Social Media Recruitment 3.0

Toward a new paradigm of strategic recruitment communication

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Abstract

Purpose – Drawing on a unique case of a Web 3.0 recruitment campaign, the purpose of this paper is to explore how a Web 3.0 social media recruitment communication strategy influence, add value to and challenge conventional recruitment communication management.

Design/methodology/approach – The study draws on a reflexive dialogical research approach, which means that it is methodologically designed as a critical dialogue between on the one hand an empirical case and on the other hand theories on social media and strategic communication.

Findings – The study points toward a fundamental new approach to recruitment communication. The application of a Web 3.0 strategy entails what we term an open source recruitment strategy and a redirection of employee focus from work life to private life. These insights point toward ontologically challenging the basic assumptions of employees, work life and the employing organization.

Research limitations/implications – The paper presents a single-case study, which prepares the ground for larger, longitudinal studies. Such studies may apply a more long-term focus on the implications of applying Web 3.0 recruitment strategies and how they may be integrated into – or how they challenge – overall corporate communication strategies.

Practical implications – A turn toward Web 3.0 in recruitment communication affects the degree of interactional complexity and the level of managerial control. Furthermore, the authors argue that the utilization of a Web 3.0 strategy in recruitment communication put forth precarious dilemmas and challenges of controllability, controversy, ownership and power relations, demanding organizations to cautiously entering the social media 3.0 employment market.

Originality/value – This study indicates how the value and potentials of social media as facilitating participatory processes and community conversations can be strategically used in and fundamentally alter recruitment communication, and hence offers new insights into a paradigmatically new way of understanding what strategic social media recruitment is, can and do.

Keywords Social media, Strategic communication, Communication management, Communication strategy, Employee communication, Campaigns

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

The uses of social technologies and digital media (i.e. blogs, social networking sites, virtual game worlds, etc.) were initially introduced and creatively used within marketing and brand communications (Fournier and Avery, 2011; Hanna *et al.*, 2011). Currently, we are witnessing an increased awareness of and focus on the strategic potentials in adopting social media in employee communication processes, e.g. in recruitment and selection (Nikolaou, 2014), as mean to knowledge sharing (Gibbs *et al.*, 2013) and employee engagement (Rai, 2012).

Surveys indicate that companies increasingly turn to social media as a preferred recruitment source (e.g. Brotherton, 2012). HR professionals increasingly and extensively use social networking sites to screen and select applicants (Nikolaou, 2014; Smith and Kidder, 2010), e.g. in order to verify information provided by the applicants (Levashina, 2009)

or merely because of the social media accessibility to applicant information to a low cost (Jacobs, 2009). However, in a study on the perceived fairness of using social media for screening applicants in the hospital industry, results show that applicants generally rated the use of social networking sites as less fair which would ultimately affect their job intentions negatively (Madera, 2012). In addition, the study suggested that applicants perceived social networking sites as not providing any information relevant for either new or current employees. The study by Nikolaou (2014) supports this, as it shows a mismatch between job seekers' social media use and the recruiting companies. The results indicate that whereas companies increasingly turn to social networking sites in posting jobs, job seekers are using specific job boards more extensively and, in addition, consider them more effective than both LinkedIn and Facebook. The same study shows that social networking sites are effective in reaching passive job seekers compared to online job boards.

From a recruitment perspective, social media are also used as part of a corporate communication strategy to promote employer brand image (Sivertsen *et al.*, 2013; Carrillat *et al.*, 2014) and studies show that a favorable brand image positively affects recruitment outcome (e.g. DelVecchio *et al.*, 2007). A study by Allen *et al.* (2004) on whether and how the media used to communicate recruitment messages influence outcome concludes that the employed media strategy affects both cognitive and affective responses to the message as well as pre-hire outcome (including attitudes, intentions and behavior associated with joining the organization). The mere social media presence, thus, seems to positively affect corporate reputation, which again positively affect employer attractiveness, and which positively correlates with applicants' job intentions and their expectations toward the employment company (Sivertsen *et al.*, 2013; Carrillat *et al.*, 2014). Consequently, social media seem to make a difference in recruitment contexts and may positively affect recruitment processes and outcome.

Additionally, in a case study of a social media recruitment campaign, Henderson and Bowley (2010) have explored how organizations can build authentic dialogue and stakeholder "friendships" through social networking sites. The core idea of the campaign studied by Henderson and Bowley (2010) was to reposition the industry image and portray the industry as a "cool" career option by means of creating authentic dialogue and friendships between existing and potential employees, thus increase identification between the organization and potential job applicants and to develop a sense of shared community. However, the authors conclude that since the organization behind the campaign adopted a taken-for-granted assumption about social media and the use of social media as automatically developing relations and generating authentic conversation, the campaign failed to strategically utilize the social aspects of social media.

