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# The Influence of Social Networking Sites on Recruiting Human Resources in the Czech Republic

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**Background:** This paper is focused on the usage of social networking sites (SNS) for human resources departments in the process of hiring new employees. It also maps the development and influence of SNS on recruiter's behavior and customs. The main aim is to find out, whether SNS could/will replace traditional online job boards in the Czech Republic. The motivation for the research is to determine whether SNS can be used for serious and practical business purposes.

**Methods:** The paper presents authors' empirical research with two interconnected instruments used for data collection: (1) Questionnaire with 15 questions devoted to usability, evaluation and comparison of SNS with job portals (N=286 HR specialists) and (2) Comparison of 3 online job advertising methods – job portals, SNS and business website.

**Results:** HR specialists regularly use publicly available information on candidates' Facebook profiles. Similar results have been observed using both instruments. SNS's in the Czech Republic are not yet used by recruiters as the main tool for recruitment, however, are often used as a support tool for decision making in the final stage of recruitment. Use of SNS's by recruiters is universal; we have not found any significant differences in terms of demographics (men, women, old, young HR professionals). The rate of utilization of SNS's by recruiters in the Czech Republic is gradually increasing, but does not reach the US level.

**Conclusion:** Our findings confirm the rising importance of social networking sites (SNS) usage as a new recruiting technology. However, as a major player in the field of recruitment, job boards (eg. Jobs.cz) are still important. However, the expectation is that in the near future, this will change and SNS's may replace the job boards.

**Keywords:** *human resources, new trends, social networks, social networking site, SNS, job boards, competitive advantage*

## 1 Introduction

Originating from classic findings that people are connected through just “six degrees of separation,” based on Milgram's (1967) Small world study, “the idea that people are organized in “social networks” is much older than the internet. However, recently a social network can be represented as an on-line space designed primarily for interpersonal communication, often referred to as a Social Networking Site (SNS). This is a place for staying in touch with old friends, making new contacts and increasing one's social capital.

There is an enormous interest in SNS from the business sector. Companies advertise themselves here, offer their products, keep in touch with customers and also recently, have started monitoring their employees as well as looking for, and vetting future employee candidates. Social networking sites are becoming important tools in the recruitment area.

They are becoming an important alternative to the traditional recruitment of employees through job boards (e.g. in the Czech Republic jobs.cz). It is clear that the potential of SNS for the Human Resource (HR) area is large. For example, Breithbarth (2011) highlights the advantages of

opening a profile on LinkedIn, underlining the fact that just “having a profile” is not enough, it is also necessary to maintain, update and engage on it too.

The companies' main goals are to save money and time when choosing employees, but on the other hand, the savings should not affect the quality of potential employees. The question of how to decrease costs, but maintain the level of the candidates may indicate the smart use of SNS where the individuals may reveal more information than to the recruiter during a job-interview than the recruiter may normally find out. In the U.S., employee selection through SNS is a common practice (O'Shea, 2012). For the Czech labor market it is a relatively new challenge.

This paper is focused on the SNS and their impact on the HR department in organizations when selecting new employees. It seeks to answer whether social media has a chance to fully penetrate the field of human resources and become a full-fledged tool for job search and recruitment. Or, whether they can move the HR forward in any direction, even perhaps replacing the very popular tools, such as job boards like jobs.cz, prace.cz etc., which currently dominate the field of Czech HR.

## 2 Literature review

### 2.1 New trends in HR

Traditionally, a recruiter's options for seeking new candidates have been newspaper advertisements, purchasing databases from external sources or asking specialized hiring professionals to head-hunt the appropriate candidates. Lately online tools have become a possibility. There are six main ways of how to look for an employee in the virtual environment:

- job boards,
- aggregators of job offers,
- labor offices,
- web sites of particular companies (section “vacancies”),
- specialized discussion forums,
- social networks.

Doucek et al. (2012) point out that social media sites like Facebook and LinkedIn have come recently to the labor market, and are used more and more frequently in the area of recruitment. Employers (represented by HR specialists) quickly discovered this new space for facilitating the recruitment process. They are using the SNS to evaluate potential candidates and to choose the best candidates for employment. It is clearly shown by the statistics of CareerBuilder (Hafner, 2009), that indicates the ratio of hiring decisions are influenced by screening of SNS profiles. Almost, one fifth of the employers claim that SNS content encouraged them to hire the candidate. On the other side,

more than 45% of employers stated that due to screening the internet profile of a candidate, they decided not to hire them.

