

# **The New Human Resources Department**

Embracing Social Media and Being Smart About It

# Introduction: Social HR

We live in an informed world. To attract and recruit top talent, your organization needs to be findable, researchable and have a compelling value proposition for a prospective employee. Candidates may not know that they are interested in your company, but if they stumble across your careers page or a job posting and feel a connection, formerly passive candidates may reach out to you directly, or to their network, to inquire about opportunities.

Before there was Twitter, there was an article called “Why We Hate HR.”

Written in 2005 for Fast Company magazine, the article described Human Resources professionals as out-of-touch, frumpy and risk-averse.

Six years later, a new breed of Human Resources professional has emerged. These individuals have embraced social media, have adopted new technologies in recruiting and have a direct line of sight from Facebook to your corporate employment brand.

Don't believe it?:

- In a strong display of consensus rarely seen in the global corporate environment, **98% of HR respondents to the 2011 Achievers Social HR survey say they believe that social networking is an important tool for recruiting, retaining and managing employees.** A majority of these HR professionals use Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn in their personal lives.
- HR professionals are growing more familiar with SaaS tools and products, and a whopping **81.9% believe that social networks will be used as an HR tool in their organizations within the next 12 months.**
- Because Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn require very little spending, **85.1% of respondents say their companies plan to increase investment in both time and money in social networks in 2012.**

These findings represent just a few compelling examples of HR's commitment to an innovation agenda within their specific organizations.

Jennifer McClure, president of the Human Resources consulting firm Unbridled Talent, believes that there is a compelling and comprehensive business case for Human Resources professionals to invest their time and energy in social media and social networking. Nearly **52% of respondents to the 2011 Achievers Social HR**

**survey say that senior management is the biggest hurdle to getting social networks accepted as a legitimate HR tool;** the onus is on the new breed of Human Resources professional to demonstrate solid ROI for each new social networking endeavor. When possible, all social networking activities should have sufficient governance practices before being proposed. HR can demonstrate ROI by highlighting how HR administrative work can be reduced or eliminated. And all social networking tools and practices should be flexible enough to fit an organization's current and future state.

The emerging HR professional learned a lesson from Fast Company and is embracing social media to reduce the cost of recruiting (33.4%) and the cost of communication (25.6%), and to enhance employee engagement (21.9%).

That's progress.

## How Does HR Use Social Media?

We live in a Googled world. Pew Research <sup>1</sup> estimates that 79% of American adults use the Internet on a regular basis and that nearly half of those individuals use a social networking site (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn) in their personal lives. This number has doubled since 2008.

Human Resources professionals have a reputation for being stodgy and difficult, but according to the results in the Achievers survey on social media, that reputation is unfair and inaccurate. Ninety-eight percent of respondents believe that social networks are a tool that HR should be using, which tells us that Human Resources professionals are open to social media and new technology. This may seem counterintuitive based on your personal experiences in the workforce, but in the Googled world, even your local HR generalist sees value in connecting on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. Social media adoption is pervasive and fun.

Furthermore, **90% of the respondents in the survey believe that social networking should be used as an HR tool.** I know that

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1 <http://www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2011/Technology-and-social-networks/Summary.aspx>

CFOs have a heart attack when I talk about granting HR the power to use social technology. Employment lawyers swoop in with litigation horror stories. CTOs complain about compliance and capacity. And while some of those fears are true, Human Resources professionals are familiar and comfortable with the integration of technology with corporate rules and bureaucracy. The rise of SaaS platforms has given HR a language for enterprise software.

Your average HR generalist understands compliance guidelines, and when it comes to the use of social media, is more than competent to adopt conservative and thoughtful practices.

The survey also finds that nearly 82% of respondents believe that social networks will be used as an HR tool in their organizations within the next 12 months. Remember when HR was a staunch opponent of giving everyone access to make long-distance phone calls? And then they were wary of giving employees access to email accounts? They've learned a few lessons since the 1990s, and the fact that many Human Resources professionals can see the practical application of social networking tools means that many of these once "cutting-edge" technologies have matured.

Additionally, social networking is, for the most part, free. The social web represents an opportunity for your local Human Resources team to make an innovative and cost-conscious contribution to your broader organization. Human Resources professionals can implement cost-effective employer branding and social recruiting campaigns on Facebook and LinkedIn; they can effectively plan for events such as a "promoted tweets campaign" <sup>2</sup> on Twitter; and HR can use its remaining budget to implement other amazing software and tools that have a demonstrated value to the employee experience — such as global rewards and recognition programs.

