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# Social Media Transformation of Human Resource Management

LaVita A. Williams

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The University of Southern Mississippi

Social Media Transformation of Human Resource Management

By

La Vita Williams

A Thesis  
Submitted to the Honors College of  
The University of Southern Mississippi  
in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Bachelor of Science in the  
Department of Management and International Business

May 2017



# SOCIAL MEDIA TRANSFORMATION OF HRM

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# SOCIAL MEDIA TRANSFORMATION OF HRM

## Abstract

Social media is rapidly transforming the way individuals interact in the real world day by day in the workforce. This research focuses on how social media effects human resource management (HRM) in areas of recruitment, selection, retention, and termination. Through a SurveyMonkey information was gathered from human resource professionals primarily in the southeastern region and throughout the United States. Human resource managers where asked about the advantages and disadvantages of using social media such as Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter in areas of recruitment, selection, and termination. The results, illustrated that there were many advantages when using social media sites in HRM such as employee recognition, wider and diverse applicant pools, and internal organization communication. However, the results revealed that there were also several disadvantages of using social media sites such as lawsuits, discrimination issues, and wrongful termination. In the end, this paper discussed the importance of organizational policies effectively governing employees' use of social media sites in order to highlight more advantages and reduce negative effects.

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## Dedication

Mom, Daddy, Momma, Dwight, Auntie Mimi, Uncle D, and Uncle Cliff

Thank you for your prayer, guidance, motivation, and love

Blessed to know that I have the best Family ever

### **Acknowledgements**

I wish to express my sincere gratitude my thesis advisor, Professor Russ Willis, for his unwavering support and guidance in mentoring me through this study. I would not have been able to complete this undertaking without your constant encouragement and help. Your contributions are sincerely appreciated and gratefully acknowledged.

Additionally, I would like to express special thanks to the faculty of The Honors College. During my four years at The University of Southern Mississippi I was blessed to have their counsel and encouragement.

Furthermore, I would like to thank all of my family and friends who provided me with emotional, financial, and moral support.

Above all, to God be the glory, the Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts him, and helps me. My heart leaps for joy, and with my song I praise him (Psalm 28:7).

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## List of Abbreviations

E-HRM	Electronic Human Resource Management
ECPA	Electronic Communications Privacy Act of 1986
HR	Human Resource
HRM	Human Resource Management
IP	Internet Protocol
IT	Information Technology
KSAOs	Knowledge, Skills, Abilities, and Other characteristics
USM	University of Southern Mississippi

## **Introduction**

This thesis explores how social media is transforming the roles of human resource managers in the workplace. This study will examine the different effects that social media has on recruitment, retention, and termination in the workplace. In addition, this study will illustrate the advantages and disadvantages with which social media sites provide human resource managers (Davison et al., 2011). Furthermore, the importance of this study is to improve the job functionality of human resource management as social media is rapidly transforming in response to technology advancements (Miller, 2012).

With the quick transformation of technology and social media, there has been limited research on the effects that it has on human resource managers. By understanding the importance of social media sites in human resource managers' job functionality, it will help to improve their day to day tasks such as recruitment, retention, reduce the number of mistakes such as wrongful termination, and strengthen the internal environment of a corporation (Collins & Clark, 2003). Research from this study will help fill the gaps of how social media sites should be utilized in the workplace for both human resource managers and employees. From this study, human resource managers will be able to comprehend when social media sites are useful and when they are ineffective in the workplace (Miller-Merrell, 2012).

This study will contribute to the field of human resource management by examining the appropriate use or inappropriate misuse of social media sites. Recently, there have been lawsuits against employers over the belief by employees that their privacy has been invaded by their employer which led to employees being terminated from their job based on their use of social networks (Davison et al., 2011). Another concern that has arisen, is the standards and regulations governing the use of social networks by human resource managers (Gramberg, Teicher, &

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O'Rourke, 2014). The recent disadvantages have created multiple problems with the proper use of social media in the workplace. This study will contribute possible solutions to help human resource managers prevent the misuse of social media sites in the workplace. Furthermore, with the many advantages that social media does provide in recruitment and retention, this study will emphasize the importance of using social media for providing an organization with a competitive advantage (Beulen, 2008). The results of this study will be used to help to strengthen the organization by improving the work ethic of employees and human resource managers using social media sites.

### **Literature Review**

#### *Introduction*

Transformation is a word that can be used to describe how the rapid growth of technology has shaped the present-day workforce. Human resource managers are faced with the task of learning how to establish their organization around the changes of technology (Hendrickson, 2003). This review examines how technology, and particularly social media should be effectively used in helping the human resource department be transformed.

Researching the effectiveness of social media sites in the human resource sector of the workforce is key because it will provide an organization with a competitive advantage (Lengnick-Ha, 1968). In addition, limited research is available on this subject due to the constant changes of social media and cyber laws. First, this paper will examine the integration of technology in the human resource department. Secondly, it will discuss the advantages and disadvantages of social media. Finally, this paper will conclude with how new research will contribute to the field of human resources' use of social media/networks.

#### *Integration of technology in Human Resource Management*

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The field of human resource management (HRM) has been restructured by technology in recent years. Through the use of social media sites, online websites, cloud storage, and a variety of other advancements, the workforce is constantly being altered to adjust to the organization's technological needs. According to Miller (2012), approximately 81% of employees identified in a survey responded that they used their personal mobile device at work. The integration of technology in organization has created a digital workforce where employees use their computer and internet (Benson, Johnson, & Kuchinke, 2002) to complete their daily job tasks. Employees are not only using technology in the office, but they are also taking it home (Miller, 2012). The role of HRM has evolved from the "file maintenance" HRM stage, to that of a "strategic business partner" stage adding value to the success of a business (Cascio, 2005). Furthermore, organizations have expanded the use of technology into electronic human resource management (e-HRM), which is using internet and web technologies as a way of executing traditional HRM practices (Huang & Taylor, 2013). For example, traditional HR practices are made easier since managers can post jobs online or train new employees through a web-based system. Although technology is changing the role of HR managers, the question that has arisen is, "how beneficial has technology been related to their workplace roles?"

