

Human Resources and Organizations

How social network sites (SNS) have changed the employer–employee relationship and what are the next challenges for human resource (HR)?

Como os Sites de Redes Sociais estão mudando a relação empregado–empregador e quais são os próximos desafios para os Recursos Humanos?

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Received 11 February 2015; accepted 12 November 2015

Available online 13 May 2016

Abstract

Business people are increasingly using social network sites (SNS) through corporate platforms or open websites such as Twitter, LinkedIn or Facebook. Because it is a recent phenomenon, the potentialities, benefits and risks of such tools have not yet been properly addressed inside organizations. SNS have been used by different members of society, including people of all ages and social classes. Human resource (HR) refers to the practices and policies adopted by companies to carry out the personnel aspects of the work, but some organizations are reluctant to permit SNS access within workplace boundaries. Currently, it is imperative to recognize SNS as an extension of people's social activities and, instead of restricting their use, companies should appreciate the benefits arisen from them. The objective of this essay is to discuss how HR activities are traditionally performed, the changes caused by the emergence of SNS and the new challenges. Thus, it may be useful for HR practitioners as it highlights how key HR activities are being affected by the emergence of SNS. Given the new challenges, HR professionals should use SNS as a complement of their activities, developing policies of use and monitoring the workforce online behavior.

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Keywords: Human resource management; Social network sites; Social media

Resumo

A sociedade brasileira usa cada vez mais *sites* de redes sociais por meio de plataformas corporativas ou *websites* abertos como Twitter, LinkedIn e Facebook. Por se tratar de um fenômeno recente, todas as suas potencialidades, todos os seus benefícios e riscos ainda não foram devidamente discutidos nas organizações. Os *sites* de redes sociais são usados por diferentes membros da sociedade, de todas as idades e classes sociais. Os Recursos Humanos (RH) se referem às práticas e às políticas adotadas pelas empresas para administrar os aspectos pessoais do trabalho, e algumas organizações relutam em permitir o acesso aos *sites* de redes sociais durante o horário do trabalho. Atualmente, torna-se imperativo reconhecer os *sites* de redes sociais como uma extensão das atividades humanas e, ao invés de restringir seu uso, valorizar os benefícios gerados por ele. O objetivo deste ensaio é discutir como as atividades do RH são tradicionalmente feitas, as mudanças causadas pelo surgimento dos *sites* de redes sociais e os novos desafios. Dessa forma, deve colaborar com os profissionais de RH, uma vez que destaca como suas atividades são afetadas pelo surgimento das redes sociais. Tendo em vista os novos desafios, os profissionais de RH devem usar as redes sociais como complemento de suas atividades e desenvolver políticas de uso e acompanhamento do comportamento *on-line* dos trabalhadores.

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Palavras-chave: Gestão de recursos humanos; *Sites* de redes sociais; Mídia social

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Peer Review under the responsibility of Departamento de Administração, Faculdade de Economia, Administração e Contabilidade da Universidade de São Paulo – FEA/USP.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.rege.2015.11.001>

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Introduction

The advance of web-based technology has enabled a greater number of people to be on social network sites (SNS). Increasingly, SNS have been used by different members of society, including people of all ages and social classes. Inside organizations, SNS may help users on connection, collaboration and communication (Jue, Marr & Kassotakis, 2009), but many organizations are reluctant to permit SNS access within workplace boundaries. Although the use of SNS inside organizations has brought several benefits, some companies are still blocking employees' access to external websites by arguing that time spent on SNS is not work related (Andriole, 2010; Boyd & Ellison, 2007). There is a common belief among employers that workers who use the Internet for personal reasons during work hours are 'goofing off'. It is not uncommon for employees to be punished or even fired for personal web usage at work (Coker, 2011).

