Business Education

THE APPLICATION OF SOCIAL NETWORKS IN CONTEMPORARY HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

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Abstract. This paper explores the application of social networks in modern human resource management (HRM), highlighting how platforms and internal company networks are revolutionising HR practices. It delves into the role of social media in recruiting, employee engagement, training and performance management. The paper addresses challenges and risks, including privacy concerns, potential bias, and ethical considerations. Through case studies of organisations successfully using social media for HRM, the paper illustrates best practices and outcomes. Finally, it offers insights into future trends and recommendations for HR professionals to navigate the evolving digital landscape.

Keywords: social networks; human resource management; employee performance management

1. Introduction

In today's rapidly evolving business landscape, human resource management (HRM) is at the forefront of organisational success. HRM not only involves the recruitment, development and retention of a company's most valuable asset, its people, but also plays a key role in shaping an organisation's culture and competitiveness. In this digital age where connectivity and information sharing are paramount, social networks are emerging as a transformative force in various aspects of our lives. However, their influence extends beyond the realm of personal connections and leisurely scrolling through timelines. Social networks are seamlessly woven into the fabric of modern HRM, ushering in a new era of practices and opportunities.

The application of social networks in contemporary human resource management is not merely a trend; it is a strategic imperative. As organisations adapt to the changing dynamics of the global workforce, they are increasingly turning to social networks to enhance their HRM strategies. These platforms are no longer limited to sharing cat videos or vacation photos; they have evolved into powerful tools that

empower HR professionals to recruit top talent, engage employees, foster learning and development, and streamline performance management (Agneš, Radmila & Nemanja, 2017).

This article embarks on a journey to explore the multifaceted role of social networks in HRM practices. We will look at the various dimensions of this relationship, from talent recruitment and onboarding to employee engagement, communication, training and performance management. We will also examine the challenges and considerations that come with integrating social media into HRM processes, as well as look into the future where emerging trends and technologies are poised to change the landscape once again.

In this age of social interconnectedness, organisations that harness the power of these networks can gain a competitive advantage in the pursuit of excellence in human resource management (Agneš, Radmila & Nemanja, 2017).

2. Major Features of Traditional Human Resource Management

Traditional human resource management (HRM) has been a cornerstone of organisational management for decades. While the field has developed significantly in recent years, it is essential to understand the foundational characteristics of traditional HRM in order to appreciate how social networks are changing contemporary HR practices.

Administrative focus or administrative orientation was one of the defining characteristics of traditional HRM. In this model, HR departments focused primarily on routine tasks such as payroll, benefits administration, record keeping, and compliance with labor laws and regulations. The administrative aspect often took precedence over strategic HR functions (Gómez-Mejía, Balkin & Cardy, 2011).

Paper-based systems were traditionally the systems, on which HR operations relied heavily. Employee records, performance evaluations, and other HR documents were stored in physical files, making information retrieval time-consuming and error-prone. This reliance on documentation had contributed to the administrative burden of HR departments (Gómez-Mejía, Balkin & Cardy, 2011).

Top-down hierarchy was a tradition in HRM decision making, with HR professionals implementing policies and practices set by top management. This top-down approach often limited employee participation in HR decisions (Gómez-Mejía, Balkin & Cardy, 2011).

Reactive approach to problem solving was the preferred approach that traditional HRM tended to adopt when solving problems. Human resources departments addressed issues as they arose, often in response to employee complaints, labor disputes or regulatory requirements. Proactive measures to prevent problems were not always a central focus (Gómez-Mejía, Balkin & Cardy, 2011).

Limited employee self-service was another common feature of traditional HRM. Employees had limited access to HR information and services. Most interactions

required employees to communicate with HR representatives in person or via email, leading to delays in resolving HR-related inquiries (Gómez-Mejía, Balkin & Cardy, 2011).

Siloed functions were a regular occurrence with HR departments responsible for specific tasks such as recruiting, training, or benefits administration operating independently. This fragmentation sometimes impeded the flow of information and collaboration (Gómez-Mejía, Balkin & Cardy, 2011).

Emphasis on compliance or ensuring legal compliance with labor laws and regulations was an important aspect of traditional HRM. HR departments made significant efforts to understand and comply with labor law, which was vital but sometimes overshadowed strategic HR initiatives.

