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THE NEW WAY TO NETWORK FOR A JOB

SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES HAVE BECOME 'SUPERCHARGED' JOB SITES, THE NEW WAY FOR CANDIDATES AND EMPLOYERS TO GAIN UNIQUE INSIGHT AS THEY SEARCH

BY ERIK SHERMAN



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY WILLIAM DUKE

AFTER SEVEN YEARS AT Digitas in New York, Carl Sorvino wanted to move back to his home state of New Jersey. So this self-described opportunist kept his eyes open. "I had gotten burned on the typical job boards and tended to stay away from recruiters," Mr. Sorvino says.

Not just an interactive media pro, he was a real user. Connected to almost 200 people, he says LinkedIn and Facebook were "simply extensions of me." When he heard about Sigma Group, just over the George Washington

Bridge, he electronically reached out, looking into the company's reputation, the LinkedIn profile of agency president Shannon Morris, and the agency's clients and connections. Mr. Sorvino e-mailed Ms. Morris, who replied.

"Especially in Manhattan, I'd never speak with the president of the agency," he says. "To hear the story from the president in her own words...made me feel powerful, which I really enjoyed and liked." Last July, he moved to the 70-person Sigma, in Oradell, New Jersey—whose clients include Panasonic Toughbook, DeLonghi and Poggen Pohl—as associate creative director for interactive.

Although such social networking sites as Facebook, MySpace and LinkedIn are relatively new, online networking in recruiting hardly is. "I have been using the internet for [recruiting] at least 10 years," says Rebecca Loughlin, a senior recruiter at AutoTrader.com. Early electronic social interaction like special interest e-mail groups go back at least three decades.

However, increased database and search power made social networking sites supercharged job sites. Eric Schelling, director of talent acquisition at AutoTrader.com, remembers a recent job fair marketed for 30 days with social networking only. "We targeted a few companies that were doing downsizing," he says, and 150 high-quality people showed up—a number that would have taken months to reach with older approaches.

"You can do targeted [recruiting] without necessarily having a specialist recruiter in that

field," says Claire Lemata, president of global strategies at PR firm Waggener Edstrom. Instead of relying on one person's Rolodex, companies can search for targeted keywords as well as ask people with whom they already have connections for recommendations.

The results are effective. "If I contact, say, 10 people on LinkedIn whom I'm interested in pursuing for a particular position in AutoTrader, I'd hear back from seven or eight of them," says Rebecca Loughlin.

For recruiter at Sigma Group, even one "inside insight into like, 'One of my require about the ebook pages they wouldn't be happy A Group. The can- lubbing, and the re. Isn't exactly a

other user groups they belong to their page." Mr. is as to how tapped ik of professionals their career." e property of cor- t of the 15 people pths, five of them

looked at my prome, and I never even met with them," says Ms. Morris. Savvy marketing employees, wary of being sold a bill of goods, want to investigate where they might end up. During her most recent job search, Michelle Arsenault, now a client strategist at VIA Group, considered returning to a previous employer. "I contacted a former co-worker who said it wasn't what it was and maybe I should explore some other options." She got the heads up without having to put a foot out the door.

Given the ink MySpace, Facebook and LinkedIn receive, they can seem to be the world of social networking, but that view is short-sighted. "I have profiles on 16 different social networks," says Amybeth Hale, a Waggener Edstrom sourcing strategist. "There are industry-specific social networks. There are internal social