



Developing effective e-recruiting websites: Insights for managers from marketers

Steven D. Maurer*, Yuping Liu

College of Business and Public Administration, Old Dominion University, Norfolk, VA 23529, USA

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Abstract In recent years, the practice of using corporate websites to recruit job applicants has increased steadily. Despite this trend, however, studies show that approximately 75% of job seekers find the sites too complicated to use successfully [Brown, D. (2004). Unwanted online job seekers swamp HR staff. *Canadian HR Reporter*, 17(7), 1–2] and that more than 20% have rejected job opportunities based on poorly designed websites [Pastore, M. (2000, March 29). <http://www.clickz.com/showPage.html?page=330331>]. To address this problem, this article joins Internet marketing and employee recruitment research to offer six development implications for creating an effective “e-recruitment” source on a corporate website. Based on a job marketing approach to the recruitment process and consumer behavior research on persuasive communication and decision making, we present considerations important to creating an online recruiting website that effectively influences the search decisions and behaviors of a target market of desired job candidates.

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1. E-recruiting: Potential and problems

“The Internet will help achieve ‘friction free capitalism’ by putting buyer and seller in direct contact and providing more information to both about each other.”—*Bill Gates*

As the above observation by Mr. Gates suggests, one of the key advantages of the Internet is that it reduces inefficiencies in the marketplace by enhancing the information exchange between buyers and sellers. For corporate staffing managers in all sectors of the economy, this advantage has been seized through the growing use of online recruiting (i.e., “e-

recruitment”) as a primary method for marketing jobs in an increasingly world-wide labor market. Indeed, reviews of job postings featured via online placement services and corporate websites illustrate a growing reliance on these sources. For instance, studies show that online sources now hold 110 million jobs and 20 million unique resumes (including 10 million resumes on [Monster.com](http://www.monster.com) alone), and that US online recruitment revenues will top \$2.6 billion in 2007 (Li, Charron, Roshan, & Flemming, 2002). Similarly, data show that virtually all Fortune 100 companies now use some form of e-recruiting methods (Lee, 2005) and that 94% of Global 500 companies use their websites for recruitment, as compared to just 29% in 1998 (Greenspan, 2003). These trends are emerging because e-recruiting has changed recruiting from a “batch mode” to a more efficient “continuous mode” (Lee, 2005) and has reduced hiring costs by about 87% as compared to

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: smaurer@odu.edu (S.D. Maurer), yxxliu@odu.edu (Y. Liu).

traditional recruiting through newspapers and magazines (\$183 versus \$1383, respectively). Also contributing to this growth are reports of success from prominent employers such as Dow Chemical, which was able to reduce its hiring cycle from 90 to 34 days while cutting its cost per hire by 26% (Gill, 2001).

Given the advantages, growing popularity, and increasing utilization of e-recruiting methods, a need exists to better understand the principles for developing a truly effective e-recruiting source. This is evidenced by findings that more than 20% of job seekers have rejected job opportunities simply based on poorly designed websites (Pastore, 2000) and that company-designed websites are so complicated that about three-quarters of all job seekers are unable to use them successfully (Brown, 2004). Economically, badly designed recruitment sites are costing US companies \$30 million every day (Pastore, 2000), rather than gleaning the estimated \$8000 per hire savings that could be gained through well-designed methods (Hurst & Nielson, 1999). Finally, there are signs that employers have yet to understand potential discrimination issues associated with recruitment websites (Cappelli, 2001; Flynn, 2002) or incorporate e-recruiting as part of an integrated selection strategy that can yield huge decision-making efficiencies (Cullen, 2001).

2. An e-recruiting source design model

Considering both the challenges and potential benefits of using corporate websites as recruiting sources, this article presents a consumer research-based model to aid HR managers in their efforts to develop effective e-recruiting websites. This model is based on arguments that the recruiting process is essentially the task of marketing jobs in a labor market of competing job opportunities (Maurer, Howe, & Lee, 1992) and that, in today's global economy, "the hiring process has become nearly indistinguishable from the marketing process" (Cappelli, 2001, p. 6). Consistent with this perspective, the model presupposes that e-recruiting is part of a job marketing process in which the job seeker is cast as a potential job consumer and that the recruiting manager's goal is to create within the employer's website a variety of job marketing materials and information designed to influence job consumer decisions and search behavior.