### *Advantages of Social Media and Human Resource Management*

Presently, social media is a popular HR technology used by organizations. The advantages of technology have been evident through the success of websites such as: LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, College Recruiter, Simply Hired, Career Builders, and variety of others (Davison, Maraist, Bing, 2011). Human resource managers use social media sites and websites for recruiting, staffing, selection, discipline, and termination (Davison et al., 2011). Another benefit is that social media provides human resource managers a competitive advantage for the

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organization (Collins & Clark, 2003). Additionally, social media provides an internal benefit to a organization by improving the social culture of it (Collins & Smith, 2006). In the following sections these topics will be expanded to illustrate the importance of social media in supporting HRM practices internally and externally.

Social media is critical in supporting the core functions of HRM such as recruitment, staffing, and termination. Many organizations rely upon sites such as LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter to recruit future employees. Social media sites have helped to limit the time it takes for recruitment. Also, it has allowed for HR managers to filter through the large pool of applicants, which is simplifying the selection process. Organizations are also using social media to discipline and terminate employees who have violated any regulations of the corporation. Social media is key for success in an organization's external and internal environment. For example, in the Harvard Review on organizational culture Unisys Tech Company experienced an increase in productivity using social media (Meister, 2011).

In recent years, organizations have gained a competitive advantage with using social media sites. According to Collins and Smith (2006), human resource practices in high-tech organizations had, "a positive effect on the organization social climate of trust, cooperation, shared codes, and language". As a result of this positive social climate, the organization could collaborate more effectively and be more innovative leading to exceptional organizational performance. A firm can create a competitive advantage through social networks that leads to its sales growth and stock growth (Collins & Clark, 2003). The integration of technology in an organization's HR department will allow them to keep up with technological advances in the global marketplace (Miller, 2012).

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Social media helps HRM to strengthen the internal functions of an organization such as efficiency, collaboration, retention, and knowledge. Employees can use social media to communicate more quickly with one another, which helps increase productivity. Also, through different social networks and web based sites, employees can collaborate with one another with more ease (Collins & Smith, 2006).

### *Disadvantages of Social Media and Human Resource Management*

Despite the vast number of advantages that social networks have in HRM, there are also quite a few disadvantages that have occurred from the use of social networks. Social networks have been said to blur the line between work and home which has a negative impact on work-life balance (White, Hill, McGovern, Mills, & Smeaton, 2003). Furthermore, there have been legal cases over the belief by employees that their privacy has been invaded by their employer which led to employees being terminated from their job based on their use of social networks (Davison et al., 2011). Another concern that has arisen, is the standards and regulations governing the use of social networks by HR managers (Gramberg, Teicher, & O'Rourke, 2014).

According to Miller (2012), many employees are using personal mobile devices, which allows them to easily take their work home with them. In some instances, organizations are a digital workplace and employees use technology as an IT tool to work from home (Benson et al., 2002). The use of person mobile devices by employees is also an issue in regards to the privacy of an organization. Human resource management is now struggling between the appropriate use of personal devices and technology within the workforce.

By blurring the work-life balance for employees, HRM faces an issue with the misuse of social media in the workplace. In a study by Whitty and Carr (2006), social networks are contributing to “productivity-lowering activities” such as “cyber slacking” and “cyberbullying”.

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For instance, HR managers are catching employees browsing their social media sites, posting comments and liking pictures all during work hours. As a result of, employees misusing the Internet and social networks, it is potentially leading to more employment related lawsuits for the organization (Gramberg et al., 2012). More responsibility is falling on HR managers to monitor employees to prevent the cost and legal troubles associated with employees misusing technology (Gramberg et al., 2012).

Due to the problems that organizations have faced from the inappropriate use of social networks and technology in the workforce, HRM has had to develop a set of rules and procedures to follow when dealing with the use of social media. However, as HRM handles these issues by termination and suspension, employees feel that their privacy is being invaded because of the blurring between their work life and personal life. Legal issues have been presented in which an employee believes that he/she is wrongfully terminated based off an image or comment posted on his/her social media account (Gramberg et al., 2012). Currently HRM is struggling with how to govern employees' use of social media and technology in the workforce.

### *Conclusion*

In conclusion, social media has its advantages and disadvantages in HRM. Human resource managers should know the appropriate limits and boundaries of using social media. However, social media is still beneficial in helping improve the functions of HRM. The research that is proposed is how HRM can find a balance with the appropriate usage of social media to provide an organization with a competitive advantage without creating a disadvantage through lawsuits and employees' misuse.



### **Methodology**

To find out how HR managers view the use of social media in the workplace, a questionnaire survey was developed with SurveyMonkey. The survey was distributed to HR professionals to gauge how effective or ineffective the use of social media is as a tool in the workplace. An HR professional was defined as a manager or employee that worked for the HR department of the organization. Furthermore, these surveys were distributed to organizations representing various industries throughout the country, but with a predominance in the southeastern region of the United States. The methodology for this research will discuss how questionnaire surveys are developed through Survey Monkey, why this is the most effective method of conducting this research, and what questions will be developed to understand the advantages and disadvantages of the use of social media by human resource managers and employees.

