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ABSTRACT
The talent acquisition process involves complex interactions between potential job seekers and the enterprises that seek to ultimately employ them. Although both parties are aligned to produce an optimal outcome, the emergence of social media technologies and a workforce adept at using them offers new challenges for companies. At the same time, studies of millennials (i.e. people born from the early 1980s to 2000) reveal that they are a large demographic currently seeking employment and that one of their characteristics is a values-orientation (i.e. wanting their jobs and companies to make a difference in the world). Just as talent managers are recognising the changing attitudes of their potential workforce, companies are becoming aware that they need to seek talent proactively rather than relying on traditional job postings. Social media strategies provide opportunities for companies to reach out to today's job seekers by using new types of engagement through direct contact and personalization. This paper investigates opportunities and challenges in utilising social media during the recruitment process based on the Elaboration Likelihood Model and the understand-deliver-measure cycle. We present two case studies with a large and mid-sized firm to illustrate how companies can utilise social media to create a value proposition for job seekers and personalise content to enhance talent acquisition.

1. Introduction
In today’s global and highly competitive marketplace, recruitment ‘has emerged as a key antecedent of organisational effectiveness’ (Allen, Mahto, & Otondo, 2007, p. 1696). This talent acquisition process is complex and costly involving many decisions on the part of both the employer and potential employee. The traditional hiring model is one in which companies with jobs to fill are central, and job seekers locate and apply to them. The company is the primary decision-maker in this view, deciding who to consider and determining the scope of the interaction. However, there are indications that the job market is changing. Based on a study of 412 U.S. companies, average talent acquisition costs increased 7% from 2014 to 2015 to nearly $4000 USD (3644 EUR) per hire, and the time to fill a job increased to
52 days on average from 48 days in 2011 (Staffing Industry Analysts, 2015). These costs reflect the difficulties in recruiting talent in a market where the unemployment rate is the lowest it has been since 2007. It also reflects the increasing influence of job seekers in the decision process. Job seekers have more accurate and more detailed information about employment conditions at different companies and increasing social awareness of work as it affects their lives.

As the competition for talent has increased among companies, job seekers have more choices along with better access to information through the Internet. For example, job seekers can estimate their market value (Salary, 2015). Regardless of the accuracy of such information, job seekers have data with which to negotiate, and employers have to respond to those data. Job aggregators provide a single source of job postings as scraped from the Web (Indeed, 2015; Job Fox, 2015), giving job seekers information about the competitive landscape for their talent. Real estate research sites such as (Zillow, 2016) have indirectly impacted talent markets allowing job seekers to search cost of living and other key community information such as taxes, local schools, etc. This new knowledge can either persuade or dissuade job seekers from considering employment opportunities. In addition, job candidates routinely use company websites to assess a firm and its potential fit with their expectations, making the experience through the Internet critical to successfully attracting talent (Staffing Industry Analysts, 2015).

Even as the balance of decision-making is changing, organisations are trying to drive more candidates, more cheaply, through their on-line career portals, but still not finding the right talent mix or volume in their organisations. Some organisations recognise that attracting talent is less about quantity, speed and cost, and more about quality, trust and value that the job seeker wants in the application/employment experience (Putre, 2013). As part of their overall big data strategy (Manyika, 2011), companies can involve the mobile and social technology platforms that have become ubiquitous in daily personal life to build a value proposition with job seekers, if they are capable of rethinking their approach to connecting with talent (Wilson & Hanscome, 2016). New approaches offer an opportunity to build proactive, personalised relationships with niche pools of talent rather than advertising open jobs farther and faster. The research community has been slow in investigating the impact of these technologies on employment and has not kept up with practitioners in using strategies such as social media in talent acquisition. As (Roth, Bobko, Van Iddekinge, & Thatcher, 2016, p. 1) suggest,

organisational practice has outpaced the scientific study of SM [social media] assessments in an area [of talent acquisition] that has important consequences for individuals (e.g., being selected for work), organisations (e.g., successfully predicting job performance or withdrawal), and society (e.g., consequent adverse impact/diversity).