In considering online recruiting sources as part of the job marketing process, it is important to take into account some basic labor market and managerial considerations. With regard to labor markets, for example, it should be noted that although commercial job sites such as [Monster.com](#) and [Hotjobs.com](#) offer job openings for millions of positions ranging from senior managers to maintenance workers, it

seems reasonable to expect that some jobs (e.g., executives, consultants, and professions such as doctors) might be approached through more traditional methods (e.g., headhunters, word-of-mouth networks) while very low-skilled positions (e.g., day laborers, domestics, itinerant labor) probably could not be effectively reached through Internet sources. Similarly, it seems likely that e-recruiting methods offer considerable potential to employers such as fast growing high-tech companies or international firms faced with filling a large number of openings from a world-wide labor market, but comparatively little advantage to smaller, more local firms with limited growth or turnover. Thus, the model and design ideas presented here are aimed at helping those recruiting managers who have properly considered these factors in deciding to design an online recruiting source.

To begin our discussion, we first present and explain Fig. 1's portrayal of the basic design elements and ultimate effects of online recruitment sources. We then employ existing marketing and management research to examine specific design issues for HR managers to consider in using components of Fig. 1 in the design process. Throughout, we link management studies of recruiting sources with research on Internet marketing methods to suggest both the issues and the logic that are important to the design of a truly effective e-recruiting source.

3. Model overview: E-recruiting source design elements and effect outcomes

Fig. 1 uses consumer behavior principles to depict the basic factors to be considered in developing a virtual recruiting environment and the effects of that environment on job consumers. In this section, we define what we mean by a "virtual recruiting environment" and briefly explain how the input design elements shown in the left side of Fig. 1 contribute to its design. Attention then turns to the right side of the model and a summary of the process by which virtual environments are expected to affect job consumer search decisions.

3.1. The virtual recruiting environment

As used here, the virtual recruiting environment is defined as the *online environment that allows companies and potential job applicants to interact with each other*. Such environments may vary in sophistication from relatively simple job bulletin boards that provide basic job descriptions and little or no opportunity for applicant interactions, to highly sophisticated sources that allow applicants to complete job applications and even perform online situational job interviews. In reality, a virtual

