

Attracting employer and recruiter attention through self presentation and
impression management on LinkedIn

Stream: Identity in Communities and Networks

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Abstract

This paper will explore self presentation and impression management using the popular social network platform LinkedIn and will argue how impression, influence and self presentation are key factors to attracting employer and recruiter engagement.

Keywords: social media, LinkedIn, impression management, self presentation, social influence



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Introduction

LinkedIn is the worlds most popular professional social network with over 530 million active users (Smith, 2018). It provides a platform for job seekers, employers, students and businesses to create a professional online profile which enables professional communities to collaborate, engage and connect. LinkedIn provides users the ability and functionality to create an online profile which has a strong resemblance to the traditional resume. The LinkedIn profile is the core feature of the platform allowing users to promote their achievements such as academic and professional experience to either grow their professional network or to seek new career opportunity.

LinkedIn is the most successfully professional social network in the world (Adams, 2013) and is the primary platform for businesses to screen candidates. A recent study has indicated that over 45% of employers in the US are using LinkedIn for screening (Bennett, 2013). Social media is arguably one of the most significant screening processes and tools being used by businesses and recruiters. It can be utilised to seek and research new candidates or to analyse and assess their workforce by researching online behaviour. Social media allows businesses and recruiters to further explore how candidates present themselves online through their personal interactions and social beliefs. Human Resource departments are strategically using this information to create a cultural baseline to decide if candidates and current employees are cultural fits and are meeting the values and expectations of the business (Madera, 2012, p.1).

I argue that online profile identity is the most important aspect of any social network as the information provided can be judged based on the accuracy and integrity, hence it is equally important to ensure the overall information provides a positive impression which can be used to influence targeted user perception. Furthermore, profile identity validation which includes integrity of information is the the most important aspect of the LinkedIn social network as the platform provides sophisticated profile steps to ensure the information is valid and has legal mechanisms in place such as the terms and conditions to ensure users are providing accurate and true information on the network.

Impression management and self presentation

Firstly, it's important to start by unpacking what impression management and self presentation is and how it plays an integral part in the LinkedIn social network. Impression is the way people influence and portray their image, whilst controlling and managing the information presented (Joanna & Magdalena, 2016, p.203). Impression is the self-presentation of one's self which is a complex process of determining what information to disclose with the aim to promote a positive impression (Brody, Davis, Drushel, Green-Hamann, Hall, Johnson, and McEwan, 2012, p4). Tedeschi describes two classes of impression management with one focusing on responsibility and the other on consequences. Interestingly, the focus on responsibility is used to highlight specific behaviours which usually relate to integrity and the person's morale which ultimately creates a positive perception and impression (Tedeschi, 2013, p7.) On the other hand, impression management focussing on consequences is to defend reputational loss and rebuild trust.

Self presentation and impression management both go hand in hand and constitute a well known social psychology approach (Goffman, 1959) and arguably are among the most important factors when seeking employment or joining a professional network. Impression management on social media platforms has evolved into creating a baseline approach to what is appropriate and what is not. This can be represented by understanding what personal information will overlay into your professional online profile and ensuring that the professional profile doesn't have any negative impact due to personal profile image perceptions (Rui & Stefanone, 2013).

It is important to note that self presentation and impression management isn't only in the online arena and traditionally is represented in real-life behaviours by understanding the social psychology approach to friends, family, colleagues and employers. Most people want to show a favourable impression which promotes trust, integrity and perceives positivity to their overall image. This example is carried through into the online space by a way of promoting and marketing your image by building a trusting relationship on social media platforms (Gilbert, 2001).

LinkedIn and Self-Presentation

Technology has changed the traditional recruitment process enabling businesses to become more integrated with LinkedIn and social media platforms. Businesses and recruiters are now able to search and connect online professional profiles such as LinkedIn with personal profiles on Facebook and Twitter to understand a person's background, cultural beliefs and behaviours. Online reputation and self-presentation using social media are now more than ever the most important aspect to online identity as it can influence and create positive and negative perceptions. These perceptions have the potential to stay online forever due to the large amount of data being mined and shared and has the potential to impact future career progression and professional profile reputation.

