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TalentSky Is Building A Professional Network With A Focus On Verified Skills

Rick Devine has spent more than a decade as an executive recruiter, and even introduced Steve Jobs to his eventual successor Tim Cook back in 1998.

Now he's working on a startup called TalentSky, aiming to address some of the big problems he sees in the hiring landscape — specifically, the “skills gap,” where employers can't find job applicants with the skills they need. For Devine, the issue is that “the change in the complexity of work, or the evolution of work, is accelerating at a faster rate than the ongoing development of workers.”

TalentSky is supposed to make it easier for individuals to showcase the skills they already have. Those skills are verified by ratings from colleagues, and not just the random “Yeah, this person knows about journalism!” recommendations you might find elsewhere. (Uh, no offense to the people who give me positive ratings on LinkedIn.)

On TalentSky, you rate someone's skills on a scale from “basic” to “expert.” The individual ratings are anonymous, but to rate someone you have to be connected through at least one of their “work moments.” The ratings are also weighted, so presumably a colleague or boss who's worked closely with you for years will have a bigger effect on your overall scores than someone who collaborated with you once.

In addition to highlighting the skills you already have, TalentSky could also help you identify the skills you need to get the jobs you want. Devine's plans on that front aren't limited to individual job applicants, but to broader trends in recruiting.

“You have to get the industry to speak as one with regard to skills,” he said.

In other words, he wants to bring together leading companies in each industry to identify the kinds of skills that they're looking for. To that end, TalentSky has also worked with IBM's Smarter Workforce initiative to create what it calls a “universal employer-to-professional skills language,” so that there's less ambiguity when an employer or job applicant is talking about a specific skill.

TalentSky is currently scheduled to launch in January, when we'll probably hear more about the product and the industry partners. In the meantime, the company is announcing its board of directors, which includes:

- Robert Edwards, former CEO of Safeway, currently on Target's board of directors
- Stephen Gillett, former COO at Symantec
- Todd Hewlin, former partner at McKinsey
- Eva Sage-Gavin, vice chair of the Aspen Institute's Skills for America's Future advisory board
- Gabrielle Toledano, Chief Talent Officer at Electronic Arts



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