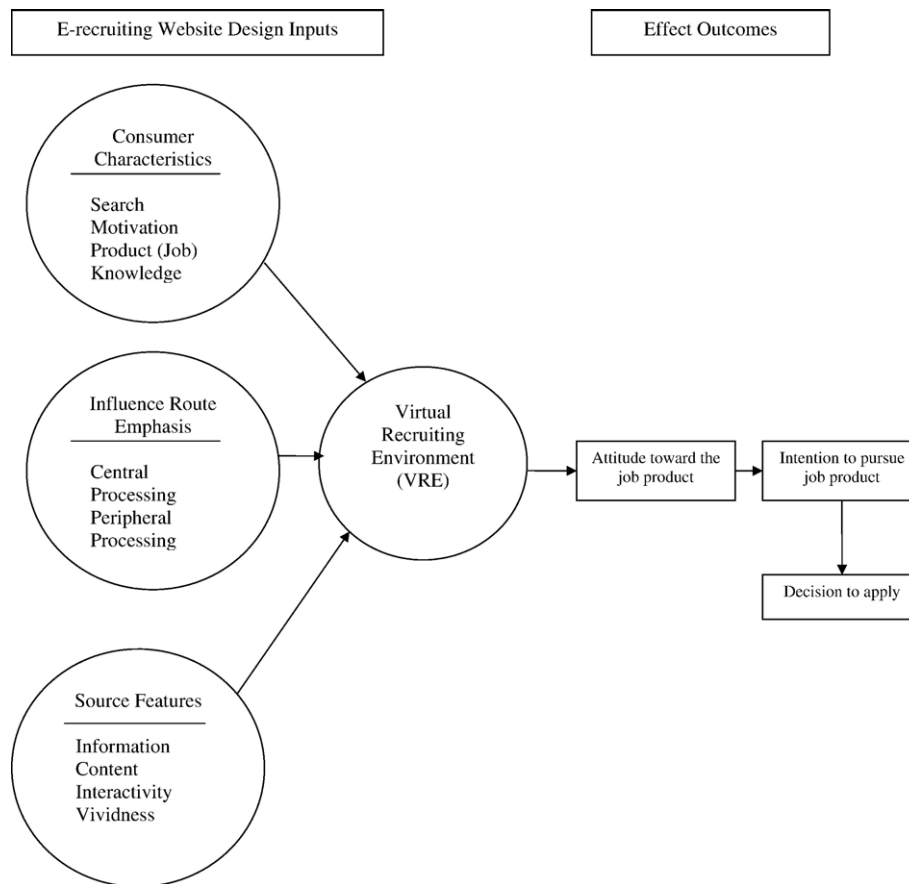


Figure 1 E-recruiting website design inputs and effect outcomes.

recruiting environment is defined by the composite of the aesthetic, informational, and process characteristics of an employer’s website specifically devoted to providing company and job/career information and, in many cases, soliciting job applications. As the left side of Fig. 1 suggests, design of these environments requires attention to three key input areas: consumer characteristics, influence route emphasis, and source features. Next, each of these inputs is considered, followed by a look at effect outcomes.

3.1.1. Consumer characteristics

As with marketing any product, marketing of jobs requires knowledge of the target market of persons who are capable of consuming the product offering. In a job marketing context, this requirement dictates that a basic part of virtual recruiting environment design is the need to focus e-recruitment efforts on a target market of job seekers who are likely to possess the skills, experience, etc., needed to “consume” the job. Further, Fig. 1 also reveals that the ability to effectively reach such target markets requires attention to the degree to which potential applicants are truly motivated to seek a job and/or are able to use previous

experience or job information to assess the attractiveness of job offerings. Because consumer behavior studies have shown that search motivation and prior knowledge of a product affect the consumer decision processes, the first design step is to consider how these factors can be used to decide how to meet the decision needs of desired candidates.

3.1.2. Influence route emphasis

Somewhat surprisingly, management studies of employee recruiting methods have failed to provide managers with a theory-based understanding of how media such as e-recruiting sources contribute to recruiting success (Breugh & Starke, 2000; Allen, Van Scotter, & Otondo, 2004) or explain “not only what happens, but why it happens” (Barber, 1998, p. 31). Hence, to fill this void, Fig. 1 relies on the extensive and well-documented research on consumer behavior and marketing communication media (e.g., newspapers, e-commerce websites) to identify psychological factors affecting consumer intentions and decisions. In particular, Fig. 1 uses as its base the Elaboration Likelihood Model of persuasive communication (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986) because it is one of the most prominent and

widely supported models of persuasion source influence in the marketing and communication literature (Wood, 2000). For that reason, it has gained attention in several management studies of the psychological effects of recruiting sources (Berkson, Harris, & Ferris, 1999; Maurer & Howe, 1995; Larsen & Phillips, 2002).

Particularly important to recruiting source design process is the elaboration likelihood model's assertion that consumer attitudes and purchase intentions toward a product are based on either central or peripheral routes to message processing. In making this distinction, the elaboration likelihood model proposes that the central route to information source processing involves "high-effort scrutiny of attitude-relevant information" (Petty, Wegener, & Fabrigar, 1997, p. 616), and that consumption decisions using this route rely primarily upon "central cues" that focus on the credibility and general quality of specific claims about the product (e.g., price, unique design features, advantages over other products, warranty/guarantee features). Conversely, in the peripheral route, attitudes and decisions toward a product are based on emotional responses to "peripheral cues" in the medium (e.g., graphics, music, visual layout) and on a relatively cursory consideration of message content.