To address this gap between research and practice on the impact of using social media strategies during recruitment, we explore the early part of the engagement between the firm and potential employee. Our research question is:

How can companies employ social media to interact with job seekers in order to improve talent acquisition?

To answer this question, we employed a case study approach with two firms: Stanley Black and Decker, a large firm in the manufacturing industry; and T. Rowe Price Group, a mid-sized firm in the financial services industry, and we investigated the opportunities and challenges of using social media strategies to improve the talent acquisition process. The
paper proceeds as follows. In section 1 we discuss the shift to a candidate-centric employment market, technology for recruiting, and the decision factors of importance to current job seekers. Section 2 gives details of our research design. In section 3 we describe the case studies and challenges of developing and using social media strategies for talent acquisition. Section 4 presents implications for researchers and practitioners. Finally, section 5 provides a summary and limitations of the study.

2. Background

2.1. The shift to a candidate-centric market

Talent is tuned in, better connected and more averse to the mass-marketed job, choosing instead to seek out opportunity alignment with their personal values or through their trusted networks (Putre, 2013; Keim, Tobias & Weitzel, 2006). Many corporations are missing these market signals and utilising dated strategies and for the first time their applicant pools are ahead of them on the technology curve giving job seekers new power and voice in the hiring process (Putre, 2013).

Job seeking candidates in the labour market today have more power in the marketplace due to: unemployment rate drops; turnover rates dramatically increase; firms are not raising salaries, so employees must seek jobs elsewhere in order to get more money; many more new jobs open and they stay unfilled much longer (e.g. the job openings rate increased 22% since July 2013); competition for talent between firms increases dramatically because, as a result of company growth, the demand for qualified talent in key jobs exceeds supply (Sullivan, 2014). Firms now compete for desirable candidates who now have multiple job openings to apply to, and job finalists receive offers from multiple firms; prospects, applicants. Candidates realise that they have multiple options so they raise their expectations.

2.2. Technology for talent acquisition

Technology in the talent acquisition area has grown. Figure 1 shows the evolution of technologies available to both companies and job seekers over the last 20 years. As shown in Figure 1, in the 1990s the talent acquisition strategy involved partnerships with job boards

![Figure 1. Evolution of technology in the talent acquisition space.](image-url)
for online advertisement of positions; a focus on in-house talent acquisition teams; company career landing pages; online applications for compliance, convenience, consistency and volume; and, search engine optimization to search more candidates more efficiently, although with less human interaction (Bersin, 2013; DeSanctis, 1986).

Enabled with these technologies, human resource teams leveraged the speed and reach of the Internet to engage candidates at distance and control market and decision-making. However, this strategy, utilised up to and through the 2007–2009 US recession (Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), 2016; FRED, 2015), is not as successful with candidates whose experiences are impacted by social media and mobile platforms beginning in the early 2000s (Wilson & Hanscome, 2016). As seen in Figure 1, social/mobile technologies have grown at exponential rates and enable job seekers to connect and communicate insider information about companies.

As seen in Figure 1, there have been some attempts at alternative market responses that would improve talent’s interaction with employers. In 2005 websites were created promising to match candidates to jobs with more precision, and although sites such as JobFox did not succeed in the marketplace, the service may have been ahead of its time. Job boards ruled the employment technology area until improved networking platforms, like LinkedIn became widespread. This technology was different and more job-seeker focused. LinkedIn is a ‘user-controlled’ job search experience in the market by allowing individual members to create and join auto-updating personal networks or accessing a wider professional networks while drawing advertising revenue from employers at the other end of the job market. LinkedIn and similar sites use a strategy of the power of viral connectivity and the desire for social interaction, as well as the perception of personal empowerment over the job search by the job seeker. This powerful combination yielded a substantive change in the job market, i.e. job seekers can be either active or passive job seekers, explore employment, link to key personal or professional contacts, read or create content, and interact proactively with little to no cost and no control from their current employers. Meanwhile, social media platforms proliferated including Twitter, Four Square, Vine, and Facebook as shown in Table 1 (Power

