

Social Media as a Means to Meet the Challenges of Personnel
Management in the 21st Century.

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Abstract

Given the rapid change in technologies, including social media platforms, there are various advantages that can be analyzed with regard to public administration. These advantages include ideas on branding, promotion of services, accountability and feedback, and information/activity awareness. There is also potential for the usage of technological communications, known as social media, which, if used properly, can aid in meeting the challenges of public personnel management. Motivational factors, recruitment, retention, and overall employee satisfaction can illustrate reasons why public managers and administrators need to seriously take a look at social media. The article includes a link between social media and motivational factors, benefits of this interaction for the agency and employee, and recommendations for how public managers should approach this new horizon of technology.

Social Media as a Means to Meet the Challenges of Personnel

Management in the 21st Century.

There are enormous challenges in managing and leading public service organizations in the 21st century. The way we as individuals communicate and share ideas are drastically changing. With the advent of social media, managers and employers face major difficulties in assessing the proper ways of controlling or limiting exposure to the negative potentials of the technology. The usage of social media, however, has brought about a host of positives within the field of public administration. Some of these positives are customer relations, branding, informing the public, and promoting agency awareness. As I have yet to make it fully to the practitioner level, I want to examine the uses of this new medium at a practical level against a theoretical framework. Public agencies are always trying to attract the best and most highly motivated individuals. In addition managers have the task of attempting to motivate their employees. I want to understand the range of positives for personnel management that can occur if managers promote social media. How can this technology lead to positive outcomes for public administrators and managers with regard to personnel management?

Benefits of Social Interaction and Social Media

The first order of business is to define what I mean when I say social media. I mean it to say all of the various contexts that exist which we identify as social media platforms including: blogs, microblogging, social networking sites, professional networks, video sharing, and content-driven communities (Walaski, 2013). For brevities sake I will not endeavor to highlight each and every specific aspect of the social media realm, the particular sites or companies, or how each various one could be used for the different positive aspects that I will discuss.

Authors such as Abraham Maslow, Douglas McGregor, Frederick Herzberg, and David McClelland have all written about the motivational factors which exist including the various social aspects such as the needs for affiliation or belonging to a group, recognition of ones work, and positive affective relationships (Rainey, 2009). Part of the benefits to encouraging social media usage in the workplace can come from the ability to promote these factors listed above. Many organizations currently have structures which promote social aspects such as football pools, Christmas parties, and softball teams. Given the fact that charisma and happiness are both contagious through social interaction, I would also make the assumption that Public Sector Motivation is as well (would be an interesting research topic) (Cherulnik et. al., 2001).

There are a host of studies which scientifically highlight the importance of social interaction in public sectors and the usage/existence of Public Sector Motivation (Perry, 1996; Crewson, 1997; Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Ellemers et. al., 2004). In addition social scientists have also provided scientific evidence to support cohesion and the sense of belonging that social media can contribute towards especially in the younger generation (Dorum et. al., 2010; Ellison et. al., 2007). As has been illustrated social media can increase social cohesion which is a major motivational factor in both the public and private sectors. The key for managers facing the challenges of managing this changing workforce is how to incorporate social media and what are the realms of potential positives for personnel management?

What Goals Could Social Media Help Attain for Public Administrators?

Public administration is currently seeing a major shift in demographics as the baby-boomer generation is retiring and generation y is moving into the field. Different generations have different values and different ways of approaching things, even employment (Smola &

Sutton, 2002). These values exist within the context of how to find employment as well. As Jared Llorens highlights, public administrators need to make use of technologies as a means to reach younger generations and recruit the best individuals possible (2011). These technologies include aspects of social media, especially of the professional variety, to access individual's competence, work histories, personal activities, and character. In short this platform can help form an understanding about the level of Public Sector Motivation an individual may have.

As already noted there are benefits as far as motivation within the organization that social interaction, which can be fueled by social media, can provide. These interactions and communications tend to allow individuals to become friends with co-workers in a personal setting and can increase commitment to service (Paille', 2013). Internal usages may lead to sharing of ideas for progression or efficiency, and this can also lead to greater dialogue and communication within the agency. Social media also has the ability to provide the individuals with a means to communicate with the public. While this is good for the public, it is also a great motivational factor in that it allows individuals to share their contributions to society and express purpose, altruism, and recognition (Rainey, 2009). Managers simply need to promote and allow individuals to access and speak on behalf of the agency as to what their contributions are within the context of their job.

In addition as young members are joining the workforce I think it is important to note that they are influenced and attracted to types of environments which hold values similar to theirs (Smola, 2002). Part of the idea within allowing social media is that this happiness and cohesion that forms as motivational factors also attracts individuals to employers who support these activities. Employers can also expect to see higher levels of retention if their employees are happy, all the more reason to support the usage of social media (Jacobson & Tufts, 2012).

Keeping these positive attributes and potentials for social media in mind there are many recommendations that I would make to managers seeking to promote social media in the workplace.

Recommendations for Practice

The first recommendation I would have for individuals who wish to promote this activity is to not take social media as solely beneficial; there are drawbacks and hazards. Many writers have advised setting policies in place or hiring risk managers to establish policies (Jacobson & Tufts, 2012; Kenealy, 2013). I would also think about the types of social media you want to use in the workplace or when reaching out to potential employees. Sharing services such as GroupMe can promote great team communication, while Twitter or Facebook can promote personal connections between employees or allow employees to interact with the public. LinkedIn and services of that sort can allow users to promote the work of others and illustrate praise and acknowledgement. As we progress into the 21st century managing public personnel is going to have to adapt to these new technological changes. Administrators need to be aware of the benefits/hazards that can be brought about by social media and how to use the various platforms to their advantage.

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