

Louvain School of Management

**In the long run, will LinkedIn's services
endanger of assist recruitment and
placement agencies in Belgium?
Could there be a win-win situation?**

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“We believe at LinkedIn, that companies are more and more going to be shifting to the only use of LinkedIn for recruitment purposes because the results have proven that we can, with less money, find more and better filtered candidates.” Adrien Duchâteau, LinkedIn.

“LinkedIn’s problem is the same problem as the number of CVs that can arrive in a company. People manage to sell themselves, to under-sell themselves, who put a lot of things on their profile and who in fact have only done half of them.” Elinor de Biolley, Robert Half.

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INTRODUCTION

With close to 650 million users, LinkedIn's role in recruitment has been quickly growing over the years. Indeed, jobseekers can market their skills, businesses can publish job offers, recruitment agencies can contact potential candidates etc. This new trend may or may not become a threat to those very recruitment and placement agencies.

The objective of this thesis is to understand the organisational impact LinkedIn has and will have on the recruitment market in Belgium. Could there be a win-win situation for both players in the long run?

This paper includes four different parts:

The first part resumes a literature review on the recruitment business and an analysis of professional social network LinkedIn.

The second part covers the methodology used in this work.

The third part indicates the results of both qualitative and quantitative researches.

At last, general conclusions are produced with a critical analysis of the situation, providing answers to the assumptions and research questions drawn up beforehand.

Among others, this thesis investigates the added value offered by both recruitment agencies and LinkedIn, the functioning of contracts or partnerships between LinkedIn and the triangle formed by: The **talents** (i.e. the people with a profile), the **clients** (i.e. companies in search of talents) and the **agencies** (i.e. the placement and recruitment providers).

I was going to be soon confronted to the job market, although LinkedIn, which seems to help job seekers to find the most attractive jobs, and vice versa, intrigued me.

On the other hand, I was rather confident that recruitment agencies or HR departments in companies, based on their experience and knowledge of the company and market, are skilled to find the most suitable people. I was wondering about current practices and behaviour evolutions.

PART I. LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONTEXT

This first part details a literature review on the context and digitalization of recruitment and an exploratory interview enabling a sophisticated analysis of professional social network LinkedIn.

CHAPTER I. CONTEXT OF RECRUITMENT

The first chapter tackles the recruitment practices of the hiring company and more specifically its Human Resource (HR) department (Section I).

Explanation of the different recruitment procedures (Section II).

Explanation of Concepts related to recruitment (Section III).

SECTION I. THE ORIGINAL SOURCE: THE COMPANY

In this section, we become familiar with the HR departments in organisations. Their possible structures, roles in their companies and recruitment related practices are being explored.

In most companies, a Human Resource department is in charge of employee-related processes and specific matters: the activities related to what the industry calls today “talent acquisition”; including services ranging from attracting, recruiting, selecting, screening¹, hiring, training, rewarding and appraising the adequate talents.

Important department as skilled hired employees would adopt the behaviours that the company needs to achieve its strategic objectives.

The charts of an HR department will crystalize the way it distributes its activities. Regarding recruitment, most large companies would include a sub-sector dedicated to recruitment and or placement, often called Talent Acquisition (Headworth, 2015). Nevertheless, the vacancy at hand can originate from any department² within the company,

¹ Screening: Process; applicants are interviewed and classified (considered or not) (Sison, 1991).

² Appendix I: Employing and Recruiting – Who handles it?

making it the hiring manager's job (manager of the department looking to fill a position) to draw up a job profile (JP).

Writing the JP is the first step towards finding the ideal candidate. This statement will include a list of the job's duties, responsibilities, working conditions, reporting lines etc. For example, a JP with the necessary prerequisites and keyword skills without being too ambitious so as not to miss a candidate who does not fit 100% to your research, but open to learning and who could adapt quickly. Also, the job's requirements will be listed, regarding education, personality, experience, skills etc. The best JP also includes information related to compensation and benefits, training and development programs and metrics for job performance.

Human Resources' staff will then start recruitment procedures. The hiring manager will assist or even run the last interview of the selection process.

A standard process of recruitment could be,

1. Studying the different jobs in the company; writing the JP and Specification;
2. Requisition for new employee: Inform the employment office about the existence of a vacancy, (date, pay required qualifications, JP and job specification)
3. Recruiting of qualified applicants;
4. Reception of applicants;
5. Application form (screening);
6. Examination of application forms;
7. Check veracity: applicant's work experiences, school records, and personal references;
8. Interview;
9. Selection of applicant;
10. Final selection by immediate supervisor or department Head;
11. Physical and medical Examination (Sison, 1991)

Large firms like Adecco adopted the same type of practices, only simplified. For example: definition of needs, job profile writing, job profile distribution, long- and short lists, job interview, candidate choice (Adecco, 2017).

Today, cloud computing technology enables the company to build a smart information infrastructure that enables efficient and effective recruitment. Cloud computing is the use of

remote computer servers via a network, usually the Internet, to store or exploit data (Rakotomalala, 2017). The use of cloud computing and its derivatives for HR solutions, allows to innovate in HR management and appeals to a growing number of HR decision-makers wishing to optimize their process (Mouiche, 2015).

Human Resources is enlarging to more strategic functions related to the business. Indeed, Human Resource managers are partnering up with business line managers to design and implement their companies' strategic plans instead of only executing them (Dessler, 2005). The increasing importance of recruitment and the well-being of the company are key issues. Today, "a company's ability to find, attract and ultimately recruit skilled talent is going to determine how successful they are in meeting their business growth objectives" (Headworth, 2015).

The importance and influence of HR are increasing. The retention of talent and the brand image of the employer remain crucial elements in the new war of talent. After the first peak of demand due to the rise of technology in the late 1990s, we now see clear signs of the prelude to the long-standing war for talent. While high-tech and related industries will be at the forefront of this new war, others should quickly follow suit (Michael Page, 2015). "*The full value of talent comes from how talent choices affect those outside the organisation, not just inside.*" (Ulrich, 2017).

In addition to the increased allocation of the total HR budget to recruitment, companies are intended to highlight the specific characteristics creating its difference compared to its competitors in the labour market. Nearly half of the Belgian companies surveyed say that branding is the responsibility of the marketing department, alone or in association with HR. However, when it comes to recruitment, HR departments are the central stakeholder most often in charge of the employer's brand image (69%), alone or in conjunction with marketing (Michael Page, 2015).

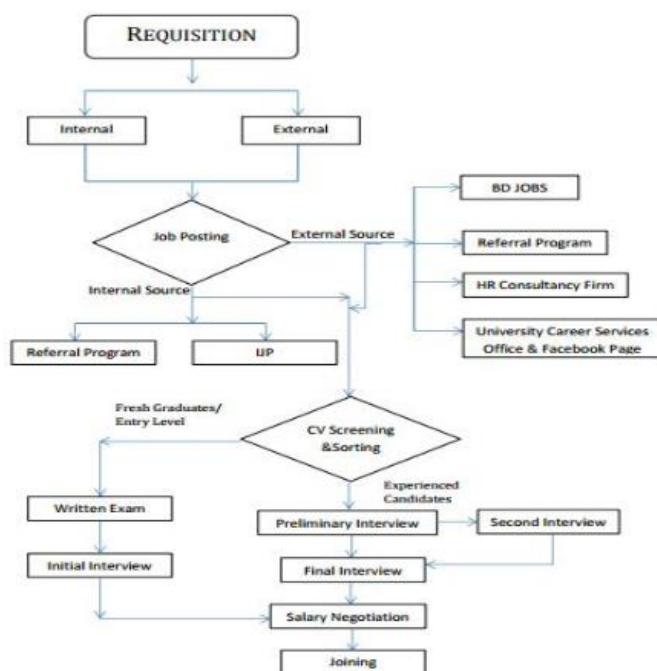
Key elements:

- Evolution of HR department's role: strategy and brand image
- Situation of war for talent
- Increase in HR budget for recruitment
- Emergence of cloud computing

SECTION II. RECRUITMENT PROCEDURES

The next section explores the main recruitment procedures found in literature. First, a model illustrating recruitment and selection (R&S) procedures and a more complex explanation of in-house recruitment and outsourcing.

Figure A. Recruitment & Selection Process at Accenture



Source: Assignment Point (2018).

After large literature readings, we support Accenture's recruitment and selection model as close to generic. Indeed, the model proposes general ways a recruitment is handled. What interest us the most is the first part of the figure. Its structure can be interpreted as follows:

1. Requisition for new employee(s) in a department;
2. Choice between internal or external recruitment;
3. In house recruiting or outsourcing:
 - a. In-house recruitment:
 - i. Internal sources;
 - ii. External sources.
 - b. Outsourcing:
 - i. External sources.

Having a standard process in mind, we can now tackle the different reasons of - and actions possible in both parts of the R&S.

A company can choose to internalize its recruitment function. Nowadays, managers or operational staffs are as much involved as HR in the hiring process because they know their teams, their needs and the specificities of the position to be filled. It is therefore essential to use a software that allows to trace, centralize and share the information of the candidate and the recruitment actions made and to achieve. Unique, centralized access to view the history of actions taken during recruitment can save valuable time for an HR team. The centralization of data has several advantages, such as following the evolution of each recruitment in real time, recruiting several by avoiding mistakes, gaining productivity by focusing on job interviews, establishing a relationship of trust and seriousness with the future collaborator. All stakeholders in the recruitment process can quickly keep abreast of developments and changes: *"Collaborative recruitment is no longer a problem"* (HumanSourcing, 2018).

According to literature, an internal recruiter has three main ways to implement sourcing.

First, he or she can hire from within the company. The candidate already knows the company. In this war for talent setting, a large gain in time regarding adaptation and trainings is appreciated. In the long run, this way of recruiting can strengthen employees' commitment to the company. However, there is a risk that not-selected applicants are disappointed and may

lose their motivation or quit the job and engender a loss for the company which is not the case for an external candidate. Another internal strategy would be to rehire former employees, for the same reasons as current employees, plus the fact that they know the firm's culture (Breaugh, 2008).

Second, companies can also participate in the "employee referral method". Current employees are then allowed to refer an acquaintance for a particular job, receiving a fee in return if the applicant would indeed be hired. It is a guarantee of reliability and security, which can remove the many psychological barriers that are found in the context of a conventional recruitment process. On average, each individual has a network of 1.000 people including family, former colleagues, classmates or sports can be added to the social networks: Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, Snapchat, Twitter etc. Thanks to new technologies, "employee referral method" spreads over the web and makes use of the professional network of people external to the company (Vincelet, 2018).

Companies often try the internal techniques mentioned before in the first place and move on to external sources of candidates and or third parties if it didn't work.

Third. The company can choose to advertise its vacancies externally. Originally, this was done through newspapers and professional journals. Nowadays, it can be done on the company's online website or through job boards and social networks (Dessler, 2005). The obligation of internal recruitment exists through competition in the civil service for the official or in the hospital environment, and more generally that of health where medical personnel must be highly qualified. For example, an agent can be transferred to serve an administration dedicated to public procurement in a different region (Grégory Coste, 2018).

Companies may like to delegate the sourcing part of recruitment to a third party (RPO, recruitment process outsourcing). By calling service providers or agencies. These agencies' business success relies on whether or not the client company will hire the suggested candidate. Over time, agencies try to build long-term relationships with their clients (here: companies) and are likely to put sizable efforts as to recommend suitable talents. On the other hand, companies are expected to select two or three agencies with who they like to work (Cooper, Robertson & Tinline, 2003).

We will see later on that Human capital is key in the war for talent. This raises the question on the use of outsourcing while it would be the very sourcing part of a company's competitive advantage. In other words, under which conditions does an organisation keeps or increases this advantage by using third parties?

Four main reasons for a company to use the services of an agency.

- Start-ups, very small businesses or non-governmental organizations (NGO), who are not in the scope of this thesis, don't have HR departments.
- Companies have a HR department that doesn't include recruiter functions.
- HR people have difficulties to find candidates on its own, or that don't have the time to find a candidate when a vacancy opened quickly.
- A firm seeks to contact employed individuals from competitors. In this case, called target recruiting, marginal and very specific work is needed. Should the company contact these individuals directly, it could send a negative message and candidates may not feel comfortable being in direct contact with another firm (Headworth, 2015).

The idea that productive organisations are competing to attract the best employees is very widespread, be it among managers, in the press, or even in management literature. From then on, the war for talents seems inevitable. We must not forget, however, that employees, whether they work in the public or private sector, are not only driven by utilitarian, rational and material considerations. They are not primarily interested in selling their talents, as long as they are aware that they have them, but rather in working in an organisational environment that is consistent with the values they believe in. The material aspects of work are undoubtedly important, but the ideal and value dimensions have often been underestimated in the contemporary scientific literature (David, Anderfuhren-Biget & Varone, 2012).

It is now up to the recruiter to seduce the candidates, and not reverse. "Our targets are hunted every day", says a senior official who is the employer of a large group. We must facilitate and accelerate the first stages of recruitment. "The tools that allow to interact with them are privileged: social networks of course, but also chatbots, virtual forums, job boards, chatlives ...We invent new ways to recruit", he continues. For example, with My Little Paris,

AXA has created an ephemeral place where women talk about empowerment, business creation, or networks (Les échos, 2018).

Key elements:

- In-house:
 - current and former employees; internal referral method;
 - external sources: website; job boards; social networks;
- Reasons for outsourcing: small HR department; urgency; C-level positions;
- RPO (third party): external sources.

SECTION III. CONCEPT DEFINITIONS

This section summarises the most important concepts for HR processes.

