

YouRock set to target young jobseekers

If you're in your 20s, your LinkedIn profile can look pretty sparse. YouRock aims to highlight skills, not experience, and to get youngsters into jobs

BY GARETH NAUGHTON

The pernicious conundrum that faces young jobseekers – how do you get a job without experience and vice versa – has been made more difficult by the increasing use of social media in recruitment.

If you are a school or university leaver, your LinkedIn profile is going to look pretty sparse compared to older people with a few years in the working world under their belts.

However, a new social network has been developed to address that gap by helping young people to highlight their skills. YouRock jobs is the brainchild of founder and chief executive Ian Clifford, who aims to make it a go-to for employers looking for young, enthusiastic employees.

"Despite there being a significant youth unemployment problem – it is about 30 per cent in Ireland and in many other countries around Europe it is higher – young people are not using employability profiles like LinkedIn," he said.

"There is a very simple reason for that. LinkedIn has an average age of 44. It is the oldest social network. If you talk to any young person under 24, you will be hard pressed to find one who is connected to LinkedIn. They perceive it to be an executive level network, but actually it isn't."

This wouldn't necessarily be a problem if HR departments were not using LinkedIn as part of their search for new talent. By virtue of the fact that most young people do not have a LinkedIn profile, they are at a disadvantage.

LinkedIn has been making concerted efforts to draw in university graduates. However, Clifford argues that the network disadvantages young people by default.

"They don't have an employment history and so their profile will look pretty empty. They don't have a big network so their connectedness looks pretty poor. As

a young person starting out on LinkedIn, it is a pretty unwelcome place. When your profile consists of a few qualifications and not a great deal else, it just doesn't look very good. Young people do not want to look bad, so they would rather not have a profile," he said.

YouRock was born out of the need to fill that gap for people under the age of 24. It works by building a profile based on what the person does in their daily life.

"Are they on a school committee; do they sell things on eBay; are they in the scouts; are they in a sports club? If they choose these various activities, it will come back and build a list of skills. There are about 130-odd activities in the system and 100 different skills mapped to those activities. With each activity they choose, the system builds a profile for them creating a personalised image of that person as being creative, or an analytical person or a technical person," Clifford said.

There are six categories – creative, analytical, technical, communications, leadership and organisation – and the site uses a hexagon motif to push the core skills forward. You can also upload details of education and employment history and have your skills endorsed by others. The site also enables users to link to examples of their work – YouTube videos, for instance.

It is currently in the beta phase of testing, but is open for users to start building profiles.

It went live three weeks ago and the local launch was supported and promoted by UPC Ireland during Get Online Week, an EU e-Skills for Jobs campaign aimed at raising awareness of the need to improve ICT skills. It has already been shortlisted for the European Commission's Social Innovation Competition.

It is fair to say that it is early days yet, and that the next few months will be spent attracting users and informing employers about the site.

Ultimately, the aim is that the site will achieve a critical mass whereby young jobseekers see it as a vital cog in their



Peter Cosgrove, director, CPL:
"Most employers still will want a CV. That is the number one thing."
Picture: Tony O'Shea



Ian Clifford, founder and chief executive, YouRock jobs

search, and employers see it as somewhere they can find good people.

Employers can search by country, city and skill for suitable candidates. It is also pan-European with profiles automatically translated into 13 languages (the aim is to increase this to 20), so if you are in France looking at an Irish user's profile, it will come up in French. The Irish version has been developed in conjunction with FIT – Fast track to IT – the industry body aimed at encouraging more people into the ICT sector.

Although the site is highlighting technology skills, it is not a niche network aimed at ICT geeks. The aim is to get young people generally to recognise and

see the value in their ICT skills.

"What we really want is for young people to recognise and identify that they actually have a whole wealth of ICT skills that they are not selling properly, that they are not really focusing on and that companies are crying out for," said Clifford.

"If they do stuff on Facebook, they just see that as their free time, but actually they have got some serious skills tied up inside that."

"There is some very subtle messaging that we are going to take with young people to encourage them to see that the skills they have probably have a technology focus and that there are technology opportunities out there."

'The jobs are out there'

Although youth unemployment is high and is, no doubt, a contributor to emigration, young people should not be discouraged in their job search, according to Peter Cosgrove, director at CPL Recruitment, who believes that social media sites like LinkedIn are only part of the process.

"I look at LinkedIn as one tool and most employers still will want a CV – that is the number one thing. That means to me that the challenge for 23-year-olds and 24-year-olds is exactly the same as it was ten years ago," he said.

Jobseekers need to ensure that they have the same ICT skills as someone of their age. They will have less experienced than older people, that is almost inevitable, but Cosgrove said that this is countered by the fact that many of the technologies that we are working with now have not been in existence long enough to really create a significant barrier.

"A lot of the new technologies on mobile and XML have only been around for a couple of years, so even if they can say they have one year's experience, nobody else has 15 years' experience because the technology has only been around for 18 months. I think that gives them a huge advantage that they are in an industry where things are moving more quickly," he said.

More and more employers are accepting that they may not get the perfect skill set that they are looking for, said Cosgrove, but they want

someone who is the right fit for the organisation, and that can work in younger generations' favour.