## The ROI of Social Media and HR

I know this seems odd, but I love the Bureau of Labor Statistics. They have a pretty awesome website. It's the kind of place where you can waste an entire day geeking out on data and labor trends.

But most people aren't a Human Resources dork like me.

The BLS estimates that there are nearly 1 million Human Resources professionals in America.<sup>3</sup> This number includes your local HR generalist, corporate recruiters and the evil HR lady who can't seem to get your paycheck right.

Nobody likes that lady.

But the field of Human Resources is growing, and the BLS projects the creation of nearly 200,000 new HR jobs by 2018.<sup>4</sup> I see fresh faces on a regular basis when I speak at industry conferences and corporate events, and I'm meeting both traditional practitioners and a new breed of business partner that possesses a mix of business skills, technology savvy and personnel-based training. These emerging HR business partners are as well-versed in Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn as they are in the theory of constraints<sup>5</sup> and the work of David Ulrich.<sup>6</sup>

Human Resources professionals are open to the idea that social networking tools can have an impact on their business. A large component of HR professionals believes that social networking can reduce the cost of recruiting, reduce communication costs and improve opportunities for career management.

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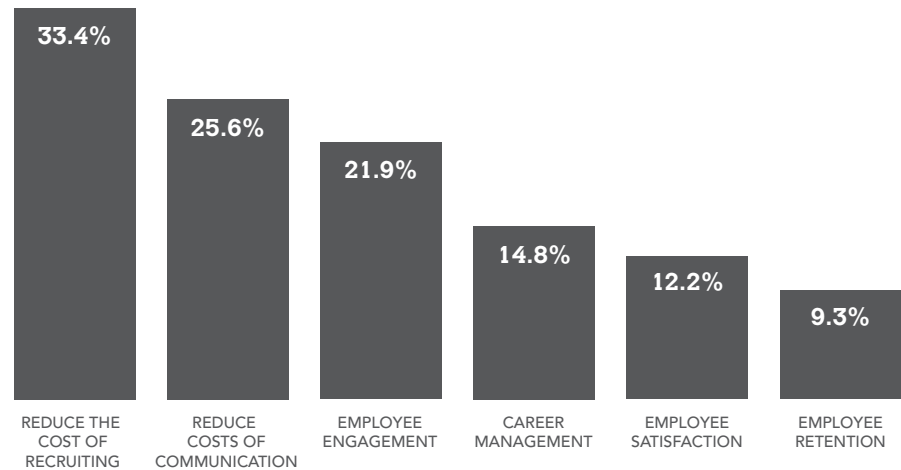
3 <http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos021.htm>

4 [http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos021.htm#projections\\_data](http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos021.htm#projections_data)

5 We had to Google this. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theory\\_of\\_Constraints](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theory_of_Constraints)

6 HR God. <http://execed.bus.umich.edu/Faculty/FacultyBio.aspx?id=000120058>

## Percentage of HR people who believe that social networking tools can have the most impact in these areas



More importantly, HR sees an opportunity for social networking to enhance opportunities around employee engagement, employee satisfaction and employee retention.

## Social Media ROI

In those instances where ROI was calculated, respondents indicated the following levels of success:

### 1. LinkedIn

- 100 percent or more ROI: 3.1 percent
- 51-100 percent ROI: 5.6 percent
- 11-50 percent ROI: 10.5 percent
- 10 percent or less ROI: 6.3 percent
- Negative ROI: 1.7 percent

## 2. Facebook

- 100 percent or more ROI: 1.1 percent
- 51-100 percent ROI: 4.0 percent
- 11-50 percent ROI: 6.6 percent
- 10 percent or less ROI: 6.2 percent
- Negative ROI: 1.8 percent

## 3. Twitter

- 100 percent or more ROI: 1.2 percent
- 51-100 percent ROI: 1.2 percent
- 11-50 percent ROI: 6.2 percent
- 10 percent or less ROI: 5.0 percent
- Negative ROI: 1.9 percent

## 4. YouTube

- 100 percent or more ROI: 1.2 percent
- 51-100 percent ROI: 0.4 percent
- 11-50 percent ROI: 2.7 percent
- 10 percent or less ROI: 4.3 percent
- Negative ROI: 0.8 percent

## 5. Yammer

- 100 percent or more ROI: 0.4 percent
- 51-100 percent ROI: 0.4 percent
- 11-50 percent ROI: 1.2 percent
- 10 percent or less ROI: 0.8 percent
- Negative ROI: 0.0 percent

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China Gorman, a noted business consultant and former COO of SHRM, sees a connection between engagement, HR and the empowerment of 21st century leaders.