### Table 1. Social media technologies that can be utilised for talent acquisition.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technology</th>
<th>Impact</th>
<th>Ease</th>
<th>Cost</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Twitter</td>
<td>Ability to connect quickly and efficiently</td>
<td>Easy</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Minimal time investment by employees. Requires constant attention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four Square / Meet Up</td>
<td>Associates and job seekers can connect when in the same geographic space</td>
<td>Med</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Possibly the most risky. Requires training of associates. Could link job seekers to event marketing, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vine</td>
<td>Low cost video messages, capture culture</td>
<td>Easy</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Show the culture. Pictures speak 1000 words, video speaks a million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LinkedIn</td>
<td>Networking site</td>
<td>Easy</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Identify passive candidates. Share content and subject matter expertise. Create a following based on credibility not ads or job posts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SalesForce.Com / Reverse CRM</td>
<td>Ability to track and store client interactions via the cloud. Could be similarly used for candidate interactions</td>
<td>Easy</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Applicant tracking systems function like CRM, but are deleted or warehoused due to privacy issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monster and BeKnown BranchOut</td>
<td>Facebook app to merge FB, LinkedIn and Monster Facebook app to separate personal and professional life</td>
<td>Easy</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Recently launched. Steps users through online profiles and job search</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YouTube</td>
<td>Job seekers post video resumes; employers post videos about company</td>
<td>Easy</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Requires pre and post-production work to look professional</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
& Phillips-Wren, 2011). Human resource professionals have yet to capitalise on their use in talent acquisition.

2.3. Job seeker’s decision factors

A job seeker balances many factors in her decisions relating to seeking employment or changing jobs. Based on interviews, (Ready, Hill, & Conger, 2008) defined four categories of influences: Brand (excellence, leadership), Opportunity (challenging work, career path, salary), Culture (authentic, meritocracy), and Purpose (mission, values, global citizenship). They refer to these as ‘promises made’ and ‘promises kept’. Technologies such as social media give the job seeker new information sources such as insider viewpoints (e.g. Glassdoor, 2016), even if this information is misleading, represents the views of only a small minority or is false. Organisations can no longer control their image through traditional methods since technology has democratised information flow.

Organisations increasingly utilise websites for recruitment (Cober, Brown, Keeping, & Levy, 2004). Websites can provide users with vivid experiences through dynamic elements that evolve in time (Coyle & Thorson, 2001). Studies have shown that active job seekers are initially attracted by the website’s façade and overall presentation, and that many other elements influence the perceptions of the job seeker about the organisation as she interacts with the site (Cober et al., 2004). Theory suggests that there are mediating constructs, including job seeker search behaviour, perceptions, attitudes, and organisational image (Allen et al., 2007; Cober et al., 2004; Lyons & Marler, 2011; Morris & Venkatesh, 2010). For example, corporate social responsibility as presented on a company website is a discretionary differentiating factor among firms that attracts job seekers who perceive a value fit with their own values (Jones, Willness, & Madey, 2014).

Throughout the recruitment process, firms attempt to communicate information about themselves. Job seekers attempt to reduce uncertainty for their important decision-making with incomplete information, so they use the information they do have available to make inferences about the job and the organisation (Allen et al., 2007). Interactions with the organisation through any means can serve as signals, according to signalling theory, and can influence the job seeker (Allen et al., 2007). Websites can provide a medium for interaction and, if well designed, rich information that influences a job seeker. However, studies have shown that contact with organisational agents, in particular, influence early attraction of job seekers to a job (Allen et al., 2007). Social media technologies provide new ways to connect organisational representatives with job seekers and potentially influence job seeking behaviour. The two companies examined in our case studies are exploring such social media strategies.

2.4. Theoretical model of persuasion and personalization

Personalization aims to ‘deliver individualised information to message recipients based on their unique preferences’ (Li, 2016, p. 26). There is a continuum from no personalization in communication to high personalization based on the recipient. The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) emphasis two relatively independent routes to persuasion: the central route that comes from thoughtful consideration of the merits of the information presented in support of advocacy, and the peripheral route that occurs as the result of a simple cue in
the information (e.g. expert source, affective association, simple inference) that induces a response without careful scrutiny of the merits of the communication (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). In the ELM central route, the recipient moves through motivation to process the communication, ability to process it, processing of the message, and cognitive structural change that can affect attitude and ultimately behaviour. The peripheral route short circuits this process, and attitude is relatively temporary and not predictive of behaviour (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). Attitudes are as ‘general evaluations that people hold in regard to themselves, other people, objects, and issues … based on a variety of behavioural, affective, and cognitive experiences, and are capable of influencing or guiding, [those] experiences’ (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986, p. 127). Thus, variables in a communication (e.g. source credibility, number of arguments, number or nature of proponents, attractiveness) can affect persuasion in a limited number of ways: it can provide a persuasive argument or it can serve as a peripheral cue, and it can affect a recipient’s scrutiny of the message in either objective or biased manners (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986).