3.1.3. Source features

As illustrated in Fig. 1, the technical features of an online recruiting source constitute a final set of factors to be considered in the design process. In practice, these main technical features include the virtual recruiting environment's message content, its ability to promote interactions between employers and applicants (i.e., its interactive characteristics), and the degree to which it provides vivid (i.e., rich) sensory information. As noted, decisions regarding these factors are guided by the "influence route" (central or peripheral) that is likely to be most favored by desired job applicants.

3.1.4. Effect outcomes

The right side of Fig. 1 portrays the effects of the virtual recruiting environment on job consumers. Review of this portion of the model reveals that the ultimate goal of a company's recruitment website is to influence a job seeker's decision to apply for a job. Upon closer inspection, it is also evident that the decision to apply for a job is pre-determined by the individual's attitudes toward a job opening. These basic principles are formed in accordance with the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991) and the extensive research in support of its main premise that a person's behavior is a consequence of his/her attitudes and behavioral intentions. Hence, this portion of the model conforms with earlier

studies of recruitment as job marketing (Maurer et al., 1992) to argue that a recruitment source should be designed to affect the potential applicant's intent to expend his/her job search capital (e.g., time and energy) in an effort to obtain (i.e., "consume") an available job.

4. E-recruiting website design issues

Fig. 1 and the previous discussion suggest that the goal of e-recruiting website design is to influence job seeker attitudes toward available job openings and that the ability to accomplish this purpose is affected by attention to three design input areas: the target market of potential job consumers, the influence route likely to affect that market, and the technical features of the e-recruiting source. As a practical matter, however, input design decisions require the ability to consider how these key design factors may *interact* to affect job seeker decisions. Hence, the following discussion joins consumer behavior and employee recruitment studies to examine three specific recruiting design issues created by the combined effects of input factors.

4.1. Design issue #1: Matching influence routes to target markets

As previously mentioned, the elaboration likelihood model asserts that consumer decisions are based on either a central or a peripheral decision making route, and that this route is determined by relative sensitivity to central cues regarding the product (e.g., product features, advantages, costs) or affective reactions to peripheral cues (e.g., spokesperson attractiveness, mood music in a television ad) found in the message source. Indeed, recruiting studies suggest that both of these routes do affect job seeker decisions. For instance, the impact of central route information was noted long ago by Behling, Labovitz, and Gainer (1968), who observed that job choice decisions are based on thoughtful assessment of key information concerning objectively measurable job attributes such as pay and working conditions (i.e., central cues). Conversely, studies of interviewers as recruiting sources have found that peripheral cues such as interviewer personableness, competence, empathy, interest in the applicant, communication skills, and enthusiasm often play significant roles in applicant interest in a job and intention to accept a job offer (Harris & Fink, 1987; Powell, 1991; Maurer & Howe, 1995).

To help decide which decision route should be emphasized in designing an effective online recruiting source, elaboration likelihood model research

calls attention to the consumer's level of search motivation as a key factor. In the job marketing context, this issue is reflected in differences between active and passive job seekers noted, for instance, in the *Bureau of Labor Statistics'* (2002) definitions of "active" and "marginally attached" workers, and in management studies focusing on differences in "job search intensity" (Schwab, Rynes, & Aldag, 1987) and job search "initiation and persistence" (Kanfer & Hulin, 1985). The research also addresses elaboration likelihood study findings which show that search motivation affects the way that individuals process persuasive information (Petty, Cacioppo, & Schumann, 1983) and that, in particular, highly motivated persons are persuaded by central information whereas persons with low search motivation are affected by peripheral route cues (MacKenzie & Spreng, 1992; Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). These findings suggest that employers wishing to address information needs of a target market of candidates who are seriously pursuing job opportunities, while minimizing their exposure to casual inquiries of "browsers", should develop sites that emphasize central route cues in the form of job information. Alternatively, the elaboration likelihood model suggests that employers recruiting in tight labor markets (such as nursing), in which currently employed persons may simply be browsing for better jobs, should employ attention-getting peripheral cues to attract the interest of job seekers faced with a multitude of choices. Whichever the purpose, elaboration likelihood research emphasizes that search motivation is a key element of a target market, and that web source designers must carefully consider the relative emphasis to be given to peripheral and central cues in the design process.