There are differences to be explained between the type of services or HR processes and between the type of partners (third parties) to execute partial or full service. When an organisation creates a recruitment partnership with a third party, it will differ depending on the organisation, the type of job that has to be filled, the urgency etc. Organisations will go for a recruitment agency, a staffing agency or a specialized head-hunter.

Recruitment agencies do a real job of precise and targeted research. They set up a recruitment process specific and adapted to the needs of their client and the position sought. They can perform head-hunting, when the profile sought by the company is not available on the market. This research carried out before the interviews is long and requires organisation.

In temporary employment agencies, we find a work of research, also through the sourcing but no direct search. In addition, the placement activity usually involves placing candidates already identified upstream. The workload performed by each actor is not comparable. A recruiting firm will take longer to recruit, of course, but it is often necessary to find the candidate that all companies are looking for (Secure Conseil, 2016).

Labour markets may be local or national (even international) in their scope and are made up of smaller, interacting labour markets for different qualifications, skills, and geographical locations. Recruitment in general is about creating a pool of qualified candidates for jobs. Some

companies are more successful than others. Strategic recruitment and HR planning are important to fill the necessary positions and maintain the profitability of a company.

HR planning is a process. It analyses the organisation's HR needs in situations of change and reacts according to it. Selection and placement, training, development and motivation of employees are all part of HR planning (Sison, 1991).

Workforce planning is a process ensuring an organisation has current and future access to the human capital it needs to perform effectively. It is thus skills-based. It involves identifying personal needs of employees and exploring the best methods to recruit appropriate and cost-effective individuals (HRzone, 2019).

Strategic HR planning is a process focused on the strategic elements of an organisation (i.e. mission, vision and strategic goals). It involves developing a project in which the HR will assist senior management to link manpower with business strategy (First Beacon, 2019).

Aside from some strategic impetus, various societal challenges in Europe also push R&S (recruitment and selection) practices forward. One of the most challenging and current drivers in the world, which is one of the most important migration trends in Europe, which, in fact, is one of the more complex societies and diverse labour markets (Artuc, Docquier, Ozden, & Parsons, 2015), (Derous & De Fruyt, 2016).

We will see later on (Part II, Chapter III) that temporary employment is increasing in Belgium. Staffing agencies are an important factor in this matter, as the management of temporary contracts would be very time consuming, should companies not outsource it.

First, the most known concept would be recruiting, which stands for filling a job position within a particular organisation (Stewart & Brown 2019). Therefore, Recruiting implies the management of job positions, applications processes, interview preparations with candidates and sometimes contract negotiations. People whose job is to recruit are called recruiters. Recruiters can be in-house or third-party. In-house recruiters are part of the Human Resource Department in their employing company whereas third-party recruiters, in other words, agency recruiters work for their agency, in charge of recruiting for their client company (von Biscuit, 2018).

Second, the facet called staffing has two opposite interpretations. A classical one focuses on the strategic planning aspect of the hiring element. Staffing agencies can be the ones assigned for these particular needs in a company. Their job goes from filling a job position, to hiring a new talent in order to endorse the team or the company. The alternative view suggests a short-term approach of hiring, based on missions or projects (von Biscuit, 2018).

Third, Head-hunting concentrates on highly-skilled and hard-to-find talents for C-level jobs (executive and high senior-level). The person in charge is called a head-hunter or executive recruiter who, in a more direct way, approaches active (job seekers) and passive (not looking for a new job) candidates. External to the company who needs a new talent, the head-hunter's task can include contacting and screening potential talents only, or participating at the undivided hiring process (von Biscuit, 2018). Head-hunters are mostly called by companies when a C-level position, in other words top management, needs to be filled. Even though their services are expensive (see Chapter II. Section III, D), companies may prefer incurring these costs than paying much more should they realise a misplacement at this level (Jex & Britt, 2014).

The poaching of personnel, a head-hunter's task, is a priori legal and in accordance with free competition and freedom of work. This is true even if the poaching has the effect of disorganising the company that is the victim of it, so as to cause it significant damage (Brussels' Appeal of December 17 2008).

However, poaching becomes illegal in four situations: debaucheries that have the effect of creating confusion between companies; that destabilize a competing company; that seek to know the trade or manufacturing secrets of another company and those that participate in the non-compliance with a non-competition clause (Antwerp's Appeal of May 30 2002).

Their relevance can be explained by their private databases and their goal to find everything there is to know about a candidate (minimum salary, desired industry, deal breakers...) which should lead to matches of quality between talents and employers. (Hanigan, 2015).

A fourth facet of recruitment is named sourcing. A sourcer, also called talent scout is the one that initially looks for candidates by conducting elaborate searches within a particular

industry, after which he establishes a list of the best potential talents in consideration of an existing job opening.

At last, talent acquisition is a very similar facet of recruitment processes as recruiting. Talent acquisition stands not only for finding a match between a talent and an employer, but for branding the employer to attract qualified candidates. The goal is to, in the end, satisfy both employer and employee regarding their hiring and career objectives, respectively (von Biscuit, 2018).

Key actors:

- HR departments: HR planning; workforce planning; strategic HR planning;
- Recruitment agencies: recruiting; permanent employment; targeted search; long process;
- Staffing agencies: staffing; temporary employment; placeable candidates; short process;
- Head-hunters: head-hunting; executive search; private databases; expensive.

CHAPTER II. DIGITALIZATION OF RECRUITMENT

Now that we have an overview of the general context of recruitment, it is time to address the changes that have occurred since the arrival of the Web 2.0. (Section I) and more particularly, the social networks (Section II).

SECTION I. WEB 2.0 AND RECRUITMENT

This section explains the evolution of the Internet and its links with recruitment practices.

In recent years, the recruitment websites “job boards” such as Stepstone, Monster, Indeed, Jobat, have gradually conquered the Web: sharing of job offers, job applications, tutorial videos, recruitment tips, resume templates, ... where every job seeker and employer finds his opportunity. A real turning point in the history of the World Wide Web, the social web, called Web 2.0, appeared in the early 2000s and continues to grow. It is progressively evolving towards a platform giving more possibilities of dissemination and content sharing by Internet users. The user is no longer a mere passive consumer but takes part in the production of information and the evaluation of their value (O'REILLY, 2005).

After 2005, the Web became more collaborative and participatory with the development of many applications. A new form of Web appears with the phenomenon of real-time web or augmented reality, what Tim O'Reilly and John Battelle called the Web² in 2009. This is an evolution of web 2.0 but not yet the Web 3.0 (O'REILLY, 2009).

The development of the Web 2.0, also called “social web”, “collaborative web” or “participatory web” (Chartier, 2013, p8) created an expansion possibility for digital social networks. Created by private computer companies, Facebook and Twitter became the most emblematic. The Web 2.0's success was quickly revealed by the adoption of millions of individuals, which brought with it a phenomenon of evolution regarding communication, learning and consuming practices (Hoblingre Klein, 2018).

Selection processes are mainly done according to the curriculum vitae (CV) of candidates and their suitability with an open job position (Galinon-Mélénec, 2011, p.191). In an increasingly complex labour market, the CV is now more and more essential to access employment (Manto Jonté, Dautre & Sarnin, 2016).

High Numbers of CV is essential. Today, Job board Indeed, present in 50 countries, claims to hold 120 million CVs (Indeed, 2019). In the case of professional social networks, on which the profiles act as CVs, it is therefore the number of members an index of success and attractiveness: network LinkedIn “owns” more than 630 million users (LinkedIn, 2019).

Key new elements of Web 2.0:

- Job boards: recruitment websites
- Social networks: professional social networks

SECTION II. SOCIAL NETWORKS AND THE PROFESSIONAL WORLD

In this second section, we evaluate the influence of social networks on recruitment in Belgium like Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn.

The use of social networks for work, has increased significantly in recent years. A survey of 3.249 executives has revealed that two-thirds of them use Web 2.0 to work and that

an increasing number of companies are investing in social networks and blogs (Bughin & Chui, 2010).

Two new names to designate companies that have an intensive use of Web 2.0 have emerged: “networked enterprises” and “enterprise 2.0”. Networked enterprises are attempting, using Web 2.0, to link the efforts of employees to find new customers, new partners or even new suppliers. As to Enterprise 2.0, Andrew McAfee (co-director of the MIT Centre for Digital Business) describes it as follows: these are companies that "make use of emerging social platforms within companies or between companies, their partners and their customers "(MacAfee, 2006).

In this context, many companies use LinkedIn to “communicate around their brand, build partnerships, expand distribution channels, improve customer relationship management, fostering internal collaboration [...] recruiting employees” (Girard 2012, 14). Moreover, figures published by Statista in 2018 show that the use of social networks by companies is primarily motivated by the desire to develop the company image or market products (Hoblingre Klein, 2018).

With a focus on recruitment, social network sites have fundamentally changed the game for both companies and jobseekers. However, the social media use in recruitment would depend on the digital maturity of a company or recruiter. “Some are still starrng off at the beginning while others are at various stages of user maturity. The reality is that with the speed of change within the world of social media, we are all learning new things every day.” would argue Andy Headworth (2015).

Situation in Belgium

According to a Eurostat study in 2018, 8 out of 10 Belgians use social networks. Belgium is the fourth most connected European country after Hungary, Malta and Norway (Eurostat, 2018).

The more recent Digital Report 2019, released in January 2019 by the International We Are Social Agency and Hootsuite Social Media Management Platform, indicates 55% of the

European population are active social media users, which is a 3,2% growth compared to January 2018. This report will be the source of several numbers appearing in this thesis.

In Belgium, based on monthly active users of the top social networks in the country versus population aged 13+, the social media penetration accounts to 77%.

Average time spent on social media is 1 hour and 31 minutes per day in Belgium, similar to its European neighbours, whereas worldwide, the average time is 2 hours and 16 minutes. The audiences of the most known social networks in Belgium, show 72% for Facebook, 36% for Instagram, 11% for Twitter, 30% for Snapchat and 39% (+ 18 years old) on LinkedIn (We Are Social, 2019).

Twitter doesn't appear to be a relevant social media in this country, and Snapchat doesn't appear in the literature related to recruitment, so they will not be developed in this chapter.

Facebook

Most used social network worldwide, Facebook was created in 2004 by Mark Zuckerberg. Historically designed only for students at the Harvard University, the social web emblem was quickly adopted around the world, counting 2.121 billion users (We Are Social, 2019). The designers' idea was to create a friendly place of communication, which explains the term "friends" that is used to define contacts on the site (Hoblingre Klein, 2018).

On a planetary scale, Facebook main users are within the age range of 18-24 (27%) and 25-34 (32%) years old people. Regarding the number of comments posted per month on the network, Belgium is ranked 5th worldwide, along with three other countries, with 7 posts per month (We Are Social, 2019).

The social network Facebook has launched in the business market through its social network Workplace enterprise. Since then Facebook recruitment tends to emerge. Many companies have already started posting Facebook job. The "Facebook Jobs" platform or "Facebook Careers" would connect companies and candidates. On the business side, the

platform allows to publish job offers on the career page of the company. For the candidate, it allows only to respond to a job offer posted on Facebook by a company (Foret, 2017).

While it is considered useful for the professional world, the average reach of Facebook pages is now 5.1% in Belgium, versus international average of 6%. Furthermore, the engagement rate has fallen from 8.13% last year to 3.5% this year, compared to 3.8% worldwide (Degraux, 2019).

Instagram

Worldwide fastest growing social network (Sheldon & Bryant, 2016), Instagram was launched on the 6th of October 2010. That very day, 25.000 people already signed up on the site. Instagram is “A simple, fun & creative way to capture, edit & share photos, videos & messages with friends & family”. An Instagram account allows people to stay in touch with their close friends by publishing pictures, videos and live “stories” of their life. It is also a way to get inspiration and information about art, fashion, sports and entertainment. Its success enabled its acquirement by Facebook 2 years after its launch. (Instagram, 2019)

894,9 million Instagram users, mainly between 18-24 (32%) and 25-34 (33%) years old. As mentioned earlier, Belgium shows a 36% penetration of Instagram, (22th place worldwide) (We Are Social, 2019).

Currently thousands of companies are on Instagram for the sole purpose of recruiting. We often talk about "social sourcing". The goal of this social network is to increase the visibility of the company with all events happening through the publication of photos. It should nevertheless be pointed out that this is not a recruitment tool. It is not possible to search for candidates like LinkedIn, but it gives the opportunity to attract people to the company by regularly publishing photos of the company, organised conventions. This is a very powerful tool to make visible on social networks (BELHO, 2018).

LinkedIn

Qualified as “specialized” (Granjon, 2011), LinkedIn has become an international professional network since its launch on the 5th of May 2003 (LinkedIn, 2019). Among the current sites for putting profiles online, LinkedIn is one of the most used after Facebook and before Viadeo. Users of LinkedIn establish links with people belonging to their professional network. It's basically between these contacts, also referred to as "connections", that communication and information are circulating (Hoblingre Klein, 2018).

Today, the 25th most popular site worldwilde accounts for more than 630 million members, mostly aged between 25-34 (38%) and 35-54 (30%) years old. 39% of Belgium's population is signed up on LinkedIn, bringing the country on the 12th place in the world (We Are Social, 2019).

Important to mention, in 2019, less than half of LinkedIn users are monthly active, with 40% of them visiting the site daily (99 Firms.com, May 9, 2019).

However, since the existence of the platform, it has generated job interviews for 122 million job seekers, and 35.5 million have been hired (Osman, August 12, 2019).

No data has been found on the reliability of LinkedIn CV's, although we can already assume that the 19% having received an interview had a useable profile for recruiters.

World's largest professional network, LinkedIn appears to be the platform that is the most associated with recruitment (Headworth, 2015).