Personalization offers a way to reach talent by ‘tailor[ing] certain offerings … by providers … to [recipients] … based on knowledge about them, with certain goal(s) in mind’ (Adomavicius & Tuzhilin, 2005). A message matched to the recipient is expected to be more persuasive either because recipients process the message more carefully and use it for decision-making (via the central route), or because the matching acts as a peripheral cue (via the peripheral route) (Li, 2016). Empirical studies have shown that the match can link to almost any characteristics, including self-monitoring, group membership, or self-schema (Li, 2016). Studies have shown that the recipient and context variables affect the processing of a communication, and that it is the perception of personalization by the recipient that is important, not whether the message is actually personalised (Li, 2016).

Attempts to utilise personalization as a method of persuasion should follow the three theoretical stages in an understand-deliver-measure cycle (Adomavicius & Tuzhilin, 2005). In the first phase, the company attempts to understand the talent market by collecting information and synthesising it to produce knowledge about the recipient that can be acted upon in either central or peripheral routes. The second step is to deliver personalised messages or offerings by matching recipient characteristics to the job characteristics and developing a strategy to deliver the message to the recipient. The third step is to measure the impact of personalization in order to adjust the strategy by identifying deficiencies and providing feedback for improvements. When one cycle is complete, another cycle can begin with improved personalization techniques.

In the discussion that follows, we investigate two firms that are beginning to adopt a strategy of personalization for talent recruitment and acquisition.

3. Research design

We followed a case study approach (Yin, 2014) with two firms: a large firm in the manufacturing industry and a mid-sized firm in the financial services industry. We interviewed human resources professionals in semi-structured interviews to investigate how social media strategies are or are not being used for talent acquisition and strategic decision-making by managers. Due to confidentiality reasons, we report only generalised comments that we received.

This research is primarily descriptive, and the case study is exploratory. Following Yin (2014) and Stake (1995), we developed an initial framework for the study and focused on
the case specifically to maximise learning about the human and technical considerations for employing social media strategies in talent acquisition rather than determining the typicality of the case. Our choice of firms and number of firms in our sample is consistent with a qualitative approach. While quantitative research depends on larger samples selected randomly, qualitative research focuses on purposeful selection of a relatively small number of samples (Patton, 1990). While convenience sampling is a qualitative strategy, according to Patton (1990), the quality of the sample is not known, and, thus, convenience sampling holds lower credibility and can yield information-poor cases. On the other hand, the logic and power of purposeful sampling is in the selection of information-rich cases for in-depth study.

Patton (1990) describes information-rich cases as ‘those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research’ (Patton, 1990). In these case studies, Stanley Black & Decker (SBD) and T. Rowe Price (TRP) Group are ‘information rich’ cases since we were able to perform interviews with company human resource leaders. SBD is an international manufacturer, has a workforce in the tens of thousands, has a robust talent acquisition process, has observed changes in job seeker behaviour, has begun to modify its talent acquisition process, and is seeking to improve its talent acquisition processes using social media strategies. TRP is a global investment management firm with a sophisticated talent acquisition process that seeks to attract highly specialised talent through high touch, particularly in university relations. It has observed that new approaches are needed to engage the emerging workforce and is investigating new approaches using social media strategies. Thus, both firms offer relevant and complementary insights for our research question.