Job seekers are not yet prepared for the new trend. The majority of people who are looking for a new job do not pay appropriate attention to their internet profile (Pavlicek, 2013). However, the recruiter can find out; whether they are responsible and loyal persons; whether they provided correct information during interviews; how other people react on their comments or whether they are friendly, popular and easygoing, etc. There are many aspects which can be discovered in the recruiting process using social media. SNS can be very dangerous for their users, when they reveal more than they expected or wanted (Sunshine, 2011).

### 2.2 SNS don't serve their original purpose

SNS are beginning to be used for other purposes than those for which they were originally created. It is typical for Facebook and Twitter. According to Qualman (2011), ‘Social media platforms like Facebook, YouTube and Twitter changed the way consumers behave, connecting millions of people with the instant communication tool.’ However, for companies that have established themselves on social networks, is not an easy task to interconnect into one meaningful communication so different fields such as IT, customer service, marketing and management. They must come up with new procedures, roles and responsibilities, metrics and strategies. They must answer the challenges and legal issues that may arise (see Wollan and Smith, 2011).

### 2.3 Use of Social Networks HR

Reppler's (2011) research confirmed the importance of personal presentation of candidates on the internet, especially on social networks, with following findings related to USA:

- Recruiters are using social networks to screen job applicants. This means it is important to carefully manage image on these types of sites.
- Facebook and Twitter are being used a lot to screen job applicants. On Facebook and Twitter, hirers are trying to get a more personal view of a candidate, rather than the resume-like view they will see on LinkedIn. Hirers are looking at the social networking profiles of candidates very early in the process. This means that job seekers need to have their online act in order before they begin looking for a job.

Therefore well prepared resume is important, but there are more points, that are taken in account by the employer. One of the new indicators is the overall presentation of

the candidate on the internet – his/her digital footprint that leaves during the everyday interaction and communication on the web. 91% of employers check the candidates on the internet; a large part of them verifies their online identities on social networks. The research shows that HR professionals use to determine additional information about the applicant in particular the following sources: Facebook (76%), Twitter (53%) and LinkedIn (48%), (see Figure 1). Reppler (2011) also summarizes main reasons for hiring and rejecting candidates (Table 1).

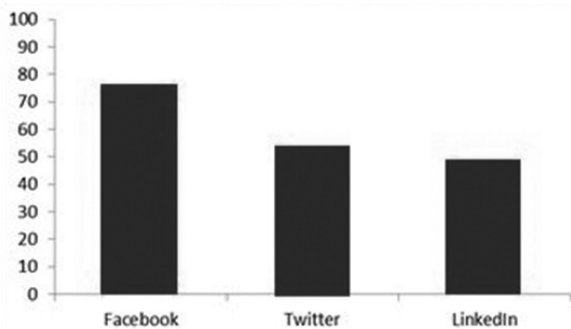


Figure 1: Utilization of Social Networking Sites for recruiting in %. Source: Adapted from Reppler (2011)

## 2.4 Tools used by HR specialist

Search for the candidates by the advertisements in paper form may now already be considered almost an archaism. Cisco's statistics confirm that in the Connected World Technology Report (CISCO, 2011). The young generation's attitude towards work with information technologies

is changing. The needs and preferences of the next generation of employees will affect the development of the labor market - how the individual companies adapt to these trends will affect their competitiveness in the future in the battle for skilled workers.

Professor John Sullivan summed up the 10 strongest trends in recruitment and talent management for 2012 (HRnews, 2012). These include the strengthening of the influence of social media, which will include more and more relevant data, and also corporate programs recommending talents through connection to social media.

Professional server ere.net (Raphael, 2015) published forecast of five trends that can be expected in recruitment. The most important trend from the perspective of social network is search and recruitment, so-called just-in-time. "The trend of searching employees is being moved from static databases to social media and there is a perspective of continuing and growing that trend. Traditional databases and talent pools will be replaced with online forums and communities. The entire recruitment campaigns can be implemented in a matter of days or weeks." (HRnews, 2012). Historically, job boards were important on the labor market, both for jobseekers and employers. This fact can be illustrated with the results of a study organized by the research company Factum Invenio, which says that 80% of the internet population is seeking employment opportunities through the internet. Of those, nearly one fifth is heading to social networks, while 75% of applicants are seeking information about offers on specialized job boards, such as Jobs.cz and Prace.cz. (Jobs.cz, 2010). The advantage of a dedicated online space (job boards) is that there are concentrated those, who are actually seeking work (as opposed to general browsing on social networks).