SurveyMonkey is an external agency for conducting online surveys. Using this online tool, a survey can be designed, managed, and distributed to participants through various media, for example like a custom web link, LinkedIn, Facebook, and email. The survey was distributed via email with a web-link attachment to the participants. SurveyMonkey guarantees the same privacy policies that it has stated on its website. The rights of the survey data belong to the creator and is safeguarded and stored securely on servers located in the United States. Survey respondents email address and IP addresses remain anonymous. This framework complied with the US-Swiss Safe Harbor Framework developed by the U.S. Department of Commerce regarding the collection, use and retention of personal information received in the U.S. from EU member countries and Switzerland. Also, TRUSTe has verified this organization's privacy

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practices against TRUSTe Privacy Standards using a combination of technical and manual methodologies and company self-attestations (SurveyMonkey, 2016).

Using Survey Monkey to create and email surveys was the most effective way to gather information from human resource professionals about the use of social media in the workplace (Wright and Boswell, 2002). There are a variety of research methodologies in the field of HRM such as action research, social network analysis, in depth interviews, etc. However, surveys have been effective in providing quick results from a large pool of individuals (Huang and Martin-Taylor (2013), Hatala (2006)). Most HR managers' work is conducted using the internet and emails (Haines and Lafleur, 2008). Furthermore, through electronic surveys, participants have a higher response rate compared to regular mail, telephone calls, or a faxed survey (Baruch and Holton, 2008).

Nevertheless, online surveys do have some disadvantages. For instance, some HR managers receive so many emails a day that they tend to overlook emails that are not so urgent at the time. Also, per Andrews, Nonnecke, and Preece (2013) research, it is difficult to reach some individuals who are currently a part of the hard-to-involve online population. In addition, sometimes due to confidentiality, human resource professionals do not want to take a risk that their responses to the survey might negatively affect their employment (Andrews et al, 2003). Nevertheless, although surveys through email have their disadvantages, in many studies they have been proven effective in collecting data and delivering results.

Using a survey method to collect data requires the researcher to use certain measurements, control variables, and selection of a target sample (Lepak, 2006). Furthermore, research has shown how electronic surveys made data collection simple for the researcher (Survey Monkey, 2016). In research conducted by Ramlall, the survey was broken down into

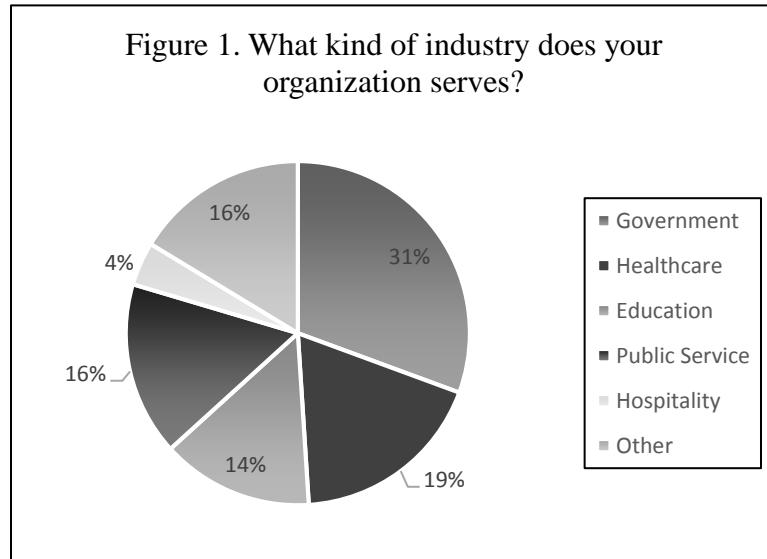
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three measurements and targeted human resource managers in the Midwest region. Furthermore, Ramlall checked the validity and effectiveness of this research method by conducting a pilot study of the survey on 12 HR professionals. Survey piloting, “is the process of conceptualizing and re-conceptualizing the key aims of the study and preparing for the fieldwork and analysis so that not too much will go wrong and nothing will have been left out” (Andrews et al., 2013). This method is effective in identifying questions that should not be included in the survey, added to the survey, reworded, and overall this gives the researcher helpful feedback in developing the final survey (Ramlall, 2006). The advantages of surveys being emailed are becoming more of a popular trend do to the advancement of technology overtime and individual’s frequent internet use (Baruch and Holtom, 2008).

In conclusion, by using Survey Monkey to develop a survey for this research, data was collected to illustrate how human resource professionals view the effectiveness of social media in the work place. There are several possible problems that can arise from email surveys, including individuals overlooking emails and confidentiality agreements. Nevertheless, the advantages like fast response rate, easier data collection and analysis, and the ability to reach a greater number of individuals outweigh the disadvantages of emailing a survey. After the information was collected through Survey Monkey, the data was analyzed and results were graphically represented.

**Results**

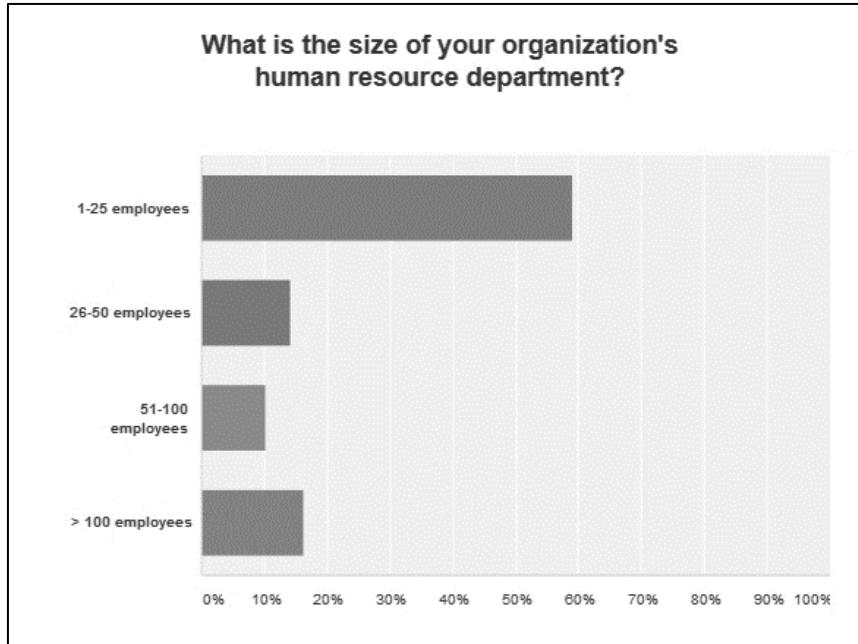
This survey was distributed to HR professionals. An HR professional was defined as a manager or employee that worked for the HR department of the organization. Each participant oversaw making decisions in employee recruitment, selection, and/or termination within their respective organization. In questions one through four, participants were asked background



