



I'm Writing This Right Now...

By Tim Dietz – SSA VP, Communications & Government Relations

When my daughter asked me if I “tweet,” I thought she was being disrespectful. Obviously, I’m struggling to come to grips with online social networking, professional online networking and the blurry chaos that has followed.

A couple of years ago when blogs were becoming all the rage I thought about letting people know my varied and interesting thoughts, but then realized that the over/under on staying employed would be about two weeks. Now, it seems like there are dozens of sites that I’m constantly asked to join. I may actually need an online assistant, someone who can make contacts and exchange my ideas for me. It’s becoming increasingly difficult to prioritize where I should waste my time.

This is all diluting personal interaction. I recently attended a quarterly association executive luncheon that had fewer people than I had ever seen. I asked a guy about a couple of folks who were missing. He said he had seen through LinkedIn that Steve had taken a new job and saw that Linda had made a comment on a Twitter string about Bruce Springsteen—but he hadn’t talked to either of them.

Muddying all of this are the social networking sites. Is it appropriate to have professional contacts on Facebook?

This is where important colleagues from work mix with fraternity brothers who might comment on what I did at that Hairy Buffalo party on Halloween back when I had brown hair.

To me, one word sums up Facebook: Creepy. Relatives who live across the country convinced me to get on, to share pictures, etc. Now, I have 150 friends, some of whom I barely knew 30 years ago, who are now friends for life because leaving Facebook would be rude. I was signed-up for about three hours when I heard from five people from elementary and high school who, in my head, were sitting in their mothers’ basements with hair growing out of their ears, tapping the keyboard with their pizza-greased fingers.

Another person at that same luncheon said he’d hook up with me on Plaxo so that I could network with his groups. He was a nice enough guy, who ended up telling me about his model airplane hobby and said he’d “friend” me on Facebook to show me some pictures.

And so, from here on, I will know hourly what some guy named Brad is up to—a relationship started over rubber chicken that will never end. ♦