This report examines the social media activity of North American recruiters across the “big three” social networks — LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter. In this report, we present key findings and benchmark data culled from the actual activities of more than 160,000 recruiters in the Bullhorn Reach user network in 2012.

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INTRODUCTION

With 98% of recruiters leveraging social media in 2012, and the greatest opportunity for the staffing industry in 2013 being “access to passive candidates via social media,” the potential payoff for taking advantage of LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter for recruiting has never been stronger.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

• Early adopters of social recruiting use a wider variety of social media than later adopters. While the percentage of recruiters using Facebook and Twitter has gone down from 2011 to 2012, the percentage of early adopters from 2011 using these networks has gone up.

• Recruiters are relying heavily on LinkedIn, because its value is clear. 64% of recruiters used only LinkedIn for social recruiting in 2012, compared to 48% in 2011, and with good reason. Jobs posted on LinkedIn received more views than jobs posted on Twitter and Facebook put together.

• Recruiters are under-utilizing Twitter and Facebook. Only 12% of recruiters were connected to all three social networks — LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter — in 2012. Half of North American recruiters using Twitter for recruiting have fewer than 50 followers.

• Facebook isn’t a highly-utilized social recruiting tool because it isn’t popular among recruiters — not because it doesn’t work. Facebook is the largest social network on the planet, but only 22% of recruiters used Facebook for recruiting in 2012, versus 27% who used Twitter. However, 16.7% of recruiters successfully used Facebook to place candidates versus just 12.7% with Twitter.

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RECRUITERS AREN’T MAKING THE MOST OF SOCIAL RECRUITING

Note: The chart above represents recruiters who have connected their Bullhorn Reach accounts to at least one social network.

Recruiters were more reliant on LinkedIn in 2012 than in 2011. Of all Bullhorn Reach recruiters who used one or more social networks for recruiting in 2012, 97% used LinkedIn. Twitter was a distant second at 27%, with Facebook last. With 97.3% of recruiters reporting that they used LinkedIn in our 2013 North American Staffing and Recruiting Trends Report, the Bullhorn Reach and anonymous North American findings closely align.

Only 12% of recruiters were connected to all three social networks — LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter — in 2012. This is a sizeable decrease in percentage from 2011, when 21% of recruiters were using all three networks.

While 48% of recruiters relied solely on LinkedIn in 2011 for social recruiting, a full 64% did so in 2012. Less than 1% of recruiters used the combination of Facebook and Twitter without LinkedIn. And Twitter was more popular than Facebook as a recruiting channel in 2012, with 27% of Bullhorn Reach users connecting their Twitter accounts versus 22% connecting their Facebook accounts.

However, in our 2013 North American Staffing and Recruiting Trends Report, recruiters reported Facebook being a more effective social recruiting channel than Twitter. When recruiters were asked which social networks produced candidates they were actually able to place, 16.7% selected Facebook while only 12.7% selected Twitter. This isn’t to argue that Facebook is most effective, of course. In the Trends Report, 92.9% of respondents stated that LinkedIn produced candidates they were able to place.

TWITTER, FACEBOOK ADOPTION WAS HIGHER AMONG EARLY ADOPTERS

For the purposes of this report, “early adopters” are defined as North American recruiters who joined Bullhorn Reach before 12/31/2011, and “later adopters” are those who joined after 12/31/2011.

In 2012, early social recruiting adopters were significantly more adventurous in terms of leveraging all three major social networks for recruiting than later adopters. For early adopters in the United States specifically, Twitter adoption was at 48% at the end of 2011, and was at 52% at the end of 2012. And while Facebook adoption for U.S. early adopters was 37% at the end of 2011, it rose to 38% by December of 2012. LinkedIn adoption for the U.S. early adopter group was 92% in 2011, and remained at 92% at the conclusion of 2012.

In North America in general, Facebook adoption in 2011 and 2012 was lower than that of Twitter, despite Facebook being a more effective and successful recruiting channel than Twitter according to the North American Staffing and Recruiting Trends Report data discussed earlier. A relatively small percentage of recruiters have used Facebook for recruiting, but those who have are seeing value.

And while Facebook and Twitter have introduced recruiter-friendly features like Graph Search and sponsored tweets, respectively, LinkedIn continues to have a strong hold on the North American recruiting market. With 200 million users and a reputation for being the “professional” network, LinkedIn has remained equally popular with those just starting out in social recruiting and those who are experienced.
The size of recruiters’ LinkedIn networks grew across the board last year. LinkedIn is the only “big three” social network that was heavily used by both early and later adopters in 2012, and the growth in average network size indicates that recruiters aren’t just exploring it — they’re actively engaged with it.