It is important to note that while traditional human resource management had its limitations, it laid the foundation for the development of modern HR practices. As organisations evolved, so did the role of HR, moving from an administrative function to a strategic partner in driving organisational success. Social networks play a key role in this transformation, facilitating collaboration, communication and data-driven decision-making in modern HRM (Gómez-Mejía, Balkin & Cardy, 2011).

3. Contemporary Trends in HRM

The field of human resource management (HRM) is in a state of constant evolution, driven by changing workplace dynamics, technological advancements, and shifting employee expectations. In this section, we will explore some of the current trends that are reshaping the HRM landscape and how social networks are playing a crucial role in these developments.

Remote and Hybrid Workforces

The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the adoption of **remote work**, challenging traditional HR practices. Social networks have become essential tools for maintaining connections, facilitating virtual collaboration and supporting the well-being of remote employees.

Many organisations are adopting **hybrid work** models where employees split their time between remote and in-person work. Social networks help coordinate schedules, share updates, and foster a sense of belonging for both remote and in-office workers (Stone et al., 2015).

Employee Well-being and Mental Health

HRM is increasingly focusing on employee welfare. Social networks are used to promote **well-being programs**, share **mental health** resources, and create supportive online communities where employees can discuss and address mental health challenges.

Social media helps HR professionals communicate and reinforce the importance of work-life balance. The platforms can be used to share tips, resources, and success stories related to achieving a healthy work-life balance (Stone et al., 2015).

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)

Diversity initiatives or DEI efforts are a priority for HRM. Social networks provide platforms for raising awareness, sharing DEI-related content, and celebrating diverse voices within the organisation.

HR departments are using social media to promote **inclusive leadership** behaviors. These platforms facilitate discussions on topics such as unconscious bias, cultural sensitivity, and alliance (Tampe, Cappelli & Yakubovich, 2019).

Data-Driven Decision-Making

Social network data can be used for **predictive HR analytics**, such as identifying employees at risk of flight or assessing the impact of HR policies on employee morale and retention (Tampe, Cappelli & Yakubovich, 2019).

People analytics is a data-driven and purposeful method for studying all processes, functions, challenges and opportunities at work in order to improve these systems and achieve sustainable business success. HRM increasingly relies on **data analytics to inform decision-making**. Social networks contribute to data collection through engagement tracking, sentiment analysis, and employee feedback, helping HR professionals gain insights into employee experiences.

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Skills Development and Continuous Learning

The dynamic nature of the job requires continuous learning. Social networks support HR efforts to **upskill and reskill** employees by providing access to online courses, expert networks, and knowledge-sharing communities.

Social networks enable **peer learning** where employees can share expertise and mentor each other. HR encourages these interactions to foster a culture of continuous learning (Tampe, Cappelli & Yakubovich, 2019).

Employee Experience (EX) and Engagement

HRM is moving toward personalised **employee experiences (PX).** Social networks help tailor communications and resources to individual employee preferences and needs.

Social networks are used to distribute **engagement surveys** and gather real-time feedback, allowing HR to respond immediately to employee concerns and suggestions (Woods et al., 2020).

Technology Integration and Automation

Integrating **HR technology platforms** with social networks streamlines HR processes. Chatbots, for example, can provide instant answers to common HR queries through social media channels.

Social networks improve the applicant experience by integrating with **applicant tracking systems (ATS)** and enable seamless communication during the recruitment process (Agneš, Radmila & Nemanja, 2017; Woods et al., 2020).

Social Responsibility and Sustainability

HRM promotes **corporate social responsibility (CSR)** initiatives through social media, demonstrating the organisation's commitment to social and environmental causes. Employees are engaged in these efforts through online volunteer activities and fundraising campaigns.

HRM uses social networks to communicate **sustainability initiatives**, collect data on environmental practices, and mobilize employees to reduce their carbon footprint (Tampe, Cappelli & Yakubovich, 2019).

4. The Evolution of Social Networks

The Birth of Online Communities

The story of social networking dates back to the earliest days of the Internet. In the 1970s and 1980s, when the Internet was still in its infancy, computer enthusiasts and scientists began experimenting with online communities. These early digital pioneers created bulletin board systems (BBS) and chat rooms where users could connect, share information, and engage in discussions on a variety of topics. These rudimentary online spaces laid the foundation for what would later become the vibrant social networks we know today (Agneš, Radmila & Nemanja, 2017).

The World Wide Web and the Emergence of Social Media

The advent of the World Wide Web in the early 1990s revolutionized online communication. With the development of user-friendly web interfaces and the introduction of web browsers, the Internet became more accessible to the general public. It wasn't long before social networking platforms started popping up.

