

Georgia Southern University

Digital Commons@Georgia Southern

Association of Marketing Theory and Practice Proceedings

1-1-2019

Use of Social Media by Sales Students for First Post-Graduation Job-Search: An Exploratory Study

Linda G. Mullen

Georgia Southern University

Randy S. Stuart

Kennesaw State University

Michael L. Thomas

Georgia Southern University

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/amtp-proceedings_2019



Part of the [Marketing Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Mullen, Linda G.; Stuart, Randy S.; and Thomas, Michael L., "Use of Social Media by Sales Students for First Post-Graduation Job-Search: An Exploratory Study" (2019). *Association of Marketing Theory and Practice Proceedings 2019*. 22.

https://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/amtp-proceedings_2019/22

This conference proceeding is brought to you for free and open access by the Association of Marketing Theory and Practice Proceedings at Digital Commons@Georgia Southern. It has been accepted for inclusion in Association of Marketing Theory and Practice Proceedings 2019 by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons@Georgia Southern. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@georgiasouthern.edu.

LITERATURE REVIEW

As students who studied/majored in professional sales approach graduation and start looking for their first post-graduation/entry-level positions, what avenues are used to pursue these opportunities? One might suspect that with the explosion of social media and the millennial generation's prolific use of said media this would be their preferred choice for job hunting. Zondag and Brink (2017) suggest that relatives and friends were some of the most significant sources for this information. Further they found that college professors and courses were important sources for this information followed by career fairs/company visits and internships. That career fairs are still an important avenue to first post-college graduation jobs is an interesting finding as one might think that career fairs have become "outdated" with the millennial generation's preference to communicate on-line. In an op-ed piece for NACE (National Association of Colleges and Employers) Scott (2016) wrote, "What I find intriguing is that the more we introduce technology into the recruitment toolkit, the more value students place on the type of face-to-face interactions that occur at career fairs". She suggests that students do not prefer "virtual career fairs" put on by companies/colleges/universities as students still see the value in face-to-face interaction with the companies' recruiters.

Conversely, what are the benefits for sales students to conduct the job search on-line? As companies can now reach a wider audience of recruits than they could by merely advertising in the local press, students also are able to find open positions not only locally, but also nationally and internationally as well (Zusman, R. R., and R.S.Landis, 2002). The use of digital recruitment tools by students are creating a number of advantages for firms. Companies are able to launch a wider web of potential recruits with substantially reduced costs versus traditional methods (Goodwin, 1999, Crispin & Mebler, 1997).

Digital media offers sales students information that was primarily available from physical sources as well as information that was previously unavailable (Peterson & Merino 2003). This presents an important opportunity for job seekers as sales students now have the ability to obtain a plethora of company information quickly and efficiently compared to traditional recruitment methods (Cober, Brown, Keeping & Levy, 2004).

Faculty may have more interaction and know students better than school's career services therefore faculty need to be "knowledge brokers" for students with regard to what types of positions are available in the market place. Although it is suggested that faculty need to be "knowledge brokers" it seems that recruiters have better knowledge of what students desire in a position than do faculty (Weeks et. al,2014). Zondag and Brink (2017) contend it is becoming more and more critical for faculty to provide sales students with knowledge about current jobs and careers. Unfortunately, research (Weeks et al 2014) shows that currently faculty are not as well informed about these jobs/careers as they should be in order to help sales students secure their first post-college graduation sales position. The knowledge faculty should possess is critical not only to aid students in their search for their first post-college graduation career position, but as Weeks et al (2014) found recruiters are relying more on faculty to assess and connect sales students with suitable companies. With knowledge of what recruiters are looking for in entry-level sales people faculty can best serve sales students as "knowledge brokers" by having guest speakers in class and hosting events such as lunch and learns inviting both sales students and recruiters to participate.

What if any part do mentors play in a student's quest for their first post-college graduation career position? Renna et al (2014) suggests a positive relationship between students that participated in

a university sponsored mentoring program involving mentoring by business professionals and career planning and success. The authors go on to find that, "Networking with others may provide direct and indirect linkages to job opportunities is a critical part of searching for a job." (p. 425).

In addition to friends/relatives, faculty, and career fairs, do sales students also employ their institutions' career service centers to help find/obtain their first post-college graduation sales position? Deruy (2016) reported that approximately 50% of college graduates took advantage of their schools career services office but sadly, few of those students found the centers helpful. By the time Deruy's colleague, Fadulu (2018) wrote an article with regard to students using universities career services the number of undergraduate students visiting career service centers had dropped to less than twenty percent. Fadulu concludes that a way to improve this percentage of use of career centers by students would be to develop/enhance relationship building between students and the members of the career service centers employees.

THE STUDY

The purpose of the study is to explore how sales students who studied/majored in professional sales search for their first career-oriented position. Specifically, what activities do they engage in during their job search? Of particular interest is the use of social media to find their first post-college graduation sales position. Is the use of this media supplanting traditional search methods or enhancing them?

