Transforming Exchange-based Job Boards into Lasting Career Communities

Elfi Ettinger
University of Twente
Problem Analysis

Large numbers of e-recruiting platforms fail
- job crawler
- matching
- up-to-date profiles
- responsiveness
- speed
- clicks, relevant applications
- push services
Research Question

How to achieve active + long-term user participation in e-recruiting platforms?
Theory

• Incorporate sense of community in e-recruiting
  – shared identity
  – shared interests
  – commonality
  – sense of belonging
  – social presence fosters pre-existing ties
However...

- Many seemingly successful niche approaches arranged around communities also failed to get users participate in the long run
Long-term sustainability...

• Online features:
  – Information Quality
  – System Quality
  – Service Quality

• Offline features:
  – How offline communication can be complemented by online communication → lock-in users
Data Collection

• Austrian engineer career platform
• Ethnography and in-depth interviewing
• Interviewed 60 users
• Visited 7 school career fairs
• 2 graduate students’ projects
Interview Questions

• Identify what services an e-recruiting platform needs to offer so that users actively re-use the service in the long run?

• Users shared needs and interests?
Analysis

• Listened to all 60 interviews
• Compiled narratives of interviews
• Compared field notes, narratives and digital communications
• Coded data according to Riding & Gefen‘s (2004) typology for reasons of engaging in online communities
Results

- 56 of 60 engineers noted they would re-use an online career service if specifically targeted at engineers' needs.

- Classical Job-boards:
  - seen as exchange-based services.
  - no value or interest to maintain long-term participation.
  - no interest to frequently update profiles.
  - prefer to fill out resume pages of corporate websites to job boards or personal agencies.
Results

• Users intend to use e-recruiting services throughout their life if those services are:

  – complemented by social network/community applications
  – aimed at specific user niches sharing a similar social identity and offline ties
  – possibility to communicate online with offline fellow-known engineers or FoF
  – Engineers are not keen on developing or maintaining a strong network with fully unknown registered engineers
Results

„It would be neat to see who of my friends have friends who work at BMW; you get a much more realistic picture of the company when getting advice from fellow-colleagues than trying to find out everything yourself.“
Results

„When I want to apply for a job in a different location in Austria, then it would be great to have some online search option to find out if some of my schools‘ graduates already work in the same area or company.“
Results

• System designers are challenged to create private (for friends) and public (for recruiters) spaces:

  – „How can you make sure that my boss will not find my profile in the database?“

  – „Sure I want my profile for friends to look different than my applicant profile“. 
Shared interests

• Information Exchange
  – Career info page on how to find jobs, prepare application docs, interview tips, training programs, links to companies, sector info page, salary calculator etc.)

• Friendship
  – Personal page with contact info, sharing pictures, different groups for hobbies, cities, army service, civil service groups etc.)
Shared interests

• Social support:
  – Sharing experiences, problems, reports, exams, music, games etc.)

• Recreation:
  – Work-climate index in different companies, events and activities, sports info etc.)
Community differentiation

- Application documents: pay attention to…
- Job Interviews: exchange your experiences with fellows
- My first steps as engineer…
- Trainee programs: Small talk about my career start
- Inside Bosch, Inside Siemens etc.
- My internship: exchange experiences with fellows
- Work-climate: That’s how I have experienced it there….
- Engineering fields of study: search….
- Branch information
- Company A (Audi), B (BMW): connect with other engineers
- My job abroad
- The best links for engineering careers
- Developmental opportunities: That’s how I was supported by BMW etc.
Conclusions

• A mere niche e-recruiting approach is not enough to maintain an active userbase.
• Niche providers need to stay in close touch with their users to sense shifting needs of their most wanted and most innovative users (lead users).
• Educational ties seem to offer the foundation for continued online interaction in the engineering career portal.
• Future belongs to those providers that best understand users shared social identity and succeed in providing semantic technologies so as to enhance users‘ online experiences.