She notes: “Every manager owns the engagement of his/her employees — all the way up to the top of the house. HR must play a fundamental role in embracing technology and equipping and training managers to be effective employee engagers.”

If we believe that Human Resources professionals are supportive and ready to implement social networking programs in their organizations, we must also believe that social media can demonstrate a return on investment.

And it can. The accompanying charts illustrate the results of ROI calculations on social networking tools used in their organizations.

Carmen Hudson, former HR leader with Starbucks and Yahoo, and founder of Tweetajob.com, frames the social media and ROI debate in a succinct way. She often asks, “What’s the ROI of the phone? What’s the ROI of your coffee maker?”

ROI calculations are crucial — and 21st century Human Resources professionals know that no legitimate business discussion is complete without analysis and data — but social media is pervasive in popular culture. More and more, Generation Y will take it for granted that your company has a presence on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. Those properties are now just as important as your career website, and your employer branding campaign is incomplete without them.

## Executive Buy-in of Social Media

Nothing makes my day more than a crabby, bloated, uninformed executive who just doesn’t “get” technology. I love that.

No? No?! OK, I’m kidding.

In Achievers’ Social HR Survey, 52% of respondents say that senior management is the biggest hurdle to getting social networks accepted as a legitimate HR tool.

You don't have to be a cynical girl to see that senior management gets in the way of everything fun. Beer Fridays. Hawaiian shirt Tuesdays. Unlimited PTO. Senior management is the biggest obstacle to many things in life.

Just ask the minions at Enron and Lehman Brothers who saw the world collapsing and tried to tell the emperors that they had no clothes. That didn't work out too well for anyone.

I know it isn't easy to sell senior managers on new ideas, especially when those ideas aren't their own, but social media can be an amazing way to address the impending War for Talent 2.0. As the economy begins to recover and employees feel a little less intimidated, China Gorman believes that employees will start to look for new jobs with increasing frequency.

"Many employees believe that the sacrifices they made during the past three years — no pay raises, cut benefits/more costly benefits, layoffs, lack of investment in productivity, reduced investment in training, etc. — haven't been shared by more senior colleagues in the company. Unless employees feel connected to the company's plan and mission, they will try to find an organization that will keep them connected to the larger purpose of the organization."

There are tremendous consequences when employees are disengaged and morale is low. Social networking, combined with smart and savvy reward and recognition programs, offers HR professionals and senior executives the opportunity to connect with employees in real time to create a culture of transparency. But how do you get senior leaders to buy into social media?

One idea is to implement an evidence-based HR model to your social media discussions. Paul Kearns, noted HR thought leader, describes evidence-based HR as the ability to make managerial decisions based on the best evidence available.

Simple. Right. Go do it.

Except that human beings are emotional creatures who are prone to jumping to conclusions, and we want to quote correlations and pass them off as causations.

When speaking to senior executives about social media, remember to frame your argument with clear, concise and specific language. Much like you would build a case for an employee's performance

improvement plan, be sure to create attainable goals for social media that are measurable and relevant to your business objectives.

And finally, remember that case studies and real-life examples of missed opportunities go a very long way in supporting your position on social networking. Jennifer McClure believes that potential employees and job seekers are using their personal networks and the Internet to research opportunities before applying. “If they can’t find any information about your company — or even worse, if the information they find is negative — they will never inquire about opportunities and/or will choose not to apply for jobs. They assume that the information they can find on the Internet is true and no longer have a desire to personally investigate.”

Sitting down with your senior executives for a one-on-one social media coaching session is a great way to explore the world of social networking and demonstrate real-life examples of how the brand is represented on the social Web. It provides a unique chance to highlight opportunities to improve employment brand awareness, reputation and recall in the marketplace.