A second distinctive target market factor suggested by the elaboration likelihood model is the job seeker's pre-existing knowledge of potential "job products". The importance of job knowledge is found in information processing studies, which have demonstrated that prior knowledge of product characteristics greatly affects the way in which consumers investigate, process, and organize product-related information (Alba & Hutchinson, 1987). Similarly, management studies have shown that differences in job experience create substantially different variations in the ways that job seekers gather and use labor market information (Rynes, Orlitzky, & Bretz, 1997). More specifically, it has been shown that experienced individuals are better able to extract and analyze important central information (Meglino, DeNisi, & Ravlin, 1993) and that their more structured decision-making style is less likely to be influenced by less

important product information and non-job-related peripheral cues (Maheswaran, 1994; Mandel & Johnson, 2002).

The implication of these findings for job marketing is that recruiting managers wishing to attract experienced applicants should design the webpage source to utilize central, rather than peripheral, cues to determine applicants' interest in the job product. Conversely, if the employer's preference is to attract the interest of relatively inexperienced workers (e.g., recent college grads) or those who may simply be browsing, elaboration likelihood model research suggests that such central cues may have less real impact, and should therefore receive less emphasis in the design process. Such distinctions are exhibited in Microsoft's career website, which not only provides separate sections for students and more experienced workers but also organizes information based on the types of students, such as undergraduate versus MBA students and those who are looking only for internships.

In making the decision as to which persuasion route should be emphasized, a final design issue to be considered involves situations in which recruiting managers find it difficult to determine the motivation and/or job knowledge of the target market, or simply wish to design the virtual recruiting environment to have the greatest overall effect. In such situations, elaboration likelihood model studies suggest that central processing should be emphasized, as careful and systematic central process deliberations tend to increase both the confidence and strength of applicant attitudes toward a job (Wood, 2000). In contrast, peripheral processes based mainly on non-job-related information or transitory affects and mood influences tend to be weaker and more susceptible to change (Petty & Krosnick, 1995).

In sum, these elaboration likelihood model-based observations suggest two fundamental principles for job marketers. First, an effective approach to recruitment requires careful and specific attention to the characteristics of the labor market consumer. Thus, the marketing axiom "Know thy customer" should be regarded to be as important in the job marketing process as it is in any other marketing effort. Second, a main design goal is to match the cues provided in the website with the likely information demands of the consumer. Based on these principles, recruiting managers must then decide which of the myriad of technical features available in an online source should be used to create a virtual recruiting environment that effectively addresses the decision process demands of the desired target market.

4.2. Design issue #2: Selecting the right virtual recruiting environment features

One of the clear advantages of online recruiting sources is that they offer a vast array of interactive and informational design options. Thus, based on the previously noted need to provide cues appropriate to either the central or peripheral decision processes of the desired target market, we emphasize here that an e-recruiting manager's main task is to decide among this multitude of options to provide the level/form of information content, vividness, and interactivity required to affect targeted job seekers. To aid in this process, we turn to some of the more important issues associated with incorporating message content, interactivity, and vividness into an effective e-recruiting source.

4.2.1. Message content

The most basic design factor to be considered is the amount and type of message content (i.e., information) to be provided. The importance of this particular factor is stressed by decades of marketing studies, which have shown that the quantity and quality of information contained in marketing messages influences consumer brand evaluation and decision-making quality (Keller & Staelin, 1987; Kivetz, 2000). Hence, because information is especially important to high-involvement purchase decisions such as the consumption of job products (Moorthy, Ratchford, & Talukdar, 1997; Vaughn, 1986), it is logical to expect that the amount of information provided about a job will significantly impact job advertising outcomes (Barber, 1998).