Accordingly, the question is not if social media are used as recruitment tools but rather how social media and online technologies are applied strategically in recruitment campaigns, and there seems to be a need for further knowledge on how to use this new tool optimally. Based on the review above, the paper proposes that the current predominant use of social media in recruitment context is driven by three overall assumptions:

(1) social media are first and foremost a channel to broader reach in recruitment processes;

(2) social media are manageable and controllable; and

(3) social media presence automatically gives rise to co-operative practice and fosters collaborative engagement.

In this paper, we use the in-game recruitment campaign entitled "CODEWARRIOR WANTED" as an exemplary case to discuss the shortcomings of the above-listed assumptions and suggest a paradigmatic shift in the use of social media in job recruitment communication, which breaks with the predominant assumptions guiding the current

use of social media in strategic recruitment communication as outlined above. Accordingly, the paper aims to explore the characteristics and nature of this new emerging recruitment communication practice and show how it fundamentally challenge previous assumptions on employee, organization and work life. However, the use of social media in recruitment communication is not entirely unproblematic, and hence the analysis also points toward some of the critiques and challenges emerging as employment relations transcend the conventional employee-employer relationship and includes private spheres, value identification and identify performance. These pitfalls are pivotal for managers to keep in mind before embarking the wonders of the recruitment communication practices.

The paper is structured as follows: in order to make a qualified discussion of social media practices, the first part theoretically outlines different approaches to social media by suggesting different notions of "sociality" in social media. Drawing on Fuchs *et al.* (2010), we outline three fundamentally different approaches to and usages of social media (Web 1.0, Web 2.0 and Web 3.0) and argue, by means of comparing this social media framework with the guiding assumptions derived from the introductory literature review, that the predominant use of social media in recruitment communication not only fails to utilize the strategic potentials and values derived from a Web 3.0 strategy, but also seems to have created blind spots toward the challenges that follows such recruitment strategy whether assumed or actually applied. On that note, we are able to formulate the research question of the study:

> *RQ1.* How does a Web 3.0 social media recruitment communication strategy influence, add value to and challenge conventional recruitment communication management?

In the second part, we introduce to the methodological considerations. Applying a research strategy of dialogical reflexivity (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2007, 2011), the research process is designed as a reflexive dialogue between on the one hand existing theories and on the other hand an empirical case, which continuously challenge the theories and push forward new avenues to pursue theoretically. Thus, the third section, which includes case description and analysis, consists of a dialogical interplay and discussion between case and theory as means to illustrate how the case challenges existing and renders new theoretical insights possible.

The fourth section includes a concluding discussion and suggests how the value and potentials of social media as facilitating participatory processes and community conversations can be strategically used and how it fundamentally alters current recruitment communication and challenges recruitment communication management. The study, thus, offers new insights into a paradigmatically new way of understanding what strategic social media recruitment is, can and do. The paper is rounded up with a critical discussion of implications for research and practice.

Social media and strategic recruitment communication

Social media is increasingly acknowledged as part of the field of strategic communication, namely, their contribution to the fulfillment of an organization's mission (Hallahan *et al.*, 2007) and is widely adopted within a variety of practice disciplines, including marketing and brand communication (Hanna *et al.*, 2011), investor and financial communication (Koehler, 2014), political communication (Macnamara, 2012), public relations (Kent, 2013), crisis communication (Schultz *et al.*, 2011), CSR communication (Kesavan *et al.*, 2013) and organizational communication (Huang *et al.*, 2013). Research generally emphasizes how the usage of social media in strategic communication adds value to organizations as it enables corporations to accomplish citizenry collaboration and transparency and thus to perform democratic ideals in both corporate and governmental contexts

(Avery and Graham, 2013; Kent, 2013), to facilitate stakeholder dialogues (Koehler, 2014), to empower consumers (Füller *et al.*, 2010) and to facilitate co-creation and participatory processes (Novani and Kyoichi, 2012).

However, the notion of social media adoption in strategic communication seems to rest on an underlying assumption of social media being social *per se* and collaborative and transformative by nature (Grunig, 2009). By virtue of its social presence, social media connect people, create democratic processes and collaborative innovations – and ultimately corporate value. However, as argued by Fuchs *et al.* (2010), social media encompass different forms of sociality, which manifest as three social media modes with respect to a distinction of different social media qualities: a tool for thought (Web 1.0), a medium for human communication (Web 2.0) and networked digital technologies that support human co-operation (Web 3.0). The distinction builds on the idea of knowledge as a threefold process encompassing elements of cognition, communication and co-operation, realizing that "all communication processes require cognition, but not all cognition processes result in communication, and that all co-operation processes require communication and cognition, but not all cognition and communication processes result in co-operation" (Fuchs *et al.*, 2010, p. 43). Consequently, the authors argue that a Web 3.0 strategy is the ultimate and most efficient utilization of the qualities of social media. The three different approaches to social media will naturally manifest in different communication strategies and tactics, as they promote various goals and objectives. Therefore, the distinctions can serve as a fruitful frame for understanding and systematizing current organizational use of social media in strategic recruitment communication.