The sample was comprised of 87 business students currently taking sales courses at a comprehensive university in the southern United States. An online survey was administered using Qualtrix. In addition to demographic data, students were asked what resources they use on their job search, who influences their decisions on where to work, and what social media sources they use to aid in their first post-college graduation job search. They were also asked about ways the job search could be improved and what services they would like to see offered from collegiate sales programs.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results show multiple methods are being used by sales students in their job search. Traditional methods, such as General Networking, (85% of respondents), Employers Websites, (84%), Social Media (83%), University Career Fairs, (82%), and Faculty, (82%), are the most widely used in the search. However, it should be noted that even the least selected, career services, was selected by 66% of subjects. It appears sales students are using a shotgun approach when it comes to job searches. When asked who will influence their decision of where to work 84% said parents, followed closely by faculty at 82%. Interestingly only 60% said they would be influenced by career services. With regard to social media sales students, 89% said they would use LinkedIn for their job search. The only other social media outlets that sales students overwhelmingly said they would rely upon were university online career services, (75%), online job search services such as Career Builder, (78%), and Facebook, (63%). Finally, subjects did not agree on how the job search could be made easier, with only "Respond to applicant more quickly," receiving more than a 50% response rate. The findings suggest that sales students are heavily using online methods including social media in their job searches, however; they still rely quite a bit upon traditional methods such as family, faculty and career fairs. The one area

that seems to be waning is university career services, perhaps suggesting less of a need in investment in this area by schools.

LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The study has limitations that could limit its generalizability. The sample was a convenience sample in a concentrated area that could affect the results of a larger more geographically diverse sample. This study is only exploratory in nature in order to ferret out unseen dimensions for future study. Future research should empirically test these findings.

For example, why do students who studied/majored in professional sales choose the career support services for their first post-graduation position they do? In addition, when sales students use digital options, why do they choose those specific options? Longitudinal studies should also be done to show any shifting trends in behavior. An investigation into which search methods are most successful in assisting sales students pursuing their first post-graduation position should be pursued. The information with regard to how sales students use social media for their first post-graduation career position could also be valuable to recruiters and support services (i.e. career services and university sales centers). Future studies of how recruiters and support services could use information in this area would be beneficial.

REFERENCES

Cober, Richard T., Douglas J. Brown, Lisa M. Keeping and Paul E. Levy, (2004), "Recruitment on the Net: How Do Organizational Web Site Characteristics Influence Applicant Attraction", *Journal of Management*, Volume: 30 (issue: 5), 623-646.

DeRuy, Emily (2016), "Colleges Really Need to Rethink the Career Advice They Deliver A new report suggests most graduates don't find the current offerings very helpful", *The Atlantic*, Available at: <https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2016/12/colleges-really-need-to-rethink-the-career-advice-they-deliver/510647/>,

Fadulu, Lalade (2018), "Why Aren't College Students Using Career Services? Harnessing the resource could help them achieve the graduate's dream: finding a job", *The Atlantic*, Available at: <https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2018/01/why-arent-college-students-using-career-services/551051/>

Renna, Robert W., Robert Steinbauer, Robert Taylor, Daniel Detwiler (2014), "School-to-work transition: Mentor career support and student career planning, job search intentions, and self-defeating job search behavior", *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 85, 422-432.

Scott, Mary (2016), "Career Fairs Are NOT Dead", *National Association of Colleges and Employers Website*. Available at: <http://eds.a.ebscohost.com.proxy.kennesaw.edu/eds/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=2&sid=5874b582-ca84-4dce-a1e8-9c8d2e052781%40sessionmgr4006>

Weeks, William A., Brian Rutherford, James Boles, Terry Loe (2014), "Factors That Influence the Job Market Decision: The Role of Faculty as a Knowledge Broker", *Journal of Marketing Education*, Vol. 36(2) 105-119.

Zondag, Marcel M. and Kyle E. Brink (2017), "Examining US college students' career information sources across three decades", *Education + Training*, Vol. 59 (Issue: 9), pp.978-989.

Zusman, R. R., and R.S.Landis, (2002). "Applicant preferences for web-based versus traditional job postings" *Computers in Human Behavior*, 18(3), 285-296.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Linda G. Mullen, Ph.D., is an Associate Professor of Marketing and Director of the Center for Excellence in Sales, at Georgia Southern University. Dr. Mullen joined the faculty Georgia Southern University in August 2004. Her teaching is in the areas of general marketing, sales, advanced sales and sales management. Research interests are in the area of pedagogical, sales and ethics. Her research has been published in Marketing Education Review, Journal of Marketing Education, The CPA Journal, Journal of Forensic Studies in Accounting and Business, and Journal of International Case Studies.

Randy S. Stuart received her MBA with a concentration in Marketing from the University of Hawaii at Manoa. She teaches Principles of Marketing, Retail and Retail Management. She joined the Kennesaw State University faculty in August 1998 after a 25-year career in retail, wholesale sales and part-time teaching. Stuart worked in retail management for Walgreen Drug Stores and then in wholesale sales in the confectionary, women's clothing, and gift and souvenir industries.

Michael L. Thomas, Ph.D., Chair and Associate Professor Department of Marketing, College of Business, Georgia Southern University received his MBA and PhD from Southern Illinois University, Carbondale. Previously, he earned his bachelor degree from St. Norbert College. Dr. Thomas's teaching interests include marketing management, strategic management, retailing and advertising, and his research streams include marketing strategy, cause-related marketing and customer delight. Prior to his work in academia, Dr. Thomas spent 11 years in corporate insurance culminating with an appointment to vice president with a publicly traded firm in the northeast.