Table 1: Reasons for hiring and rejecting candidates. Source: Adapted from Reppler (2011)

Rejected		Hired	
13%	Lied about their qualifications	39%	Gave a positive impression of their personality and organizational fit
11%	Demonstrated poor communication skills	36%	Profile supported their professional qualifications
11%	Posted negative comments about a previous employer	36%	Profile showed candidate was creative
11%	Posted inappropriate photos	34%	Candidate had good references posted by others
11%	Posted inappropriate comments	33%	Showed solid communications skills

### 3 Methods

Empirical research is based on two interconnected instruments:

- Survey with questionnaire containing 15 questions (listed in subchapter 3.1.) focused on the usability, evaluation and comparison of social networks with job portals and 5 questions focused on the demographic data (N=286 HR specialists).
- Comparison of 3 online job advertising methods – job portals, social networks and business website.

#### 3.1 Survey

The aim of the survey was to collect data for subsequent analysis. We try to determine the current view and practice in HR recruitment in the area of social networks compared to traditional methods, such as advertising on job boards.

The questionnaire survey was conducted online, during one month period. Link to the questionnaire was sent via e-mail directly to HR professionals (mailing list comes from collaborating personal agency Jobs21) in various sectors within the Czech Republic. Questionnaire was also distributed on Czech HR groups/pages on LinkedIn and Facebook, in the specialized forums and discussion groups focusing on HR.

The questionnaire contained 15 questions devoted to usability, evaluation and comparison of social networks in recruitment with job portals. We used both closed and opened questions in which respondents could evaluate and express their views on social networks and job boards, as well as state their personal experience.

List of questions in the survey:

- Are you personally involved in recruitment? (closed question)
- How do you search for new employees? (open ended question)

- What is – according to you - the most effective way to advertise job openings? (closed question)
- Based on your experience, rate SNS by frequency of use in recruitment. (closed question)
- Do you regularly check the candidate's professional and/or private profile on a social network? (closed question)
- How crucial for your hiring decision are information about candidates from SNS? (closed question)
- Do you see the future of social networks in recruitment? (closed question)
- Does your company have profile in SNS? (closed question)
- What does your company use social media for? (open ended question)
- Do you think social networks can replace job boards?(closed question)
- What advantages do you see in SNS in recruitment? (closed question)
- What kind of workers are looking on social networks? (open ended question)
- How many successful candidates have you discovered through social networks? (open ended question)
- Do you personally use SNS? (open ended question)
- What is your opinion on social networks and their use in the recruitment of HR managers? (open question)

The questionnaire was concluded by demographic section determining gender, age, locality and size + economic sector of the company (more in Tables 2 and 3). There was a disproportional amount of females in the sample, caused by disproportional distribution of females in HR field.

Table 2: Age of respondents in correlation with gender. Source: Questionnaire by authors

Gender	Number	18 - 24 age	25 - 34 age	35 - 44 age	45 - 54 age	More than 55 age
Female	206	4,84 %	33,09 %	18,97 %	4,84 %	3,69 %
Male	80	3,15 %	11,89 %	6,26 %	7,39 %	3,98 %

Table 3: Size of company. Source: Questionnaire by authors

Size of company	Micro compan (1–9 employees)	Small company (10–99 employees)	Midsize company (100–499 employees)	Large company (500 and more employees)
Number in %	9,93 %	37,59 %	26,95 %	25,53 %

The total return was 286 questionnaires (61.8%), of which 77.9% came by e-mail, 12.6% from LinkedIn and 2.3% from Facebook. Other sources are negligible. We used unique IP addresses condition as a deterrent against the accumulation of responses from one respondent. Almost 70% of answers came from Prague. Industries such as consulting, mediation, evaluation, information technologies and services are together 43%. The research results are presented in the Chapter 4 (Findings) of this paper.

### 3.2 Content Analysis

Content analysis mapped the existing recruitment information channels. We focused solely on on-line channels, because only these are relevant to the subject of our interest (are competitors/substitutes of social networks). Our analysis is based on the results of the questionnaire survey and previous expert interviews, in which we have identified three main recruitment informational channels: companies' websites, job boards and social networks.