In order to distinguish between the different approaches to the notion of "sociality" in social media, i.e. understanding of what makes social media social, Fuchs *et al.* (2010) draw on classical social theories and define "sociality" from within a Durkheimian, Weberian and Tönniesien perspective.

The Durkheimian, or structure-based view on sociality defines social media as fixed and objectified social structures, imposed upon humans, which form and guide actions and behaviors. Applied to a recruitment communication contexts, the rationale of a structure-based use of social media is that organizations must be present where (potential) employees are, and thus, social media represent a basic term for navigating within the social world and therefore include no strategic considerations.

The Weberian, or action-based view on sociality draws on the categories of social actions and relations, suggesting that in order to be considered a social relation, meaningful symbolic interaction – i.e. communication – must take place between involved actors. Weber states, that "not every type of contact of human beings has a social character; this is rather confined to cases where the actor's behaviour is meaningfully oriented to that of others" (Weber, in Fuchs *et al.*, 2010, p. 45). In other words, sociality is defined in terms of interaction and communication, and social media technologies are defined by means of their ability to support communication processes between relevant people and content. Applied to a recruitment communication context, the rationale of an action-based use of social media is that organizations are able to reach potential applicants across time and space and potentially build relationships and positive brand reputation through dialogue and communication of (employer) brand values.

Social media presence may create a positive employer brand image and expand the potential pool of job applicants (e.g. Carrillat *et al.*, 2014). However, social media are not social *per se* and do not automatically create candidate engagement and collaborative relationship as the case study by Henderson and Bowley (2010) also suggests. According to Fuchs *et al.* (2010), the Tönniesian, or co-operation-based view on sociality draws on the

notion of "sociality as community," hence the feeling of togetherness, values and shared meanings. Thus, social media is valuable insofar as it "enables the social networking of humans, brings people together and mediates feelings of virtual togetherness" (p. 49). Though potentially carrying strong strategic values, such communities and feelings of togetherness do not automatically emerge in recruitment contexts. Rather, it requires strategic efforts to utilize the community values and potentials of social media. Fuchs *et al.* (2010) argue "that the turn towards Web 3.0-technologies that foster co-operation should not only remain a technological turn, as for example the Semantic Web or wikis, but needs to be accompanied by a transformation towards a fully co-operative society" (p. 57). The quote highlights that a fully utilization of the Web 3.0 qualities and characteristics assumes fundamental corporate changes and an alternative understanding of how power is distributed and strategic value is created (cf. Macnamara and Zerfass, 2012).

Comparing the social media framework provided by Fuchs *et al.* (2010) with the guiding assumptions derived from the introductory literature review, we argue that the predominant use of social media in recruitment communication is characterized by a structural and communicative utilization of social media, while at the same time assuming the values of a Web 3.0 strategy. We therefore argue, that current practice fails to utilize the strategic potentials and values derived from a fully integrated co-operative use of social media, and current practice seems to have created blind spots toward the challenges that follows a Web 3.0 recruitment strategy whether assumed or actually applied. Following this, we propose the following research question:

RQ1. How does a Web 3.0 social media recruitment communication strategy influence, add value to and challenge conventional recruitment communication management?

Methodology

The paper argues that the in-game recruitment campaign entitled "CODEWARRIOR WANTED" represents a unique example of a Web 3.0 in-game job recruitment campaign, as it breaks with the predominant assumptions guiding the current use of social media in strategic recruitment communication as outlined above. Hence, it provides the opportunity to explore and discuss how a Web 3.0 social media recruitment communication strategy influences, adds value to and challenges the existing strategic recruitment communication practices in general and recruitment communication management in particular.