In practice, the design of information content is a matter of deciding the "richness" of information provided. As applied to this decision process, information richness refers to the *amount and quality* of the actual content of information presented (e.g., a detailed versus cursory description of job opportunities). Clearly, the Internet's almost complete lack of space and time constraints, in stark contrast to those faced by print and broadcast media, presents recruiting managers with the means to provide relatively unlimited amounts of in-depth job product information. Because more information is not always better, however, the recruiting manager's main task is to determine the proper balance of website information to be provided.

As was suggested earlier, the answer to this problem greatly depends on the target market's information needs. For instance, to meet the central route processing needs of a target market of experienced or highly motivated applicants who possess the ability/desire to thoughtfully consider

extensive or complex information, emphasis should be given to offering a very rich environment that contains fairly extensive and detailed job characterizations. Conversely, peripheral route applicants who tend to lack the ability or desire to cognitively process complex information may prefer a less rich environment that contains basic job information about factors such as possible wage levels, basic job duties, location, etc.

A final factor to be considered in deciding the amount of information to be provided is based on studies which suggest that there is a U-shaped relationship between the amount of information contained in a virtual recruiting environment and its effectiveness as a source for promoting central route decision processes. For example, in an information-poor environment, job seekers are, by definition, faced with a relative absence of job-related information; thus, they must form attitudes and decisions based on less diagnostic peripheral inputs (Feldman & Lynch, 1988; Petty et al., 1997). At the other extreme, studies show that too much information can be overwhelming (Breaugh, 1992) and that, because of limitations in the ability of individuals to process complex information (Bettman, Johnson, & Payne, 1991; Keller & Staelin, 1987), systematic information processing will diminish in favor of an increased reliance on simple heuristics (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993).

Taken together, these findings underscore the importance of target market forces in deciding information richness and suggest the need to provide a balanced approach to this issue. Hence, recruiting managers should recognize, for example, that the strategy of providing a website that requires the user to navigate through expansive and/or irrelevant information may adversely affect job seekers who tend to rely on peripheral cues. So too, it is important to note that enough information should be provided to at least meet the basic information needs of central route job seekers. To decide the proper balance in information richness, it seems logical that job marketing managers might employ marketing methods such as focus groups, online surveys, etc., to identify information needed to successfully influence job consumer decisions.

4.2.2. Interactivity

In an e-recruitment source, "interactivity" pertains to the level of interactive capability between employers and applicants. In particular, interactivity refers to their ability to act on each other and exchange information in a synchronized environment. The fundamental importance of interactivity is found in Steuer's (1992) classic typology, which characterizes various media technologies (including

the Internet) and their effects along two dimensions: interactivity and vividness. This interactivity/vividness framework has been widely used by marketing researchers to specify and study the effectiveness and persuasive power of Internet-mediated communications (Coyle & Thorson, 2001; Fortin & Dholakia, 2005; Sundar, Kalyanaraman, & Brown, 2003) and has been used by management researchers (Allen et al., 2004) to study and explain the effects of recruiting media on job seekers.

The online marketing and communications literatures have found "active control" and "reciprocal communication" to be the two key elements of an interactive environment (Liu & Shrum, 2002; McMillan & Hwang, 2002). The former reflects the ability of a highly interactive environment to allow job seekers to maintain control over the environment and the information they receive (Hoffman & Novak, 1996). As applied to the e-recruiting source design process, this means that applicants are able, for instance, to seek and select only those messages important to their specific job search needs. Successful implementation of this control feature is exemplified by *Monster.com*'s "My Monster" page, which allows users to customize relevant job openings and personalized career management tools into a single webpage.