In the area of job boards server jobs.cz maintains its long term prevalence, so it was chosen as a representative unit of the whole group. Social networks are represented by Facebook (FB), LinkedIn, and Twitter.

Analysis of current recruitment information channels is presented in Table 8, which presents the advantages, disadvantages and reach of various channels. Finally, we also specified the suitability of a particular channel for different employee positions.

## 4 Findings

### 4.1 Questionnaire survey results

Based on our survey, we have come to following interesting results:

Survey clearly showed the still prevailing dominance of job portals in the Czech Republic, but it also registered recent rise of social networks on the Czech labor market. (Question: Based on your experience rate social networks by frequency of use in recruitment.)

Question "Do you check the candidate's profile on the social network?" revealed, that almost 53% of HR professionals check the candidate's profiles.

The questionnaire also proved (Question: Do you personally use social networks?) that HR professionals who use social networks in their personal life far more inclined to use social networks for business purposes.

65% of HR professionals who screen the candidate profile on a social network, have their own profile on social networks and are at least occasionally active there. Maybe that is why they hired 62% of applicants discovered directly (firstly) on social networks. On the other hand, HR professionals who do not perform social network screen-

ing come mostly (67%) from companies without social network presence. This is why just they hired just 12% of applicants discovered directly (firstly) on social networks.

The survey confirmed (supported by 99 respondents) that HR professionals, who privately use social network at least once a week, do screen the profiles of candidates on social networks.

Table 4: Private use of SN / Professional use of SN. Source: Authors

Antecedent: *Do you personally use social networks? – Daily or Several times a week.*

Succedent: *Are you viewing the candidate's profile on a social network? – Yes.*

Reliability of implication (confidence): 72.26%

	Succedent	Non Succedent
Antecedent	99	38
Non Antecedent	52	97

Table 5: Large company / Future of SN. Source: Authors

Antecedent: *Size of the company – Large company (500+).*

Succedent: *Do you see the future of social networks in recruitment – Main method or Supplement.*

Reliability of implication (confidence): 98.61 %

	Succedent	Non Succedent
Antecedent	71	1
Non Antecedent	194	88

Another confirmed hypothesis (supported by 71 respondents) is, that HR professionals from large companies believe that social networks are the future of recruitment: either as a supplement or even main method of finding candidates. Illustrative finding is, that even the recruiters, who still have not hired any employee based on a contact from the social networks, sometime check the of candidates' on-line profiles.

Answers, how recruiters see the future of social networks, significantly varied: 99% of respondents who do screen candidate's profile, see the future of social networks in the recruitment (either as one of the main alternatives or at least as a support for other ways). In the second group, which does not use social networks for screening, less than 15% of respondents think that social networks have the future in recruitment.

On social networks, most respondents are looking for junior positions (35%), followed by management of 19.8%, specialists and top management together less than 6%.



Questionnaire survey highlighted that HR professionals whose company is on social networks and also organizes recruitment within the social networks, are the most frequently between the ages of 18-34 years. This confirms the assumption that the younger generation has therefore

closer relation to social networks and modern technology than the older one.

The data presented in Table 6 and Table 7 was gathered by analyzing the responses to open ended questions.

*Table 6: What advantages do you see in social networks in recruitment? (multiple answers). Source: Questionnaire by authors.*

Advantages in social networks in recruitment	Number of responds	Number in %
It's the current trend	150	52.63%
Job offer can be published free of charge	136	47.72%
Swiftness (immediate display)	125	43.86%
Possibility to check candidate's profile - "digital footprint"	118	41.40%
Easily accessible - no extra technology needed	113	39.65%
Good tool for HR marketing	86	30.18%
Common and familiar environment for young generation	65	22.81%
Possibility of continuous edit and update	50	17.54%
Detection of false claims (easy comparison of professional information in CV)	50	17.54%
I do not see any benefit	48	16.84%

*Table 7: How do you search for new employees? (multiple answers). Source: Questionnaire by authors.*

How you search for a new employee?	Number of responds	Number in %
Advertising on the job boards (jobs.cz, práce.cz, spráce.cz and others)	254	87, 9%
On our own company's website	219	75, 8%
Recommendations through friends	178	61,6%
By searching the internet (headhunting)	108	37,4%
By publishing openings on social networks (Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter and others)	88	30, 5%
Advertising in press	82	28,4%
Another method	36	12,46%

## 4.2 Content analysis results

According to the results shown in Table 7, we selected two most common ways of job advertising and compared them with the social networks.