Methodologically, the study of the "CODEWARRIOR WANTED" case applies a strategy of dialogical reflexivity (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2007, 2011). Alvesson and Kärreman (2011) view "empirical material as a resource for developing theoretical ideas through the active mobilization and problematization of existing frameworks" (p. 4). In other words, they argue that theory development is produced "through recognizing the fusion of theory and empirical material in the research construction process" (pp. 3-4), thus, dissolving the classic methodological polarization between inductive and deductive research designs. The notion of induction and deduction builds upon a clear separation of theory and empirical material in the research process. Given our reflexive dialogical methodology, the "CODEWARRIOR WANTED" case is not used to verify or test existing theory or to provide a "thick description,", but to illustrate new theoretical issues and challenges through empirical material (Stake, 2005; Thomas, 2011). Berg (2009) introduces the notion of a spiral research approach, arguing that the research process is continuously pushed forward in the interplay between empirical material and existing theoretical constructs as new questions keeps arising as a result of the interplay. Consequently, the role of the empirical material in reflexive methodologies is to "challenge, rethink and illustrate theory" (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2011, p. 4). Accordingly, the "CODEWARRIOR WANTED" case is chosen purposively as it offers important learning points (Stake, 2005) when it comes to challenging

and broadening our theoretical knowledge of social media recruitment communication. In other words, we argue that the "CODEWARRIOR WANTED" case challenges predominant theoretical assumptions on the use of social media in recruitment communication.

The empirical material consists of a two-minute long digital case presentation provided by the recruiting company (available on YouTube) as well as user comments on YouTube[1]. The case study is methodologically designed as a critical dialogue between on the one hand the empirical case and on the other hand theories on social media and strategic recruitment communication. As the case continuously challenges the conventional understandings of how online media and social technologies are approached and utilized in the recruitment of new employees, new exploratory questions continue to arise, offering new insight into understanding the characteristics and strategic potentials in adopting a Web 3.0, which thus not only understands social media as a new medium by employing its structural and communicative characteristics, but also incorporates the co-operational dimensions of social media. Subsequently, the paper discusses the strategic challenges as well as ethical concerns in adopting a Web 3.0 strategy in recruitment contexts.

"CODEWARRIOR WANTED": a Web 3.0 recruitment communication campaign

In 2011, Uncle Grey, a Danish division of the worldwide advertising agency Grey, introduced a new, creative approach to social media recruitment, as it turned to online social gaming and merged itself into the gaming community to recruit a front-end developer. Having had no luck in job advertisement via traditional media channels (newspapers, job boards and industry websites), the agency had to rethink its recruitment strategy. An analysis of the ideal potential employee touch points revealed a high affinity toward online gaming, and consequently the agency moved their recruitment campaign into the digital space (Plate 1).

To ensure that their recruitment message would fit unobtrusively in the digital gaming environment, Uncle Grey teamed up with the most popular Team Fortress 2 players to serve as ambassadors for the Uncle employer brand by adding Uncle.dk/developer to their avatar profile name (Plates 2 and 3).

Like a peer referral, players added "CODEWARRIOR WANTED" posters within the game to promote the job and recommend players to apply for the job. The posters provided a direct link to apply for the job (Plate 4).

Within the first week of the campaign, Uncle Grey received more than 50 qualified applications and ultimately hired a highly qualified and experienced front-end developer as a result of the campaign.

From traditional HRM to open source recruitment strategy

Social media are often used as a key element in viral marketing strategies or so-called word of mouth/mouse strategies (Grifoni *et al.*, 2013) to spread corporate and brand messages among relevant stakeholders (e.g. Kesavan *et al.*, 2013). In marketing communications, such strategies are driven by the selection of loyal customers – or fans – to act as brand ambassadors to spread and circulate brand narratives among peers (e.g. Hanna *et al.*, 2011). Similarly, in an HR context, Henderson and Bowley (2010) describe how an organization initiates employee spokespersons – or ambassadors – to enter into dialogue with potential candidates on a selected social networking site as an integrated part of its recruitment strategy in order for them to experience the organizational culture and values through current employees, hence creating an authentic relationship and organizational identification. Thus, current employees are used strategically as culture bearers and company representatives.