Key findings for Belgium:

- Social media penetration of 77%;
- Facebook: mostly used for social purposes;
- Instagram: employer branding tool;
- LinkedIn: professional network; 39% penetration; recruitment tool.

SECTION III. ANALYSIS OF LINKEDIN

Prior to the accurate analyse of the platform, let's first look at the evolution since day one (2002). Then, its analysis is summarised within:

- A. Different business proposals
- B. Current available products
- C. Critics
- D. Recruitment tool in Belgium (actual Thesis' subject)

Headquartered in Mountain View, California, LinkedIn started in 2002 thanks to five founders: venture capitalist Reid Hoffman, product designer Allen Bleu, marketing professional Konstantin Guericke and engineers Eric Ly and Jean-Luc Vaillant. The platform, a business-oriented social networking web site, was launched online on the 5th of May 2003 by Reid Hoffman.

LinkedIn is originally an online CV platform, where people create personal profile and resume pages, using a similar structure. Users are able to extend their professional network by sending or accepting invitations to members. When the invitation is accepted, both users become each other's "connections" (Gregersen, 2017). The platform aimed to connect professionals and allow individuals to market their skills, share content and plan their career (Caers & Castelyns, 2011).

Growth was slow until 2005 and the launch of LinkedIn talent Solutions, first and still biggest business proposal of the company. Thanks to 15 million accounts from all over the world, LinkedIn achieved profitability in 2007 and became public the 19th of May 2011 (Bullas, 2014), reaching 100 million members worldwide (Gregersen, 2017).

During 2015, Jeff Weiner, CEO since 2009 operated a \$1,5 Billion take-over targeting Lynda.com (online learning). The take-over was a financial success and the "new skills solution provider" will create ultimately a new business proposal for the platform (see: A. Four Business Lines) (Kumar 2019).

One year later, it was IT multinational Microsoft Corp who acquired LinkedIn for \$26.2 billion. At the time, LinkedIn had 433 million users, a quarter of them living in the United

States. The aim of this acquisition was, for Microsoft, to a synergy of the tool LinkedIn Sales Navigator (see: B. Products) with its own tool called Dynamics, which is customer relationship management related (Kumar, 2019). Microsoft characterised LinkedIn as “the world’s largest and most valuable professional network and continues to build a strong and growing business” (Microsoft, 2016).

The takeover allowed Microsoft to integrate LinkedIn in its enterprise software, mostly Office 365 as it is professionally targeted. Nevertheless, the platform remained untouched regarding its brand culture, independence and CEO.

Being part of Microsoft allowed LinkedIn to grow faster. Satya Nadella, CEO of Microsoft: “Together we can accelerate the growth of LinkedIn, as well as Microsoft Office 365 and Dynamics as we seek to empower every person and organisation on the planet.” (Microsoft, 2016).

Nowadays, the company reaches a peak and keeps growing by two to three new members per second (Duchâteau, 2019).

The vision is to “create economic opportunities for professionals in the whole world through Economic Graph”

The Mission is to “connect professionals around the world to make them become more performant and productive”.

The revenue streams come from user’s subscriptions, advertisement sales and recruitment solutions (LinkedIn, 2019).

Our mindset will always be on how we can help companies and digitalise the most and have access to the right data at the right time and really quickly (Duchâteau, 2019).

Today, Jeff Weiner heads a 16.638 employees’ company (LinkedIn Company Page, 2019) for a 630 million members’ platform in over 200 countries and territories (LinkedIn, 2019). 300 million are monthly active users, using as much as 24 languages (Bouissiere, 2019). Moreover, the professional social network means 15 million job offers, 20 million active companies and 60,000 schools and universities in all countries - even in China where LinkedIn is the only authorized American platform (L’Echo, 2018).

In 2018, the 7.4 billion dollars turnover shows a 25-30% year-over-year (YoY) growth for the last five years (Duchâteau, 2019).

Knowing now the historical and the current situation of the company, let's focus on the current business.

LinkedIn changed over the years from an online CV, enabling professionals to follow each other's careers, to a worldwide known company, offering various services to its members. The company understood quite early how valuable and useful could be the massive profile's data for recruitment purposes (in fact recruiters were already using LinkedIn for the same purpose) (Duchâteau, 2019). Today, LinkedIn is known under four business proposals, developed hereunder.

A. Four Business Lines

The company manages four business lines: LinkedIn Talent Solutions (LTS), LinkedIn Marketing Solutions (LMS), LinkedIn Sales Solutions (LSS) and LinkedIn Learning Solutions (LLS) (Duchâteau, 2019).

First, LinkedIn Talent Solutions helps companies and recruitment agencies to leverage the data on LinkedIn through a platform called LinkedIn Recruiter (Duchâteau, 2019). A partnership with LTS for a company means it can buy LinkedIn Recruiter Lite accounts (see: B. Products), that give access to the whole network so that it can find and reach any talent having a profile on LinkedIn. Among others, Job slots can be bought to post open vacancies and attract candidates, even passive ones. With this tool, the recruiter can also follow up who and how people apply to the job (Duchâteau, 2019).

Regarding employer branding, companies can opt for a LinkedIn Career Page and enter information on the organisation's culture, insights and open jobs. This way, candidates gain information on what it is like to work for that company and can connect with it (LinkedIn Talent Solutions, 2019).

Second, LinkedIn Marketing Solutions is the advertising part of the platform. Businesses achieve their marketing goals by sharing content on LinkedIn, target their audiences thanks to member-generated data, and engage their target with content and optimize their

impact. Companies' targets can be defined on LinkedIn by rich demographic data (Job Function, Seniority etc.), interest-based filtering (field of study, skills etc.), persona targeting (Job Searchers, Opinion Leaders etc.) and a tool called Your Own Audience Data. Enterprises match their account list against all other Company Pages on LinkedIn in order to achieve their account-based marketing goals (LinkedIn Marketing Solutions Platform, 2019).

To create awareness, LinkedIn provides different types of content such as Sponsored Content, Sponsored InMail and Display, Text and Dynamic advertising formats. To achieve their marketing goals, companies can measure the performance of their campaigns as LinkedIn offers insights and critical metrics such as clickthrough rates, demographics, the social actions and engagement that the campaigns generated (LinkedIn Marketing Solutions, 2019).

Third, *“LinkedIn Sales Solutions is made for sales professionals to find the right targets, needs and possibilities through a different platform that is completely digitalised and based on all the data that LinkedIn gathers from every profile”* Adrien Duchâteau, LinkedIn. As this business line is not relevant to the topic of this thesis, we will not discuss it.

Fourth, LinkedIn Learning Solutions, the most recent business line, offers courses of e-learning so that businesses can embed a sort of learning culture in their company and offer e-learning to their employees (Duchateau, 2019). For the same reason as LinkedIn Sales Solutions, LinkedIn Learning won't be researched more deeply.

Regarding the revenue streams of those business lines, unlike other web giants, advertising (for a job or a product, for example) only accounts for 20% of revenues. The main revenues come from the core business of the platform, namely the matching of supply and demand for jobs on a large scale. Marcel Molenaar, Country Manager of the Benelux at LinkedIn, states that "80% of the Fortune 500 (ranking of the top 500 American companies in terms of turnover) uses our tools in their search for talent".

Within those four business lines, LinkedIn created a range of products purchasable by individuals and or by organisations. We are focused on the core business of the platform: recruitment, the products we have chosen to develop hereafter are in accordance with this topic.

B. Products

The main products of LinkedIn developed here are the four different subscriptions possible for individuals and the most relevant products for this thesis with its LinkedIn Talent Solutions business line.

As on other social networks such as Facebook or Twitter, registration to LinkedIn is entirely free (Gregersen, 2017). However, to benefit from all the features provided on the platform, we will need to subscribe to one of the four LinkedIn premium subscriptions. All of them offer the possibility of a 30 days period of free trial. On the same LinkedIn.com platform, every individual can purchase the LinkedIn Premium Career or the LinkedIn Premium Business account, that cost, respectively, 29,74€/month and 54,54€/month for a monthly subscription or 24,78€/month and 44,62€/month for an annual subscription.

The LinkedIn Premium Career subscription is particularly suited for job seekers. A LinkedIn study showed that job applicants who have subscribed to a LinkedIn premium account, have a twofold increase in their chances of being hired. These results can be justified because having a premium account places the applicant at the top of an employer's application list. In a few words, LinkedIn Premium Career increases talent visibility for recruiters.

Having opted for this profile type, the person has access to applicant insights, to who has viewed his or her profile, to 5 InMails a month, to be featured in the applicants list (as explained above), to let recruiters know of your career interests, to job alerts and finally to the LinkedIn Learning platform (Walz, 2019).

Subscribing to a LinkedIn Premium Business account gives the individual more visibility than the LinkedIn Premium Career one. LinkedIn Premium Business accounts get, on average, six times more visits than a free account. This type of profile is suited for people looking to expand and develop their network, and with it, their business and marketing (Bouissiere, 2019).

“You have the tool ‘insights’ for both accounts, which is based on LinkedIn data, where you can see the number of employees in a company, their growth rate, their hiring rate, the average tenure, where the headcount has been growing and slowing down etc. So, for example,

if a company has been cutting down on their marketing effectiveness, candidates can see that.”
Adrien Duchâteau, LinkedIn.

As mentioned before, LinkedIn Premium Career and LinkedIn Premium Business are still on the same LinkedIn.com platform. When opting for the LinkedIn Sales Navigator and the LinkedIn Recruiter Lite, it's a different platform that we can access from LinkedIn.com.

LinkedIn Sales Navigator targets Business to Business (BtoB) companies, wanting to leverage business opportunities. This account enables an individual to draw up prospect lists, to follow their news and companies' news. The price of this account is 59.59 €/month in annual payment or 74.36 €/month in monthly payment.

Finally, the LinkedIn Recruiter Lite subscription is the most expensive one, at 89.25€/month in annual payment or 109.08€ per month. This separate platform is destined for recruiters, looking for the most fitting candidates, by making use of search filters (Bouissiere, 2019). The first step of filtering candidates demands the entering of a function title, a location and specific skills. After that, the search will narrow down the number of people in the pool of candidates. Recruiters have access to the feature “highlights” (people who are more likely to respond, based on their activity on LinkedIn) and “open for new opportunities”, which are the ones that recruiters contact the most.

Also, recruiters can refine their search with precise filters such as a specific industry, a specific university, companies, spoken languages etc. Once the recruiter found his or her potential candidate(s), he or she can save the candidate(s) in “projects” that can be shared with, for example, the hiring manager (Duchâteau, 2019).

In conclusion, all four accounts offer premium features. Regarding recruitment, the most relevant ones are,

first, the InMails to contact a recruiter or a talent directly when a person does not have the contact details of the target or company he or she wants to contact;

second, the feature ‘open for new opportunities’ enabling candidate to show he or she is a jobseeker on the one hand, and procuring a view on active job seekers on the platform for recruiters on the other hand;

Third, the view on who has visited one's profile;

Fourth, for a candidate, to be on the top of the candidates list;

Fifth, the filtering tool for recruiters to perform highly targeted searches (Bouissiere, 2019).

The table hereunder resumes the different features for every type of account. With eyes on the topic of this paper, the Premium Career and the Recruiter Lite accounts are the most relevant ones.

Monthly price	Your plan Premium Career €29.98* / month Switch to annual and save 17%	Premium Business €54.99* / month Switch to this	Sales Navigator Pro €74.98* / month Switch to this	Recruiter Lite €109.99* / month Switch to this
Best for:	Individuals looking to get hired and get ahead	Power users looking for more access and insights	Sales professionals looking to generate leads and build pipeline	HR professionals looking to find and recruit talent
InMail per month ⓘ	5	15	20	30
Who's viewed your profile ⓘ	✓	✓	✓	✓
Job insights** ⓘ	✓	✓	✓	✓
Salary insights** ⓘ	✓	✓	✓	✓
LinkedIn Learning** ⓘ	✓	✓	✓	✓
Business insights** ⓘ		✓	✓	✓
Unlimited people browsing ⓘ		✓	✓	✓
Advanced search filters ⓘ			✓	✓
Saved notes on profiles ⓘ			✓	✓
Additional sales and hiring tools			Sales spotlights ⓘ	Guided search ⓘ
			Lead recommendations ⓘ	Smart suggestions ⓘ
			Saved leads and accounts ⓘ	Saved search alerts ⓘ
			Email integration ⓘ	Projects ⓘ

Source: Audrey de Gottal on LinkedIn. Switch plans. In: My Premium.

Next to those four different premium accounts, individuals and or companies can also purchase more specific products, offered by the LinkedIn Talent Solutions business line of the platform. For example, companies can create company or career pages while recruiters can buy job slots.

The most recent product is called Talent Insight, a tool enabling the search for company reports or talent pool reports, revealing the real-time number of employees in a company (based on LinkedIn data), its growth rate, the hires made in the last 12 months, where the company hired from etc. Or, regarding talents, specific profiles in a location, the gender diversity, the hidden gems to find the right talents, the schools they attended, the skills they have, companies that hire them etc. (Duchâteau, 2019).

C. Current critics of the platform

Due to innovations provided by LinkedIn; standard recruitment procedures are affected by some changes. The Internet³ shows not all are in favour of those modifications. One author in particular, Maury Hanigan, expressed his concerns regarding the evolution of recruitment.

Entrepreneur Maury Hanigan claims the arrival of LinkedIn has “destroyed” the recruitment function. While companies are broadening their internal Human Resources Departments, intending to use LinkedIn for recruitment purposes as it would appear to be cheaper and more efficient than to delegate this to a third party, Hanigan argues that LinkedIn is missing the personal aspect of recruitment. Indeed, the inexistent human touch of the platform would not enable to understand the talent’s or the company’s expectations.