The second main feature of interactivity, reciprocal communication, refers to both the direction (two-way versus one-way) and speed of communication (Liu & Shrum, 2002). The importance of such considerations is supported by recruiting timing studies (Arvey, Gordon, Massengill, & Mussino, 1975; Rynes, Bretz, & Gerhart, 1991), which show that highly interactive contacts with employers tend to increase applicant interest and avoid the discouraging effects of slow responses to job inquiries. Thus, in designing a virtual recruiting environment, managers should try to utilize the Internet's ability to provide rapid feedback by creating mechanisms that provide timely responses to questions and applications received from job seekers. For many employers, this design goal may result in relatively simple environments that allow job seekers to contact the company if they have questions. For others, the result will be a more interactive environment that offers immediate feedback and perhaps even the ability to apply for a job, take preliminary screening tests, or participate in employment interviews online. While, in practice, the level of interactivity of an e-recruiting source may be limited by technology, both marketing and management research suggest that the level of interactivity is a specific and important element of e-recruiting success.

4.2.3. Vividness

In the e-recruiting source design process, vividness refers to the degree to which the employer's website provides rich sensory information and, specifically, to "*the representational richness of a mediated environment as defined by its formal features*" (Steuer, 1992, p. 81). Working under this definition, Steuer has asserted that richness is defined by both the breadth and depth of sensory information; information breadth concerns the degree to which vividness invokes multiple perceptual channels (e.g., auditory and visual channels) while vividness depth refers to the quality of information within each perceptual channel.

In dealing with the breadth component of vividness, managers must consider the ways in which the virtual recruiting environment might evoke multiple perceptual channels. While early attempts at website design relied primarily on text-based communications, recent advances in data compression and transmission technologies have provided a variety of audio and video information channels that can be used, for instance, to provide streaming media that offer both audio and visual information. Such capabilities are evidenced by the fast-growing communication technology provider Skype, which offers virtual tours of the external surroundings and office environments of the company's world-wide offices in Tallinn, Estonia and London. Similarly, Google's website provides videos of its employees' first-hand experiences. Such three-dimensional technology addresses the depth component of vividness, and is clearly more vivid than a two-dimensional pictorial representation.

Reason to pay particular attention to vividness as a key e-recruitment source factor is found in consumer research and employee recruitment literatures. For example, studies suggest that richer media that contain vivid persuasive information such as colorful images tend to have stronger effects on information recipient attitudes (Keller & Block, 1997; Perloff, 1993). In particular, an extremely vivid source that offers a high fidelity portrayal of the job product is found to be highly persuasive because it addresses the job seeker's need to "experience" a job in order to decide its merits. This finding is consistent with the logic that job products are "experience goods" that, according to the marketing literature, must be experienced before their functionality and quality can be properly judged. Hence, in comparison to their effects on "search goods" that can be more easily evaluated by objective acquisition and analysis of product information (Nelson, 1981), vivid sources may be particularly persuasive through their ability to allow job seekers to more realistically experience

job and organizational attributes. A vivid recruiting method may also increase job search effectiveness by affecting the candidate's ability to recall important information about job openings (Breugh, 1992).

4.3. Design issue #3: Managing potential excesses

A main feature of online recruiting sources is that they afford an almost unimaginable range of low cost and highly alluring opportunities for approaching job consumers. Indeed, the ability to present an engaging and aesthetically impressive introduction to the employer and its job offerings is one of the most appealing aspects of an online recruiting environment. As our previous comments suggest, however, it is important that e-recruiting managers maintain a job marketing focus and exercise caution in deciding among these features. This inherent tension in the design process is evident in numerous decisions, such as that of choosing the proper levels of interactivity and vividness to be included. In considering this issue, for example, it is logical to expect that low levels of interactivity and vividness may improperly limit two of the most appealing advantages of online recruiting sources. On the other hand, when these features are too high, studies reveal that flexibility and aesthetic impact of an influence source may actually divert attention from job-related information truly important to the applicant's decision processes (Frey & Eagly, 1993; Higgins, 1996).