questions about their organization. First, respondents were asked what kind of industry their organization serves. The following results are illustrated in Figure 1. Fifteen respondents (31%) worked in the government industry, nine (19%) worked in healthcare, seven (14%)

worked in education, eight (16%) worked in the public sector, two (4%) worked in hospitality, and eight (16%) worked in other industries like a manufacturer, bank, or private sector. The next question asked respondents was how many employees worked at their organization. Forty-six (92%) respondents worked for an organization that employed over 100 employees, three (6%) respondents from organizations that employed 51-100 employees, and one (1%) respondent from an organization that employed less than 50 persons. Question three indicated that participants were located throughout the United States to include the following states of: Arizona, Arkansas, Alabama, California, Colorado, Louisiana, Mississippi, Ohio, Tennessee, and Texas.

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Most respondents managed a smaller human resource department as illustrated in Figure 2. Twenty-nine (59.18%) respondents HR departments employed 1-25 employees, seven respondents (14.29%) HR departments employed 26-

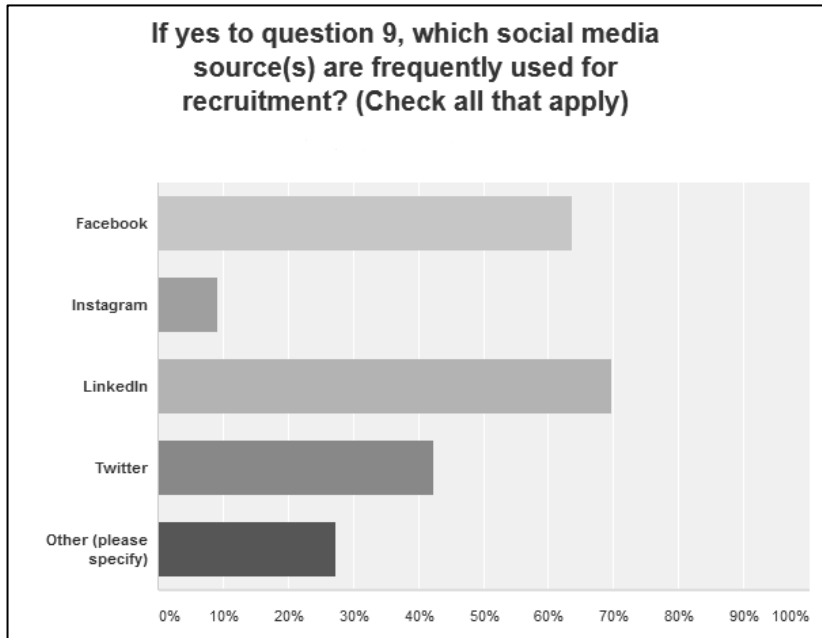
50 employees, five (10.20%) respondents HR department employed 51-100 employees, and eight (16.33%) with more than 100 employees.

In questions 5-8, respondents were asked about their organizations' policies. For question 5 (Appendix B), thirty-eight (79.17%) respondents agreed that their employee handbook had policies that addressed the use of social media at the workplace. On the other hand, ten (20.83%) respondents answered "no" to the question of employees having policies that addressed social media. Two respondents opted to skip this question. The next question asked if their employer restricts the use of social media sites to its employees. Twenty-two (44%) respondents answered "yes", twenty-five (50%) respondents answered "no", and three skipped the question. For question 7, twenty-one (45.65%) responded that their organization did allow employees to use their social media at work, and twenty-five (54.35%) responded employees were not allowed to use their social media accounts at work. In responses to the last question in this section, thirty-four (73.91%) respondents answered "no" to employers monitoring employees' social media

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accounts and twelve (26.09%) responded that their employers do monitor its employees' social media accounts.

In questions 9-15, participants were asked about their recruitment and selection process. For question 9, thirty (69.77%) respondents' organization use social media as a recruitment tool and thirteen (30.23%) respondents' organization did not use social media for recruitment.



To follow up on the previous question, the social media sites that were most used as a recruitment tools are:

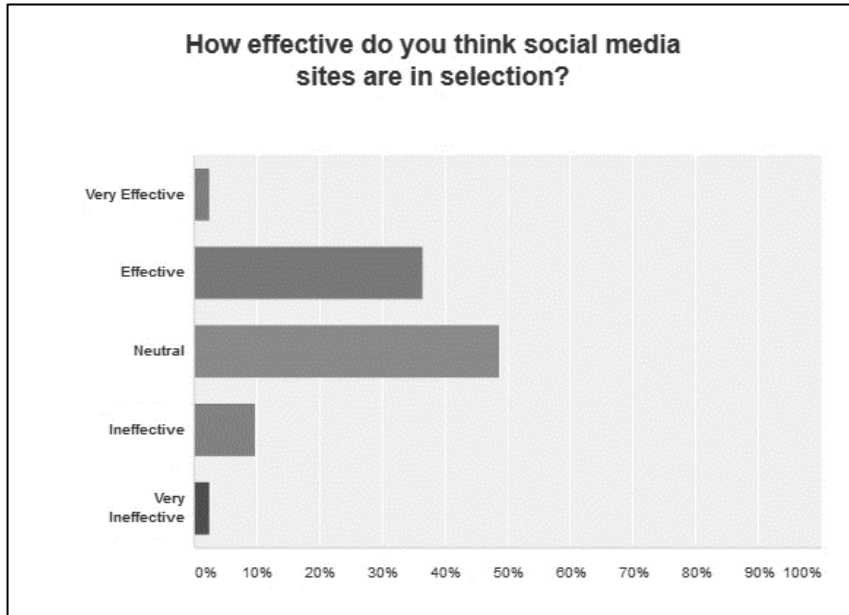
Facebook with twenty-one respondents (63.64%), Instagram with three respondents (9.09%), LinkedIn twenty-three