Moreover, having access to uncountable amounts of potential candidates would incline employers to send, impersonalised and untargeted text-only, job descriptions to “all candidates”. Filtering made by head-hunters based on information such as the interest of working in a specific industry, the quality of the candidate or if the individual is looking for another job is not always clarified on LinkedIn. The fact that professionals, active on LinkedIn, aren’t necessarily looking for a job, would already cause a waste of time and efforts for recruiters.

Hanigan concludes his opinion with the illustration of a vicious circle. As finding the perfect candidate is difficult, recruiters send more and more InMails without getting enough

³ Kilmer, W. Manager partner of C5; Friedman, A. columnist of New York magazine; Klein, T. blog owner.

responses due to uninterest or inadequate filtering, which would lead to the frustration of employers as well as candidates (Hanigan, 2015).

Key elements:

- Lack of human aspect
- Untargeted search
- Lack of quality
- Members not looking for a job
- Frustration on both sides in war for talent.

D. LinkedIn in Belgium

As this paper focuses on the Belgian situation of recruitment, it seems accurate to provide the latest numbers related to LinkedIn's penetration in Belgium, its use by recruiters and by talents. At last, a comparison of costs related to recruitment for companies will be made, focusing on the different existing tools explained in the first part of this thesis, namely LinkedIn, recruitment agencies and head-hunters, staffing agencies and job boards.

Numbers

On January 1st 2019, the legally registered population in Belgium reached 11.431.406 inhabitants, according to official figures from Statbel, the Belgian statistical office. 10.86 million Belgians spend, on average, 5 hours and 01 minutes a day on the Internet, whereas the average of the 40 countries studied is at 6 hours and 42 minutes.

The penetration rate of social networks in Belgium is currently 65%, which means 65% of the Belgian population is active on at least one social network (45% in all 40 countries analysed). As mentioned before, if we focus on Belgians over 13 years of age (minimum age to create a Facebook account officially), the penetration rate reaches 77%. Compared to the rest of the world, Belgium stands out as the penetration rate of social networks amounts to 45% in 40 countries, and 58% when focusing on individuals over 13 years old. Nevertheless, while those rates have been growing for the last past years in Belgium, compared to January 2018, there is no significant growth observed (Degraux, 2019).

Knowing LinkedIn's penetration rate amounts to 39% among Belgian adults, this means 3.2 million Belgians own a LinkedIn account. Nevertheless, a distinction must be made between active and non-active users. Xavier Degraux, a digital expert, argues that "if we extrapolate what we see at the global level, we can say that only half of these profiles are active every month".

Using the platform's search engine, coupled with the advertising campaign simulator, the expert obtained data reporting that, within Belgium, LinkedIn is the most represented in Brussels, with 726.000 profiles (Molenaar, 2017), followed by Antwerp and Gent. Moreover, Charleroi, Liège and Namur follow each other from fifth to seventh place. Marcel Molenaar confirmed those results and explains those positive and growing numbers by local events, organised by the platform to promote its services to professionals (L'Echo, 2018).

Recruitment professionals

The use of LinkedIn by Belgian professionals has not been widely researched yet. However, the study discussed hereunder gives a view of the situation of 9 years ago, at the time when the platform started observing an increasing number of new memberships.

Professor Ralph Caers and Business Consultant Vanessa Castelyns realised a field study in Belgium in February 2010 regarding "the influences and biases of social network sites in recruitment and selection procedures" with a focus on Facebook and LinkedIn. In this paper, for the most part, the findings concerning the use of LinkedIn will be discussed.

The case's samples were made of Belgian professionals taking part in the R&S of talents. Out of the 731 (58.3%) individuals that filled the questionnaire, 426 had a LinkedIn account. As 73 of them affirmed they didn't use their account, these were removed from the data, leaving a number of 353 (48.29%) active users. The surveys showed that 17.8% of the active users utilize LinkedIn every day.

As for the opinions on the professional character of LinkedIn, respondents argued that LinkedIn was suited to stay up to date on a friend's career (87.1%) or on the activities of organisations (57.8%). Also, respondents related that LinkedIn also appears appropriate to promote oneself by referring to their education and professional experiences (78.7%), by having

a lot of connections on the platform (41.6%) or by showing the existence of important or powerful friends (41.2%).

With regards to looking for potential candidates, 44.3% of the respondents confirmed they used LinkedIn, which allows to presume LinkedIn might provide benefits in the recruitment area. Moreover, the positive answers regarding the recruitment elements of LinkedIn were linked with the activity on the platform of the respondents. Indeed, frequent users tended to use LinkedIn more as a recruitment tool than occasional users.

When addressing selection procedures, 70% of the active users stated they used LinkedIn to find further information regarding applicants, compared to 43% of active Facebook users, using Facebook for the same matter. A part of those individuals, 26.1% of active LinkedIn users and 13,2% of active Facebook users, admitted that, respectively, both platforms, helped them to decide whom to invite for an on-site interview or not.

Finally, the questionnaire included questions on policies related to the using of LinkedIn and Facebook at work in their organisation. The data showed most organisations (90.4%) do not have any policy in that regard. In the case there is one, the policy mostly results in the posting of vacancies on both networks and less then 3% of the respondents were asked not to or forbidden to do it (Caers & Castelyns, 2010).

Talents

After the analysis of recruiters' use of LinkedIn, it is time to evaluate whether Belgian talents are indeed active on this professional network. Articles written by Marcel Molenaar helped in this perspective.

Nowadays, talents have a long list of expectations regarding their jobs or future jobs. The culture of the company has become as important, or more important than a pay-check (Duchâteau, 2019). Thanks to LinkedIn, talents have access to information of all companies active on the platform.

Next to that, LinkedIn offers talents insights on how well they could match with a job offer. In order for this to be as relevant as possible, talents should update their profile, mentioning specific skills and using the right keywords (Duchâteau, 2019).

Two-thirds of the Belgian workforce are LinkedIn members (Molenaar, May 2017a). With a focus on Brussels, the country's city with the highest LinkedIn penetration rate, Marcel Molenaar explained that, in 2017, "For every single LinkedIn member that emigrates from Brussels to work elsewhere, 18 other LinkedIn members arrived". He named the city a "magnet for global talent" because of its position as an international centre.

In Brussels, 15% of LinkedIn members were employed by the government and non-profit sectors, 13% by professional services, 12% by financial services and 9% by the healthcare industry. Another interesting point is that 45% of LinkedIn members in Brussels worked SMBs (small and medium businesses) (Molenaar, May 2017b).

Unfortunately, we have not found a study on the specific use of Belgian LinkedIn Members. In the field research of this thesis, a survey will try to demonstrate which type of profile types are active on LinkedIn in Belgium, and if the platform helps Belgians find jobs.

Comparison of costs

Regarding its competition, LinkedIn came along after a series of recruitment tools and services were already present on the Belgian market. The aspect of pricing seems a relevant subject to analyse, as we live in a country where adding an employee to a company's department has to be discussed deeply beforehand because of its costs (gross salary, withholding tax, social security, benefits in kind etc.).

LinkedIn

On LinkedIn, organisations (and talents) can choose between monthly or yearly subscriptions. The packages opted for and the price thereof depend for example on the number of job slots needed or the choice for one or more LinkedIn Recruiter Lite accounts. The

packages are thus personalized for every organisation. Most companies opt for a yearly contract with the platform, knowing that LinkedIn provides account management with customer success managers to make sure organisations use their contracts “to their best abilities” (Duchâteau, 2019).

We have mentioned the prices of the different types of accounts. When buying products like job slots, the individual price of a product decreases according to the amount bought. The initial price of a job slot is \$1500 (LinkedIn SlideShare, 2017) and the tool Talent Insight costs approximately \$10.000/year (Duchateau, 2019).

Recruitment agencies, Head-hunters and specialized agencies

The price an organisation will pay when choosing to delegate a new hire to a third party depends the specialisation, the type of service offered, the reputation and the branch of the recruitment agency. Two most common types of compensation systems can be found in Belgium.

The first one is called “no cure, no pay”, meaning the hiring firm will only remunerate the agency when the proposed candidate joins the company. In most cases, the payment varies between 20 and 30% of the gross annual salary of the hired candidate (Cooper, Robertson & Tinline, 2003).

Secondly, retained search, a system divided into three instalments, will in the end amount to between 25 and 33.3% of the gross annual salary. The first one is the retainment fee, paid when the mission starts, the second is a short list fee, paid when the firm receives a list of relevant candidates and the last one is paid when a candidate sign his or her employment contract (Freshfield Recruitment, no date).

Staffing agencies

Temporary employment agencies work with billing coefficients, applied to the gross hourly pay chosen by the hiring organisation. For an interim employee paid at the SMIC (salaire minimum interprofessionnel de croissance), the Belgian minimum wage reference, the coefficient applied is 1.70. The higher the gross hourly wage, the higher the coefficient.

This means that staffing agencies and recruitment agencies only take into account the gross and not the net salary of the temporary employee. The latter depends on other facets than the gross salary, such as the duration of the mission, salary accessories etc. (LIP Gestion, January 2019).

Job boards

Recognised as the website closest to LinkedIn in terms of its services by Adrien Duchâteau, job board Indeed offers different types of packages. Organisations can post job offers for free but can also sponsor these offers in order to benefit from a privileged location, being able to accept and manage more candidates (up to five times more clicks based on Indeed data).

A recruitment campaign can also be invested in with a career page, as well as a company page or a product called Indeed CV to search for and contact candidates. The cost thereof is 100 € to contact 30 new candidates. No other numbered costs are mentioned on the site, although it explains the cost per click system, where hiring firms pay only when the platform records a click on an offer; it is not a fixed or long-term contract. (Indeed, 2019).

Stepstone's services, the most known and mentioned job board in the Belgian professional literature, could be divided into three main categories, namely job offers, CV database and products of visibility. Regarding job offers, organisation can choose between different types of products, going from 999€/ post to 1899€/post, depending on the degree of personalization of the offer (colours, pictures, videos etc.) and on if the firm wants an expert to draw up the offer and send it to the 500 most relevant candidates.

The CV database of Stepstone is similar to the LinkedIn Recruiter Lite account. Filtering and contacting candidates are the main activities made possible on both websites. When opting for a CV database, the organisation can pay from 499€ for two weeks for 2 users, to 14 999€/year for twelve users.

Visibility, the last category of Stepstone's products, includes e-mail solutions offering to send an e-mail to all relevant candidates when an organisation posts a job offer, for a price of 1.100€, or to the 500 most relevant ones for 750€. Banners can also be bought to increase a job offer's visibility, with a starting price of 1.500€/ad. At last, organisations can create their own company page on the website, for free. Candidates applying to a hiring firm's job can access directly to its page or simply by using the search tool of the website (Stepstone, 2019).

Key findings:

- 2/3 of Belgian works are on LinkedIn;
- 17.8% of Belgian recruiters are daily users;
- Talents:
 - o more expectations -> employer branding very important;
 - o Can see if skills match with job needs;
- Agencies: no cure no pay; retained search; coefficients (staffing);
- Job boards: cost per click;
- LinkedIn: annual subscriptions;
- Stepstone: cost per CV/job offer -> most expensive.

PART II: METHODOLOGY

The second part of this thesis is dedicated to the explanation of the methodology adopted. It describes the origin of the initial question (Chapter I), the exploratory phase (Chapter II), the problematic (Chapter III), the analysis model and the hypotheses made (Chapter IV) and the observation phase (Chapter V).

CHAPTER I: QUESTION OF START

During my first Bachelor year (2013), I was asked to create a LinkedIn profile. I have been following since the different evolutions of the platform and recently I looked closely at the multiple uses proposed as well as the potential valuable connections.

In the past 2 years, I received a few professional InMails from recruitment agencies and universities, regarding potential jobs and master's degrees programs. I got excited when getting a proposal for a Master in Fashion in Milano.

It occurred to me then that LinkedIn uses algorithms, enabling foreign schools to contact potential students. I found out also while checking that most of my entourage didn't have an updated LinkedIn profile at that time.

Choosing LinkedIn's use in recruitment process as my Thesis subject is the outcome of my curiosity for the platform, for the new technologies, and this first approach I had regarding the labour market through those companies using LinkedIn for internal recruitment purposes.

It is only since August 2018 that I started to consider LinkedIn as a professional tool, when I applied for multiple internships through LinkedIn. Thanks to this, I got a 5-months internship program with CHANEL, a fairly valuable experience.

Since April, I began to look for professional opportunities via the platform, I tried the 30 days free trial for a LinkedIn Premium Career account in May, under the assumption I would be more visible and get more insights regarding candidates and companies.

I extended my subscription for a longer period, as I was actively applying for multiple vacancies. Within 2 weeks, I received an answer from one of my first-choice companies and after a second interview on site, I was selected to join their team for a 6-months period.

In that case, LinkedIn has been a key factor helping me achieving a personal goal in the professional environment.

The role of recruitment agencies was not clear to me on a platform allowing straight forward connections in-between employees and companies.

Despite the fact that some jobs probably need specific procedures in order to select the best candidate, given the availability of algorithms and filters on the platform, I could not understand the added value of a middle man.

This is the original thinking of my thesis project adding to it the general understanding of current recruitment processes and its evolution since the development of Internet, Job boards and Social networks (i.e. Web 2.0).

I then summarised as follow: “In the long run, will LinkedIn’s services endanger or assist recruitment and placement agencies in Belgium? Could there be a win-win situation?”

CHAPTER II: EXPLORATORY PHASE

I soon realised that I was not the first one to inquiry on LinkedIn versus recruitment processes. I got valuable information through surveys realised by Belgian and French students and Professors.