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, platforms such as Six Degrees, Friendster, and MySpace pioneered the concept of social networking on the Internet. These platforms allowed users to create profiles, connect with friends, and share personal information and interests. Although these early social networking attempts had their limitations, they paved the way for the social media giants that would follow (Agneš, Radmila & Nemanja, 2017).

The Rise of Facebook and the Social Media Era

In 2004, Mark Zuckerberg and his college roommates launched Facebook, initially as a platform exclusively for students at Harvard University. These humble beginnings marked the beginning of a social media revolution. Facebook quickly expanded to other universities and eventually to the world. It introduced features like the News Feed and the ability to upload photos, transforming the way people share and consume content online.

Facebook's success has inspired a wave of social media platforms, including Twitter, LinkedIn and YouTube, each catering to different aspects of online communication. Twitter introduced the concept of microblogging and real-time updates, LinkedIn focused on professional networks, and YouTube became the main video sharing platform (Agneš, Radmila & Nemanja, 2017).

The Mobile and App Era

The proliferation of smartphones in the late 2000s and early 2010s further accelerated the growth of social networks. With the convenience of mobile apps, people can stay connected and engaged with their social networks anytime, anywhere. Instagram, Snapchat, and WhatsApp emerged as mobile-first platforms serving visual content, ephemeral messaging, and instant communication (Agneš, Radmila & Nemanja, 2017).

The Current Landscape

Today, the social media landscape is more diverse and interconnected than ever. Established platforms continue to evolve and new ones are constantly emerging. Niche communities and interest-based networks have gained strength, providing venues for specialized interests and hobbies. Social media has become an integral part of how we communicate, share information, conduct business and even shape public opinion. They have played a key role in political movements, cultural trends and global events. However, with their enormous reach and influence come significant challenges, including issues related to privacy, misinformation and online harassment. As we travel through the history of social networks, we must also turn our attention to their current trends and the ever-evolving landscape of digital connectivity (Agneš, Radmila & Nemanja, 2017).

Social networks as part of Industry 5.0

Although we consider Industry 5.0 as humans working together with robots and intelligent machines, we can also consider the emergence and application of social networks as part of Industry 5.0. Let us recall that Industry 5.0 is called Society 5.0, referring to the social component of technological development. Robots help workers work faster and better using advanced technologies such as the Internet of Things (IoT) (Kirova & Yordanova, 2024). We can say that Industry 5.0 adds a personal human touch to automated production. On the other hand, society uses social networks to communicate between employees as well as to conduct effective HRM. Mitev (2024) views labour productivity as "economic indicator reflecting the performance of an economic system in terms of the quantity of goods and services produced over a given period of time with the use of given resources, per worker or per hour worked". Although we can list many factors affecting labor productivity, we can point out that at the core of labor productivity lies effective human resource management (HRM).

AI

AI has become a key part of modern human resource management (HRM) by improving efficiency, decision-making, and the employee experience. However, there are some ethical implications of AI in HRM, such as concerns about privacy, transparency in decision-making, or the risk of reinforcing existing biases (Biolcheva & Shterev, 2024).

5. The Role of Social Networks in HRM

In the field of human resource management (HRM), the influence of social networks has grown significantly, changing the way organizations approach talent acquisition, employee engagement and overall HR strategy. Here we explore the multifaceted role of social networks in HRM and how they are revolutionizing the traditional HR landscape.

Recruitment and Talent Acquisition

Social networks have become invaluable tools for HR professionals looking to **identify and connect with top talent**. In particular, platforms like LinkedIn have become dynamic hubs for both job seekers and recruiters. HR departments can use these networks to search for candidates with specific skills, experience, and cultural fit, expanding the talent pool beyond traditional job postings (Stone et al., 2015).

Social media provides a wealth of information beyond what is found in traditional resumes, which **enhances candidate assessment**. HR professionals can evaluate candidates based on their professional profiles, endorsements and connections, while receiving information about their networks and references. This holistic view helps make more informed hiring decisions (Stone et al. 2015).

Social networks also play a major role in **employer branding**, promoting the organization's brand. Companies can share their culture, values and success stories, attracting candidates who align with their mission. Through social media, HR can humanize the recruiting process and create a more engaging candidate experience (Stone et al., 2015).