SNS may increase both the number and strength of ties among people, yield highly useful digital environments that are easy to capture and spread knowledge, and provide high-quality answers to questions (DiMicco et al., 2008; McAfee, 2009; Skeels & Grudin, 2009). Currently, SNS use is so spread that we come to the point where monitoring, instead of banning SNS activities, may bring greater benefits to company performance. Thus, human resource (HR) plays an important role in this paradigm shift, as it should understand, adapt and disseminate new guidelines inside the organization.

Within this context, this essay will discuss how the activities under the responsibility of HR (recruitment and selection; training and development; performance management; safety, health and engagement; and labor relations) have adapted to the emergence of SNS. More than pointing out the changes, this essay discusses the implications, by indicating the problems that can arise and how to overcome them.

The emergence of SNS has changed the employer-employee relationship. Thus, this essay indicates the benefits and risks involved in SNS use within the workplace. It begins with a discussion on SNS functionalities and how some organizations are making use of them. It presents some HR activities and discusses how SNS are affecting them. Implications and new challenges are also highlighted.

Social network sites

Social network sites (SNS) are web-based services that allow users to construct an individual profile to interact with contacts and also enable the visualization of friends' network within the system. These platforms allow users to learn detailed information about contacts, share it with others and build online human-relationships (Beer, 2008; Kwon & Wen, 2010; Valenzuela, Park & Kee, 2009).

SNS complement the network of relationships present in the offline world by providing both the technical and the social infrastructure for social interaction. For example, the tool provides technical support for communication through applications (wall posts, messages, comments) and information about users'

contact. The identity information serves as a social lubricant, providing clues about the profile owner's social status, physical attractiveness, credibility, cultural tastes and political affiliation, besides other aspects of the self (Ellison, Steinfield & Lampe, 2011; Steinfield, Ellison & Lampe, 2008; Tong, Van der Heide & Langwell, 2008).

The passive observation of social news also allows users to track the activities of connections and might lower the barriers to initiating communication, both because potential commonalities are revealed and crucial information about others is provided (Burke, Marlow & Lento, 2010; Steinfield et al., 2008; Vitak, Ellison & Steinfield, 2011). The size of one's apparent friends' network on SNS can easily become much larger than traditional offline networks, as technology facilitates greater connection, and social norms inhibit refusals to friend requests (Tong et al., 2008).

Most SNS are structured around a profile and a display of connections, but they may vary to the extent that they support additional services such as blogging (LiveJournal), audio-visual content sharing (Flicker, Last.FM, Youtube) or status updates and mobile connectivity (Twitter). Also, they can be directed to a specific audience, such as work-related connections (LinkedIn), romantic relationship initiation (the original goal of Friendster.com) or ethnic, religious, sexual orientation or particular content genres (Ellison, Steinfield & Lampe, 2007; Papacharissi & Mendelson, 2011). Apparently, each SNS may be directed to a particular audience or purpose. However, informal and formal relationships are mixed in the same platform, because people may use it indiscriminately, mixing personal and professional objectives.

Much of the existing research on SNS has focused on the motivations for using it, its role on the creation of social capital and privacy concerns. There is a lack of studies in the organizational context. Inside companies, information technologies with SNS features are changing the way HR departments handle record keeping and information sharing. Today, HR employees use information systems to automate much of their work in managing employee records and giving employees access to information. This means employees have online access to information about HR issues such as job opportunities, training, performance, and compensation; go online to enroll themselves in programs and services; and provide feedback through online surveys (Noe, Hollenbeck, Gerhart & Wright, 2007).

Some organizations have developed internal SNS to be exclusively used by employees. They have the objective of promoting internal network connection, enabling information exchange and stimulating cooperation inside the firm. Internal SNS may be considered as an extension of HR's information technologies that support employee record, information sharing and knowledge management through firm-wide (DiMicco et al., 2008).