The most important advantages of SNS compared to job boards and web sites are: price – they are usually free, swiftness (instant publication) and digital footprint<sup>1</sup>. HR professionals realize the benefits of social media. This is confirmed by the results of a questionnaire survey on

the question “What benefits of social networks do you perceive in recruitment?”. The biggest advantages were: Firstly – that the social networks are the current trend. Secondly the possibility to study candidate’s digital footprint, thirdly swiftness of information flow, and a possibility to publish job offers free of charge.

Analysis of the current possibilities of online advertising shows the advantages of social networks compared to working portals and websites. The most important include: Price (usually free), speed (instant view) and digital footprint.

Table 8: Comparing the different means of online recruitment. Source: authors.

	Job board (jobs.cz)	FB	LinkedIn	Twitter	Corporate websites
Kind of employees	junior and senior management, graduates	young people, graduates	specialists, senior and top management	specialists	active jobseekers
Advantages	many responses CV database seeking, almost non-limited advertisement	existence of digital footprint, increasing visitors of corporate FB page	CV presentation, references, circles of friends, interest groups	easy reach of specialists worldwide	responses of active individuals who are interested in a particular company
Disadvantages	price, a large number of irrelevant responses	uncertainty that someone replies distrust in FB	activity must make HR	limited number of characters, little used in the Czech Republic	limited distribution low response

## 5 Discussion

Our survey showed that HR specialists regularly use the public information on candidates’ Facebook profiles. Question “Do you check the candidate’s profile on the SNS?” revealed, that almost 53% of Czech HR professionals check the candidate’s profiles. Similar question in the research made by Reppler (2011) reached 91%, which demonstrates the difference between Czech Republic and USA.

From the data that we have collected and analyzed we could sense that there is an experience gap between employers and potential employees. Employers represented by HR specialist have had very quickly discovered this new space and have learned how to use it to their advantage

– for facilitating the recruitment process. They are using the social networks to professionally evaluate potential candidates and to choose the best employees. It is also clearly shown by the statistic of CareerBuilder (Hafner, 2009).

Employers looking through their employee’s pages or data can sometimes gain access to the most intimate personal data. Not only are employees responsible for their statuses, they are also judged by who they are friends with, needing to clean up or delete friends’ comments and posts on their pages. Facebook users carelessly publish a lot of personal information. More than 60% show their photos and around 50% of Facebook users, have their wall open for all Facebook users. Based on our research, we for example know that more than 90% of Facebook users have

<sup>1</sup> “Digital footprint” is the data left behind by users in virtual on-line sphere. A passive digital footprint is created when data is collected without the owner knowing (IP address, cookies, etc.), active digital footprints are created when personal data is released deliberately by a user for the purpose of information about oneself by means of websites or social media. Recruiters mainly focus on the active digital footprint (Grayson, 2011).

the information about their education publicly accessible (Bohmova and Malinova, 2013).

As time goes by, we can expect some changes – people probably won't change their behavior or life-style, but they will put more effort in maintaining the good public image in the terms of internet presentation (including forcing Google to “forget” something). Candidates would hide the problematic photos, comments and other information, or even they could publish specific information, that will make up their profile more desirable.

But we expect eventually closing of the gap between employers and employees. So finally the screening the Facebook profile could become almost worthless. On the other hand, it could open new opportunity for Facebook to sell the publicly hidden information to the recruiters, as the LinkedIn already does (Hines, 2015).

Our survey confirmed that HR professionals from large companies are interested in the social networks' data and believe that social networks are the future: either as a supplement or even main method of finding candidates. The reason may be the fact that large companies are often part of the multinational chains. And if the chain comes, for example, from the USA, the employees in the Czech Republic can be affected significantly by the overall corporate culture. Interesting fact is, that even the recruiters, who still did not accept any employee based on a contact from the social networks, sometime check the of candidates' on-line profiles.

Our findings can be compared with the results of Jobs.cz (2010). It declared that even Czech recruiters are beginning to discover new horizons. The study on a sample of 234 Czech recruiters pointed out, that social networks like Facebook or LinkedIn use professionally 24% of the respondents, 27% of them use the social networks only for personal purposes. 44% of HR specialists do not use social networks in order to not lose the time. The remaining 11% of respondents consider the use of social networks in the future.