To reconcile these considerations, we invoke consumer studies of vividness and interactivity which reveal that there is, in fact, a U-shaped relationship between the level of these characteristics in a communication source and its persuasive effectiveness. For instance, interactivity studies have shown that the opportunity to exercise a variety of choices in browsing a website stimulates cognitive processing and increases involvement (Ariely, 2000; Fortin & Dholakia, 2005) that may draw attention to central processing cues. This can be especially beneficial to job seekers with high search motivation and the knowledge to properly process central information. A website that is too interactive, however, places significant demands on a user's cognitive resources, and tends to impede central processing by reducing attention to key job-relevant information and increasing reliance on less persuasive peripheral cues (Ariely, 2000; Petty, Wells, & Brock, 1976). These latter effects often occur most among inexperienced job applicants, who may experience high levels of cognitive difficulty in trying to process even basic job information and may be prone to distraction by

enticements of a highly interactive source. Similarly, it is important to note that, while increased vividness can enhance arousal and prompt individuals to elaborate more on the stimuli (Tybout & Artz, 1994; Fortin & Dholakia, 2005) and thus enhance central processing activity (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986), an overemphasis on eye-catching graphics and other "bells and whistles" may well draw attention to peripheral cues and away from critical central processing factors.

These considerations call for recruiting managers to provide adequate levels of vividness and interactivity, while avoiding the temptation to incorporate too many of these alluring features in an e-recruiting source. In order to strike this balance, it is important that recruiting managers and webpage designers be constantly mindful of the need to emphasize marketing imperatives, rather than the temptations of "glitz" in the design process.

5. Points to consider

Clearly, Internet recruitment methods represent a growing and high-potential opportunity for employers to broaden their recruiting reach and reduce recruiting costs (Cappelli, 2001). To assist recruiting managers in realizing this opportunity, our purpose here has been to join consumer behavior and management research to provide basic ideas for developing an effective e-recruiting source. Overall, this synthesis has yielded the following principles for designing an effective recruiting source within an employer's website:

- Recruitment is, in reality, job marketing. Thus, the design focus should constantly be on creating a virtual recruiting environment that meets the needs of potential job consumers.
- Know the consumer. In particular, it is important to define the target market of desired job applicants and understand their motivation and job product knowledge characteristics.
- Job seekers pursue either central or peripheral routes to decision processing. The goal of webpage design, therefore, is to address these needs by providing appropriate cues in the employer's virtual recruiting environment.
- Success lies in the ability to *integrate* interactivity, vividness, and information richness factors and to consider their possible interaction effects on job consumers.
- More is not necessarily better. To reach job seekers with different levels of experience or interest in seeking a job, e-recruiting webpages must provide carefully targeted levels of information richness, interactivity, and aesthetic appeal.

In offering these marketing-based insights, we should note two final considerations. First, as was mentioned at the outset, the advantages of e-recruiting methods may differ across employers and labor markets. Thus, the first step in the virtual recruiting environment design process is to realistically assess whether e-recruiting, either on an employer's website or through commercial sources, is consistent with the employer's staffing needs and/or webdesign capabilities.

Second, the ideas presented here use the elaboration likelihood model and consumer behavior research (Darley & Smith, 1993; Krishnamurthy & Sivaraman, 2002; MacKenzie & Spreng, 1992; Berkman & Gilson, 1999) to help employers affect attitudes toward a job product and the effort needed to attract a job offer. This focus differs from HR studies in which elaboration likelihood model elements have been used to examine recruiting source effects on more distant outcomes such as job acceptance decisions (Harris, 1989; Maurer et al., 1992) or general attitudes such as organizational attractiveness (Larsen & Phillips, 2002). Hence, our approach attends to e-recruitment design factors that affect initial interest in a job product and the tendency to exert search efforts needed to eventually attract a job offer, rather than on the ultimate decision to accept/reject such an offer. This distinction suggests that, while design elements such as information richness and consumer factors might play a role in a job seeker's attitudes and job acceptance decisions, the recruiting managers' main design goal should be to enhance the likelihood of filling job openings with the right people by affecting the tendency of truly interested and qualified persons to pursue viable job products and make informed "purchase" decisions.

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