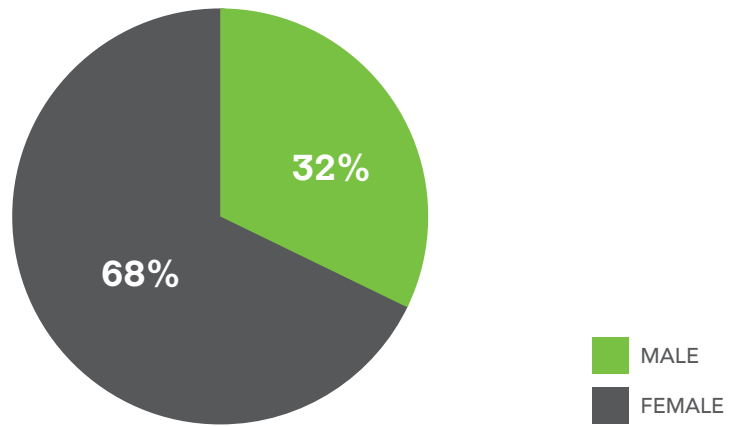
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# Demographics

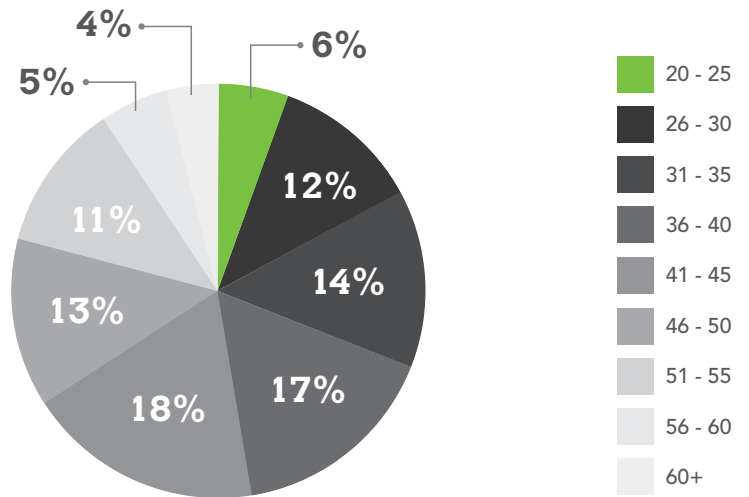
The survey data was gathered from responses to an Achievers online survey conducted in May-June 2011. The 527 HR professionals who responded to the survey answered the questionnaire via an online survey tool and were assured of confidentiality. Their responses were used to drive the results and conclusions of this report and will be used only in this aggregate analysis. The key findings herein are based at a 95 percent confidence level with a margin of error of plus or minus 5 percentage points.

The demographic breakdown of the survey's respondents is explained on the next few pages.

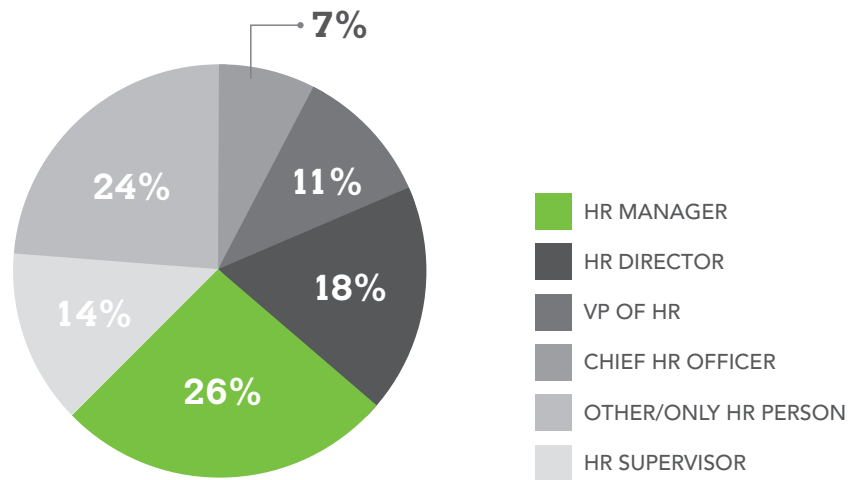
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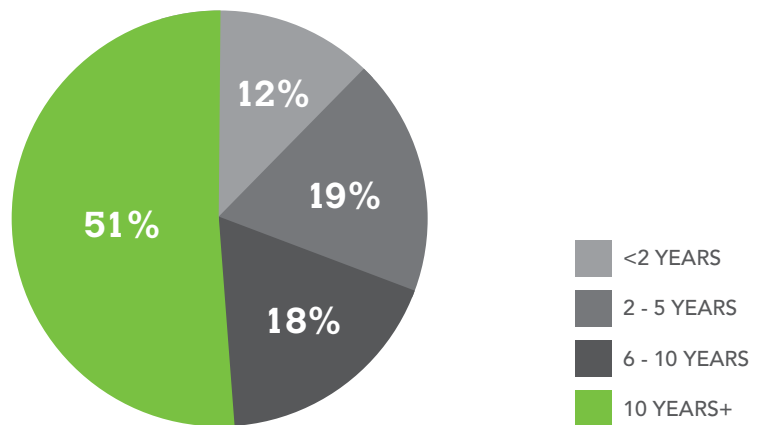
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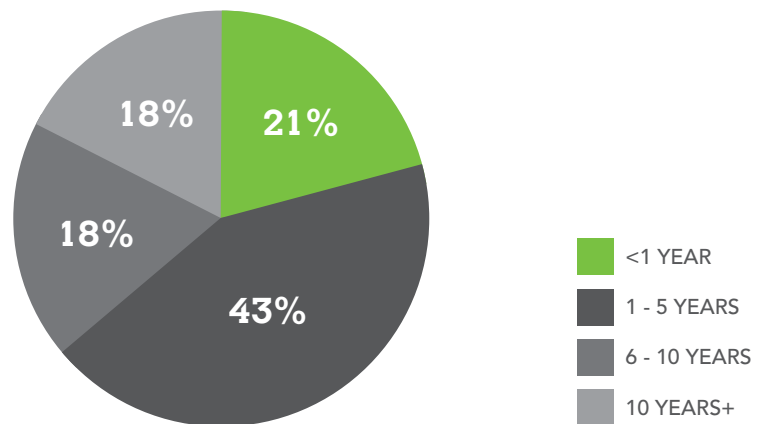
### Job Function