"Often they can work longer hours, they can be more flexible and they are not set in their ways. We have more and more employers saying, 'Look we know we are not going to get exactly what we want and, to be honest, we don't even know where we are going to be in two years in a positive and challenging way, so we need this person to be really flexible, really creative,'" he said.

"I actually think that, in a way, it has never been a better time for these people – they have always had the challenge of going up against people with more skills sets and it is harder for them to demonstrate their skills, but more and more employers are looking for the right attitude and cultural fit than ever before."

Crafting a good CV and putting in the hard work to find a job by getting out there to demonstrate that you are really hungry to get into the world of work will pay off.

"It is bleak when people believe it is bleak. To the person who says there are no jobs out there, I say there are 1.8 million in the Irish economy and you are looking for just one. That to me doesn't sound very bleak," said Cosgrove.

"Our employment monitor yesterday said there are 40 per cent more jobs this year than last year. If you come to it with the frame of mind that there are no jobs out there, you are not going to find one."

People Problems

Relationship Breakdown

How one small slip derailed a promising retail career

Retail chain Dunnes Stores has a reputation as a tough, business-like operation without too many frills. A good, hard-working and ambitious young manager – the sort who used to be called "suits" – can go far in the family-owned chain.

That was how it looked for Brendan O'Callaghan, who started working with Dunnes in 1996 when he was a teenager.

Five years later, he had finished a business course and returned to the retail chain as a junior trainee manager, moving between outlets and learning the business.

He was a good employee, and was soon appointed manager of a medium-sized shop, with 30 staff and some department managers reporting to him.

O'Callaghan was one of the group's best employees, according to annual performance reviews, and he was promoted to open new outlets, due to his excellent sales record. But sometimes, you can be just too good for your own good – as happened when O'Callaghan was asked

to help manage the launch of a new super-outlet, while also downsizing the existing Dunnes Stores on the same street.

Around 30 employees were transferred from his shop to the new one, and he was left to manage with 12 employees. If he needed more support, he'd have to hire and train himself.

Another problem also emerged. The level of returned items bought at the new outlet was high, but customers preferred to return them to his outlet, as its customer service/returns desk was on the ground floor and near a car park. In one week, O'Callaghan estimated that 90 per

“ Sometimes you can be too good for your own good ”



Gerald Flynn

cent of returned items had actually originated in the new, bigger outlet, and it seriously distorted his sales figures.

One Sunday, the shopping centre was busy, so O'Callaghan decided to open at 1.30pm, half an hour early. However, within those 30 minutes, customers arrived and returned €300 worth of items, while sales amounted to just €280.

O'Callaghan decided to rectify this, as he believed that had he not opened early, these returns would have been made to the new, bigger outlet.

He got the customer service till operator to record some

of the returns as sales, and then asked that another staff member bring them down the street to the new outlet and get a returns refund on them at the third-floor service desk.

This happened twice, and so €317 was recorded as sales and then cancelled out as returns in the new outlet. There was no financial loss to Dunnes Stores, but O'Callaghan felt it rebalanced his shop's Sunday sales.

His staff members were recognised by a security manager at the new outlet, however, who wondered why they were returning items which had apparently only been sold down the street a few minutes earlier.

The security manager contacted a regional manager and suggested that he review closed-circuit TV recordings.

The next day, when he saw the security manager visiting his shop, O'Callaghan contacted the regional manager to explain what had happened when he opened a bit earlier than scheduled.

It was too late. A disciplinary investigation was under way with a member of head office security and the regional manager. O'Callaghan ex-

plained his reasoning, admitted what he had done and apologised for having involved more junior staff, but argued that it was unfair to label his actions as fraud. He was under pressure to maintain sales levels, and made no personal gain.

He was, however, found guilty of gross misconduct, and his 15-year unblemished record as a manager counted for little. On appeal, it was held that, as a manager, he had a special duty to maintain policies and procedures. Dunnes Stores denied that it had pressurised O'Callaghan about sales or high levels of returned items.

Despite no financial loss to the business and his immediate admission and apology, the keen, hard-working manager was dismissed for breaching sales and refund policies. This was upheld by an Employment Appeals Tribunal, as he had lost the trust and confidence of his employers with one single slip that fateful Sunday afternoon.

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■ Nestlé Ireland has a new head of sales. Tamara Whitney is joining from Pernod Ricard in London where she was business unit controller for 18 months and field sales controller for 12 months.



■ Dr Johnny Ryan has been appointed executive director at the Innovation Academy in UCD. He joins from the Irish Times, where he was chief innovation officer for two-and-a-half years.



■ The Insurance Institute of Dublin has appointed a new president. Michael Fleming served as the IID's deputy president for 2013-2014. He is casualty claims manager at QBE European Operations, a position he has held since 2008.



■ Nicky Logue has been appointed general manager of the Gibson Hotel in Dublin. He joins from the Fitzpatrick Castle Hotel in Killiney, where he had been general manager for ten years, and a director since 2007.



■ ePubDirect has recruited Joe Lennon as its new chief technical officer. He had previously spent three years as head of technology at Core International, having been a product manager with the company for two years before that.



■ John Eves is the Insurance Institute of Ireland's new president for 2014-2015. Eves was appointed to the position on April 15. He is chief executive of Thornton & Partners Loss Adjusters

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