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However, the "CODEWARRIOR WANTED" case takes on a different approach as the company "outsources" its voice and values to be represented beyond organizational employment. As a result, the company and its cultural values are not constituted by means of its current employees; rather the company represents and manifests itself through
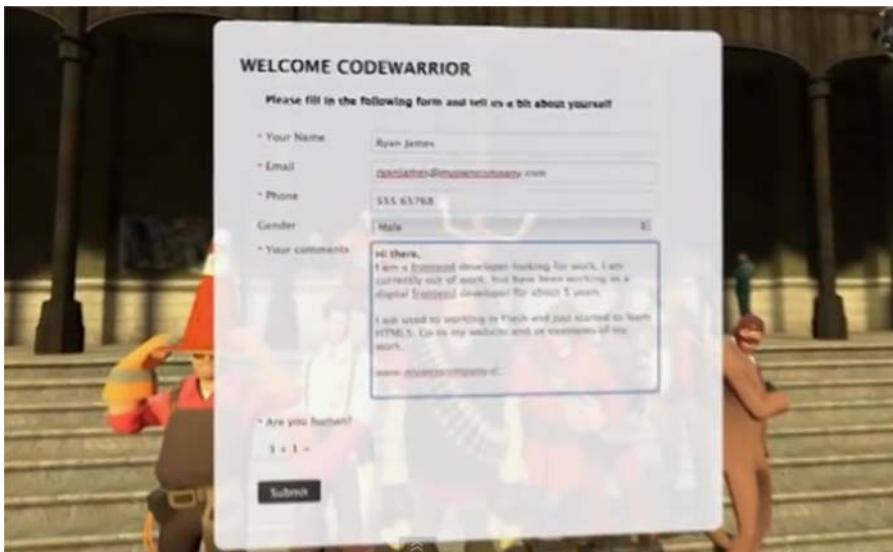
peripheral external actors by merging itself into relevant markets and circulating conversations. Consequently, the "CODEWARRIOR WANTED" case performs what is suggested to be termed an open source recruitment strategy, i.e. a recruitment strategy, where strategic decisions on recruitment are made in collaboration with the total brand ecosystem, beyond HR and marketing departmental walls and organizational barriers. Fournier and Avery (2011) introduce the idea of open source brand management, arguing that whereas traditional branding rests upon the notion of differentiation, i.e. claiming and occupying a market position different from those of its competitors through unique value propositions, branding in open source contexts is about creating resonant cultural conversation. This idea seems transferrable to a recruitment and employment context when

looking at the "CODEWARRIOR WANTED" case. In addition, several researchers argue that the notion of empowerment and brand co-creation not only adhere to consumers, but to stakeholders in general (Hatch and Schultz, 2010) and employees in particular (e.g. Aggerholm *et al.*, 2011).

Hence, we argue, that the "CODEWARRIOR WANTED" case provides an example of the creation of cultural resonance in recruitment communication as it seamlessly integrates the recruitment message into an existing online community culture of passionate gamers; a culture which the company aims to create organizational affinity toward, thus ultimately becoming the natural choice of employer for community members. The case seeks to tap into naturally occurring social conversations among potential employees, hence (potentially) creating organizational identification through cultural and community resonance.

From work life to social life

The performance of an open source recruitment strategy suggests a broader perception of the organizational boundaries in that such a strategy inherently turns the organization into a brand ecosystem (Bergvall, 2006) where internal and external stakeholders converge. Plate 5 illustrates how stakeholders converge in the "CODEWARRIOR WANTED" case, as the Team Fortress 2 avatar discursively articulate himself as part of the organization with the use of the pronoun "we" ("*we* are looking for a front-end developer" – our italic), though not actually employed by the company in a traditional sense.

As the organization expands its organizational boarders, it becomes increasingly difficult to make a clear distinction between the organization and its surroundings; between the corporate world and society; between work life and private life. Consequently, with the performance of an open source recruitment strategy, the value creation activities occur within the (employment) market, detached from the organization, and, organizational values are performed and enacted in community relations in non-corporate settings. The "CODEWARRIOR WANTED" case thus builds upon a strategy where organizational identification and professional sympathy with the organization is created beyond organizational boarders; detached from the organizational culture. Or it could be suggested that the notion of organizational culture is enacted beyond traditional organizational membership. Hence, authentic dialogues and relationship building between current employees and potential applicants is not what is assumed to create organizational

Plate 5.
Screen dump from Team Fortress 2: an online conversation between two players (an Uncle spokesperson and a potential employee) on the job posters, followed by an invitation to apply for the job
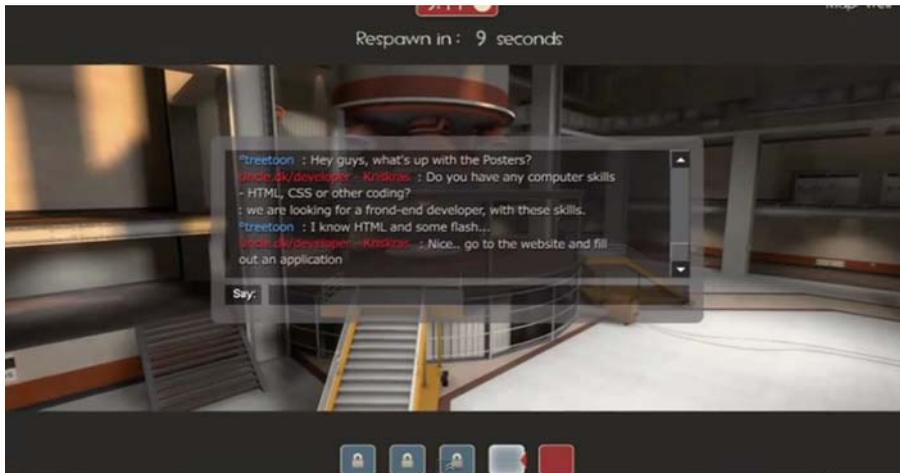
identification (as with the case provided by Henderson and Bowley, 2010). Rather, the gaming community in general and the assigned Team Fortress 2 players create a link between the job seekers and the Uncle Grey brand, which renders new forms of organizational identification possible. In other words, we argue that organizational identification is potentially created because the potential job candidate identifies with the community and its members and not the corporate culture and values as such. The Uncle Grey brand broadens the notion of organizational culture by merging itself into an alternative cultural setting. Consequently, the creation of employment values is detached from the organization and created by means of this alternative culture through existing social relations and conversations between the Team Fortress 2 gamers. Accordingly, the employing organization do not enter into recruitment conversations with potential applicants; rather the organization approaches (using key Team Fortress 2 gamers as extended organizational members or recruitment ambassadors) the job seekers as they are in the midst of performing a private, non-work-related role.