respondents (69.70%), Twitter with fourteen respondents (42.42%), and other websites with nine respondents (27.27%) including the Muse and the Ladders (Figure 3). In question 11, of the social media sites mentioned, the most effective were LinkedIn with fifteen responses (44.12%), Facebook with nine responses (26.47%), Twitter with three responses (8.82%), and other sources with twelve responses (35.29%) from websites like Career Builder or an external website.

Instagram had no responses indicating it was not effective at all in recruiting potential employees. For the next question, respondents stated that they use these social media sites to announce vacancies, post new listings with a description of job responsibilities, and to provide a link to a job application. When asked if their organizations human resources department

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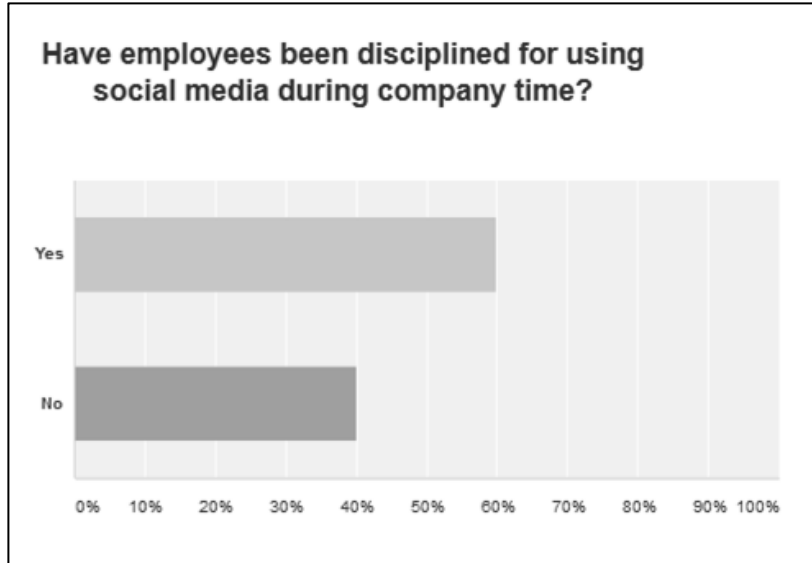
currently use social media sites to attract more applicants than other methods of recruitment, thirty-four (79.07%) respondents disagreed and nine (20.93%) respondents agreed that social media is used most often for recruitment (Question 13, appendix B). For question 14, thirty-six (83.72%) respondents agreed that HR managers review potential applicants' social media profile during the selection process and seven (16.28%) answered "no" to the following question.



Illustrated in figure 4, the most frequent response to the question of effectiveness of using social media in selection was neutral at 48.78%. Further, 36.59% found the use of social media sites effective, 9.76% found the use of social

media sites ineffective, 2.44% respectively found the use of social media sites very ineffective and very effective.

using



Questions 16-20

addressed workplace discipline and termination due to the inappropriate use of social media. Figure 5 illustrates the results of question 16, which asked if employees had been disciplined for using social

media during company time and twenty-five (62.5%) answered “yes”, while sixteen (32%) stated “no”. The next question was a follow up which asked participants to briefly explain an incident if they answered “yes”. The most common responses were: inappropriate usage or content, negative comments in forms of retaliation or discrimination, violating HIPPA, and disclosing sensitive information about a coworker or client. For question 18, twenty-eight (68.29%) respondents answered “no” to employees being terminated for misusing social media during work hours and thirteen (31.71%) respondents said “yes” that employees were terminated. For question 19, thirty (76.92%) respondents said “no” to employees being caught misrepresent the organization’s purpose on their social media account and nine (23.08%) respondents answered with “yes”. The last question in this section, asked participant who answered “yes” to elaborate and provide examples of when employees have misrepresented the organization. Some of the most common examples where, a teacher complaining to a substitute, negative comments made about client, political views, and personnel making comments about sensitive information.

Questions 21-26, addressed the advantages of using social media sites in HRM. For question 21, eleven (28.21%) respondents said “yes” their organization used social media to

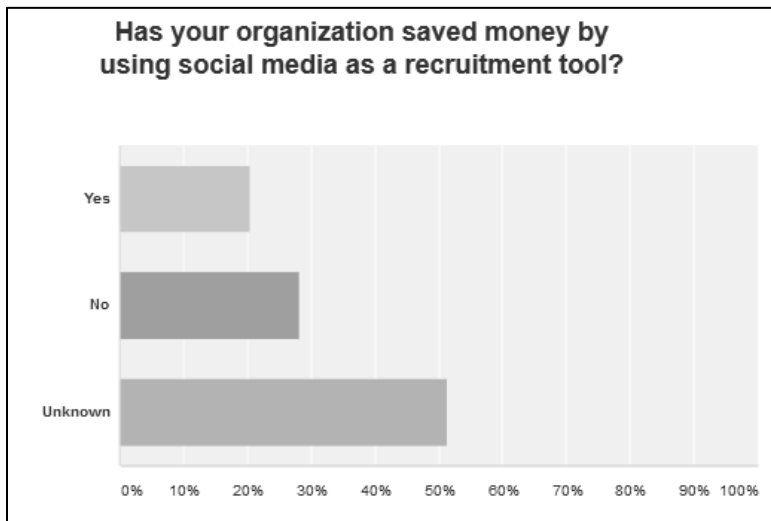


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recognize employee's accomplishments and twenty-eight (71.79%) respondents indicated "no".

