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## THE PIVOTAL ROLE OF HRM IN ENHANCING ORGANIZATIONS COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE

**JYOTI.C. GANDHI**  
**ASST. PROFESSOR**  
**DEPARTMENT OF MANAGEMENT**  
**VADODARA INSTITUTE OF ENGINEERING**  
**KOTAMBI**

### ABSTRACT

*Unlike few years ago where social media was only considered as a medium for networking, now a days it has become an important tool for the organizations to add value to its business, as well as for the employees to enhance their career development and professional growth. This paper focuses on exploring the advantages of social media usage at workplace, how professionals & organizations are gaining competitive advantage with its usage and why human resource professionals need to handle carefully its usage by the employees within and outside the organization set up.*


### KEYWORDS

social media, social networking, human resource, collaboration, communication.

### ACRONYMS

HRM     Human resource management  
 HR      Human resource

### INTRODUCTION

ocial media as per Merriam Webster is: "forms of electronic communication through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, etc." (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/>).

The personal and professional contacts that individual develop over the social media is one's social network. In one's social network un-knowingly and at times knowingly individuals share information which are sensitive and privileged. Hence it becomes at-most important for human resource professionals (HR professionals) to gear up their department as well as train employees for channelizing the use of social media for enhancing their performance and educate them as to how sensitive information is to be handled over the social media.

### NEED/IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

Since the past decade use of social media for work related activities has grown substantially. This phenomenal increase in use of social media has affected the organizations work culture, and its impact on Human Resource Management (HRM) function cannot be ignored.

Regardless of our profession and location, social media allows us to expand our network and helps us to stay connected in this virtual world. Collaboration through social media has made it possible for employees to get real time solutions to their work related problem, sharing idea and remain updated with latest trends in the industry.

With this boom in usage of social media it's become all the more necessary for Human Resource Managers to make sure that information shared on social networks is not putting organization reputation and workplace secrets at risk.

Most of the social networking sites encourage sharing of personal information as a result of which employees may also put themselves in a trap.

Thus it's necessary for the HRM function to ensure that information shared by employees on these networks are regulated to mitigate the risk. Also the time spent on these sites affect the over efficiency of the employees. A proper policy framework & non – disclosure agreements can guide employees on what to share and not what not to disclose on use of social media within the organization and outside the workplace environment.

Effective use of social media, within the HR department can give it a competitive advantage. With effective policies & vigilant HR personnel its detrimental impact on the organization can be minimized.

### OBJECTIVES

The study aims as exploring the use of social media within HR department and challenges that HR department is facing with the advent use of social media by workforce.

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In order to explore the potential use of social media within HR activities and the challenges faced by the HR department literature research was done.

### FINDINGS

#### WHY EMPLOYEES ARE USING SOCIAL MEDIA EXTENSIVELY?

- Most of the employees prefer to use social media to get real time work related information.
- It's also a platform to share knowledge and guide other colleagues on their assignments. New technological updates etc.
- Many employees do not feel comfortable bothering their bosses or the HR managers for frequent workplace policy related dilemmas. Instead they prefer to seek quick and prompt information from their colleagues over social media. Many a times such policy discussion over social media like WhatsApp turns into a debate ground, where employees engage into comparing work policies of other competitors which can be detrimental for company's image.
- At times employee prefer to hook on to social media to just take a break from their hectic work schedule & stress.
- It is also observed that due to work pressures and extended working hours the social life of the professionals has weekend. So employees use the most of social media space to catch up with family and friends over the virtual space provided by social media.

#### VARIOUS HRM ACTIVITIES DONE EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENTLY OVER SOCIAL MEDIA

- Social media is widely used by HR professionals for recruitment. Almost all industries make use of social media for recruitments in one way or the other.
- The next important step after recruitments is to conduct reference check or background check of the selected candidate. HR managers check the online presence of the selected candidate over the social media. Any inappropriate communication over the social media by the selected candidate about his previous company, fellow colleagues, sharing of sensitive information to other etc. is a signal for the HR professionals that the selected employee is not fit for hiring.
- Social media facilitates onboarding process and induction of new employees across the globe. It ensures that the policies and guidelines are disseminated to the new joiner as per the regional requirements.

- Other dominant activities where the use of social media is advent is HR communications. HR professionals are increasingly using social media to leverage their employee connect, organization communication, task allocation and management etc.
- Organization policy communication, policy awareness, changes and implementation have become much easier & faster with the use of social media.
- HR can instantly get feedback and adjust its process, policies and communications swiftly as per the requirement of the organization.
- Social media has made it possible for the HR professionals to provide on time 24X7 support to the employee. Irrespective of the fact whether the employee is within the organization or at onsite project work station or at client’s site.
- Social media has supported training and development by providing real time information to both the trainers and the trainees. The training programs are more relevant information loaded.

The aforesaid usage of social media by the employees, HR department and the organization as a whole can be further bifurcated into usage within the organizational set up and outside. The bifurcation is shown in table 1.