In 2012, according to a Nielsen study, the average number of connections for a general LinkedIn user was just 60. The average for a U.S. recruiter, according to the chart above, was 692 — 11 times the “normal” network size.

On a related note, when asked which social networks they plan on using more extensively in 2013, 82.6% of recruiters in our 2013 North American Staffing and Recruiting Trends Report said LinkedIn. Twitter pulled in 38.3% of the vote, while only 37.4% said they’d use Facebook more often in the coming year. Therefore, it’s likely that the average LinkedIn network size will continue to grow in 2013.

While the U.S., Canada, and rest of world increased their average number of Facebook friends in 2012, the numbers still pale in comparison to LinkedIn network sizes.

This is notable given that Facebook's active user base is 6 times larger\(^4\) than LinkedIn's active user base and 7 times larger\(^5\) than Twitter's active user base. The average U.S. Facebook user between the ages of 18-24 has 429 Facebook friends (according to Statista\(^6\)). The average U.S. recruiter, according to our data above, has 251 Facebook friends. This is despite the fact that recruiting is arguably the most connection-heavy and social job role in existence.

The data suggests that Facebook isn't a highly-utilized social recruiting tool because it just isn't popular among recruiters—not because it doesn't work. Its perception as a purely personal tool and the lack of awareness of its targeting features (such as friend lists) may account for why recruiters haven't yet fully embraced it. However, our research indicates that it works better than Twitter for identifying place-able candidates.


2012 was a good year for recruiters in terms of Twitter network size. While research shows that network size on Twitter inversely correlates with applicants per follower⁷, recruiters’ Twitter network sizes were much larger in 2012 than 2011. The United States topped Canada and Mexico in Twitter followers, but all three North American countries had fewer average Twitter followers than recruiters in the rest of the world.

The chart above clearly illustrates the growing popularity of Twitter. With 500 million registered⁸ users worldwide and 100,000 tweets⁹ sent per minute, Twitter shows no signs of slowing down. Recruiters had stronger Twitter presences than the average user, in contrast to their lower-than-average Facebook network sizes. In 2012, the average Twitter user had 126 followers¹⁰, whereas the average U.S. recruiter had 290.

This exponential growth in average Twitter network size makes it all the more surprising that only 38.3% of recruiters in the 2013 North American Staffing and Recruiting Trends Report plan on increasing their use of Twitter in 2013. It indicates that while engagement may have increased, recruiters still aren’t recognizing the value Twitter provides.

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⁷ Bullhorn Reach Infographic, 2012: http://www.bullhornreach.com/cmsites/default/files/size-isn%27t-everything-full.png
¹⁰ “50 Twitter Fun Facts,” MediaBistro AllTwitter, 1.11.13: http://www.mediabistro.com/alltwitter/50-twitter-fun-facts_b33589
50% OF NORTH AMERICAN RECRUITERS USING TWITTER HAVE FEWER THAN 50 FOLLOWERS

To get a better sense of how follower counts varied between channels and recruiters, we examined North American recruiters’ network size distribution.

26% of North American recruiters using Facebook have fewer than 200 Facebook friends. For the 22% of recruiters who even post jobs on Facebook, the highest percentage (11%) has between 101-200 friends, followed by 10% with 201-300 friends. The graph then gradually scales downwards with a slight uptick at the 1,001-2,000-friend mark, representing the 3% who are Facebook power users (or potentially young enough that they have a large network of personal connections culled from using Facebook throughout their college years).

Twitter network size distribution is more concentrated. Fifty percent of North American recruiters using Twitter for recruiting have fewer than 50 followers, and the highest percentage (32%) have between 11-50 followers. This reflects an early stage of Twitter adoption for many recruiters, who are only beginning to nurture and grow their follower communities. Twitter network size then precipitously declines until the 1,001-2,000-follower mark, representing 2% of recruiters.

Unsurprisingly, recruiters are more active on LinkedIn than on any other network. LinkedIn encompasses the highest percentage of recruiters with enormous network sizes (15% have between 1,001-2,000 connections). Before that mark, however, the distribution is sporadic. Many recruiters (13%) have fairly small LinkedIn networks hovering between 101-200 connections, characteristic of newer adopters. This scales down gradually and then sharply increases at the 1,001-2,000 connection mark, with a still strong 5% of recruiters having networks of 2,001-3,000 connections. Forty percent have fewer than 300 connections.
LinkedIn gets more job views than Facebook and Twitter combined

A job view is defined as a jobseeker’s view of a recruiter’s job on Bullhorn Reach, which requires a click-through on the associated job posting on LinkedIn, Facebook, or Twitter. A view does not equate to an actual application.