Examples of employee recognition that were provided included: showing pictures of service awards; spotlight on employees, clients or business partners; anniversaries of the organization; and acknowledging employee accomplishments. For question 23, the responses were split on whether social media helps an organization with communication and connection. Nineteen (48.72%) respondents agreed that social media helps with the connection of its employees.

Respondents that indicated "yes" provided the following examples: social media provides information to employees about rewards, newsletters, announcements, company updates and



news, employee recognition, social events, and internal messaging. Twenty (51.58%) respondents disagreed that social media helped keep the organization more close-knitted with its employees. In Figure 6, participants were asked how has

social media help their organization to save money, and the fact of the matter is most did not know this information. Eight (20.51%) respondents said "yes" to their organization saving money, eleven (28.21%) respondent indicated "no", and twenty (51.28%) answered "unknown" meaning they did not know whether social media provided their organization with a financial gain or loss. When respondents were asked in question 26, what advantages that social media has provided their organization with there was a variety of answers. Some advantages that respondents listed about social media included: it is a great way to communicate, employee

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connections, attract millennials, customer service connection, quicker meetings and discussions, fundraising, advertising, branding, expanding applicant pool, and networking with other organizations.

Finally, in the last section questions 27-29 focused on the disadvantages of using social media. The first question asked was are there any disadvantages in using social media and if so what are they. Twenty (57.14%) responded “yes” to question 27 and fifteen (42.86%) responded “no”. Respondents that answered “yes” provided examples like, privacy issues, inappropriate comments and pictures, more unqualified applicant pool, negative reviews, time consuming, takes away from work time, negative impact on organization, false claims, loss of brand reputation, and discrimination. However, in the next question about whether the advantages outweigh the disadvantages twenty-three (69.70%) respondents said “yes” and ten (30.30%) respondents answered “no”. For the last question, which asked since social media is new how cautious show organization be in the future due to the rise of lawsuits and briefly explain. Thirty-two (88.89%) stated yes and four (11.11%) stated no. Reasoning behind this question included: being cautious about using social media primarily for recruiting, discrimination, inappropriate behavior, privacy violation, discrimination, not clearly defining rules of social media in handbook, biases, and similar situation could increase the risk of law suits against an organization.

### **Discussion**

The results illustrated some patterns about how beneficial the use of social media is in human resource management. First, in the background section, most of the respondents work in human resource departments that were small and consisted of a 1-25 employees in most organizations. Brewster’s research suggest that if the size of the HR department is smaller in a

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larger organization, it is either to dismiss a wasteful bureaucracy or take advantage of the economies of scales benefit (Brewster et al 2006). Furthermore, an organization's industry could affect the size of the HR department. According to Brewster, in traditional, administrative organizations, the HR department may be larger, but in other organizations that are hiring more highly skilled professionals and using technological systems more efficiently, the HR department is smaller (Brewster et al 2006).

In the second section of the survey, most individuals had policies in their handbook in regards to the use of social media. Also, more organizations did not restrict the use of social media than did. However, they also did not allow employees to go on their social media sites during work hours. The HR department is central in ensuring that organizational governance of social media is clearly outlined in employees' handbooks and the organization's policies in order to prevent the misuse of it. According to Vaast, organizations establish social media norms by outlining and directing employees' practices, which need to be clearly stated from the beginning of employment (Vaast and Kaganer, 2013). Question 6 and 7 illustrate that organizations are not clearly outlining the usage of social media, which in turn can lead to more misunderstandings, potential wrongful corrective action, and lawsuits for wrongful termination.

In addition, according to question 8, most organizations did not monitor their employees' social media accounts. By not monitoring employees' social media usage, employers are protecting themselves against the risk of invading an employee's personal life and potentially making improper decisions about an employee's job performance due to a personal post. When an employee is contracted to work for an organization, the employer can dictate the use of company property as it sees fit (Sanchez Abril, 2012). Although employee workplace privacy is restricted by the employer, it must be done under compliance with certain federal and respective

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state laws. The Electronic Communications Privacy Act of 1986 (ECPA), “protects wire, oral, and electronic communications while those communications are being made, are in transit, and when they are stored on computers (DHS 2013).” Whether an employee is on the clock or off the clock, it is important that their social media usage does not misrepresent the organization. An employee’s First Amendment right can only be exercised in defense against the government, both federal and state. Furthermore, it is important that employees do not use social media to make false accusation, slander, or disobey an organization policy. HR professionals must make sure they are cautious in not blurring the work/life balance of its employees (Miller 2012). There are several notable cases that will be discussed later in this paper, illustrating the employer’s misunderstanding of proper social media use outside of work.

