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TalentSky fights against employee poaching with skills-based talent network

The rise of social networking caused a big problem for companies — and it isn't about employees wasting time on Facebook.

“LinkedIn actually caused a retreat in users from internal human resources and talent systems,” says Rick Devine, founder of TalentSky, a new professional network that counts major names like EA (NASDAQ: EA), SAP (NYSE: SAP), Target (NYSE: TGT) and eBay (NASDAQ: EBAY) among its client base. “Over the course of five to 10 years, all of a sudden employers were struggling to manage their own talent within their own systems.”

Particularly for large companies — Target has 350,000 employees, Devine notes — that can create a huge blind spot for human resource divisions.

“Organizations are looking for insights and visibility into their own talent,” Devine says. “The industry was really stuck.”

Devine, a longtime Silicon Valley talent consultant who famously introduced Steve Jobs to his eventual successor Tim Cook at Apple (NASDAQ: AAPL), saw an opportunity for a new kind of professional network designed equally for the needs of both companies and their employees.

For companies, that means being able to quickly mobilize and “upskill” workforces amidst rapidly changing technology, and being able to standardize professional development across industries.

That's filling a void that has already attracted several Fortune 500 companies, scrambling for a better way to manage and develop their employees, to the platform. On its newly formed board of advisers, TalentSky has executives from a broad range of companies, among them Airbnb, Starbucks (NASDAQ: SBUX), Gap (NYSE: GPS) and Motorola (NYSE: MSI).

“It's about how do we move people into new roles, how do we align people to our own demands?” says Devine, who recently raised \$10 million to build out the platform. “That's a very important problem. It's about efficiency; it's about helping people, and it's about retention.”

TalentSky is an open network where anyone can view individuals' profiles, and makes money by charging companies for profile authentication. But unlike LinkedIn (NYSE: LNKD), “it's not about recruitment,” says Devine.

Job postings are explicitly banned within the app, and “you will not see job ads or mass emails. You can't apply for a job through TalentSky,” he says.

Rather, the network is intended to promote retention through professional development, an increasingly critical area for both companies and employees.

Professional development is “more important than money or title,” says Devine — especially for millennial workers accustomed to rapidly evolving technology.

“Companies never got behind LinkedIn because it was about selling recruiters access,” Devine says. “But the world of work is changing, and that's something the industry has to accept.”



▲
TalentSky founder Rick Devine with Judy Dutton, Director Talent, eBay

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