The data above shows that jobs posted on LinkedIn received more views than jobs posted on Twitter and Facebook put together last year. For any job posted on Facebook in 2012, Twitter drove 4.3 times more job views and LinkedIn drove an astonishing 17.2 times more job views. In turn, LinkedIn drove 4 times more job views than Twitter did.

As a point of comparison, in 2011 Twitter drove just 1.9 times more job views than Facebook and LinkedIn drove 3 times more job views than Twitter. Why the decrease in job views on Facebook? Advances to its content-ranking algorithm and changes to the appearance of users’ Newsfeeds in the past year have redefined best practices for recruiting using Facebook. Recruiters who have not kept abreast of these changes (often those newer to social recruiting) may not be getting the greatest benefit from the behemoth social network.

The relative number of job views does not necessarily reflect a network’s effectiveness, but it does reflect the network’s content strategy. Facebook’s EdgeRank algorithm discourages spamming one’s friends by penalizing and hiding repeat posts. This makes posting the same jobs over and over again
a fruitless endeavor, as opposed to posting a mixture of jobs, articles, and other content, which is typical of more advanced social recruiters. On Twitter, 80% of tweets are read within the first hour, and there are especially active times of day such as early afternoon. Using hashtags can help active jobseekers find and curate tweets well after they’ve been posted, but generally, tweeting about a job opening at 3 a.m. is not going to do a recruiter any favors.

The relatively smaller number of job views for Twitter and Facebook compared to LinkedIn doesn’t mean they’re ineffective for job posting, but that many recruiters may not be using these tools in an optimal fashion to reach jobseekers. One size does not fit all on social media.

*Furthermore, network size also affects number of job views. The larger one’s network, the more people who see every post. Given that recruiters have comparatively larger LinkedIn networks than Twitter or Facebook networks, it makes sense that LinkedIn would yield a higher number of job views.*

**FACEBOOK CATCHING UP TO TWITTER IN DRIVING JOB APPLICATIONS**

![Figure 8.0](figure8.0)

A job application is defined as an event on Bullhorn Reach in which a jobseeker connects with a recruiter about a particular position.
Looking at relative applications per job posting by network for 2012, Twitter drove just 1.3 times more applications per job post than Facebook despite Twitter job postings getting 4.3 times more views. Back in 2011, Twitter drove 2.9 times more applications than Facebook. This suggests that while Facebook job posts get fewer average views, those who do view them may be more receptive to applying.

LinkedIn, on the other hand, drove 4.2 times more applications than Twitter and 5.5 times more applications than Facebook. Why the disparity in performance? LinkedIn has a robust native job board and has had one for ten years. Even though both Facebook and Twitter have recently made efforts to welcome recruiters and hiring managers and encourage them to post jobs, LinkedIn has been associated with job postings and professional development since its launch in 2003. LinkedIn is not only the de-facto professional network, but also an older social media destination than both Facebook and Twitter.

This again brings to mind our 2013 North American Staffing and Recruiting Trends Report research in which a higher percentage of recruiters were successful in placing candidates they found on Facebook than those they found on Twitter. While Twitter and LinkedIn saw much higher job views than Facebook, the number of applications was more evenly distributed. In 2012, LinkedIn was still well ahead of Facebook — though not nearly as much as 2011 — and Twitter was almost even.

And the data above only takes into consideration number of applications, not a subjective indicator like quality. Overall, much of our recent data corroborates the idea that recruiters should not discount Facebook for recruiting.

**TWITTER NO LONGER MOST EFFECTIVE FOR DRIVING APPLICATIONS FROM CONTACTS**

[Figure showing relative applications per job posting by network for 2011 and 2012.]

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4.6x

2.9x

3x

6.6x

LinkedIn  
Twitter  
Facebook

As of 2011  
As of 2012

figure 9.0
Twitter was most effective for driving applications from network contacts in 2011, but didn’t even come close to regaining that title in 2012. LinkedIn connections were 4.6 times more likely than Facebook friends and 1.6 times more likely than Twitter followers to apply for a job.

If a recruiter is just using Facebook to nurture personal relationships with friends and family, it’s unlikely these particular connections would apply for a job. It’s easy to see why Facebook, if used as a purely personal tool, wouldn’t perform well in this regard.