4. Case studies

4.1. Stanley Black and Decker

Stanley Black & Decker (SBD) is a top US toolmaker with 50,400 employees that has achieved healthy revenue and profit growth operating in the US, Canada, Europe, and Asia (Hoovers, 2016). The US accounts for about 50% of revenue, followed by Asia (10%), Canada (5%), France (5%), and the rest of Europe (25%). The company has three major segments: Construction & Do-It-Yourself (which generates 50% of sales), Security (20%), and Industrial (30%). It also has additional items, such as garden tools, plumbing products (Pfister), cleaning items (Dustbuster), security hardware (Kwikset) and door products. The company sells brands besides Stanley and Black & Decker brands, including Bostitch, Mac Tools, and DEWALT. SBD re-emphasised its desire in 2015 to foster ‘true organic growth culture’ by encouraging innovation and becoming a more digitally-enabled enterprise. (Hoovers, 2016).

An examination of employee attrition data at SBD shows correlation in the rise of employee turnover and the perspective power of the job seeker in the marketplace. Data indicate that over 50% of total attrition comes from 20% of employees. This 20% is specifically millennial talent born between 1981 and 1987, and the talent demographic that has the least invested in the firm such as retirement benefits, pension, medical, and stock options. This demographic is also the most comfortable demographic in working with new technology platforms, having grown up with social and mobile devices as part of their academic and social interactions. Their comfort level with technology to connect and investigate the market make them the
quintessential ‘passive’ job seekers, opportunistically leveraging their power through technology to find and select new employment opportunities more easily and regularly. Turnover rates are 23% of the total population of these associates at SBD as compared to high single digit attrition for all other older, more tenured demographics, due in part to zero to small in annual salary rate increases during recessionary periods.

SBD has participated in volume hiring over the last decade. Data from human resources during that time period indicates that job offer acceptance rates have dipped from 95+% to the low 80% range while job seekers expect more allowances for post-graduation travel, comparative benefit packages, and even relocation and sign-on bonuses. Each of these elements stands as a clear signal that power is shifting from the employer toward the job seeker. Personalization offers a potential approach to influence passive and active job seekers to explore SBD.

One way that SBD is engaging talent through dynamic elements is to utilise older technology infrastructure with an updated approach consistent with the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) to persuade by recognising that millennials are influenced by a values proposition. On the main website, the job seeker is not greeted with some of the standard query-based, ‘see or search’ for open jobs functionality that can be found on many job sites. The company seeks to engage job seekers with a values proposition by showing a video that illustrates the company’s values. Individuals in the video talk about themselves, company values and their passions rather than their titles or compensation. They articulate the journey they have taken, and the video is an indicator that SBD realises this type of unstructured, qualitative data about a company can enhance talent acquisition through a peripheral route.

On its career pages, not only is there a significant space dedicated to topics and awards like sustainability, SBD is giving job seeking visitors a chance to ‘like’, ‘follow’ or ‘share’ with their network via links to well-known social media platforms in an attempt to personalise their experience and provide data to the company for future decision-making, i.e. the understand-deliver-measure cycle. The first part of this effort, the focus on sustainability is reflective of the values and interests of the next generation of the workforce. Reflecting that the company’s interest in clean, responsible and sustainable business is an important part of the culture hopes to persuade through a central route in ELM. Although, SBD is utilising generally accepted practice to indicate that it is a socially responsible company, these elements of the career pages are not integrated into the rest of the career pages. Once a job seeker clicks away from either of these sections, he/she moves into the realm of Job Requisition numbers and search by state dialogue boxes. Thus, although talent acquisition is moving in the right direction, there is room for more innovation and personal outreach attractive to job seekers.

In the social media space, SBD is active on Twitter and Facebook across all brands and countries with multiple accounts. However, there are opportunities to be truly innovative by leveraging unstructured data in new ways or by linking different data pools to gain totally new insights for products, services or improvements to its business to understand-deliver-measure. Currently, SBD’s Twitter site follows only 143 others, has 2947 followers, and 95 likes. The page tweets items that are commercial such as PR for the company or a product update that mimics mass media advertisements rather than attracting job seekers. An examination of 412 Tweets revealed that only 3 featured a job opportunity theme, and those jobs were high volume open positions, not a job seeker attractor since there is no exclusivity in
the job. Tweets mimic the speed and reach of the job board rather than capitalising on personalization that real-time tweeting and trending topical interests can create.