The different readings on e-recruitment, social networks and LinkedIn comforted me to focus on LinkedIn, obviously ahead of every other social network regarding the professional world and recruitment opportunities.

Furthermore, an exploratory interview⁴ with Adrien Duchâteau, Strategic Analyst for the Benelux at LinkedIn helped bringing a good comprehension of the platform, its different business lines, its goals and future expectations.

⁴ Appendix II: Interview at LinkedIn with Adrien Duchâteau – Strategic Advisor. 11/07/2019

CHAPTER III: PROBLEMATIC

Literature and exploratory interview brought new points of view regarding the digitalisation of recruitment, confirming the social media as a recruitment tool, moving it from "web 1.0" to "web 2.0" recruitment.

The academic literature emphasis the professional and the recruitment aspect of LinkedIn, as well as its penetration rate in Belgium.

Facebook also offer recruitment services, however, not successfully in Belgium.

Adding interim agencies to the research comes from the fact that the literature mainly explores the use by companies and recruitment agencies, while the temporary employment sector is booming in Belgium. The turnover has risen by 4.9% in 2018 and had been growing for the past five years. (Federgon, 2018). This third category better reflects the Belgian market.

Mainly private sector's companies are using LinkedIn, and other social networks for recruitment purposes.

Public employment agencies will not part of the research as they use Social platforms as communication tools only (except for field research thanks to information below).

Adrien Duchâteau pointed out that "LinkedIn remains more of a white-collar platform in general terms, although we actually see that one of our growths is in the blue-collar sector as we see a rise in blue collar workers setting up LinkedIn profiles as well".

A first angle will focus on the use of the platform by the three different actors (i.e. LinkedIn, companies and agencies), the organizational changes occurring and their professional opinion regarding the future of the recruitment market.

A second angle will focus on the use of LinkedIn by talents with personal accounts (i.e. working people and job seekers). No data has been found regarding LinkedIn's impact on talents' search for opportunities in Belgium. Their behaviour on the platform will be analysed.

CHAPTER IV: ANALYSIS MODEL AND HYPOTHESES

The initial research question was the following: “In the long run, will LinkedIn’s services endanger or assist recruitment and placement agencies in Belgium?”

Extensive data found brought additional aspects, so that a second research question has been formulated as follows: “In the long run, will the Human Resource departments of Belgian large companies start using exclusively LinkedIn for recruitment purposes and stop calling upon recruitment and or placement agencies?”

Hypothesis 1: LinkedIn has changed recruitment processes in Belgium.

Sub-hypothesis 1.1: LinkedIn changes the way sourcing is conducted.

Sub-hypothesis 1.2: The use of LinkedIn depends on the type of organisations.

Sub-hypothesis 1.3: The use of LinkedIn varies according to who uses it.

Sub-hypothesis 1.4: LinkedIn has an impact on Human Resources Departments in organisations.

Hypothesis 2: LinkedIn is used for other purposes than recruitment in Belgium.

Sub-hypothesis 2.1: LinkedIn changes the way employer branding is conducted.

Hypothesis 3: LinkedIn is used by job seekers to apply for jobs.

Sub-hypothesis 3.1. The use of LinkedIn by job seekers depends on the sector.

Sub-hypothesis 3.1. The use of LinkedIn by job seekers depends on seniority level.

Hypothesis 4: LinkedIn is used by current employees.

Sub-hypothesis 4.1. The use of LinkedIn by current employees depends on the sector.

Sub-hypothesis 4.1. The use of LinkedIn by current employees depends on seniority level.

CHAPTER V: METHODOLOGY OF OBSERVATION PHASE

Following the guidelines given by the Thesis Accompany Seminar at the Louvain Management School, I pursued a three-step process.

The first step: choice of the research field and the sample constitution (Section I).

Second step: Techniques used to collect the data (Section II).

Third step: method selection to analyse the data (Section III).

SECTION I. RESEARCH FIELD AND SAMPLE CONSTITUTION

This section identifies two research fields and explains the nature of their samples.

A first research field includes companies, recruitment agencies and interim agencies based in Belgium. Addressing to Human Resources Managers in companies, and professionals in charge for the recruitment departments of the agencies.

A vast majority of the contacts for the companies were done through my personal network and or acquaintances.

I also sent InMails on LinkedIn to HR Managers and professionals in the recruitment business with less success that I'd hoped.

Little anecdote: I contacted Marcel Meulenaar (Country Manager at LinkedIn for the Benelux), who responded very shortly. Unfortunately, he didn't find time for an interview.

Most of the agencies were covering both activities, recruitment and interim. which was a benefit for my research as the respondent could compare one and other.

One of the agencies interviewed was specialized in one specific area, namely the engineering area. In total, six interviews were conducted in four different agencies.

Thanks to Adrien Duchâteau's explanation (see above) , on top of private sector , two public companies were chosen for interview . The selection of companies (private and public) was made in accordance with size and business sector analyses and figures for Belgium.

In 2016, 56% of companies (located in Belgium) and 47% of employees were active in the service sector, 21% of companies and 22% of employees in the trade sector and 6% of

companies and 19% of employees in the industry sector (Statbel, 2016). The service sector was than a priority for interviews.

For the public sector, La STIB (Société des transports intercommunaux de Bruxelles), a public interest organisation for public transport in Brussels, was chosen for its size, being the biggest employer of the region, accounting for 9.037 people on the 31th of December 2018 (La STIB, 2019).

The second interview was conducted at FN Herstal, employing 1500 people in Belgium (FN Herstal, 2019), representing the industry sector.

For the private sector, the service companies chosen were of acting in private banking (two companies) and consultancy (one company).

Table I. Overview of the company interviews

	Public/Private sector	Business area	Sub-sector	Number of interviews	Interlocutor	Active use of LinkedIn	Active use of agencies
La Stib	Public	Services	Public transport	1	Petra Fissette & Marianne Seels	Yes	Yes
Degroof Petercam	Private	Services	Private banking	1	Véronique Dhanis	Yes	No
Puilaetco Dewaay	Private	Services	Private banking	1	Karla Plas	No	Yes
FN Herstal	Public	Industry	Weapon industry	1	Caroline Coumanne	Yes	Yes
KPMG	Private	Services	Consultancy	1	Laura Curreya Rodriguez	Yes	Yes

Table II. Overview of the agency interviews

	Interim	Recruitment	speciality	Number of interviews	Interlocutor	Active use of LinkedIn
Page Group	x	x		1	Marie Libbrecht	Yes
Robert Walters		x	Finance & Accounting	2	Laurence Brutsaert Sofie Slagmulders	Yes
Walters People	x		Finance & Accounting	1	Audrey Hannecaert	Yes
Robert Half	x	x		1	Elinor de Biolley	Yes
Enginium Group		x	Engineers	1	Eric Myard	Yes

The second research field focuses on job seekers and current employees having a LinkedIn profile. Literature qualify the platform as a professional network, so the field has been reduced to only employees and job seekers, to find out to what extent LinkedIn helps individuals to find a job.

SECTION II. COLLECTION OF DATA

In this section, we can observe the collection of data gathered by both a qualitative and quantitative research approach.

First, a qualitative approach has been be conducted. Qualitative research is, according to Creswell (2009), “interpretative research, with the inquirer typically involved in a sustained and intensive experience with participants” which allows for “data interpretation an “collaboration”.

To collect this qualitative data, semi-directive interviews were conducted. According to Combessie (2007), partially orienting the discourse of the interviewees avoids personal experiences not essential to the research.

The method allows also the interviewer to ask additional questions, enabling to explore deeper the subject (Robson, 2002).

Three different interview forms⁵ were drafted, two for companies, depending on their use or no use of agencies, and one for the agencies. The three forms were much alike, differences based on the purposes and structure of the organisations.

The questionnaires can be divided into different parts.

First part inquiries about the quality and role of the respondent as well as the agencies specific business area regarding recruitment. It inquires also about companies' organisation using or not recruitment agencies.

The second part is the key part, regarding LinkedIn. Through multiple sub-questions, interviewees were able to explain their recruitment procedures with and/or without LinkedIn.

The third part focuses on data regarding the use of LinkedIn, the cost of subscriptions and contracts, the quantified impact regarding recruitment and the impact on employees' turnover.

The last part focuses on personal opinions of the respondent regarding LinkedIn and agencies. Questions concentrate on the added value of both actors, the benefits and limits about one and other and their trust in the platform.

Several interviews with the agencies were conducted together with Margaux Macken, as her thesis was focusing on the organisational changes since the arrival of LinkedIn, centred on the pharmaceutical sector. This had been a suggestion from our thesis promoter. Most interviews were conducted in French or in English, with one exception in Dutch. The shortest one lasted 33 minutes and the longest one 1 hour and 20 minutes.

In a second instance, a qualitative approach has been realised. Mixed methods approaches (qualitative and quantitative) have been the topic of a lot of research in literature, concluding that combining both approaches would enable a deeper collection of data (Almaki, 2016).

⁵ Appendix III: Interview forms

An online survey⁶ has been conducted, targeting job seekers and current employees' members of LinkedIn. It was made on Google Forms and posted online on my personal LinkedIn and Facebook accounts.

The questionnaire first divides the respondents into two group, namely job seekers and employees. Then in four different categories: socio-demographics (age and education degree), work-related elements (experience, sector, seniority level), LinkedIn (creation of profile, InMails received, applications), other types of recruitment elements used (agencies, job boards etc.). The survey obtained 179 responses.

SECTION III. METHODOLOGY OF INFORMATION ANALYSIS

This section tackles successively the used methods to analyse all effectuated interviews and the conducted survey.

In order to clarify the data and to compare with the literature, different codes⁷ were used for interviews, depending on whether it was a company or an agency.

Coding can bring out new variables or new ways of analysing things as well as encourage people to look for new data or to look at existing data in a new way, with the aim of producing original things (Ayache & Dumez, 2011).

Different codes were used for agency and company interview. For agencies, 3 general codes (Talents, Companies, LinkedIn) with 6 to 8 sub-codes. Companies interviews were divided into 2 main codes (LinkedIn and Agencies) with 10 to 11 sub-codes. Coding makes easier to analyse the answers, compare with the literature and eventually verify the hypotheses made before.

After downloading the raw data of the survey in an Excel file, we noticed that out of the 178 respondents, two of them didn't have a LinkedIn profile. Both respondents were deleted.

⁶ Appendix IV: Survey

⁷ Appendix V: Coding of interviews

A pivot table was created, enabling the analysis and generating a synthesis of the data. The data was separated into the four categories (jobseekers, employees, students and self-employed individuals). Since students (8 respondents) and self-employed individuals (7 respondents) weren't the target of the survey, their data wasn't analysed.

The analysis of the remaining 161 completed questionnaires was then divided into the two main categories. First to study graphs with all answered questions per category, then to make further analyses by relating answers of common questions or by filtering a specific group of respondents for a particular question.

In the end, the survey visualises a certain impact of LinkedIn on recruitment regarding Belgian job seekers and employees.

PART III. RESULTS PRESENTATION

The third part of this thesis shows the global results from the survey and the interviews. Results are divided into five chapters (focussing on bi-lateral relationship)

- between LinkedIn and talents;
- between talents and agencies;
- between agencies and LinkedIn;
- between LinkedIn and companies;
- between companies and agencies.

The relationship between companies and talents is not confined to one chapter, as it is inherent throughout the recruitment process.

For the sake of clarity, we will consider that:

- “Job seekers” means all potential job seekers
- “Agencies” means all types of agencies performing in the recruitment area
- “Hunting”: means direct search
- “Recruitment.” means all activities that support the search, addressing, and selection of new employees

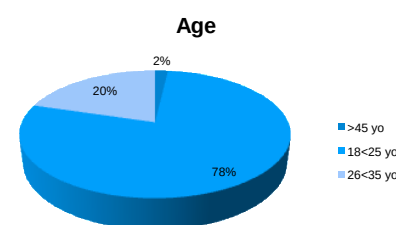
CHAPTER I: RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LINKEDIN AND TALENTS⁸

This chapter resumes the survey-based results relating to LinkedIn's use by talents. As mentioned earlier, out of 178 respondents, 17 have been disregarded for various reasons (respondents had to be looking for a job or already be an employee, and also have a LinkedIn profile)

Out of the remaining 161 respondents, 107 were employees (66%) and 54 were job seekers (34%). As questionnaires were different for each category, section I tackles extracted data corresponding to job seekers. Section II concerns information related to employees.

SECTION I. JOB SEEKERS

For an accurate analyse of the job seekers' answers, the next paragraphs address the main socio-demographic elements of the respondents and the different work-related data. The information featuring their behaviour on LinkedIn is analysed with other related recruitment variables.



Out of the 54 respondents, 78% are between 18 and 25 and 20% between 26 and 35. One jobseeker was over 45. 78% of respondents have a master's degree, 20% a bachelor's degree and one person with high school degree level.

Regarding their future job, most job seekers are looking for the service sector (49). 2 for in the primary sector, and 3 for secondary sector. 29% have none professional experience, 54% have 6 months professional experience. 91% of job seekers picture their future job in a junior-level position.

49 out of the 54 respondents created their LinkedIn profile during their studies. 5% when they graduated. That means that 96% of jobseekers did have account before their first professional experience.

8 respondents confessed a non-updated profile (7 had already achieved 6-months professional experience)

⁸ Appendix VI: Survey results

1/3rd of the interviewees were LinkedIn members looking for a job, mainly having none or little experience. The platform looks like not only a social network between professionals but is also used by young individuals looking for their first or second work experience. We can also find non-professionals, i.e. studying young people.