Aggerholm *et al.* (2011) suggest that one of the most important concerns for employer branding in sustainable organizations is to understand, interact with and address employees as whole human beings and not simply as strategic resources acting as channels to markets and defined by means of their embodiment of corporate values. Along this line of thinking, Bourne *et al.* (2009) rearticulate the employee as human beings with moral, values and opinions beyond the employee identity. From a recruitment perspective, and as the "CODEWARRIOR WANTED" case illustrates, such reconceptualization of the employee redirects the communicative focus. Whereas traditional recruitment messages seek to convey job descriptions and communicate corporate values to potential job candidates, the case suggests an alternative path to communicate realistic job previews through insights into the social and private life of the potential employees as human beings: who are they, what do they do in everyday life, what are their passions and interests? Not as employees and hardworking laborers but as human beings.

These insights manifest themselves in the strategic social media choices as a corporate presence where the potential candidate performs his social identity. Such presence carries certain employment expectations. Thus, a strategic utilization of social media is not a mere creative broadening of media channels possibilities, but carries significant meaning and value in itself, influencing the nature of and expectations toward the unwritten, mutual psychological contract that operates the exchange relationship between both parties and form the basis for every term of employment (Rousseau, 1989). As an alternative to the more traditional transactional and relational psychological contracts, Thompson and Bunderson (2003) introduce the concept of an ideological psychological contract, which is constituted by the notion of the organization as one that is committed to and invests in a certain value-based cause, or advocates certain ideological principles. The "CODEWARRIOR WANTED" case can be seen as a way of carrying such ideological and value-based expectations to the job through its social media strategy. As a strategic choice, the in-game presence as means to search for new employees suggests a well-balanced employment relation, where the employee will have the time and energy to pursue and outlive private passions. In other words, the strategy sets up an expectation of a balanced relation between work life and private life and thus invites the employee into the organization as a whole human being and not a mere strategic resource and corporate asset.

Reciprocally, the in-game recruitment strategy implies an expectation toward the potential employee to invest himself as a whole human being and not merely his professional competencies. However, different studies suggest, that such focus on embracing the whole human being in the employment relation does not come without critiques. In a study by Land and Taylor (2011) on corporate and managerial interventions in private and leisure lives, the authors introduce to the company Ethico, branded as an

environmentalist and value driven company with an authentic bottom-up culture, where employees live the brand and "managerial discourses suggest that work and life should be balanced by making "work" a place where you can really be yourself" (p. 36). As part of an incentive system, the Ethico company introduced a "too nice to work day" voucher system, which rewarded exceptional performance (i.e. employees working especially hard during sales or Christmas) with a voucher for a day off over and above the standard annual leave entitlement. Still, the authors observe that many employees have several vouchers in stock, which could suggest that in reality employees had not found a valid reason to take a day off or had not been able to negotiate the time away (p. 49). Interestingly, the authors further observe a blog entry from an employee who had cashed in a "too nice to work" voucher to go sea kayaking, which was seemingly validated by means of writing a blog entry. Thus, the employee may not have been at her desk, however, her activities did contribute to reinforcing the brand value. The authors provocatively reflect: "what would happen if an employee took a day off to lie in bed, smoke, masturbate, watch day-time TV, or organize a trade union branch" (p. 49), implying that the notion of embracing the whole individual is a balance between employee emancipation and corporate control of employee's lives in accordance with brand values.

The case thus points toward some of the critiques and challenges emerging as employment relations transcend the conventional employee-employer relationship and includes private spheres, value identification and identify performance. And the case points towards the importance of employer and employee to enter into an open dialogue to match their respective expectation toward the employment relationship. Such employment dialogues have always been crucial, however, the introduction of social media reinforces their importance, since the usage of social media is not just a questions of channel selection and market reach, but carries with it fundamental reassessments about employees, work life and organizations.

