

Reprinted with Permission of The Business Report & Journal at
www.savannahbusiness.com

Business Information Zone
"Social Networking for Grown-Ups"

By Dr. Kevin Lee Elder

Biography: Kevin Lee Elder is an associate professor of information systems at Georgia Southern University. He may be reached by e-mail at kelder@georgiasouthern.edu.



Teenagers have been using social networking sites on the internet since they were old enough to use computers. Facebook.com with over 200 million users worldwide and MySpace.com with over 125 million users worldwide are the most used and most well known. Most adults, or make that Business people, don't see much use for social networking sites like Facebook.com and MySpace.com. In my experience business people would rather social network on the golf course, which is why I advise all business students to take a golf class before they graduate into adulthood. Oh, business people might use social networking sites to search for information on a prospective employee they are interviewing, but in general they would prefer these social networking sites did not exist due to the lack of productivity they might be

causing for their employees. Why do you need a page to post pictures or send messages to friends? Or worse, why does anyone need constant updates on your thoughts and whereabouts like you can find on upstart Twitter.com? However, there are now a growing number of social networking sites for professionals. LinkedIn.com is one of these sites. I decided to experiment with this site and decide if there is a useful need these social networking sites could provide to business professionals.

I chose LinkedIn.com to experiment with since I have had over the last few years several e-mails from colleagues asking me to Link to them. LinkedIn works like a sort of online resume. You create an account and put in your basic information like your current address, employer, e-mail address etc. If you stopped there people who work for the same employer will most likely send you an e-mail and invitation to Link or connect with them. You can have as many connections or links as you want. Why would you want to be linked? Most likely you would like the person to recommend you, much like you would a reference. Or maybe you just want to be seen as a connection of that person's. I can only imagine how many connections President Obama has.

So by creating the account and putting my current information in I already had 2 connections. Within a week I had connections to over a dozen current employees at work. Next I started putting in previous employers. Within two weeks I was connected to over a two dozen colleagues from previous employers. Next I put in the information on my three college degrees from two universities. Within the week I was connected to over two dozen former friends and classmates. But the real power came when I started

joining groups. LinkedIn has groups for everything. I joined several alumni groups from universities I attended or worked for and within days I had dozens more requests for connections from people I had long forgotten about and from people I never knew who would like to do business with me in one way or another. I joined alumni groups from past employers (one was a well known consulting company that has changed names twice) and then the connections exploded in number and type. In the last stage of my experiment I joined groups that I had an interest in, like Enterprise Architecture and SAP groups. Less than three weeks after establishing the account I had over 100 connections, several job offers, more than a few new job and money making opportunities, dozens of new friends and a new addiction.

I encourage you to check out LinkedIn, or one of the other professional social networking sites. You can advertise yourself and your business to a whole new audience. You can network with past, current and future colleagues and friends. I have noticed my consultant connections have the most connections and actively use the site more. I check it daily and find it does an excellent job networking me with like-minded professionals. Social Networking is now available to grown-ups, and it is cheaper than a golf addiction!