In an effort to better utilise personalization, SBD is moving towards allowing employees to engage the marketplace via mobile and social platforms. The strategy is to attract quality talent by showing talent how much the company cares. One future approach is to connect live people to job seekers via social media strategies since it is feasible to pair associates with similar job seekers anytime, anyplace. For example, a young engineer visiting the site and filling out an application could have a conversation via Twitter on his cell phone at Starbucks with one of the engineers. It is expected that the 140 characters of Twitter exchanged a few times over the employee base of 45,000+ would not derail productivity.

Another future area that can be addressed through social media and personalization is job seeker preparation for interviews and company culture. Current associates can share insights about culture, interview processes, open roles and the company. They can express their passion and excitement for a job via these platforms with enough personalization to differentiate SBD from other employers and influence through peripheral routes. Current employees can also share information not directly related to current jobs such as subject matter expertise. Recruiters and subject matter experts are not always confident about the specific expertise that they are seeking. Instead, they express value-oriented characteristics such as ‘professional, competent, good communicator.’ Through social media, subject matter experts can share projects and problems of current interest through blogging, writing, speaking, and illustrating their expertise as a way to attract talent through a central route. One firm that uses this approach is (Bluewolf, 2016), redefining how to use an entire organisation as a recruiting tool and very rarely talking about jobs during Twitter feeds or other media. There is an effort to CARE, PAIR, SHARE, PREPARE talent interested in the company, and Bluewolf is building a reputation for drawing top talent in a competitive technology space. SBD aims to follow a similar strategy.

4.2. T. Rowe price group

T. Rowe Price (TRP) Group with headquarters in Baltimore, Maryland USA, reported 58,700 employees in 2014 with a one-year employee growth of 3.56% (Hoovers, 2016). The company administers about 100 mutual funds in a variety of risk and taxation investment styles, including small-, mid-, and large-cap stock funds; money market funds; and bond funds. Other services offered are asset management advisory services, corporate retirement plan management, separately managed accounts, variable annuity life insurance plans, discount brokerage, and transfer agency and shareholder services. With nearly $747 billion in assets under management, investment advisory services account for more than 85% of its annual revenue (Hoovers, 2016).

Over the last 18 months TRP’s University Relations team has been tasked with centralising the University Relations effort within TRP in order to create consistency in branding, identify the most efficient and effective way to recruit talent on a domestic and international scale and create a reporting database to document feedback and performance of those efforts and employee performance. These data will be used to inform the understand-deliver-measure cycle. As a result of this centralization effort, data collection and analysis of structured data was commenced based on feedback directly from participants (i.e. interns) and the
employee population: identifying the high performing associate attributes such as: where did they attend school, what was their major, how did they become introduced to TRP, how long have they been with the firm, etc. Additionally, return-on-investment (ROI) was considered from an operations standpoint such as the total recruiting costs per school (including recruiter travel and time) for all schools, as well as the hiring ROI per school. HR managers indicate that the future success of their hiring strategies is in need of aggregating unstructured data as well.

In partnership with the Human Resources Generalist and Succession Planning teams, TRP outlined the University Relations goals and objectives and aims to create a working assessment formula utilising structured and unstructured data, year over year, to help evaluate on-campus efforts, build a talent pipeline and help focus on effective university relations practices to ensure hiring of top-tier talent into the firm that, in turn, directly contributes to the strength of the organisation. Challenges exist due to unexpected internal or external attrition, imprecise headcount forecasting, and lack of a sufficient talent pipeline.

As the first step in personalization, TRP anticipates that social media strategies can improve their outreach and understanding of what millennials are interested in hearing about/ from employers 9i.e. ‘understand’, how to engage with them (i.e. ‘deliver’), and how to capture and retain their attention in order to create a talent pipeline strategy (i.e. ‘measure’). Gathering and analysing unstructured data has the ability to create a deeper understanding and connection to the VABEs (Values, Assumptions, Beliefs and Expectations) (Mento, Cougnet, & De Vader, 2012) of strong passive talent who would potentially be top contributors to the firm’s initiatives and future needs. These data would also assist in aligning and refining talent acquisition programmes (such as the Summer Internship Programme) to meet the evolving demands of the firm’s initiatives as well as the professional development needs of university talent.