Social network sites inside organizations

Researches have showed that employees surf the web or send personal e-mails during working time because these activities are considered to be similar to other everyday activities at the workplace, such as calling home or chatting with a coworker

about any subject (Garrett & Danziger, 2008). Thus, SNS might be increasingly used inside organizations for the same reasons. LinkedIn and Facebook are widely used at Microsoft and raised benefits, such as creation and strengthening of ties. However, it has caused some tensions about mixing personal and professional connections, spanning organizational levels, disclosing confidential information and procrastination (Skeels & Grudin, 2009).

Some big companies, such as IBM, have developed internal SNS with the objective to allow employees to reach out across team and division boundaries to connect with people with similar interests (DiMicco et al., 2008; Steinfield, DiMicco, Ellison & Lampe, 2009). In the same way, Costa, Ribeiro and Meira (2009) described the implementation of an internal SNS in a private innovation institute, with the objective of supporting employees on creation, management and sharing of knowledge. The implementation of such tool resulted in a better relationship among coworkers through mutual cooperation, better communication and exchange of knowledge. Internal SNS may assist the development of internal communication, as it has the objective of keeping people informed and shape the organizational and administrative functions (Marchiori, 2010). To confirm the role of SNS inside organizations, Curvello (2012) states that internal communication aims to listen, inform, mobilize, educate and maintain internal cohesion around the values of the company, which can strengthen the image that employees have of their own company. SNS can help facilitate communication inside organizations by overcoming existing boundaries and ignoring traditional structures that limit free flow of information, making it available to all (Jue et al., 2009).

Human Resource And Social Network Sites

Human resource (HR) refers to the practices and policies adopted by companies to carry out the personnel aspects of the work (Dessler, 2009; Noe et al., 2007). In this section, some important HR practices are introduced and the changes caused by the emergence of SNS are discussed. At the end of each topic, a summary table containing the main points are presented, indicating how HR activities were traditionally performed, the key changes with the emergence of SNS and the new challenges.

Recruitment and selection

Recruitment is the process through which the organization seeks applicants for potential employment. Selection refers to the process by which the organization attempts to identify candidates with the necessary knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics that will help the organization achieve its goals. Sources of recruitment can be internal (promotion, transfer, rehires, job rotation) or external (advertising, employment agencies, executive recruiters, educational institution placement, internships, professional associations, referrals, walk-ins, etc.) (Dessler, 2009; Noe et al., 2007). Traditionally, large companies use their corporate websites to request candidates to enroll in the system. Smaller companies can hire specialized websites to announce open positions or consult their database.

Currently, with the emergence of professionally targeted SNS such as LinkedIn, HR professionals can search for qualified candidates or even announce new job positions on the website. In the United States, the amount of recruiters using SNS to access and recruit talent is high: about 92 percent already use or are planning to use SNS in their hiring pursuits (Westemeier, 2012).

One of the main features is that HR professionals can visualize the candidate's network connections, identifying mutual friends. Based on such information, it is possible to request the mutual friend to intermedate the first contact between the company and the candidate, or even assesses the candidate's technical and personal skills.

Companies are also using external SNS to supplement the selection process. Many companies are checking Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn pages in search for characteristics that qualify and/or disqualify the candidate. Through such analysis, it is possible to observe the candidate's behavior, attitude and language appropriateness in virtual environments. Moreover, HR people can check political position, social status, religion and family structure. This search helps HR professionals to build a better picture of the candidates, which saves recruitment fees, reduces the chances of hiring the wrong personal and massively reduces the amount of time it takes to locate potential new employees (Hallam, 2013).

In this sense, internal SNS can also function as a source of information about the workforce, serving as the basis for identifying those who are qualified to internal transfers and promotions. Internal SNS may also be a means of communication to vent internal problems and dissatisfactions involving employees searching for internal transfers.

In sum, the emergence of SNS has brought benefits like the ability to visualize the candidate's network connections, and even interact with common friends, bringing more arguments to help on hiring decisions. Furthermore, the possibility to check the candidates' profile on SNS enables HR managers to compare between what is written in the curriculum and the candidate's behavior in virtual environments.

