

The New Résumé: It's 140 Characters

Some Recruiters, Job Seekers Turn to Twitter, but Format Is a Challenge; Six-Second Video Goes Viral

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Twitter is becoming the new job board. It is also becoming the new résumé.

Fed up with traditional recruiting sites and floods of irrelevant résumés, some recruiters are turning to the social network to post jobs, hunt for candidates and research applicants.

Some recruiters say Twitter has transformed their prospecting and hiring, helping them identify candidates they wouldn't have found otherwise, but others say the messaging platform has some way to go before it can replace LinkedIn, Facebook or other job-hunting tools. Lauren Weber reports. Photo: Twitter.

Job seekers, in turn, are trying to summarize their CVs in 140 characters or six-second videos.

Twitter, which was founded in 2006, isn't yet revolutionizing recruiting, but some employers are already using it to great advantage, citing quick, direct contact with candidates and access to broad networks.

The appeal will grow as the site develops, says Josh Bersin, principal and founder of Bersin by Deloitte, a human resources research firm owned by Deloitte Consulting LLP. "Companies see its potential and they know that over time it'll get more sophisticated," allowing recruiters to target the right individuals with both sponsored tweets—essentially, jobs ads—and regular tweets, he said.

Others remain skeptical.

For one, the rules of recruiting on Twitter are still unclear: Should job seekers only post on professional matters, or are personal updates fair game? Should recruiters respond to Twitter dialogues initiated by candidates?

And how does one write a 140-character résumé—a single tweet summarizing one's experience and unique attributes—anyway?

In February, Enterasys, a Boston network-infrastructure firm, decided to exclusively recruit for a social media marketing position using Twitter. The firm promoted the position via tweets and only accepted candidates who tweeted their interest using the hashtag #socialCV. Among the requirements for candidates: More than 1,000 active Twitter followers.

Having narrowed the field down to about 15 finalists, Vala Afshar, Enterasys' chief marketing officer, says he's convinced Twitter recruiting is the way to go.

"I am fairly certain I am going to abandon the résumé process," he says. "The Web is your CV and social networks are your references."

Jocelyn Lai, a talent acquisition manager for advertising firm GSD&M in Austin, Texas, says she regularly uses Twitter to get a sense of a candidate. "I watch people interact, learn what their positions are, who their best friends on Twitter are, whether they have a sense of humor. From that you can get a pretty good picture," she says.

Still, most HR executives and recruiters haven't embraced Twitter for filling jobs, finding other social-media sites like LinkedIn more effective. Moreover, they aren't sure their audience is using it for job-seeking purposes.

In March, HR consulting firm CareerXroads found that of 37 large U.S. companies, none was using Twitter extensively for posting jobs or for identifying candidates. But the survey did show that recruiters expect to use the platform more in the future, especially for getting the word out about openings.

In corners of the job market, such as media and technology, candidates and recruiters swear by Twitter's value.

Lars Schmidt, senior director for talent acquisition and innovation at NPR, turned to Twitter when he moved to the nonprofit public radio company from Ticketmaster. With tighter resources, creative strategies were essential to meeting his recruiting goals. He started an @NPRJobs Twitter account and now uses it not just to broadcast job openings but to share information about NPR's work culture, publicize openings at member stations, and build community by offering career tips.

"The people who are great aren't always looking for jobs, and they're not necessarily going to our career site, but they are on social media," said Mr. Schmidt. Two of his key hires last year applied for jobs after seeing postings on the Twitter feeds of people they followed.

Mr. Schmidt says the interaction with candidates and potential candidates is what makes the tool work. He estimates he replies to about 90% of the tweets he receives. "Companies that fail at recruiting on Twitter are the ones that only use it to broadcast jobs and don't interact with anyone. If you're just posting jobs, it's no better than a job board," he said.

Twitter, which says it has more than 200 million monthly active users, is well aware of the network's use as a recruiting tool.

Earlier this year the company co-hosted a job-search Twitter chat at its San Francisco headquarters, receiving several hundred tweets in response to questions. The public nature of Twitter "allows you to develop a certain rapport with recruiters and companies you otherwise would not have access to," says Twitter spokeswoman Alexandra Valasek. "A tweet is much easier to send than an email or a phone call."

In February, job seeker Dawn Siff, a former radio journalist, used Twitter's new video program, Vine, to create a six-second video résumé. In the spot, Ms. Siff, wielding whimsical props such as a Rubik's Cube, light bulb and a light saber, says she is an "idea machine," as well as a journalist, strategist, manager and "deadline Jedi."

The tweet went viral, leading her to increase her Twitter followers fourfold and earn television coverage.

Ms. Siff just started a new job as a project manager with a major media company. While the Vine video wasn't directly responsible for the job, she says that executives at the firm were impressed by it.

"This is a new era where everyone needs to have a voice, and you want to leave a digital trail of yourself," says Ms. Siff.

Not so lucky was Eric White a former journalist seeking to break into public relations, who tweeted a link to his CV, but with only a few dozen followers, he didn't get much traction. In the end, he opted to start his own PR firm.

After recruiters and job seekers find each other over Twitter, more traditional means of hiring usually take over: Candidates may tweet a link to a résumé or a more complete social-media profile, followed by phone or in-person interviews.

But for making that first connection, Kathryn Minshew, founder and chief executive of career-resource site TheMuse.com, for one, is an advocate of the 140-character résumé.

A tweet, she explains, "is the new elevator pitch."

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Tips for a Twitter Job Search

Hunting for a job on Twitter can be tricky, particularly because the social network combines a person's personal and professional identities. Here are some tips, gathered from recruiters, job-seekers and career experts, on how to best leverage the social network.

- Follow companies – and if possible, individual hiring managers and employees -- you'd like to work with.
- Re-tweet and converse with hiring managers and employees at companies of interest. If you're currently employed, you can directly message employers once you have established a rapport.
- Use your profile to indicate you're looking for a job. Nothing says social-media novice more than a Twitter account with the default picture, but make sure your photo shows you in a professional, positive light.
- Don't shy away from personal tweets or humor, as hiring managers want to know what you'd be like among colleagues. But keep posts clean.
- Don't be offended if a hiring manager doesn't respond to your posting. Many people dip in and out of Twitter and don't read it religiously.
- Create a 140-character resume, a concise summary describing your skills, what you're interested in and how a recruiter could find out more. Also consider creating a Vine video, a six-second video highlighting your skills.