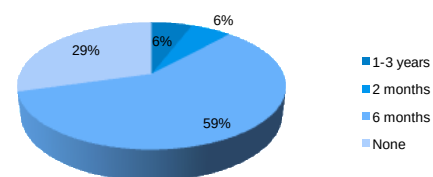
32% of job seekers are receiving one InMail through LinkedIn per week. Out of these 17 individuals, 10 have a 6-months professional experience. 52% of respondents would respond to those messages only in case of interest .37% never respond and 5 people always respond.

38% of the people having no professional experience and 50% of respondents who never answered to those InMails, said most of them came from pure recruitment agencies.

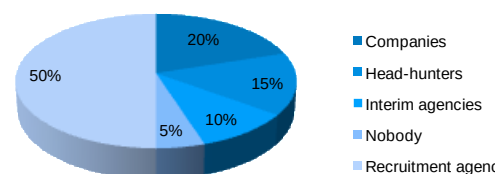
LinkedIn's InMails are mainly used by recruitment agencies and not by internal recruiters of hiring companies. Small percentage of responding raises the question of targeting the right candidates or not when using the platform. Members of LinkedIn might eventually feel overwhelmed by all those InMails and getting tired of them.

48% of job seekers did apply for jobs on LinkedIn. 13 respondents applied for 1 to 5 job. 4 respondents applied for 10 to 20 vacancies. 32% have no professional experience and 57% have 6 months professional experience. One respondent had over 20 years of experience. 61% of those 26 job seekers also applied through company's websites. One respondent only used recruitment agencies.

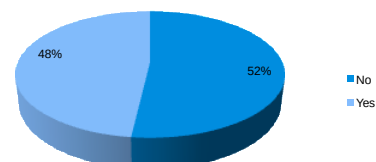
InMails once a week // professional experience



Never answers to InMails // most InMails



Job // LinkedIn



Out of the 28 job seekers which never had applied for jobs on LinkedIn, 59% applied through company's web site and 24% through direct emails. agencies were only used by 4 persons for application purpose.

Conclusion is that Belgian companies are using LinkedIn as a tool to promote their job offers and their company profile, and not as a tool to contact candidates. A first explanation could be the lack of digital maturity observed within Belgian companies (Duchâteau, 2019).

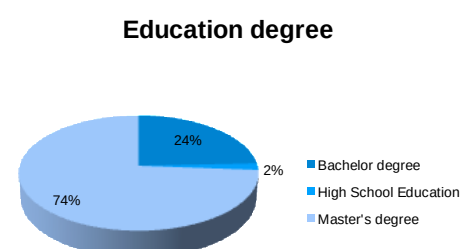
It could also imply that a significant number of Belgian companies do not employ internal recruiters. Or that the internal HR people are less efficient on the platform than trained agencies' consultants. Nevertheless, company's websites show a greater success than LinkedIn and agencies when referring to application procedures. This could imply more trust and security feeling from job seekers towards company's site.

SECTION II. EMPLOYEES

Let's now see the employee's point of view.

107 respondents' data within the employee's category will be structured similar to job seekers. socio-demographic data, work-related data, the LinkedIn data, and data related to other recruitment aspects.

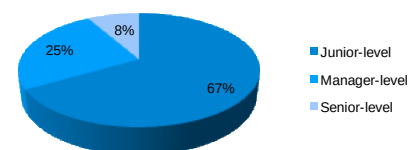
60% of correspondents were aged between 18 and 35 and 35% between 26 and 35. So that 95% of the respondents were between 18 and 35. 5% were older than 35, with 4% older than 45. 74% of the employees had a master's degree. In addition, 2 % checked the high school degree box.



87% of the respondents were working in the Third Business sector, 4 employees were working in the primary sector, all of them having between 1 and 3 years of experience. 59% of the employees had between 1 and 3 years of experience, with 27 respondents aged between 26 and 35 and 36 respondents aged between 18 and 25. It was no surprise that 80% of the responding employees had a junior-level position, as 64 out of all respondents were under 25.

84 % of the employees created their LinkedIn profile as a student or when graduated (9%). Like for job seekers, respondents started their membership on LinkedIn before getting their first job. Nevertheless, 12 respondents (11%) admitted their profile wasn't up-to-date. Out of those 12 individuals, one has more than 20 years of professional experience, 3 have more than five years of experience. All three of them are working at a manager level position.

Profile not up-to-date // job function level

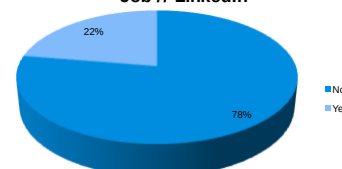


50% of the employee would confess willing to stay informed about new opportunities on the labour market. 15% of employees (13 at junior level, 1 at senior level and 2 at manager level), argued they received InMails on LinkedIn more than once a week, while 24% of the respondents mentioned they received less than one InMail a month.

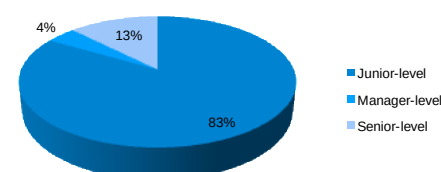
Regarding those InMails, 30% of the employees said they never responded to any of them. Strangely, when looking at their openness to new opportunities, 4 of them responded "Yes" and 15 argued they stayed informed. The sources of those InMails were mostly messages from recruitment agencies (45%) and hiring companies (29%), whereas only 6 respondents argued most InMails came from interim agencies.

One of the most interesting parts of this survey relied on whether the respondents found their current jobs through LinkedIn or not. Not less than 22% of respondents did find their job thanks to the platform. Although "finding" a job thanks to LinkedIn could implicate different ways (internal referral, InMails, application on LinkedIn...), we suppose this means applying for a specific job on a company's job offer (low number of InMails received). The CV of the candidate is then asked by the platform and sent to the company's database. Within those 24 individuals, 1 occupied a managerial position, 3 occupied a senior-level position, and the balance of 20 occupying a junior-level one. Regarding the sectors, 79% of those 24 people were working in the service industry.

Job // LinkedIn



Job function level // job LinkedIn



When analysing respondents with less common responses regarding their age or degree, it was found that LinkedIn helped none of the 4 persons aged over 45 finding a job. However, one of the two individuals with a high school education degree only benefited from LinkedIn for obtaining his or her job.

The other 78% respondents found their jobs through others ways than the platform. 32% applied for - and were accepted for their current jobs on a company's website, 27% applied via e-mail and another 27% argued their job was found using their personal or professional network. Only 4 people (5%), asked or were asked by a recruitment agency to come upon their current job.

When observing the outcomes of the survey, employees aged between 18 and 35 years old appear to be most likely to have a LinkedIn profile. With the same results observed as for job seekers, a vast majority of them created these accounts when stills students and have a master's degree. Significant here is the number passive job seekers (i.e. employees staying interested to other job positions, with no direct intention of leaving their current job) and the number of young employees having found their job through LinkedIn. However, applying directly through mail or on a company's career page seemed more effective.

The findings regarding Belgian job seekers and employees are in line with LinkedIn's global statistics regarding age, applications and employment rate (See Part I, Chapter 2, Section II).

CHAPTER II: RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TALENTS AND AGENCIES⁹

This chapter discusses the current relations between agencies and talents, implying several aspects taken under consideration since the situation of war for talent. Furthermore, agencies explain how they compete with LinkedIn and bring value to their talents.

The addressed aspects include visibility, the agency's value proposition and the new generation of candidates.

⁹ Appendix VII: Agency interviews

When addressing the recruitment business, three interviewees pointed out the difficulty of the current situation. Indeed, as Belgium's economy is doing very well (fifth consecutive year that Belgium is in the top 20 of the 'Growth Promise Indicator' report of KMPG and a decreasing unemployment rate for the past six years¹⁰), companies are more eager to invest in additional staff. Today, the challenge for agencies is to fill in a lot of vacancies while they have difficulties to find the right candidates. Even compared to last year, agencies report a significant rise in the number of open vacancies companies ask them to fill.

“in 2015 {...} confidence in the employer has recovered, so more recruitment is needed, but candidates are being hunted down from all sides. It's even worse now, today we're in a candidate-oriented market¹¹.” Audrey Hannecaert, Walters People.

Therefore, agencies say they must be very visible and attractive, certainly on social networks for job seekers. Before, when the employers' confidence was weaker, they were less willing to hire new employees, candidates were less demanding and agencies had less trouble finding hiring solutions for their clients, the organisations. Today, agencies consider candidates as clients as well, who have to feel cared for and convinced.

Both interim and permanent recruiting consultants argue that the agency added value for someone who is looking for a job, is the advice on his career and the follow-up the person gets. The experience of the candidate with the agency has become very important. Eric Myard, founder and consultant at Enginium group, explains how he prepares a candidate before his or her interview. The candidate will be briefed on the topics he needs to take care of about the personality of the manager he meets. When there is a return from the organisation, the candidate is contacted for some feedback. At Robert Walters, after a hire, two follow-ups are done with the candidate; the first one after 30 days and the second after 6 months. “We really want to build the long-term relationship with candidates” explains Sofie Slagmulders from Robert Walters, referring to candidates who might come back some years later to change jobs.

¹⁰ Appendix VIII: Belgium Long Term Unemployment Rate

¹¹ Candidate-oriented market: Situation of a talent shortage, where candidates have more bargaining power during the job search. (TalentNow, 2018)

The aim of specialised agencies, such as Enginium Group and Robert Walters, is that candidates with a specific profile, in engineering or finance in this case, choose their agency, firstly for their expertise, but also based on the added value the agency procures.

On the other hand, with the arrival of social media, it has become very easy for talents to apply for a job. This generates some difficulty for involved organisations and agencies as they receive an enormous number of CVs, this making it hard for them to distinguish between quality ones and those with none or less quality.

“The big concern we have today is that there are candidates who apply for anything and everything. And this applies for all ages. {...} The problem with LinkedIn, all other social networks and the whole generation in which we live today, is that everything goes very fast and that people don't think, so there is no more quality. The easier it is to apply, the worse it gets.”
Audrey Hannecaert, Walters People.

Furthermore, the nature of the new generation at work and its knowledge of the volatility of the global workforce lead to a broader competition that agencies have to cope with.

“We see candidates who sometimes have eight or nine interviews in one week. {...} There are candidates who do not come to our appointments, thinking they have some already or will have many others anyway.” Elinor de Biolley, Robert Half.

Agencies, such as Robert Walters, try to help candidates screen vacancies instead of applying to all of them. They prefer to listen to the candidate, advise them on the type of job the person could be good at. Some even tell them to create or update their LinkedIn profiles, which also gives a very transparent and honest impression of the agency. In developing a role of advisor, agencies look at creating some form of positive differentiation.

In this war for talent, we noticed a lack of quality candidates. Agencies propose value with professional advice and follow-up. Faced with this era of digitalization, agencies realize that we can do without them more easily than before. Their reaction is translated in more

tailored made solutions: understanding and preparation of the candidate. Also, agencies build their business in a certain area, to demonstrate the usefulness of their expertise and knowledge.

CHAPTER III: RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LINKEDIN AND AGENCIES

The following chapter investigates the position of agencies when addressing the platform. It firstly analyzes to what extend LinkedIn is implemented in agencies' recruitment practices (Section I), then focuses on the impact LinkedIn has had or can have on the agencies' strategies (Section II).

SECTION I: USE OF LINKEDIN BY AGENCIES

This section procures an overview of the tool of LinkedIn used by agencies, the link with their databases and other sourcing tools and the profiles they use the platform for. The benefits and limits are addressed as well.

Firstly, all five agencies interviewed have all chosen to work, among others, with LinkedIn for their sourcing activities. In voluminous agencies, such as Robert Half and PageGroup (PagePersonnel, MichaelPage and PageExecutive), that offer permanent as well as interim recruitment services, permanent recruitment consultants, specialized in a specific area, are provided with LinkedIn Recruiter Lite subscriptions. Other junior or senior consultants use their own personal LinkedIn profile but often ask their colleagues, benefitting from that subscription, to post a job offer or search for a candidate.

The other agencies also opted for this specific tool, used for permanent recruitment only or for interim positions of a certain level. Enginium group, having opted for a package of only three LinkedIn Recruitment Lite accounts, doesn't use key performance indicators (KPIs) to decide whether it would be efficient to continue this contract or not. Larger agencies however, use KPIs measuring the number of CVs obtained and the number of placements done through LinkedIn. For a company such as Robert Walters, having opted for approximately 75 job slots, the tool Talent Insight and multiple LinkedIn Recruiter Lite accounts, the platform seemed more than useful when measuring its success, which allows them to allocate budget for it accordingly.

The internal databases of the different agencies regroup all CVs received, irrespective of its source. Except for Robert Walters and Walters People, the agencies couldn't say where the CV came from, once it was integrated in the database. Regarding those data bases, practices differ on whether the agency keeps track on candidates' experiences, ambitions, wishes etc. Elinor de Biolley, consultant at Robert Half, explained how she would describe every candidate after a first interview and add the information obtained on the CV in the database. However, Marie Libbrecht, consultant at PagePersonnel, while mentioning trainings on the beginning of her career, argued nobody in the agency still did that. Given the fact that the needs of companies were so specific, it was already difficult to find a reasonable number of potential candidates.

When discussing the use of LinkedIn for recruitment purposes, all appear to compare them with other tools, namely job boards. For instance, when asking Eric Myard, from Enginium group if they saw LinkedIn as a form of competition, he answered that LinkedIn competes with job boards such as Stepstone and Monster. As another example, PageGroup offers hiring companies the possibility to buy a package of ten job boards at 2.500€, meaning that the job offer will be posted on all ten websites, with Stepstone, the most expensive one (999€/post for 30 days), included. Should organisations choose not to take this option, their vacancy will be posted on LinkedIn, Twitter, the agency's website and VDAB only (Marie Libbrecht, PagePersonnel).