As new concerns, we may point out the existence of fake profiles, the reliability of posted information, and especially the privacy issue. SNS removes the privacy barriers that people keep between different aspects of their lives as it makes one's connections visible to all the others. Disclosed information may be available for the entire network of friends and it may bring privacy concerns, because the way that one user interacts with a boss is different from the way one interacts with one's mother or potential mate, for example (Donath & Boyd, 2004; McClard & Anderson, 2008).

Companies need to respect the applicant privacy and understand that people may act differently depending on the context. One important point is that hiring decisions cannot be based solely on the content posted on SNS. Candidates are safeguarded by legal rights and should have the chance to defend themselves. Moreover, HR professionals should check candidates' identity (people with similar names), as well as people with fake profiles. Table 1 summarizes traditional function, SNS influence and new challenges in regard to recruitment and selection.

Table 1
SNS and recruitment and selection.

Recruitment and selection		
Traditional function	SNS influence	New challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited number of candidates • Limited to information presented on CV 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active search for qualified candidates • Check candidate's profile • Visualize candidate's network connection • Ask for third-part assessment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fake profiles • Information reliability • Privacy concerns

Training and development

Training refers to the methods used to give employees the skills they need to perform their jobs. Development involves acquiring knowledge, skills, and behavior that improves employees' ability to meet the challenges of a variety of new or existing jobs, including the client and customer demands of those jobs (Dessler, 2009; Noe et al., 2007).

Companies adopting learning portals are putting more information into employees' hands, whenever they want it. Instead of limiting training opportunities to teacher-led conventional classes or to periodic training sessions, training becomes available 24-7. Employees can learn at their own pace, when they want to (Dessler, 2009). In multinational companies, training overcomes geographical barriers and becomes available worldwide. In such cases, organizations need to develop communication skills and train employees on how to deal with cultural differences.

In addition to the increased availability and flexibility, SNS permit users to interact with others during training and development. Thus, SNS allow users to exchange experiences, share knowledge and gain access to experts worldwide. Organization leaders can solve complex problems more effectively by simply asking for input and listening to the firestorm of responses from team members (Jue et al., 2009). Speed of sharing and volume of collaboration are differentials. In this sense, Srivastava, Bartol and Locke (2006) emphasize how SNS may facilitate knowledge sharing among team members with diverse expertise.

In the case of external SNS, users can get answers from any person (whether co-workers, suppliers or even competitors). Accordingly, the amount of information is much greater and the resolution of the problem can arrive faster and even more efficiently. Therefore, when someone exposes a problem on SNS, anyone may reply and interact to resolve the issue. Another interesting point is that messages exchanged on forums are usually available on the network, so it is possible to search for previous discussions before starting a new one.

In the case of internal SNS, discussions are restricted to employees from the same company. In these cases, despite the lower number of people who may have access to the questions, there are probably better-qualified individuals to help dealing with the problem, because they have company-related specific knowledge. Note that in the case of internal SNS, the issue of

Table 2
SNS and training and development.

Training and development		
Traditional function	SNS influence	New challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher-led/unilateral • Passive • Limited to working hours • Geographic barrier 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Availability • Flexibility • Interactivity • Speed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication skill • Information leakage • Incorrect information

information confidentiality can be better controlled, since access is restricted.

The number of employees is an important factor when considering whether or not to implement internal SNS. The number of connections reinforce the usefulness of SNS, suggesting that with increased peer connections, SNS interaction becomes more interesting (Lin & Lu, 2011). SNS are more effective when there is greater possibility of connections, as users share information and interact with their connections.

The use of SNS may assist employees on their training and development, since it encourages interactions with others in search for problems resolution. However, as employees use external SNS to discuss internal problems, there is a risk of information leakage. One message containing secret data, as well as photos or videos containing training confidential data can bring problems of information leakage.