Although HR professionals use social media for recruitment of potential employees, they use it less for the selection process of potential employees. In terms of recruitment, social media sites were not used more commonly than other methods of recruitment. These results could be attributed to the risks associated with the use of social media, difficulty in gauging a strong applicant pool, and potential adverse impact. In research conducted on recruitment practices through Facebook, results illustrated that potential applicants KSAOs were ranked higher for Caucasians and lower for Hispanic and Black minorities (Van Iddekinge et al. 2016). The potential problems in using social media makes HR managers cautious in making recruitment and selection decisions in using social media. In question 10 and 1, the respondents did use LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter as the top three methods of recruitment, however when asked which sites are the most effective LinkedIn, Facebook, and other sites were selected. Social media sites are not dependable in helping employers find and select satisfactory potential applicants

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Some employees have been disciplined for inappropriate use of social media and even termination. These results were understandable since social media is rapidly changing and the current laws governing social media are constantly being modified to keep up with its rapid transformation. Organizations are more comfortable with disciplining employees because if it has social media policies in their handbook. However, it is more difficult for organizations to prove in a court room how an employee was terminated for not following its policy or misrepresenting the goals of their employer, if there are no clear and concise laws for the governance of social media. It is the responsibility of the employer and HR manager to properly inform employees about their social media policies at the beginning of employment to help prevent the improper use of it. This will lead to less disciplinary action and terminations.

Despite the problems and risk associated with HR managers using social media the survey participants agreed that the advantages do outweigh the disadvantages. This information was conflicting because when asked if it was used for employee recognition and to keep organizations connected, most respondents answered “no”. Also, most respondents stated that it was “unknown” whether social media has reduced cost to their organization or “no” it did not help them save money as a recruitment tool. More questions and research must be conducted in this section because when asked certain question about effectiveness, results did not support the generalization that the advantages of using social media outweighed the disadvantages. In fact, when reviewing comments from question 27, many of the disadvantages to social media had worse consequences than the advantages that it provided organizations. For example, a false claim or discrimination lawsuit could cost a corporation a greater loss than the gain from a bigger applicant pool or positive review (Vaast and Kaganer, 2013). HR managers must carefully

## SOCIAL MEDIA TRANSFORMATION OF HRM

analyze the ramifications in using social media to provide their organization with a competitive advantage because it could potentially result in more overall losses than gains.

Due to the rapid technological transformations, it is important that HR managers be knowledgeable and prepared to deal with the legal, ethical, and business-related questions that will arise in the future about social media (Sanchez Abril, 2012). In *Horizon Group v. Bonnen* (2009), the plaintiff Horizon sued its employee, Bonnen, for libel and \$50,000 in damages. The case was thrown out due to lack of evidence that met the strict definition of libel (Gaines-Ross, 2010). Nevertheless, there are cases won by the employer that provided evidence supporting its decision to terminate an employee. For instance, in *Tinley Park Hotel and Convention Center LLC v. Audelia Santiago* (2015), the Tinley Park Hotel unlawfully terminated Ms. Santiago due to the Facebook posts and conversations during her break with coworkers about working hard like a “slave”. Tinley Park Hotel lost because the National Labor Relations Act Section 7 protects employees from “overly broad” employee handbooks. It is important to reduce future lawsuits by making sure HR departments are knowledgeable about current federal and state laws (DeMaria, 2015). Furthermore, they must properly inform employees about these laws and make sure the organization’s policies reflect these laws.

### **Conclusion**

Overall, what was expected was that the advantages in using social media outweighed the disadvantages. The results, did not conclusively support this prediction. In addition, when using social media in recruitment, selection, and termination, HR managers were guarded because the benefits did not always prevail over the risks. Suggestions that are made for future research would be to have a larger sample. Also, ask more in depth questions that explore the advantages and disadvantages of social media.

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Social media has helped human resource manager's in areas of recruitment, selection, and employee recognition. The advantages of using social media include: expanding the applicant pool, employee recognition, and job postings with descriptions of positions on popular social media sites such as LinkedIn, Facebook, and other personal organization websites. Not all social media sites that were used in HRM provided the organization with a benefit. Human resource managers must be careful in which social media sites are used in recruitment and selection outside of LinkedIn and Facebook because other websites might be not efficiently using company resources. Furthermore, social media sites should not be the primary recruitment and selection tool because of the risks associated with them. Human resource managers have experienced difficulties in managing employees' usage of social media sites.

The disadvantages of using social media has not outweighed the advantages, even though the costs of the disadvantages are greater. Nevertheless, after surveying a variety of industries like healthcare, government, education, and the public sector the advantages of using social media in HRM has not been dominant in any one sector. More research will need to be conducted to conclude whether the disadvantages of using social media have more of an impact than the advantages. For organizations to reduce the negative effects of social media sites like termination and employee discipline, it is important that HR managers inform and enforce social media policies in the organization's policies.

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## SOCIAL MEDIA TRANSFORMATION OF HRM

### Appendix A: Cover Letter

My name is La Vita Williams and I am an Honors College student at the University of Southern Mississippi. I am completing my thesis in Human Resource Management. This survey for my thesis is about the effects of social media in Human Resource Management. Your responses to this survey will help us evaluate the effectiveness of social media sites in different areas of Human Resource Management. The survey is very brief and will only take about 10 minutes to complete. Please click the link below to go to the survey Website (or copy and paste the link into your Internet browser). Your participation in the survey is completely voluntary and all responses will be kept confidential. No personally identifiable information will be associated with your responses to any reports of these data. The USM Institutional Review Board has approved this survey. Should you have any comments or questions, please feel free to contact me at [lavita.williams@usm.edu](mailto:lavita.williams@usm.edu). Thank you very much for your time and participation.

Sincerely,

La Vita Williams

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## Appendix B: Survey Instrument

La Vita Williams, an Honors College student at the University of Southern Mississippi majoring in Human Resource Management, would like for you to participate in her research study for her Undergraduate Honors Thesis. The purpose of this research is to further understand the importance of social media sites in human resource managers' job functionality in order to help to improve their day-to-day tasks such as retention, reduce the amount of errors in termination, and strengthen the internal environment of the organization as a whole. Research from this study will help fill the gaps of how social media sites should be utilized in the workplace for both human resource managers and employees.