Concluding discussion: toward a Web 3.0 social media recruitment strategy

In this paper, we draw on the social media vocabulary of Fuchs *et al.* (2010), who argue that social media encompasses different modes of and approaches to sociality. On that notion, they distinguish between Web 1.0, Web 2.0 and Web 3.0, reflecting a development toward a broader and more extensive understanding of the concept of sociality, ranging from social media as means of cognition, to social media as modes of communication and finally to social media as co-operation, articulating social media as facilitating community relations and establishing a sense of shared community among its members.

As a basic strategy and drawing on a Web 1.0 approach, the paper argues that the CODEWARRIOR WANTED case illustrates and acknowledges new means to distribute recruitment messages and consequently new ways of reaching potential employees. In line with this, the case illustrates how digital media and social technologies represent a new channel in the recruitment communication mix. From a Web 2.0 approach, the usage of social media enables the employer to reach potential employees and subsequently create basic forms of meaningful interaction. It can be argued that the case not only demonstrates the establishment of communication between the organization and the individual job candidate, but also facilitates meaningful interaction and dialogue between human beings, thus offering an ontologically new way of understanding what recruitment communication is and is capable of.

The "CODEWARRIOR WANTED" case study also illustrates a paradigmatic shift toward a Web 3.0 (Fuchs *et al.*, 2010) within recruitment communication, which can be summarized into the following four determining and interrelated characteristics:

- the focus on job competencies as part of a personal and private passion breaks down the conceptual line between an employee and a human being;

- the focus on the potential employee outside employment related contexts breaks down the distinction between work hours and social life;
- the focus on employment messages merged into private and social online communities breaks down the boundaries between the organization and its surroundings; and
- the focus on the values and relations of an online (gaming) community breaks down the notion of employees as individuals and reinstall the employees as networked and social human beings.

Fuchs *et al.* (2010) argue that a turn toward Web 3.0 ontologically changes the understanding of human actions and relations, and assumes fundamental corporate changes as well as an alternative understanding of how power is distributed and value is created. Drawing on the above, we suggest that a social media 3.0 recruitment strategy thus breaks with fundamental notions of employees (as the notion of employees as individuals are rearticulated into networked and social human being), of work life (as the distinction between work hours and social life is dissolved) and of the employing organization (as the boundaries between the organization and its surroundings are broken down).

In the following, we discuss how a Web 3.0 social media recruitment campaign such as the "CODEWARRIOR WANTED" case fundamentally influences and challenges traditional recruitment communication strategy and practice.

From organizational control to communicative complexity
Introducing social technologies and digital media in strategic recruitment communication adds considerable complexity to the planning processes and execution of recruitment communication. On the one side, when organizations begin to understand potential applicants beyond representing a homogenous group of raw brainpower towards being whole, human beings living heterogeneous lives and performing non-work-related identities, the pool of applicants becomes more diffuse and blurred, hence the communication network becomes more complex. On the other side, entering into dialogue with such complex communication network also decreases complexity in terms of vagueness and diffusiveness (Nothhaft and Wehmeier, 2007) as the understanding of applicants' stakes, interests and life worlds become more accurate. At first glance, from the inside constraints of the organizational walls, the pool of applicants might seem as a diffuse, impenetrable collective entity, however, through interaction and co-operation facilitated by use of Web 3.0 technology, the pool of applicants come to appear a nuanced system of subsystems and actors with coalitions and interest (of which the Team Fortress 2 community is just one of these systems).

From a sociocybernetic viewpoint as formulated by Nothhaft and Wehmeier (2007), "persuasion" of (potential) employees has its limits in the complex world of Web 3.0. The idea of controllable persuasion might work in clearly delimited, manageable groups under the authority of the HR manager; however, it is challenged in an inherently co-operation based, pluralistic and complex social network as the Team Fortress 2 community. Within such networks it is impossible to control social and cultural phenomena such as the employer brand or company reputation (Nothhaft and Wehmeier, 2007).

In addition, it is not the (HR) employees, who act as "ambassadors" but third persons with no direct organizational attachments, obligations or psychological contracts, which adds even further to the authenticity and credibility of the communication, but also implies a redoubtable lack of communicative control. It is of course possible to take precautionary, monitoring measures with regard to the "life" of the "CODEWARRIOR WANTED" poster within the game, however, the entire purpose with and flow of communication mediating

feelings of virtual togetherness (Fuchs *et al.*, 2010) would be short-circuited if the organization interfered in the interactions and co-operation characteristic of a fully co-operative Web 3.0 society.

