

Global Talent Managers Are Missing A Trick By Overlooking The Role Of Technology

There's no denying that technology today plays a huge role in our lives. The majority of us are using social media and other various digital communication channels to stay in touch across the globe. And if you walk down the streets of almost any city across the world, you'll see professionals sending emails on their tablets or the creative types tapping away on their laptops in coffee shops.

The sheer scale of our global social technology use is immense. For example, according to independent research by web designer and developer, Creativo, every minute of the day;

- 100,000 tweets are sent
- 2 million queries are searched on Google
- 48 hours of video are uploaded to YouTube
- 684,478 pieces of content are shared on Facebook
- 3,600 photos are shared on Instagram

From a business perspective, corporates across the globe are using these channels to encourage engagement with their brand. It's common to see companies communicating with customers and clients through Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook to name a few. We just need to look at the vast number of updates, comments and reactions posted through social media on the 2014 UK Budget announcement, or the 2013 US elections, to see how instrumental these channels have become in the way we operate globally.

In fact, according to McKinsey & Company, 90% of organisations worldwide are using social technology and reporting a direct business benefit from them. From an employee point of view, 28 hours of their working week are spent writing emails and searching online for information.

And as many of us are perhaps already aware, the use of tablets and mobile devices is increasing around the world. The prediction by The World Bank that within 4 years 71% of the world's literate population will have a smartphone highlights just how reliant

we are all becoming on technological innovation.

It's clear, then, that technology plays an extensive role in the way individuals operate both in and out of work wherever they are in the world. But, while it might be used well by a corporate brand or an individual, it would seem this is yet to be utilised in a vital company process: that of staff learning and development. Examples of talent management strategies that incorporate social technology devices to engage employees and assist with formal training programmes are few and far between. But, considering the clear value staff and business decision makers place on this, could the HR profession be risking losing its credibility if it fails to catch up with, and integrate, technological developments in people processes?

This certainly appears to be the case in the UK, with a recent report by the CIPD (Social technology, social business?) indicating that, whilst over half (54%) of employers are using this medium for recruitment, there's a clear gap in expanding this across wider people strategies. The majority of those surveyed (78%) stated that their organisation doesn't use social media to deliver learning and development. Considering that the report also found that almost two thirds (61%) of the UK workforce use a mobile device for work and one in nine have found a new job through this channel, talent management professionals are certainly missing a trick.

Talent strategies – whether implemented by internal teams or external suppliers – quite simply must be driven by the business world and staff expectations. If, as the CIPD report suggests, social media and mobile technology are significant influencers in our working lives, it's vital that these resources are used as part of the full people agenda. While the data from the CIPD clearly identifies a gap within UK talent strategies, it's perhaps fair to say that this challenge is of global

significance. If HR teams and resourcing professionals around the world fail to utilise social technology in internal training and development, there is the risk that people strategies will become significantly outdated.

That's not to say that people processes need to become wholly digitalised either. Of course we must embrace the media that all our stakeholders are engaging through, but it can't be overlooked that talent management is all about people. There is the slight danger that, as digital developments simplify the engagement element of a company's talent programme, businesses and candidate or employee pools become separated by technology.

At the end of every channel there needs to be a person engaging with another person. As with any talent management plan, if it becomes too processed HR teams will lose touch with the end user. So, rather than using these tools as a replacement for existing strategies, resourcing teams need to look at how they can be incorporated into current people processes.

In my view, it would also be interesting to measure engagement levels and business impacts as a result of social interaction. It's all too easy to assume that the activity on these digital channels is engaging, but without identifying measurement indicators it's impossible to demonstrate the true business value and assess where improvements can be made. In our experience we find that few companies around the globe achieve true engagement with their social initiatives and therefore it's hard to quantify the return on investment from implementing social practices.



Stephen Gilbert is Practice Director at Rethink Talent Management. For further information visit: www.rethink-recruitment.com/talent-management