Participation in this research is voluntary. You can refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time without any questions. The information collected will be kept confidential, and you will not be identified in the research findings. The questionnaire will be generated and distributed through Survey Monkey. It will take participants approximately 10-15 minutes to complete. There are no restrictions on normal activities or invasive techniques being used. There will be no incentives offered to participants. Participants will not experience any potential risks, inconveniences, or discomforts.

If you have any questions should or need additional information, please email La Vita Williams at [lavita.williams@usm.edu](mailto:lavita.williams@usm.edu). Thank you for taking time out to complete this survey. I truly value the information that you have provided.

This project has been review by the Institutional Review Board, which ensures that research projects involving human subjects follow federal regulations. Any questions or concerns about rights as a research participant should be directed to the chair of the Institutional Review Board, The University of Southern Mississippi, 118 College Drive #5147, Hattiesburg, MS, 39406-0001, and 601.266.6820.

### I. Background

1. What kind of industry does your organization serve?

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2. How many employees work at your organization?

- a. 1-25 employees
- b. 26-50 employees
- c. 51-100 employees
- d. >100 employees

3. Where is your organization located? (Please list City, State)

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4. What is the size of your organization's human resource department?

- a. 1-25 employees
- b. 25-50 employees
- c. 51-100 employees
- d. >100 employees

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### II. Policies

5. Are there policies in the employee handbook in regards to employees' use of social media?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
6. Does your organization restrict the use of social media sites to employees?
  - c. Yes
  - d. No
7. Are employees allowed to go on their social media sites while at work?
  - e. Yes
  - f. No
8. Are employees' social media accounts monitored?
  - g. Yes
  - h. No

### III. Recruitment

9. Does your organization use social media in recruitment of employees?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
10. If yes to question 9, which social media source(s) are frequently used for recruitment? (Check all that apply)
  - Facebook
  - Instagram
  - LinkedIn
  - Twitter
  - Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_
11. Of the sites that your organization most frequently use which one is the most effective for recruitment?
  - Facebook
  - Instagram
  - LinkedIn
  - Twitter
  - Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_
12. How does your organization advertise job positions using these sites? Please briefly explain.  
\_\_\_\_\_
13. Does your human resource department currently use social media sites to attract more applicants than other methods of recruitment?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
14. Does the human resource manager review potential applicants' social media profile during the selection process?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
15. How effective do you think social media sites are in selection?
  - a. Very effective

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- b. Effective
- c. Neutral
- d. Ineffective
- e. Very ineffective

### IV. Termination/Inappropriateness

16. Have employees been disciplined for using social media during company time?

- a. Yes
- b. No

17. If yes to question 16, please briefly explain.

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18. Have employees been terminated from your company due to the misuse of social media during work time?

- a. Yes
- b. No

19. Have employees been caught misrepresenting the company's purpose on their social media sites?

- a. Yes
- b. No

20. If yes to question 19, please briefly explain.

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### V. Advantages

21. Does your organization use social media sites in order to recognize employee accomplishments (ex. Employee of the month)?

- a. Yes
- b. No

22. If yes to question 21, please briefly explain.

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23. Does social media help with making your organization more connected with its employees?

- c. Yes
- d. No

24. If yes to question 23, how does social media help with making your organization more connected with its employees? Please check all that apply.

Rewards

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

(i.e.-company social events, birthday shout outs, and etc.)

25. Has your organization saved money by using social media as a recruitment tool?

- e. Yes
- f. No

26. What advantages does social media provide to organization? Please briefly explain.

SOCIAL MEDIA TRANSFORMATION OF HRM

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VI. Disadvantages

1. Are there any disadvantages in using social media sites? If there are any disadvantages, please list them?

- a. Yes
- b. No

Reasons: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Overall do you think the disadvantages outweigh the advantages in using social media sites?

- a. Yes
- b. No

3. Given that social media sites are fairly new, do you think that organizations should be cautious in making significant personnel decisions due to the rise of lawsuits? Please briefly explain.

- a. Yes
- b. No

Comment (please specify)

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Appendix C: IRB Approval Letter



**INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD**

118 College Drive #5147 | Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001

Phone: 601.266.5997 | Fax: 601.266.4377 | [www.usm.edu/research/institutional.review.board](http://www.usm.edu/research/institutional.review.board)

**NOTICE OF COMMITTEE ACTION**

The project has been reviewed by The University of Southern Mississippi Institutional Review Board in accordance with Federal Drug Administration regulations (21 CFR 26, 111), Department of Health and Human Services (45 CFR Part 46), and university guidelines to ensure adherence to the following criteria:

- The risks to subjects are minimized.
- The risks to subjects are reasonable in relation to the anticipated benefits.
- The selection of subjects is equitable.
- Informed consent is adequate and appropriately documented.
- Where appropriate, the research plan makes adequate provisions for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of the subjects.
- Where appropriate, there are adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain the confidentiality of all data.
- Appropriate additional safeguards have been included to protect vulnerable subjects.
- Any unanticipated, serious, or continuing problems encountered regarding risks to subjects must be reported immediately, but not later than 10 days following the event. This should be reported to the IRB Office via the "Adverse Effect Report Form".
- If approved, the maximum period of approval is limited to twelve months.  
Projects that exceed this period must submit an application for renewal or continuation.

PROTOCOL NUMBER: 16102106

PROJECT TITLE: Social Media Transformation of Human Resource Management

PROJECT TYPE: New Project

RESEARCHER(S): LaVita Williams

COLLEGE/DIVISION: College of Business

DEPARTMENT: Management and International Business

FUNDING AGENCY/SPONSOR: N/A

IRB COMMITTEE ACTION: Expedited Review Approval

PERIOD OF APPROVAL: 12/05/2016 to 12/04/2017

**Lawrence A. Hosman, Ph.D.**

**Institutional Review Board**