Regarding the other job boards, only Robert Half and PageGroup mentioned the importance of Stepstone and Monster. The other agencies stopped using them or started using them less because of their costs or because they weren't showing good enough numbers. The job board Indeed has more success. The website seems to have better quality CVs than the others and is less expensive.

Addressed as yet another tool, agencies use LinkedIn to contact candidates with personalised messages, post job offers or follow-up careers of earlier candidates. Interviewees argued LinkedIn isn't suited for every type of profile. In truth, most of LinkedIn's members already have a job, would argue Eric Myard. Other respondents also appeared to see the platform as a source of experienced employees, with hard to find skills and value. Except for Elinor de Biolley, who has more success finding juniors on the website, all other consultants

agreed it is most useful to use the platform when looking for experts, specialists, or when higher-level positions are to be filled.

Out of the various LinkedIn benefits mentioned in relation with candidates search, the most important ones were the easy filtering and contacting of potential candidates with the LinkedIn Recruiter Lite account, the picture of the candidate and the written recommendations. Regarding the limits of the use of the platform, all interviewees pointed out a very low respondent rate, varying from one to two answers out of ten. Three of the respondents also mentioned the fact that it is impossible to download a LinkedIn profile, forcing agencies to ask potential candidates for their CVs. Another reason why they must always get a CV is because LinkedIn doesn't offer the possibility for active job seekers to add their phone number. In addition, not all LinkedIn members keep their profiles up-to-date or don't add descriptions of their experiences.

"2 clicks and we have their CV, their LinkedIn CV of course. The downside is that it's not that extensive. So often people only put the year, the job title and the company, but you already have a picture of the candidate. Not everyone puts a very extensive LinkedIn CV online, but you do have all the contact details, the interest of the candidate and then it is actually a matter of taking the phone and talking to that candidate, asking for a CV and arranging an interview directly." Sofie Slagmulders, Robert Walters.

When comparing LinkedIn with an agency, all interviewees specify that recruiting is a human's job. Most importantly, soft skills can't be evaluated on LinkedIn.

Whether a candidate will match with the job proposed has to be evaluated. Next to hard skills mentioned in his or CV, among others, the following soft skills are to be analysed:

- Fit with the company's culture;
- Fit with personality of Manager and team;
- Communication skills;
- Values;
- Ambitions – wishes – desires;
- Flexibility and adaptability;
- Collective sense.

Internal HR people of a hiring organisation would waste a lot of time selecting the right candidates, whereas it is the job of agencies to do this for them. Agencies focusing on a specific market also use the expertise and experience in the sector as an argument, where an internal HR person would not be as qualified. Nevertheless, recruiting done by internal HR people ensures a good explanation of the company to the candidate. Companies have to be sure the third party involved sells their organisations in the right way.

Secondly, LinkedIn is used by all agencies to promote their activity. Indeed, as mentioned earlier, agencies feel the need to be attractive and visible to candidates and hiring companies, leading them to create company pages on the platform. Interviewees argue that being active on LinkedIn is a must for agencies, as well as for the hiring companies. Otherwise, candidates would tend to think the organisation is not future-minded (Sofie Slagmulders, Robert Walters).

Key findings:

- Use: recruitment and employer branding;
- Profiles: permanent recruitment for experienced profiles;
- Benefits: filter and contact candidates;
- Limits: low response rate, no phone number, not possible to download CVs.

SECTION II: IMPACTS OF LINKEDIN ON AGENCIES

According to agencies, LinkedIn has had three major impacts on them, developed in this section.

The impact LinkedIn has had on agencies can be seen, firstly on their recruiting strategy (Enginium Group, Robert Walters and Walters People):

- Rise in the volume of CVs obtained;
- Rise in the number of candidates received for an interview;
- Rise in the number of recruited candidates.

“We received more candidates thanks to the increased visibility. {...} So, it has an impact on the volume of CVs, on speed indirectly also because if we didn't have LinkedIn, we

would have fewer CVs and therefore less recruitment. {...} I think that, indirectly, this has made it possible to increase the volume of recruitment.” Audrey Hannecaert, Walters People.

Another impact occurred related to the skills a recruiting consultant should acquire. Indeed, the same three agencies mentioned trainings, webinars and seminars given by LinkedIn on the use of the different tools, mostly regarding the sourcing of candidates, which the consultants of those agencies are asked to follow.

A last general impact for those three specialized agencies, is that they are rather specialized in a specific sector. As mentioned earlier, Robert Walters’ aim is to make it know that the agency is specialized in finance and accounting. This strategy is the same for both Robert Walters and Walters People. When discussing this point with Eric Myard, his opinion was that agencies needed to specialise in a market niche and brand their expertise, as agencies offering recruitment services related to all types of profiles will no longer be able to demonstrate their added value when compared to the use of LinkedIn by an internal HR person.

In the 3rd chapter of this work, we have seen that agencies defend their human impact on recruitment. Next to that, their core business value proposition includes first and foremost helping companies to fill as fast as possible a gap with the right talent.

To summarize, their activities can be translated by following equations: time/money and productivity/effectiveness.

CHAPTER IV: RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LINKEDIN AND COMPANIES¹²

Further to the analysis of the agencies’ situation, companies can be approached on the same topic. As the questions were in a similar structure, this chapter is again divided into the description of LinkedIn’s use by companies (Section I), and on the organisational impacts that occurred (Section II). A particular focus has been made to the case of the bank Degroof Petercam, as the arrival of LinkedIn enabled large strategic and organisational changes within the company.

¹² Appendix IX: Company interviews

SECTION I: USE OF LINKEDIN BY COMPANIES

This section reveals the use of LinkedIn by companies interviewed. Profiles types to be found on the network, limits, benefits and costs are discussed. Also, the employer branding benefits, trust related aspect and other sourcing tools are explained.

Every company interviewed makes use of LinkedIn's services. Although they all show different types of use, all companies opted for one or more LinkedIn Recruiter Lite subscriptions as well as a company page. On average, companies started using the platform as a real recruitment tool in 2017. Except for Puilaetco Dewaay, who is the least implicated company regarding LinkedIn and not very successful with it, the organisations all have departments, and consequently people, focused on recruitment. The status of the recruiters varies between employees on payroll of the company, consultants and free-lance self-employed recruiters.

The choice to use LinkedIn for recruitment purposes appears to depend on the type of position that is looked for. First of all, all respondents argued LinkedIn was a platform targeted to white-collar profiles only. Manager- and senior-level positions were mentioned by all companies when referring to the use of LinkedIn for a new external hire.

Regarding junior-level, positions, the use of LinkedIn doesn't seem to be very efficient. Indeed, on the one hand, companies argue graduating students or young professionals are harder to find on the platform and on the other hand, that the inflow of this type of CV is already large enough. Caroline Coumanne, consultant at FN Herstal, explains young people assimilate LinkedIn as an active professional network, where only experienced individuals are allowed. People over 50 don't seem to be very active on the platform either, as companies have difficulties finding them. A possible argument for that could be the digital maturity a person would need to use LinkedIn.

Higher positions such as director-level and C-level jobs aren't hunted down by the internal recruitment staff either, except at KPMG, who doesn't hesitate to contact all its competitors' employees directly on the platform. Others prefer to delegate these hires to a third party (i.e. head-hunters or recruitment agencies).

In this regard, large companies can, as does KPMG, attribute LinkedIn Recruiter Lite accounts to recruiters for a specific period, when specific hires have to be made. Laura Curreya Rodriguez explained she uses her account during the second semester of the year, when working on more experienced profiles. The account is reallocated to someone else during the first semester, when she is looking for young graduates to join their business. Indeed, the consultant claims he has no need for her account as the inflow of unsolicited applications is high and also that they take part in job fairs in universities.

Interviewees of the four companies, using LinkedIn actively, show hunting procedures when using the network. This includes the publication of job offers through job slots, the search for candidates by filtering down the candidate pool, sending direct InMails and lastly, the creation of projects with candidates, saved in their internal databases for most companies, on their recruiter account and sharing these projects with hiring managers.

Although none argued they would find the firm's existing employees when filtering, it is important to mention that LinkedIn doesn't have a tool to prevent this. (Duchâteau, 2019) This means that, by filtering very well on the skills and experiences, a recruiter could come across a current employee and see if he is open for new opportunities or not.

The arguments of time, quality and money are the ones that came up when addressing the platform's limits and benefits. Strangely, companies' opinions differed in those matters. Indeed, when some may argue that the personal use of LinkedIn for recruitment is very time consuming and demands a lot of effort from the internal recruiter, others disagree in the sense that the platform is easy to manage, allowing the first search and selection phase to be performed quickly.

“What takes time is to personalize all the messages; I go to see the profiles of all the people, I look at what they have done, what they do and according to that I orientate.” Marianne Seels, La STIB.

“The added value is that sometimes recruitment agencies do not listen to what you are looking for and you receive resumes that do not match the search at all. Whereas with LinkedIn,

since we already know the company culture, the type of profiles we are looking for, we go directly to interesting profiles.” Laura Curreya Rodriguez, KPMG.

When bringing a critical view to those arguments, we can observe that companies tend to feel agencies do not provide for qualified candidates fast enough. Due to this, companies may be tempted to prefer looking for candidates by themselves, even if that means hiring new recruitment staff to do it. This is where LinkedIn, with its advanced features regarding sourcing, becomes a potential solution.

Regarding the costs of the site's services, companies were rather enthusiastic. If some may have been suspicious beforehand, the successful results made them change their mind. Although none of the companies could present specific KPIs, all agreed LinkedIn had been useful for recruitment, mentioning time and money arguments.

Different types of partnerships between the companies and LinkedIn were observed. For example, La STIB decided to opt for 2 Recruiter Lite accounts with an access for 50 hiring managers, 25 job slots and the product Talent Insight, whereas FN Herstal has a package including one Recruiter Lite account and 2 job slots. Respectively, those packages cost €76.000/year and €16.700/year. We could assume the extension of the packages goes along with the hiring needs of the company as well as the website's performance.

The assessment of the soft skills (see Chapter III; Section I) of a candidate appears to be the most annoying limit of LinkedIn. Although algorithms on the platform enable job seekers to see for which job they would be a possible fit; for the moment, it is only able to produce results based on hard skills. In that perspective, interviewees argue the human part still plays a central role in recruitment.

When discussing about the platform, the aspect of employer branding has been addressed by all five companies. Company pages are now seen as companies' websites. LinkedIn intervenes by offering branding and personalization services for those pages (Duchâteau, 2019). Interviewees argue it generates visibility and a healthy and/or modern image of their company towards talents, but also towards their clients. LinkedIn is seen as more than

a recruitment tool, as it provides opportunities to find partnerships as well. Two respondents evoked a point of view when LinkedIn is not used or not used well:

“The professional side of someone can be seen if the person has a complete LinkedIn profile. In fact, you can see if people are unprofessional if their profile is not complete.” Laura Curreya Rodriguez, KPMG.

When the consultant mentions a “complete LinkedIn profile”, we can assume someone’s profile is complete when it is up-to-date regarding his or her education, skills and experience. However, we have seen, from an agency’s point of view, that LinkedIn profiles are most of the time less complete than a CV. Indeed, when adding a professional experience on their profiles, most members don’t explain the tasks given, projects managed and so on.

“What it made me change is to respond much more quickly to people, to make the journey as if I were a candidate, to redo the journey. Because if I don't, I think LinkedIn can do worse than good. Everything has become so transparent, that people who do not receive answers, who see us connected... It can be a disaster.” Caroline Coumanne, FN Herstal

In the last part of the questionnaire, three questions were introduced regarding the trust issues that may occur when referring to LinkedIn’s data. However, not one company appeared to be really bothered by the data manipulation done by LinkedIn or by incorrect data that could be found on the platform (i.e. fake profiles or people lying) as it is not different than an actual CV. Only Caroline Coumanne from FN Herstal mentioned she asked LinkedIn some information regarding General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), and that she received documents explaining how users were covered. Indeed, LinkedIn complies to the GDPR guidelines, a European regulation, and has even chosen to extend those standards on a global level regarding its members (Duchâteau, 2019). With regards to incorrect data, respondents talked about people lying about dates but not more than that. In addition, recruiters always ask for a CV, a reference, degrees or even loan pages. A very valid argument was evoked by Karla Plas from Puilaetco Dewaay, arguing that the only difference in this respect between a CV and a LinkedIn profile, is that, on the platform, everyone can see it. In consequence, it would be strange to lie.

With still a focus on trust, companies were questioned on how they perceived the activity on LinkedIn by their staff and whether they measured it somehow. No one felt being active on LinkedIn was a bad thing, on the contrary. It seemed as a plus for companies, as it enables them to show that they have professional employees even though there is a risk that they would be more solicited. Moreover, it seemed normal that, if the company isn't able to offer a certain position to one of its employees, that the employee stays informed on other opportunities. Measurements in this regard weren't implemented in any of the companies.

Next to LinkedIn and recruitment agencies, all companies mentioned the use of their company's website and the former use or current use of job boards. Stepstone and Monster have been used by all companies. Monster isn't used by any company anymore and Stepstone is only used by La STIB and Puilaetco Dewaay. Strangely, job board Indeed was only mentioned by KPMG, while the interview with LinkedIn revealed the job board was perceived as most closely to what is seen as a competitor. La STIB, hiring a lot of blue-collar workers, uses multiple job boards such as Jobat and Le Forem as well as the social network Facebook. La STIB even has a contract with a targeting agency called Golden Beas, that is in charge of all job vacancies publications on social networks.

