did not exclusively focus on the distinction and use of the different approaches and thus left out certain options (e.g. the research did not address the use of aggregator sites)

The use of 'we-find-you' approaches is particularly important in times of low unemployment, when it is difficult to recruit. Furthermore it can be argued that the use of 'we-find-you' approaches means targeting the more 'passive jobseekers', which is most often perceived to be able to lead to reaching high-quality candidates.



Table 2 Identified Internet recruitment and selection methods

<b>Recruitment methods</b>	
<b>We-find-you approaches</b>	<b>You-find-us approaches</b>
Searching through resumes on a job board  <i>Online auctions</i>	Posting jobs on a job board  <i>Online recruitment agencies</i>
Searching through resumes on the organizational career website	Posting jobs on the organizational career website  <i>Organisational website</i>
Generating names using search engines or chat rooms  <i>Free/fee searches</i> <i>Chatrooms</i>	Advertising jobs online  <i>Newspapers online</i> <i>Webradio</i> <i>Banners/links</i>
Using the service of name generating firms (A firm which generates names of potential candidates and sells these lists to organisations)	Putting jobs on computers in physical kiosks e.g. in employment offices
Web-event recruiting (Identifying and analysing candidates in for example online conferences)  <i>Discussion groups</i>	Participating in online job fairs  <i>Online career fairs</i>
Using the service of aggregator sites (A firm which screens incoming resumes and job postings and then redirect them to appropriate employers)  <i>Application Service Provider</i>	
Relationship recruiting (Develop a long-term relationship with passive candidate. Based on profiling visitors and surf behaviour en sending e-mail updates.)  <i>Email list</i> <i>Flipping</i>	
<b>Selection methods</b>	
<i>Online interviewing</i> <i>Online testing</i> <i>Online selection tests</i>	
<b>Communication methods</b>	
<i>Email + email auto responders</i> <i>Text/WAP</i> <i>Webcamera</i>	

Source: Adapted from Veger (2006)

## 5. Conclusion

In Internet recruitment and selection the distinction between traditional and alternative sources still seems appropriate, as some channels within Internet recruitment are more established than others. Traditional Internet recruitment sources are those sources which are commonly accepted. This implies also that the sources are used more frequently than the alternative sources, which are not commonly accepted.

The research show that there are certain Internet recruitment and selection tools, which can definitely be classified as 'traditional', namely the use of organisational websites and the use of e-mail. Furthermore, there are tools which can definitely be classified as 'alternative', such as web camera, web radio and viral messages. There is then a group of tools which seems to be making the move from being an 'alternative' Internet recruitment and selection tool towards being a 'traditional' tool. These are, for example, online newspapers and online recruitment organisations. The research furthermore indicated that organisations do not seem to utilise the 'we-find-you' approaches to its full extend with low use for tools such as 'mailing list' and 'use of discussion groups', which could aid in making the Internet recruitment and selection process more effective and efficient.

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