

Making the most of being socially networked

► RISHI VORA

The effects of recession have begun to show up on the social networking sites as well, albeit on a positive note. Users today are increasingly using social networks as a platform for better jobs/opportunities. They are constantly uploading messages to friends and colleagues about what kind of jobs they are looking at, regularly updating their profiles, resumes, their areas of interests, expected pay package etc. And interestingly, even the job hunters are taking interest in networking sites to look out for appropriate candidates...

Going by what the experts are saying, India is one of the fastest growing markets in terms of membership for most of the career or social networking sites. Moreover, as per reports published in media, one in five employers have searched the web for personal information on candidates, and 59 percent said that the information in question influenced their decision. This worldwide trend of informal reference checking through social networking is on the rise. The same is picking up in India now. The number of companies adopting this process is also increasing at a fast pace. This increase shows that it is an emerging trend.

LinkedIn, Apnacircle.com, Ibibo.com, Bigadda.com, Facebook are some sites that have seen this trend going in India.

But given that the recession is upon us and that most companies have shut the doors for further recruitment, can this trend sustain itself over a period of six to nine months? Yogesh Bansal, CEO, Apnacircle.com explains: "Although due to adverse market conditions companies have completely stopped or have slowed down their recruitment processes, it is expected that in the next quarter or two the job market will certainly open up."

Further explaining the benefits of this new medium, he says, "Because of the

these networking sites will only boost the recruitment space, which means good for both the recruiters as well as the candidates.

Jagat Mohanty, Head HR, Andhra Pradesh Circle, Loop Telecom Pvt Ltd., has recruited many candidates through social networking sites. He says, "You can use both the push and the pull strategy. Pull strategy is basically used to attract candidates by posting your requirements on the sites in the space 'What are you working on?' Such posts enable you to get a lot of interested candidates applying to you. The push strategy entails doing head hunting from the sites' database. This works well especially for senior level positions. You can also use your network for references."

Dheeraj Kumar Singh is a classic example of a candidate who was looking for a job and got one through a social networking site. "I created my profile on Apnacircle, Orkut and LinkedIn. And in each of these sites, in the status bar I wrote, 'I am looking for a job' and set visibility to everyone. Within a few days I got a call from Apnacircle.com itself as they were looking for a Senior Java Developer. Now, I work with Apnacircle on the same position."

He further says, "I definitely think that social networking sites and business networking sites are the best medium for getting a job because networking is of utmost importance when it comes to exploring options and seeking right opportunities. Also, networking sites enable us to find friends, seniors and IT recruiters, HR executives and Consultants all in one place."

Bigadda COO Shivanandan Pare agrees that such a trend exists. "Networking, by nature, is to seek out something that one doesn't have. So on the same lines, networking is a ready option for job seekers that gets further explored during these trying times," he explains.

Ashish Kashyup, CEO,

of India, right across the length and breadth of the country, have an inherent self confidence and a burning desire to express their talent to the rest of the world. It is this pressing need for recognition that Ibibo understood and is meeting the same by providing a platform for the youth. Talent could be modeling, singing, dancing, photography, blogging or more - Ibibo is the canvas where it can be expressed and displayed to the world at large."

On how to monetise this opportunity, Bansal says that his company (Apnacircle.com) is, as of now, not focusing on revenues. "We are focusing on providing greater value to our community,



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However, it is for sure that if a networking site will be able to provide the right kind of platform to the target groups, then revenue can be generated through various means—recruitment ads, creation of special target groups, mailer exercise etc."

As for Bigadda.com, though it has not finalised a business model around this, the management is hopeful to extract money from this trend.

Kashyup makes an interesting observation from the point of view of recruiters. He says that social networks are a cost effective platform for the employers to tap the right talent. "In addition, they also provide great opportunity for individuals from smaller cities and provide instant recognition," he notes.

Bansal agrees to Kashyup's point on the cost effective option it offers to the recruiters. He explains, "These sites can connect the right careers with the right candidates." Explaining how it helps companies in recruiting, he says, "At times it is difficult to get their details of candidates who are interested in doing a particular job. Social networks can help companies get in touch with top-notch professionals with people sharing their personal details such as mobile numbers, addresses and designations on such sites."

Commenting on his company's initiatives in the past few months, he says, "We have been creating the right kind of platform for both the professionals as well as the companies. We have developed interactive systems and techniques to enable both the parties to interact with each other. We have also helped companies to create focus groups or discussion forums, so that they can engage their potential employees."

The advantages of this medium are there to be seen. But one may not find an ideal job instantly on a social networking site. What this does, as experts have pointed out, is that it is making things easier for both the recruiter as well as the