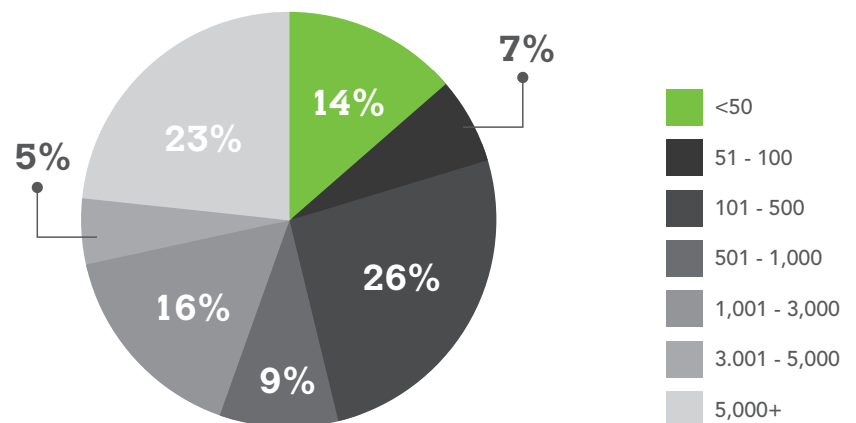
### How long have you been at your current company?



### How long have you been in HR?



### Number of employees in organization



# Conclusion

The Internet is for real, and social networking is pervasive among Human Resources professionals. The results are in, and Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn represent tangible opportunities for Human Resources to tap into the innovation agenda within an organization and make a significant contribution to the success of a company.

Whether it's social recruiting or employer branding, the onus is on the new breed of Human Resources professional to demonstrate solid ROI for each new social networking endeavor. When possible, all social networking activities should have sufficient governance practices before being proposed. Human Resources can demonstrate ROI by highlighting how recruiting costs can be reduced, turnover can be addressed and better communication between senior leaders and the workforce can create a culture of transparency and recognition. And all social networking tools and practices should be flexible enough to fit an organization's current and future state.

The most important element of the social media revolution is that Human Resources is there. We are on the major social networking sites, we are actively engaged with the latest software and we are optimistic about the way that technology can positively impact our organizations.

And HR is finally on the side of fun in a company.

Who doesn't welcome that kind of change?

# About Achievers and Laurie Ruettimann

## About Achievers

Achievers (formerly I Love Rewards) is passionate about employee rewards and Social Recognition. Our software helps engage employees and inspire performance globally. Achievers' customers include Deloitte, 3M and Microsoft.

Check us out on the web at [www.achievers.com](http://www.achievers.com).

## About Laurie Ruettimann

Laurie Ruettimann is an influential speaker, writer and social media expert focused on the human capital management industry. In addition to her work as the Director of Social Media and Human Resources Strategy at Starr Tincup, she created Punk Rock HR, which was recognized by Forbes as one of the Top 100 blogs for women. Laurie is listed as one of the Top 5 career advice websites by CareerBuilder and CNN. She blogs at [TheCynicalGirl.com](http://TheCynicalGirl.com).

**Written by:** **Laurie Ruettimann** (Social Media and HR Strategist, Starr Tincup)