LinkedIn is a platform which has the potential to build positive reputation by showcasing a user's skills and achievements through self promotion and influence. It is arguable that LinkedIn is actually the largest platform for self promotion due to the fact users are engaging with colleagues, employers, professional networks and groups to highlight achievements and to create a positive status and reputation which can ultimately affect career progression, job hunting and cultural fit. There is a number of ways which a LinkedIn user can build reputation and positive impression. The obvious is through profile building and seeking recommendations however, being a social network built on professional online communities it is important to highlight that adding value to these communities through the use of articles, galleries and sharing information creates trust and can further develop a user's network visibility.

It is important to note the comparison between traditional marketing techniques and that of personal self-presentation. Business marketing uses promotional methods to attract brand attention by building trust with its targeted audience by showcasing quality and value. Similarly, self-presentation follows the same concepts and for a job seeker it is vital that they market their profile to a high quality by tailoring information to LinkedIn job advertisements.

To further understand how self-impression is built into the very fabric of LinkedIn, it is important to understand the built-in mechanisms which are used to request information from its users which builds and highlight specific career skills and achievements thus promoting strengths to highlight and draw attention to recruiters, businesses and professional networks. LinkedIn then uses the data to tightly link skills and achievements to job advertisements which are calculated, processed and recommended to recruiters or hiring companies (Gilbert, 2001) through the use of sophisticated algorithms. On the other hand, LinkedIn also provides insight to potential candidates by suggesting jobs or careers which are closely matched using their user profile data.

Literature Review and Discussion

In Chiang & Suen (2015) research study investigating self-presentation and hiring recommendations on LinkedIn, it was found that job seekers who used LinkedIn to self-promote themselves by ensuring their profile information was at a high quality had a greater chance to influence recruiter perceptions due to the way the LinkedIn profile self presented and promoted the job seeker. The research was conducted based on how the job seeker presented their profile information which was defined into three categories being informative, valuable, persuasive. These categories were then measured against employer and recruiter scoring which was based on credibility, integrity and organisational cultural fit. Chiang & Suen suggested that future research will need to be conducted to further clarify the self-presentation and keyword matching of job advertisements (Chiang & Suen, 2015).

The study by Chiang & Suen truly highlights the importance of self-presentation and how it can impact recruitment. A profile which is not completed and has not been marketed well can result in a negative evaluation from a profile viewer such as a recruiter or business. The study further highlights the importance of profile recommendations which are regularly analysed by recruiters to understand how fit-for-purpose a job might be for a potential candidate. Traditionally, these recommendations were formal references either conducted in writing or verbally by hiring managers and recruiters however, the shift to technological recruitment processes now focus on the use of online recommendations being a more on-demand and accurate measure of a users capability (Chiang & Suen, 2015)..

One might argue that a large amount of LinkedIn data on the social network could be false due to its users creating a profile based on dishonesty as they are ultimately trying to create an impression and self presentation which might not be accurate and focusing on key words rather than actual truth. LinkedIn are investing large amounts of money and resources into verification of credentials which is making it difficult for users to create a false profile. This dishonesty can be further analysed to understand the importance of self-presentation and influence by having to go to extreme lengths to attract attention and engage with intended audiences. The new era of technology-enabled recruitment has focussed more on self-presentation and influence which ultimately decides if a candidate is successfully shortlisted, connected and networked with.

Conclusion

This paper has argued that self presentation and impression management for job seekers on LinkedIn is the most important aspect to impress, influence and persuade recruiters and businesses. Technology advancement and focus on streamlining business processes through the use of analysing social media is an important tool for both recruiters and employers. Analysis of social media consists of comparing personal and professional identities to build a holistic view and image of a candidate. Self presentation is vital to ensure the online identity being perceived is accurate and has positive impression. Research suggests that LinkedIn users who have engaging profiles, contribute to professional forums and communities through the use of articles and collaborative resources prove to be more successful when it comes to recruiter and employer shortlisting.

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