

# Public Practice

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## Social Networking... What's In It for Me?

Facebook, LinkedIn, Plaxo. Blogs, Podcasts, You Tube. Wikis, RSS, and widgets. Oh my! Social networking technologies, those that create online communities, aren't just for tweens and college kids, although most of us beyond that age would like to think so to avoid having to learn about them! Many professionals, and even executives of large corporations, have embraced social networking as a means to communicate with colleagues, clients, and their marketplace, too.

"Old school" professional networking has primarily consisted of face-to-face meetings or conversations over the phone. Today, with the plethora of technologies available to individuals and organizations, you can communicate to a wider audience and build relationships by inviting others into your online network or community.

### Why Should You Participate in Social Networking?

Interactive technology makes it possible for all people in all professions to network with their peers from anywhere, at any time in an online environment. Social and professional network services provide a venue to convene by creating informative and interactive meeting places. In business, social networks can:

- Connect people who share common business interests and goals at a low cost
- Act as a customer relationship management tool for companies selling products and services
- Be used for advertising in the form of banners and text ads
- Make it easier to keep in touch with contacts regionally, nationally, and around the world
- Brand or position your firm as experts in specific areas
- Position your firm as an attractive workplace for the young
- Aid in on-campus and experienced recruiting and reaching people looking for employment opportunities

When you participate in social networking activities, you'll reconnect with important business and social contacts that you may have lost touch with and expand your network to include those who may not be available to you otherwise. You'll open the door to potential referral sources, employee and partner candidates, and other resources that are not limited to geographic boundaries or the amount of "face time" you're able to put in. You'll be amazed by the people you can reach and new relationships that can be formed as you expand your network online.

### Join the Groundswell

Getting started doesn't have to be hard or time consuming, although it will take some time, especially initially, to identify the right technology that you can use to achieve your objectives. Learn about specific social technologies and identify one that you can commit to – whether it's connecting with a network of people using LinkedIn, creating a presence for your firm with college students by building a firm profile on Facebook, or branding yourself or your firm as a

specialist in a particular area by creating your own blog.

Schedule an allotted time to work on your selected social networking technology, typically outside of your normal office hours, just as you would schedule the time to network in person before or after work. Because new technologies are emerging continuously, and their easy accessibility can be overwhelming and confusing, you need to be judicious about which ones you commit to learn and use and when. Consider asking someone on your team who has an interest in social networking to research current technologies and update your leadership team quarterly on the emerging technologies and possible benefits for your people and your firm. Download a glossary of helpful social technology terms and definitions on our web site by clicking here.

In the meantime, pick one of these technologies that you can learn about, become proficient in, and actively work. It may be as simple as following someone else's blog to start and then posting a comment or two. Or, you might accept one of those LinkedIn (or other social networking site) invitations you've received and begin getting connected with others.

Read and feel free to add your opinions and ideas to our Inspired Ideas blog at <http://blog.convergencecoaching.com> and connect with some of our team members on LinkedIn at:

- [www.linkedin.com/in/tameraloerzel](http://www.linkedin.com/in/tameraloerzel)
- [www.linkedin.com/in/jenniferwilsonprofile](http://www.linkedin.com/in/jenniferwilsonprofile)
- [www.linkedin.com/in/kristaremer](http://www.linkedin.com/in/kristaremer)

Where will we see you in the groundswell of social technologies? Begin connecting with your online network today!

Tamera Loerzel is a partner of ConvergenceCoaching, LLC, a leadership and marketing consulting and coaching firm that specializes in helping CPA and IT firms achieve success. Learn more about the company at [www.convergencecoaching.com](http://www.convergencecoaching.com).