Social networks noticed the recent trend and skillfully began to adapt to the new situation. The largest ones: Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter have developed new tools to effectively link with the labor market. Leadership in relation to HR holds LinkedIn, the social network for professionals, which is inherently destined to be used by human resources.

There are even some special applications created just for recruitment, for example Czech personnel agency “Bohemia job start” has created an applications on Facebook which enables search for job offers, facilitates creation of CV or gives the tips for interview (Facebook, 2014). Also international company Monster launched the first global Facebook's application for professional networking - Be-Known (Monster, 2014).

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## 5.1 Limitations of the study

Our work was focused on Czech Republic only; most of respondents were from Prague. The survey was conducted in Czech language – therefore even foreigners and expats living and working here were excluded from the pool of respondents. Hence the study reflects just and only Czech point of view, which can be different from the global one. Another limitation of the study is self-selection of the respondents, which could further skew the results.

Future directions for research (unanswered questions) are thus following: Similar researches should be done in other countries (possible further expansion to V4 and CEE countries).

Also, we have interviewed just HR specialists, but this topic could be also tackled from the point of regular internet users – employees.

## 6 Conclusion

Based on our research, we believe that social networks are important HR tool, but they are not able at the moment fully replace the websites of companies or job boards. Websites are and probably will remain important channel to present job offers – especially for companies. Also job boards are here to stay - due to the fact that some professions (plumber, electrician, and other kind of laborers) are inappropriate for recruiting on social networks.

However, the increasing importance of social networks is undeniable. Some professions (mostly IT specialists, white collar workers, upper management) will be hired mostly through them, in other cases, the networks will be at least used for background check of selected candidates.

We expect that social media will become a suitable alternative to traditional recruiting tools, and we assume that there is a very probable a parallel functioning of all the above mentioned instruments in recruitment.

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## Vpliv informacij s spletnih družbenih omrežij na zaposlovanje v Češki republiki

**Ozadje:** Članek obravnava proces zaposlovanja v kadrovskih oddelkih z uporabo spletnih družbenih omrežij. Ravno tako izpostavlja razvoj in vpliv spletnih družbenih omrežij na vedenje in navade kandidatov za zaposlitev. Glavni cilj je bil ugotoviti, ali spletna družbena omrežja lahko nadomestijo tradicionalne spletne portale na Češkem. Vodilo raziskave je bilo ugotoviti, ali spletna družbena omrežja lahko uporabljamo za resne in praktične poslovne namene.

**Metode:** V članku je predstavljena empirična raziskava, kjer smo uporabili dva med seboj povezana instrumenta za zbiranje podatkov: (1) vprašalnik s 15 vprašanji v zvezi z uporabnostjo, koristnostjo in primerjavo družabnih omrežij s zaposlitvenimi portali (N = 286 kadrovskih strokovnjakov) in (2) primerjava treh spletnih metod oglaševanja: zaposlitvenih portalov, družabnih omrežij in poslovnih spletnih strani.

**Rezultati:** Kadrovski strokovnjaki redno uporabljajo javno dostopne informacije kandidatov, ki jih najdejo n.pr. na Facebook profilih. Podobne rezultate smo dobili z uporabo obeh instrumentov. Družbena omrežja na Češkem še niso glavno orodje pri izbiri kandidatov za zaposlitev, se pa pogosto uporabljajo kot pomoč pri odločitvah o zaposlitvi kandidatov, predvsem v končni fazi postopka zaposlovanja. Uporaba družbenih omrežij pri kadrovanju je splošna; nismo ugotovili pomembnih razlik v smislu demografije (moški, ženske, starejši, mladi strokovnjaki). Kadroviki v Češki republiki vse več uporabljajo družbena omrežja, vendar uporaba ne dosega ravni Združenih držav Amerike.

**Zaključek:** Naše ugotovitve potrjujejo, da narašča pomen socialnih omrežij kot ene novih tehnologij pri zaposlovanju. Vendar glavni akterji na področju zaposlovanja, zaposlitveni portali (n.pr. Jobs.cz) še vedno ostajajo pomembni. Pričakovati pa je, da se v bodoče to lahko spremeni, da bodo družbena omrežja nadomestila zaposlitvene portale.

**Ključne besede:** *človeški viri, trend, družbena omrežja, spletne strani za družbeno mreženje, zaposlitveni portal, konkurenčna prednost*