

COACH & CANDIDATE: THE DIGITAL WAY

By Marc Saunder

Long time gone the days when looking for a job required primarily handwriting skills. Answering ads and contacting head-hunters and recruiters were essential to a successful job search. And in the early days of outplacement in the 70's and 80's, one of the key roles of consultants was to help out their candidates write...or rewrite their resume and motivation letters.

In the past few years the job search market has changed dramatically...and so has the outplacement business. Recruiters have started to post their ads on online job boards and most international groups have a section on their website dedicated to job opportunities. Some of them even post these opportunities on their social media page (Linked In, Twitter and even Facebook!).

Sourcing the adequate profile to fill a position within an organization chart requires new skills and research assistants of most search firms tend to explore a wider scope of media to select candidates for their corporate customers. Social media is definitely one of them and some key players on the recruitment market admit that more than 60% of the positions they have filled in the past 12 months were sourced through social media. Whether these figures are fully accurate or not isn't that important. The trend is there and will probably grow in the next decade.

It has a direct impact on the way unemployed executives approach their job search. The Y generation and the first digital natives entering the employment market are so familiar with these tools that they feel comfortable with the new rules set by the market. They have a LinkedIn profile even before they graduate and spend time on the Web looking for their internships even before considering looking for a job.

The more senior executives (in age and position!) have to adjust their habits to stand a chance to stay in the race. When they benefit from an outplacement program, they have a tremendous opportunity to acquire these new digital skills.

Personal branding is one of the key sections of an outplacement program, once the assessment part is completed. Basically, it covers all aspects of positive communication of the professional project: resume, motivation letter, self-presentation, interview techniques, targeting, networking... And the digital image has a growing place of importance in this personal branding.

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Topics such as digital identity, organized presence on the social networks, business intelligence strategy to collect relevant data on firms, managers, businesses and professions must represent a significant part of the job search campaign of an outplacement program. This mind-set has also a direct and positive effect on networking, as sourcing the right person is quicker and allows more 2nd level contacts.

Outplacement firms have been fairly slow to response to that trend, but they have realized that the expectations of their candidates have changed and in the past few years, the more advanced firms have included Web 2.0 seminars in their outplacement programs, most of the time under the supervision of a web consultant.

Some top executives have been able to overcome negative information on Google through careful monitoring of their digital image, thanks to team work between his coach and a web consultant.

But very often, candidates are better trained than their coach and their level of expertise on the use of social media and web search is greater.

Coaches and consultants must get trained as well and show the way to their candidates, otherwise they will lose part of their legitimacy. It will also strengthen their link to the candidate and show a modern and positive image of the firm. Of course it is difficult to keep up with the constant evolution of new technologies, but both coaches and candidates must develop a new skill: information literacy to be able to know where to find the relevant data and input.

Coaching candidates on Web 2.0 will enable them to:

- Increase their presence on the Web and make sure they will stand out in the search engines
- Differentiate their candidacy through innovative communication tools (f.i. a scoopit summarizing all the latest news on the firm/brand showing a digital skill as well as a strong motivation)
- Encourage the development of an internal alumni network within the outplacement firm (LinkedIn groups or similar...)

The effect on working habits is also enormous and has an impact on the physical organization of the space within outplacement firms. Less space required, more Wi-Fi facilities, remote access to candidate portals, Skype interviews, development of a BYOD (bring your own device) approach...

The mind-set is more important than the pure technical expertise. A change of position in a business where it's all about supporting change!

Marc Saunder – Board Member ACF Europe
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The ACF Europe Newsletter of November will feature an article by Herbert Mühlenhoff about:

VOLUNTARY REDUNDANCY

Herbert is Managing Partner at Mühlenhoff + Partner GmbH and Board Member of ACF Europe



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