Twitter dominated the other two social networks in 2011, with a Twitter follower being 6.6 times more likely to apply for a job than a Facebook friend and two times more likely to apply for a job than a LinkedIn connection. Despite Twitter’s easy hashtag searches and simple interface, LinkedIn’s feed redesign may have helped the network push ahead in driving candidate applications.

**THE BIGGER THE NETWORK SIZE, THE MORE APPLICATIONS PER JOB POST**

![Bar chart showing average number of applications per job post on LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter correlated to a recruiter's network size.](image)

The chart above tracks the average number of applications per job post on LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter correlated to a recruiter’s network size. What’s especially telling about the data is that despite the fact that recruiters with enormous (5000+) LinkedIn networks receive the most applications, even recruiters with very small networks get a high number of applicants.

The results for Facebook, in comparison, are much less impressive. A recruiter with a small number of Facebook friends gets an average of 1.4 applications per job post. However, even recruiters with...
extremely large Facebook networks (1001-5000 friends) only get 2.6 applications per job post. In other words, a Facebook super connector receives half the applications per job post of a LinkedIn novice. And Twitter, while ahead of Facebook in number of applications received by power users, still doesn’t offer a good starting average to those with fewer than 50 followers.

**SOCIAL RECRUITING POWER USERS OVERWHELMINGLY RECRUIT FOR IT JOBS**

Only 12% of Bullhorn Reach users are actively recruiting on all three major social networks — LinkedIn, Twitter, and Facebook. These are recruiters who understand the advantages of all three social networks and are therefore the true “power users” of social recruiting. These power users are more likely to recruit for certain industry verticals than others.

Among all social recruiting power users, the most heavily represented vertical was, by far, information technology. This was followed by recruiters in finance and banking, healthcare, and manufacturing.

With IT professionals being in very high demand in North America, it’s not surprising that recruiters specializing in IT would try to reach as many potential candidates as possible through a variety of social networks.
CONCLUSION

Social recruiting has gained momentum in the past year, but a smaller percentage of recruiters are taking advantage of all three major social networks.

LinkedIn continues to be the dominant social network for recruiting due to its age, reputation as a professional destination, and penetration amongst recruiters and jobseekers alike. Sixty-four percent of recruiters relied exclusively on LinkedIn for their social recruiting efforts in 2012. LinkedIn yields considerably more job views and applications than Facebook and Twitter.

Twitter, while still ahead of Facebook in terms of adoption, isn’t yielding impressive dividends. While in last year’s report we speculated that Twitter would gain ground from LinkedIn in 2012, that prediction has proven inaccurate. If anything, Twitter lost ground in the past year as a social recruiting resource. While Twitter is actively working to further monetize its features and recruiters are becoming more adept at sharing both job posts and content with their followers, the effectiveness of the social network’s micro-messages are highly dependent on timing.

Despite Facebook being the least-utilized network in Bullhorn Reach, data suggests that it provides recruiters with candidates of the same and potentially higher quality than Twitter. The real barrier to successful recruiting on Facebook may be an unwillingness to try it and acknowledge that it works differently than other networks. Only 22% of North American recruiters used Facebook in 2012, despite it having one billion active users. However, new use cases for Facebook recruiting such as Graph Search and nascent initiatives like the Social Jobs Partnership signal that Facebook is serious about courting recruiters and may prove to increase its popularity in the staffing industry. We predict that in next year’s report we’ll see Facebook overtake Twitter in terms of applications per job post and grow considerably in average network size.

METHODOLOGY

The findings in this report are based on the real activities of more than 160,000 recruiters using Bullhorn Reach. More than 33% of North American recruiters have used Bullhorn Reach since its launch in February of 2011.
ABOUT BULLHORN REACH

Bullhorn Reach is a software-as-a-service (SaaS) social recruiting product designed to help recruiters leverage social media to source candidates and identify potential movers effectively. Launched in February 2011, the Bullhorn Reach social recruiting suite offers robust solutions that empower recruiters to engage with their social connections, enhance their personal brands, and increase their visibility online.

With more than 170,000 registered users worldwide, Bullhorn Reach delivers advanced technology that brings recruiters and job seekers together more efficiently than ever before. Bullhorn Reach is a division of Bullhorn, Inc., the global leader in recruiting software. Headquartered in Boston, with offices in St. Louis, Vancouver, London, and Sydney, Bullhorn’s recruiting CRM and social recruiting products serve more than 10,000 clients representing nearly 200,000 users across 150 countries.