Employee Engagement and Communication

Social networks in organizations, often called enterprise social networks (ESNs), encourage collaboration and knowledge sharing among employees, thus **fostering employee connections**. These platforms break down silos, allowing teams to connect, brainstorm, and work together regardless of physical location (Stone et al., 2015).

HR departments can use social networks for **real-time communication** with employees. Whether it's announcing company updates, sharing important information, or gathering feedback, social networks provide a convenient channel for HR professionals to stay in touch with the workforce (Stone et al., 2015).

Enterprise social networks (ESN) allow employees to **contribute ideas and innovations**. HR can tap into the collective intelligence of the organization by encouraging employees to share suggestions, provide feedback, and engage in problem solving, which fosters a culture of innovation (Woods et al., 2020).

Learning and Development

Social networks have redefined learning and development by facilitating **social learning**. HR can encourage employees to participate in online forums, webinars and communities where they can share knowledge and learn from peers. This

democratization of learning empowers employees to take responsibility for their own development (Woods et al., 2020).

Social networks support **microlearning** by providing small amounts or **bite-sized content** that employees can access on their mobile devices. This approach allows the HR department to provide ongoing training and skill development opportunities tailored to individual needs (Woods et al., 2020).

ESNs can be used to foster **mentoring and coaching relationships** between employees. HR can facilitate connections between experienced employees and those seeking guidance, creating a culture of continuous learning (Woods et al., 2020).

Employee Feedback and Performance Management

Social networks enable **real-time feedback**, allowing managers and colleagues to provide timely performance feedback. This approach replaces traditional annual reviews with ongoing, constructive conversations that contribute to employee growth and development.

HR can use social media data to gain insight into employee performance trends. **Performance analytics** tools can help identify high performers, areas for improvement, and learning and development opportunities (Woods et al., 2020).

Social networks provide platforms for peer **recognition and rewards**. HR can use these networks to recognize and celebrate employee achievements, reinforcing positive behaviors and fostering a culture of appreciation (Woods et al., 2020).

While integrating social media into HRM brings numerous benefits, it is not without its **challenges and considerations**. HR professionals must pay attention to issues related to privacy, data security, and the potential for abuse. Additionally, managing employee expectations and balancing online and offline interactions are important issues to be considered. As social networks continue to evolve, HR departments must remain vigilant in adapting their strategies to leverage the benefits of these platforms while mitigating potential risks (Stone et al., 2015; Woods et al., 2020).

6. Conclusion

In the ever-evolving human resource management (HRM) landscape, the inclusion of social networking has ushered in a transformative era of innovation, connectivity and progress. We explored how these digital networks have seamlessly integrated into various aspects of HRM, shaping the way organizations attract, engage, develop, and manage their most valuable asset – their people.

Social networks have become indispensable tools in the HR professional's toolbox, redefining how talent is recruited, onboarded, and cultivated. They have revolutionized employee engagement and communication, fostering a sense of belonging and collaboration that transcends geographic boundaries. Through these networks, learning and development have evolved into dynamic, self-directed

journeys, enabling employees to acquire new skills and knowledge at their own pace.

Performance management has also evolved, with real-time feedback and data analytics providing more accurate insight into employee performance and potential. In addition, social networks have brought visibility to employee achievements, strengthening a culture of recognition and rewards (Tampe, Cappelli & Yakubovich, 2019).

However, the integration of social networks into HRM is not without its challenges. Concerns about privacy, data security and the potential for abuse require vigilant management. HR professionals must navigate a dynamic landscape where offline and online interactions coexist, balancing the benefits of digital connectivity with the need for real human connections.

As we conclude this study of the application of social networks in modern HRM, it is evident that these platforms are not just tools, but essential enablers of HR excellence. They empower organizations to adapt to the changing world of work by meeting the diverse needs and expectations of today's workforce. The future promises even greater integration and innovation as HRM continues to evolve. Emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, augmented reality and blockchain are poised to change HR practices, and social networks will play a central role in their implementation.

In this era of digital interconnectedness, organizations that enable the full potential of social networks in HRM can gain a competitive advantage by fostering a culture of continuous improvement, adaptability and engagement.

The application of social networking in modern HRM is a testament to the ever-expanding boundaries of what is possible when we combine technology with the art of human resource management. Having said that, we expect HR professionals, organizations and employees to harness the power of these networks and follow the path of HR excellence in the digital age (Agneš, Radmila & Nemanja, 2017).

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