**TABLE 1: THE REASONS WHY EMPLOYEES, ENTERPRISE AND HR DEPARTMENT USES SOCIAL MEDIA TO THEIR ADVANTAGE WITHIN AND OUTSIDE THE ORGANIZATION SETUP**

	Internally	Externally
Employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Platform to share and collaborate with colleagues on work assignments.</li> <li>• Keeping the team member updated if posted on client location.</li> <li>• To remain updated with latest technological trends in the industry.</li> <li>• As a tool for work allocation on day to day basis or in absence of fellow co-worker.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To get real time work related information from other professionals of the industry.</li> <li>• Checking out opportunities for career advancement.</li> <li>• Socializing with their online communities to break free from work stress.</li> <li>• To upgrade their technical knowledge and skill through various online forums.</li> <li>• Sharing of sensitive information to competitors.</li> </ul>
HR Department	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Talent acquisition.</li> <li>• Reference check</li> <li>• Learning and development initiatives.</li> <li>• Employee engagement.</li> <li>• Employee communication.</li> <li>• Facilitating onboarding across the globe.</li> <li>• On time employee support.</li> <li>• Knowledge sharing and collaboration.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employment branding for attracting talent.</li> <li>• Communication with external customer of the HR department like legal advisors, bankers etc.</li> <li>• Getting real time information about the latest policy and law changes.</li> </ul>
Enterprise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge centers.</li> <li>• Policy communication.</li> <li>• Better employee connect.</li> <li>• Increase employee satisfaction.</li> <li>• Eliminate regional and global communication barriers.</li> <li>• Retain and recruit talent.</li> <li>• Training and development.</li> <li>• Increasing productivity.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Customer relationship.</li> <li>• Customer service.</li> <li>• Branding &amp; advertisement.</li> <li>• Competitor watch.</li> <li>• Promoting the company’s products &amp; innovations.</li> <li>• Increasing the web traffic through SEO.</li> <li>• Recruitments and alumni.</li> <li>• Real time updates.</li> </ul>

**TABLE 2: HRM FUNCTION NEEDS TO BATTLE THESE TWO DIFFERENT SETS OF RISK THAT SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENTS TO THE ORGANIZATION**

	Internally	Externally
Employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workplace related negative conversation between cross functional teams on organizations intranet.</li> <li>• Sensitive personal information of employees available to many subordinates.</li> <li>• Inappropriate non-work related use of social media leading to wastage of time and decreasing overall performance.</li> <li>• Derogatory comments on fellow colleagues leading to issues pertaining to workplace harassment.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unintentional or deliberate leakage of information by employees over networking sites.</li> <li>• Employees getting engaged with customers over their social network in inappropriate business discussion.</li> <li>• Misrepresentation of organization’s policies, thus damaging the brand image.</li> <li>• Inappropriate or inaccurate comments on organizations financial positions.</li> <li>• Posting defamatory comments about the company, client or fellow colleagues.</li> </ul>

**HOW EFFECTIVELY POLICY FRAMEWORK CAN MITIGATE THE RISK OF SOCIAL MEDIA**

Taking into consideration the advantages these new technologies have to offer the flip side of using social media cannot be ignored. Organizations cannot ban social media usage completely and hence a vigilant HR department can overcome these dis-advantages by orienting and re-orienting their employees about the organization’s social media policy, organizations non-disclosure agreements binding the employees.

Points to be kept in mind by HR professionals while framing and implementing the social media policy:

- It should define what is “social media” & “social networking” as per the organization.
- It also should define scope of which “social media” and which “social networks” are permissible for specific departments and for the whole organizations.
- Defines proprietary and confidential information.
- Guides the employees as to the acceptable behavioral norms while using social networking.
- It should specify the circumstance under which staff uses social media, emails and internet will be monitored, so that the employees know that there is no expectation of privacy in their use of work computers and accounts.
- Social media policy should be positively framed, i.e. it should detail out how effectively social media can be used to enhance performance rather than detailing out what not is to be done.
- The policy creator’s panel should have cross functional member representatives from IT, legal, HR, marketing, risk management team etc., to ensure that policy creators are the users of the policy and know the scope of its usage within their departments.
- Once the policy is created appropriate feedback is to be taken from the users.
- At regular intervals employees should be given training, orientation and reinforce policy guidelines and updates.
- All employees should be provided with a copy of the policy or should be informed where the copy may be viewed.
- Employees should be made aware of the implications of policy breach and what would be disciplinary action and legal consequences.
- All employees should be bound by the policy through non-disclosure agreement undertaking.
- HRM function should update the organizations disciplinary, grievance, equal opportunity and harassment policies to include social media policy guidelines.

**CONCLUSIONS**

The use of social media in HR process has enormous advantages in comparison to the traditional HR process.

The EY 2016 Global Forensic Data Analytics Survey says that 40 per cent of its Indian respondents are concerned about cybercrime. In its article published in "The Economic Times" rising risk of cybercrime, fraud, bribery and corruption are the key concerns for the Indian organization.

- For most of the companies the primary concern is the security of information shared over the social media by their employees.
- The HR department needs to update their social media policy & non-disclosure policy / agreement regularly.
- A cautious HR department needs that the re-orientation and understanding of the policy is given to employees frequently to ensure that they are well aware of the policy and to avoid any misuse or information leak by the employees over social media.

Choosing to block social media access and banning smartphones at work will only result in drop in productivity. However; this will not prevent employees from using social media. Such a situation is more dangerous as use of social media by employees beyond work premises will become uncontrollable.

One of the preliminary function of HR professionals is to ensure that competitive, happy and efficient work force is there within the organization. HR professionals need to realize that in order to accomplish business goals individual needs to be encouraged to think out of the box and come up with real time solutions in this fast moving competitive business environment. Positive usage of these applications will improve both productivity and profitability. The social media revolution at workplace is just the beginning.

By embracing social media within the department and allowing monitored access of its usage to the employees across the organization, HRM function bring in competitive advantage not only to its department but the whole organization and stay ahead of ignorant competitors.

**SCOPE FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

1. Advent use of social media by recruiters in Vadodara.
2. Social media and workplace harassment.
3. Role of social media in other organization functions like marketing, finance, quality control etc.

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