Another problem resulting from this increased access to information is that employees cannot evaluate which information is correct. In an environment where anyone can express his or her opinion, there is a risk to access dubious or even incorrect information. The employee must use critical thinking to assess the validity of the information before applying it to the company (Table 2).

As presented, SNS can be used as an auxiliary tool for the development of employees' technical and specific job-related skills. Companies should train them on how to search for relevant information, select the appropriate resolution and apply this knowledge in their work. In addition, companies must also develop communication skills in virtual environments, encompassing cultural differences in the case of multinational companies. Care with information leakage should also be considered.

Performance management

Performance management is the process through which companies ensure that employees are working toward organizational goals. The manager defines the employee's goals and work, develops the employee's skills and capabilities, continuously appraises the person's goal-direct behavior, and then rewards him or her in a fashion that hopefully makes sense in terms of both the company's needs and the person's career aspirations (Dessler, 2009).

Therefore, the performance appraisal provides crucial information on which the supervisor can make promotion and salary raise decision. It also develops plans for correcting deficiencies, reinforces correct work and also serves as a useful

Table 3
SNS and performance management.

Traditional function	Performance management	
	SNS influence	New challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited information • Unclear goals • Unclear evaluation methods 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transparency • Alignment of goals • Workforce monitoring (qualification) • Indicator of performance (procrastination, customer satisfaction) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information leakage

career-planning purpose. Appraisals today are most often web-based. It helps the manager and his or her subordinates develop performance objectives for the employee, and to conduct the annual review (Dessler, 2009).

In this sense, SNS can be used as a way to disseminate organizational, department and employees' goals. The purpose of information sharing is to inform people about a decision, direction or strategy with the goal of getting recipients to buy into the idea (Li, 2010). In addition, an employee who has clarity about the company's strategic objectives tends to establish professional and personal goals that are more aligned with the company. This release brings even greater transparency, because employees know which direction to follow and how they will be appraised.

Still about performance evaluation, SNS can also be used as performance indicators: (1) time spent by the employee in SNS may be an evidence of procrastination; (2) number of customer complaints on SNS as well as comments involving the company name may indicate the level of customer satisfaction. Accordingly, there are consulting firms specialized in search relevant comments and trends in the Internet.

Content posted on SNS permit that HR professionals monitor the employees and help them on management decisions. Organizations may follow employees' behavior on SNS, and based on information collected on LinkedIn, for example, HR people can identify which employees are investing in their careers through classes (language, leadership, management) and even who are dissatisfied with the work and seeking for new opportunities in other companies (Table 3).

As pointed out in the previous section, there is concern over the disclosure of confidential data, such as the salary and benefits. Even with internal SNS, it is necessary that certain information be restricted only to specific departments or people on managerial positions. Organizations should encourage leaders to disclose more information about the company directions, as well as methods of evaluation and reward.

Safety, health and engagement

In designing safe and healthy work environments, employers need to pay special attention to vulnerable workers, those who are unprepared to deal with hazards in the workplace, either due to lack of education, ill-fitting personal protective equipment, physical limitations, or cultural reasons. Furthermore,

organizations need to prevent job withdrawal – a set of behaviors with which employees try to avoid the work situation physically, mentally, or emotionally. In this process, job stress may entail diminished performance, and increased absenteeism, turnover, grievances, and health care costs (Noe et al., 2007).

To avoid such behaviors, organizations need to promote job satisfaction – a pleasant feeling resulting from the perception that one's job allows for the fulfillment of his or her work values. Thus, organizations need employees who are fully engaged and committed to their work. Work engagement is defined as a positive, fulfilling work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli, Salanova, González-Romá & Bakker, 2002; Schaufeli, 2006).

Accordingly, SNS may complement the off-line interactions and assist on the formation of social capital – benefits created by a person's location in a structure of relationship, which enable the achievement of certain ends (Burt, 2005; Coleman, 1988). The creation of connected networks through SNS may help employees to increase trust and sense of responsibility. Also, it may encourage reciprocity and willingness to contribute to the company (Steinfeld et al., 2009). A culture of collaboration allows for greater use of SNS experimentation and enables employees to be more engaged, have greater purpose, and feel that they make a difference (Jue et al., 2009).