From creative execution to ethical balancing
As the traditional boundaries between an organization and its surroundings are broken down when applying a Web 3.0 social media strategy in recruitment, the recruitment messages of the organization unconsentingly invade the private sphere of (potential) applicants without the knowledge and consent of the involved actors, which give rise to ethical concerns. Martin and Smith (2008) discuss the notion of stealth marketing, defined as "the surreptitious marketing practice that fail to disclose or reveal the true relationship with the company that produces or sponsors the marketing messages" (2008, p. 45). Stealth – or covert – marketing thus means that the intention of the message or sender's identity is not openly displayed and states as premise that word of mouth/mouse is an effective promotion tool and that peer group recommendation is an ultimate marketing weapon (Kaikati and Kaikati, 2004). It can therefore be difficult to distinguish between creatively sophisticated marketing executions and ethically challenging activities.

Martin and Smith (2008) analyze three cases of stealth marketing based on the concepts of deception (e.g. whether it fails to disclose the commercial or corporate affiliation of the message), intrusion (e.g. whether it violates the privacy of the involved actors) and exploitation (e.g. whether it exploits the goodness of mankind). The analysis shows that from a non-consequentialist ethical perspective, there may be positive intentions related to the use of stealth marketing, including sharing knowledge on useful information about product or services, and entertainment. However, from a consequentialist ethical perspective, all consequences of the action must be taken into consideration, including the potential creation of denigration of the brand and a heightened distrust in business in general (Martin and Smith, 2008, p. 48). The authors also point toward a more far-reaching and socially harmful consequence as stealth marketing may potentially create inauthenticity among and ultimately distrust in human relationships as a consequence of the increasingly widespread commercialization of human interaction.

Consequently, it seems relevant to ask whether the "CODEWARRIOR WANTED" case is an example of what one might term stealth recruitment? On the one hand, it can be argued that the recruitment messages and posters appearing in the game do not try to cover their corporate agenda – on the contrary, the messages rest on the ability of the potential job candidate/player actually being able to identify the employment company and thus ultimately apply for a job. In order to reach communication objectives, the message must necessarily be decoded as a recruitment message. However, when browsing through user comments on the case on YouTube, several comments suggesting skepticism toward the placement of recruitment messages in the game can be found (see Box 1).

Box 1. Selection of negative user comments and responses to the "CODEWARRIOR WANTED" case presentation on YouTube

"WTF is this shit. I am being marketed to in games by other companies? Looks like I will have to put my posters up covering theirs"
"fuck this shit, i DON'T WANT fucking ads on my tf!"
"This is actually a pretty neat one-off thing, but i hope it doesn't become standard for shooters to get plastered with ads of any kinds, even ones made by skilled players"
"I will cover these ads with my own spray to the best of my ability if and when I see them"

In addition, Grimes (2013) suggests a general trend toward a commercialization of digital gaming, most prominently including product placements and in-game advertisement. The "CODEWARRIOR WANTED" case indicates that the commercialization also includes other corporate messages, e.g. recruitment messages. The gamers strongly react to the messages and the comments (see Box 1) point toward a feeling of intrusion and exploitation among the users. At best, the stealth recruitment messages create distrust and skepticism toward the (employer) brand and recruiting company, resulting in users covering the corporate messages (as the comments suggest). However, in worst case, the commercialization creates a general distrust between the users and thus potentially violates the very essence of the online gaming worlds, i.e. the strong sense of community. Consequently, what creates value for a Web 3.0 social media recruitment strategy is what ultimately may also be destroyed by the strategy.

Accordingly, we can conclude that from a strategic communication perspective, a turn toward Web 3.0 in recruitment communication affects the degree of interactional complexity and the level of managerial control. Hence, we conclude that the utilization of a Web 3.0 strategy in recruitment communication put forth precarious dilemmas and challenges of controllability, controversy, ownership and power relations, demanding organizations to cautiously entering the social media 3.0 employment market.

Naturally, this paper has its limitations since the above conclusions are drawn on the basis of a single-case study, and as such we only offer a limited contribution to the initial understandings of how a Web 3.0 social media recruitment communication strategy influences, adds value to and challenges traditional strategic recruitment communication management. Hence, the conclusions may as such call upon a need for larger, longitudinal case studies, including studies on the long-term implications of applying Web 3.0 recruitment strategies and their integration with or challenges of overall corporate communication strategies. Such studies on the long-term strategic values and implications will contribute to pushing the boundaries and traditional assumptions in terms of how social media can be used strategically in relation to value creation and facilitation of truly participatory processes and community conversations.

Note
1. The "CODEWARRIOR WANTED" case and pictures are used and reprinted by kind permission of Lars Samuelsen, Chief Strategy Officer & Head of Digital, Uncle Grey, Aarhus, Denmark. An agency prepared case presentation can be viewed at www.youtube.com/watch?v= PTAdGBg1TvY.

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