Key findings:

- Use: Recruitment and employer branding;
- Profiles: white collar, manager and senior level;
- Costs: small price to pay for results;
- Biggest limit: no assessment of soft skills.

SECTION II: IMPACTS OF LINKEDIN ON COMPANIES

This section discloses the three main impacts of LinkedIn revealed by the companies. Also, the particular changes at Degroof Petercam are developed.

From the actual recruitment procedures' point of view, several companies pointed out that hiring managers, their teams and even business partners internal to a company are more implicated in the hiring of new employees since the arrival of LinkedIn. The latter began to contact potential candidates directly on the platform and share open vacancies with their

personal account. This has been seen to be efficient, as their expertise in the specific business field attracted more people and enabled a direct discussing of the jobs with candidates.

When looking at organisational impacts, only la STIB and Degroof Petercam saw a change in that regard. Degroof Petercam created a new department called Talent Acquisition, which will be further developed later in this thesis, and at La STIB, two people's jobs have changed towards a job fully dedicated on recruitment, mostly using LinkedIn. At FN Herstal, recruiters are consultants.

According to Caroline Coumanne, it is not always possible to create internal recruitment departments with employees on payroll, as recruitment activities in a company aren't constant. This may suppose internal recruiters' work load can depend on the number of hires done in one year. Ultimately, the size of HR departments in companies can be affected in this regard.

The turnover of employees was the last subject of the questionnaire. All companies admitted that LinkedIn must have a certain influence in the matter but that, for most of them, it didn't have had an impact in their company. In addition, none had figures to support their opinion. However, Laura Curreya Rodriguez was convinced that LinkedIn increased the turnover rate, arguing that even when someone isn't looking for a job, he or she will be contacted. Furthermore, in her opinion, people are more likely to read messages coming from a company directly than from an agency, which has been enabled thanks to LinkedIn.

The case of Degroof Petercam

The case of Degroof Petercam will be discussed more deeply in this paper, due to the fact that the company showed a real change of procedures since the arrival on LinkedIn, not only in recruitment but also in terms of employer branding. Indeed, since 2017, 80% of the hiring in the company is made through LinkedIn.

The merger of the banks Degroof and Petercam in 2015 have had consequences for the HR department of the new company. Due to the merger, the bank had to change the structure of several departments and recruit new staff, such as private bankers for the new offices. *"The objective was to internalize the entire procedure. We no longer wanted to use recruitment*

agencies, we wanted to manage all recruitment internally." Caroline Wouters, Talent Acquisition Manager. *"At the same time, we want to better position ourselves in the market as an employer and thus improve our brand awareness."*, Nora Mrabtifi, Talent Acquisition Coordinator. (CVWarehouse, 2019). In 2019, the company has already hired over one hundred talents. (Wouters, 2019).

This has led to the creation in 2017 of a new sub-department within the Human Resource department of the Bank. Talent acquisition is formed by a team of five people, including one manager on payroll, and three consultants in charge of recruitment and one consultant in charge of employer branding. At the time of the interview with Véronique Dhanis, the company accounted for approximately 60 open vacancies. The explanation is that, since the merger, the bank has been opening new offices.

One year after the creation of the team, the company won the Award for Best Talent Acquisition Team in Belgium of 2018, selected by LinkedIn out of one thousand companies. Next to that, the bank also launched its employer branding campaign called "Make A Mark" that focused on the importance of doing something meaningful, as an employee in a company. For example, the bank "made a mark" by giving warm clothes, shoes and other basic goods for people in need (Wouters, 2019). On LinkedIn, the company posted videos of five employees, explaining how they "make a mark" in the world. The aim of this campaign is to "reinforce pride within the company and at the same time inspire others to join Degroof Petercam." (Degroof Petercam, 2019).

Finally, the bank also provides Premium Business Account for teams of other departments such as Marketing and Asset Management, in order to find new partnerships and clients.

"LinkedIn is also a platform that evolves, that listens very well to its customer, that follows the evolution of the market but that is also forward-thinking by listening and creating ideas into projects." Veronique Dhanis, Degroof Petercam

Key findings:

- Internal impact: hiring department more implicated;
- Organisational impact: depends on the size of company and numbers of hires/year;
- Degroof Petercam: New Talent Acquisition sub-department; 80% of recruitment with LinkedIn.

CHAPTER V: RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN AGENCIES AND COMPANIES

This last chapter covers the different types of relationships observed between companies and agencies. The results have been divided, with the aim of differentiating and comparing the data within all three categories:

Section I: Recruitment agencies

Section II: Staffing agencies

Section III: head-hunters and specialized agencies

SECTION I: RECRUITMENT AGENCIES

In this section, the extent to which companies use agencies, the criticism thereof and a comparison with LinkedIn are procured.

The interviews have shown that four out of the five companies use the services of recruitment agencies, Degroof Petercam being the one that doesn't. None of them ask for those services regarding junior profiles. Nevertheless, regarding other types of profiles, uses appear to be different as KPMG only uses the agencies for specific profiles such as administrative profiles, when the other three companies rely on them for managerial positions.

Regarding to what extend agencies' services are used, we can notice that companies first try to look by themselves. Recruiters will indeed firstly look within the company, through employee referral, LinkedIn or post vacancies on job boards and their own website. Should recruiters not find the right agencies, then agencies will be approached. It looks like agencies aren't the first choice when speaking of recruitment.

During the interview, the respondents seemed, in general, not very satisfied by the work of those agencies. Many argued the same criticism, highlighting the fact that the person behind

the agency is the one that will determine whether the job is well done or not. Multiple bad experiences came up as to the candidates sent by the agencies for an on-site interview. Interviewees were positive that agencies don't listen to or don't understand what the firm is looking for, and that some of them don't even meet with the candidate beforehand, leading to interviews where the candidate isn't suited for the job regarding his personality, isn't aware of the job description or doesn't check all the boxes regarding the qualifications needed.

“What we see is that the agency always wants to sell their candidates. When it is ‘no cure no pay’, they just send you CVs and you have to do all the work.” Karla Plas, Puilaetco

“Sometimes agencies harass candidates to get their fees and then they don't want to come anymore. It all depends again on the person.” Véronique Dhanis, Petercam

In addition, when asking respondents if candidates were better prepared for an interview when sent from a recruitment agency, Only La STIB didn't answer that there was no difference. According to Laura Curreya Rodriguez, a reason would be that the agencies don't know the firm culture well enough to sell it and prepare the applicants correctly.

When discussing the fees an agency asks for when in charge of filling a vacancy in a company, all companies reported using both the 'no cure, no pay' and the three-steps method. The no cure, no pay method is mostly used for difficult to find functions, with a cost varying from 22% to 35%, depending on years of experience of the candidate, the annual package also, in case a candidate is indeed hired. The three steps approach is most commonly used, approximating €8000/ step.

However, when compared to LinkedIn, arguments related to human contact and time were mentioned to address the added value of a recruitment agency. As the companies have been in partnership with specific agencies for a long time, a situation has been established. This way, companies feel more secure knowing those agencies won't come looking for candidates in their organisation. The argument of the person behind the scenes was repeatedly evoked, stating that people who have known the firm for a long time, consequently, procure better quality service. The issue arises when a new recruiter comes along, and the process has to start

all over again. Respondents explain the job of recruitment agencies as a way of pre-filtering the candidates, based on soft skills such as communication, personal compatibility, values, languages etc. When invited for an on-site interview, the question regarding the loan and the job description must have already been anticipated.

“There is a whole series of things that are being verified and that the agencies are doing for us. Here, Marianne, the moment she starts contacting someone on LinkedIn, she has to do all the work. She has to call the person, send an InMail, see if the person is interested in La STIB, if we can offer at least the same salary as the person is receiving today or even a little more. With a temporary employment agency or recruitment agency, you pay for a finished product.” Petra Fissette, La STIB.

SECTION II: PLACEMENT AGENCIES

All interviewees would agree staffing agencies are essential for temporary employment situations. Most of them also use their services when looking for students. The reasons revealed the time-consuming task of drawing of temporary, weekly contracts for interim employees and the very complete administrative documents to be filled in for students. The advantage implied here is thus the time savings. Indeed, respondents admitted that, most of the time, the company itself would find the candidate and send him to the staffing agency. In situations of crisis, companies also acknowledged the importance of this type of agency, making it possible to fill a job quickly.

“When we need students, we often find them ourselves, but we go through interim agencies for logistical and administrative reasons, to go faster. So that is not the initial role of the interim agency we are using. We can say that this is due to the arrival of LinkedIn, among others.” Véronique Dhanis, Degroof Petercam.

SECTION III: HEAD-HUNTERS AND SPECIALIZED AGENCIES

For executive and C-level position, four out of five companies hire a head-hunter or a specialized agency. As mentioned earlier, only KPMG argued it is LinkedIn they used the most for such positions. Nevertheless, once again, respondents made sure to evoke their first method, which is looking internally or by themselves externally. The specificity of a head-hunter job, is

the need for some companies to have him or her to contact the client instead of the firm. In truth, as seen in literature as well, companies may generate a bad image for themselves, would they be contacting its competitors' employees directly. According to Véronique Dhanis the fee payed to a head-hunter vary from €60.000 to €100.000, depending on the function, the gross annual salary of the position and on the head-hunters' prices, justified by their quality data bases.

“A good head-hunter has a quality database, he calls back all the talents every 3 months or twice a year, which we can't do. They then know where people are, if they are still happy, if they want to change soon ... in other words what about their career evolution. What is their motivation: salary, more responsibilities, tired of being a team leader and wanting to be an expert again etc. At that point, if his database is up to date, what takes time, he can very quickly meet one of our needs. We also use them to avoid playing cowboys. In order not to steal the talents of the competitors, we go through the head-hunters. Often, the names are already given to the head-hunters, so that he can make the approach.” Véronique Dhanis, Degroof Petercam.

Key findings:

- Use: specific profiles (recruitment); students and urgent situations (placement); C-level (head-hunters); never junior profiles
- Limits: Little knowledge of firm culture; expensive.
- Benefits: Time; intermediary aspect (C-level)

CONCLUSION

Before tackling the main outcomes of this work, a quick reminder of the initial and second research questions seems appropriate:

1. “In the long run, will LinkedIn’s services endanger or assist recruitment and placement agencies in Belgium? Could there be a win-win situation?”
2. “In the long run, will the Human Resource Departments of Belgian large companies start using exclusively LinkedIn for recruitment purposes and stop employing recruitment and/or placement agencies?”

In order to answer both ones in the most exhaustive way, several elements have been considered.

Companies’ recruitment strategies have always been divided between outsourcing or internalising the hiring of new talents. Recently, both HR departments of companies and agencies have been confronted with digitalization, including the emergence of social networks such as LinkedIn. As an innovative tool, the platform provides its members with several types of services, recruitment solutions in particular. This network has gained a strong and growing impact in Belgium, leading LinkedIn to plan priority focus on its market as of 2020.

During this challenging period regarding the recruitment sector, LinkedIn has indeed procured agencies’ recruiters, as well as internal recruiters, with a sourcing tool enabling to filter down the right talents and approach them directly. From far, the tool seems rather relevant when looking for the permanent recruitment of either an experienced, a specific or a certain level profile.

Furthermore, the survey confirmed that job seekers and employees make significant use of - and benefits procured by LinkedIn (CV upload by InMail or on company’s job offer). However, companies’ websites’ career pages are still their first choice regarding application purposes.

LinkedIn use by businesses can firstly depend on their digital maturity. The size of their HR departments and their ability to bear a constant recruitment function relies on, among other

factors, the company's magnitude, its employees' turnover rate and the yearly hire rate. The creation of a Talent Acquisition department would seem optimal for a white-collar employing business, having a high employee number and turnover (for instance: Big Four companies such as KPMG).

This is a real threat for agencies, as companies may be able to replace their services by solely making use of LinkedIn for recruiting. As we observed with the bank Degroof Petercam, certain companies are already shifting towards this model.

However, such a move seems more difficult in certain circumstances. Indeed, professionals interviewed argue that for some particular situations and specific profiles, the use of LinkedIn is not sufficient. This could be the case if the company seeks to hire a new CFO or a temporary employee for a specific mission. In this regard, a 100% internal recruitment is not feasible yet.

Moreover, LinkedIn appears to lack some quality features needed for recruitment. As an example, a LinkedIn profile doesn't procure soft skills information or phone number. Agencies argue LinkedIn profiles are not as relevant as CVs. Also, sometimes Belgian's profiles on LinkedIn are not up-to-date, and most of time they do not include brief descriptions of their experiences.

This is the area where agencies can procure value based on their large databases with well documented and complete CVs, obtained from direct search, job boards, former candidates or spontaneous CVs. Nevertheless, LinkedIn is used by all agencies as a major tool of sourcing and approaching candidates.

Time, money and quality are the key factors to take into account when addressing recruitment in the current war for talent. Time is more than ever an essential element for both hiring companies and agencies, as competition is broadening and the access to talents is getting easier. In order to remain competitive, agencies may need to start specializing themselves in a specific niche area.

Chances of a win-win situation would depend on a recruitment agency's ability to procure qualified candidates (soft- and hard skills) in a very short period of time. Placement agencies are not likely to be threatened by LinkedIn thanks to their administration service. Head-hunters also keep their competitive advantage with their high-quality databases and their important role of intermediary.

Nevertheless, LinkedIn continues to improve its products and services. For instance, the company is developing a new tool called LinkedIn Salaries, currently in a beta version. This feature will reveal salary levels matching a job title and a location.

Finally, we are curious to see how LinkedIn will continue to disrupt the recruitment market in Belgium in the coming years.

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