In this sense, Yokoyama and Sekiguchi (2014) state that SNS have become a means of communication by which employees can directly connect to anyone, including those in high management positions. Thus, SNS may lower hierarchical barriers and generate greater connection between bosses, subordinates and people from different departments, which can facilitate the flow of information. However, organization should ensure that SNS technologies do not merely constitute another method for informing employees of organizational practice and of circulating organizational propaganda (Denyer, Parry & Flowers, 2011).

SNS may increase humanization, since it becomes possible to know a little more about the connections' personal characteristics. SNS may bring down hierarchical barriers, in which an intern can talk to the CEO about any matter, even those not related to the company such as soccer, for example. This approach can result in admiration and engagement by employees, since these can feel like part of the whole. Such engagement may also cause impact on marketing campaigns. Interaction between the workforce and their connections may promote discussions about products, services or news and put the company's brand in evidence.

Internal SNS may also provide a good source of information for human resources departments through profiles with up-to-date, relevant and dynamic data. The associated information relating to the connections, interests and activities of employees are suddenly available and archive-able by the company, providing new information sources and new possibilities for understanding the workforce (DiMicco et al., 2008).

Finally, SNS may help organizations to conduct surveys for assessing employee attitudes. Internet surveys shorten the time between asking a question and receiving the results if compared to paper-based surveys. If managers set aside time to review the results when they arrive, the organization can act on them

Table 4
SNS and safety, health and engagement.

Safety, health and engagement		
Traditional function	SNS influence	New challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited to physical presence • Limited to working hours 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase social capital • Bring barriers down • Workforce monitoring (dissatisfaction) • Means of communication (voice) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overexposure • Inappropriate content • Cyber bullying

quickly, demonstrating to employees that their opinions matter (Noe et al., 2007).

The use of SNS to increase social capital between coworkers also brings new concerns such as overexposure and possibility of knowing inappropriate things about others. Once the personal barriers are reduced, there is a risk that individuals with professional affinity might have problems to deal with the colleague's private life. In this sense, there is a concern about people posting content that is offensive, alienating, needlessly provocative, irrelevant, or otherwise out of line with the goals of the organization (McAfee, 2009). More recently, we have heard cases of cyber bullying in which communication technologies are used to harm other people in a deliberate and hostile manner.

The appropriate use of SNS may include the management of contacts in groups and the controlling of who can have access to certain content; the creation of different profiles for each circle of contacts; or simply discretion regarding the content of publications. Organizations should also monitor employees' online behavior to detect cases of cyber bullying, since it may affect workforce health, stress and engagement. Table 4 summarizes traditional function, SNS influence and new challenges in regard to safety, health and engagement.

Labor relations

A union is formed for the purpose of representing organization's members in resolving conflicts with employers concerning improvement of wages, working conditions, and work security. Labor relation is the management specialty emphasizing skills that managers and union leaders can use to minimize costly forms of conflict and to seek win-win solutions to disagreements (Dessler, 2009; Noe et al., 2007).

SNS assume an important role in the creation of groups and mobilization of people. For an extreme example, the popular manifestations arisen in Brazil in 2013 clearly demonstrate the power of SNS in mobilizing masses. Although Brazilians have historically been part of protest groups, SNS was a catalyst due to high number of users, greater scale of information sharing and complementation of individuals' ideas and interests. SNS also fulfill the role to document the sequence of events. By sharing a photo or video, it is possible to follow in real time the movement of people and propagate the ideal independently of traditional media. Likewise, this virtual movement can also reach organizations as employees are increasingly connected to SNS. Unions may use SNS to communicate, organize and engage workers

Table 5
SNS and labor relations.