The company envisions that unstructured data could be used to answer questions such as: the effectiveness of on-campus branding initiatives (what are students saying about TRP); gathering feedback regarding Summer Intern programmes compared to others; assessing if students recommend TRP as a future employer for internships or full time opportunities; determining where students are learning about competitor programmes; assessing the competition. These data would be used to ‘understand’ and ‘deliver’ messages personalised to the university group as the audience.

Interestingly, TRP student surveys have concluded that university students do not want to utilise social media such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram as a way of interacting with potential employers. This result, based on surveys, is counter to expectation and creates a challenge of obtaining data without being invasive. In the ‘measure’ part of the cycle, TRP currently obtains feedback on outreach and programmes from interns who have been accepted into its programmes. However, it is not clear if feedback is biased in order to improve the chances of securing a job with the company after graduation. Feedback sessions are conducted in a group setting towards the final weeks of the internship programme, structured and compared against the previous years to influence change and identify the new professional developmental needs of the students.

The goal is to reinvent how TRP targets future top talent by adopting an understand-deliver-measure cycle that enhances personalization for the university audience as a group. The strategy is to build an innovative on-campus branding presence for millennials based on data, delivering the message, measuring results, and being agile in the assessment and
implementation of programmatic professional development offerings to better meet the personal and professional needs of all candidates by supporting and contributing to their growth and development.

5. Implications

5.1. Implications for researchers

Strategies such as using social media with messages personalised to reach today's active and passive job seekers are being actively pursued by thought leaders in the practitioner community. (Roth et al., 2016) propose that organisational practice has outpaced research on the use of social media strategies for personnel decisions in an area important to individuals, organisations and society. Thus, there is a gap between research and practice that provides fertile ground for researchers. Our research begins to address this gap by studying two firms considering their approach to recruitment by developing and implementing social media strategies based on personalised messaging for talent acquisition. Our study suggests that millennials represent a major part of the workforce and that they have a values orientation that can be impacted by using associated technologies. The implication for researchers is that more research is needed, particularly on theoretical underpinnings.

5.2. Implications for practitioners

Employers are using outdated technology solutions in talent acquisition and need to shift to the newest media platforms (Bersin, 2013). Although companies employ high touch, low volume recruitment on college campuses and individual outreach effectively, they need to leverage social media technology platforms such as LinkedIn, Twitter and Instagram that will allow companies to create communities proactively with passive job seekers (Gorman, 2011). Some of those technologies were shown in Table 1. However, this effort entails more than technology; it requires a social media strategy. This change may be met with resistance since it is less structured. Companies need to provide a values proposition to passive and active job seekers through social media channels, demonstrating that they care about their subject matter, prepare current employees to participate, pair their best talent with those interested in the company, and share their values. An understand-deliver-measure cycle can be used to guide these efforts. The recruitment strategy then improves the connectivity and engagement of the future talent base: connectivity that is more personal, more mobile and better articulated in value terms meaningful to them, not the company.

6. Summary and limitations

This paper makes several contributions to the literature. It:

1. builds on theories of persuasion (i.e. Elaboration Likelihood Model) and personalization (i.e. understand-deliver-measure cycle) by applying them to talent recruitment domains;
2. identifies opportunities to utilise social media strategies for personalization in recruitment to attract high quality talent for both active and passive job seekers;
(3) provides evidence that a values orientation is of interest to millennials (who will be large portion of the future workforce) and that values can be communicated through social media by firms desiring to hire them;

(4) provides management insights for recruitment of millennial talent based on two case studies of firms actively involved in talent acquisition.

Our study has limitations. The sample size is small, consisting of two firms, one mid-sized and one large, that are representative of US companies in their categories. Thus, additional study is needed to generalise the results. However, companies are competing for high quality talent, and recruitment costs, time and turnover indicate that new strategies are needed. At the same time, millennials and the emerging workforce communicate differently with technology and have different expectations from employers than in the past. Social media strategies offer a new approach to talent acquisition that is largely unexplored. Emerging experiences from the two companies researched in this paper offer fresh perspectives that can provide guidance to researchers and practitioners alike.

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Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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