Labor relations		
Traditional function	SNS influence	New challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bureaucratic • Time-consuming • Low interest 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mobilizing power • Documentation • Communication, organization, engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speed of information sharing

in search of better wages, working conditions and work security. Since there is no boundary between the connections, the content of such postings can reach people outside the organization, something that could hurt the company's image among consumers.

Accordingly, organizations need to follow up the employees' movements, ensure communication between the parties and thus avoid conflict. Organizations have to use SNS to monitor the fast dissemination of information so that responses to unions can be made quickly and efficiently. The speed of communication and the ability to provide accurate and reliable information may enable organizations to establish a constant and continuous relationship and a consequent approximation with their employees. Table 5 summarizes the influence of SNS on labor relations.

Conclusion

The present essay discussed how the activities under the responsibility of HR have adapted to the emergence of SNS. We could observe that many changes have already taken place or are still underway within organizations. This essay is an attempt to show to companies that SNS are an extension of people's social activities and it makes no sense to prohibit their use.

Thus, since HR carries out the personnel aspects of work, it is clear that SNS should be used as a complement to HR activities of recruiting, selecting, developing, evaluating, involving and engaging people. SNS are virtual platforms that help people to construct human relationships through online communication and allow for posterior data analysis of these interactions.

Along with the changes, SNS have brought new challenges for HR professionals, generating the need to develop specific policies to help to protect personal integrity, preserve confidential information and maintain company reputation (McAfee, 2009). Such policies instruct employees about the personal and corporate benefits arising from social networks formation and also the associated risks, like inappropriate content, personal safety, building security, data confidentiality or legal penalties (Li, 2010).

Every company needs to develop and put in place a policy for SNS to create structure, procedure and discipline. The benefit of having a code of conduct and disclosure policy is the clarity on how the company expects employees to behave in such environments, taking into consideration aspects of identity transparency, responsibility, confidentiality and common

sense (Li, 2010). From now, HR professionals should train the whole workforce in how, why, when and what to do with SNS in their day to day work, explaining the organization objectives, and how SNS is going to help achieve that objective (Hallam, 2013).

Recently, some companies have adopted the policy of Bring Your Own Device (BYOD), in which employees are allowed to bring personally owned mobile devices (laptops, tablets, and smart phones) to the workplace and have access to company information to perform their work. These companies believe that flexibility and empowerment increase employees' productivity. In this context, prohibition of SNS use during working hours no longer makes sense.

As employees bring their own devices, organizations will reduce the costs to acquire new equipment but, at the same time, they have to invest on technological infrastructure, as employees will consume network bandwidth. These companies should establish a policy for device utilization that involves legal department, as well as IT and HR, since risk of information leakage may increase. Beyond the issues presented in this essay, this policy should also cover decisions on which organizational applications will be available for what group of employees, and who will assist them to implement such devices on professional tasks.

To finish, it is important to mention the role of SNS in the international context. Since geographic barriers no longer exist in virtual environments, multinational companies should exploit this benefit in order to engage subsidiaries' employees and build an organizational identity. Thus, these companies can explore the diversity of background, stimulate the development of new technologies and manage world-spread knowledge. This alignment can collaborate in the management of International Human Resource.

Final considerations

This essay discussed how the emergence of SNS has brought new challenges for HR professionals. Some difficulties may have resulted in limitations that should be mentioned. Essays have some limitations inherent to its nature, as it consists of a logical and reflective explanation with a high level of interpretation and personal judgment. Although it brings greater autonomy for the author, it does not exempt the logical rigor and coherence of argument (Severino, 2007).

Finally, the present study brings theoretical contribution to the literature due to the lack of previous research about the utilization of SNS in the organizational context, especially those involving HR activities in Brazilian companies. It highlights how key HR activities are being affected by the emergence of SNS. Thus, HR professionals should use SNS as a complement of their activities, developing policies of use and monitoring the workforce online behavior.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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