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[Executive use of LinkedIn, Plaxo, Spock, SecondLife and Facebook](#)

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March 11th, 2008 by Bob Gourley

Unless you are the Lone Ranger, Rambo or Superman, you have to work with others to get the hard things done. And the harder the thing is you need to accomplish, the more important collaboration becomes. Fortunately for today's executive, there are some great new Web2.0 tools that can help you connect with others.

Popular social networking tools include LinkedIn, Plaxo, Spock, SecondLife and Facebook. The following are some personal thoughts/perspectives based on how I use those tools:

[LinkedIn.com](#) is good for keeping up with the careers of friends and associates. It has also been of use in helping me introduce myself to others since I can connect to a new associate via LinkedIn and they can see my extended profile. Conversely it helps me learn a bit more about who I might be meeting with so I frequently check LinkedIn before I meet with someone new. If an executive was only going to pick one online social networking site to use I would recommend this one.

[Plaxo.com](#) began as a site that would help users keep each other informed when their contact details change, and it is still pretty good at that. It also provides contact and calendar and task synchronization services, but I don't use those. My data synchronization needs are far more complex and I found when I turned on Plaxo agents on all my devices I started generating duplicate entries. The value to me now of Plaxo is in periodically reviewing it to see when friends have updated their blogs. I also point my blog to Plaxo and some friends tell me that is how they read it so I'll stay a member. One good thing about Plaxo is that it can automatically synchronize with LinkedIn, so it is not hard to keep up to date. My view: if someone invites you to join Plaxo, you should accept, but don't invest too much time in it.

[Spock.com](#) seems to have grown really rapidly. I started getting invites from associates and tried it out myself. But for the life of me I don't see what value I'll ever get from it. They claim to make it easier for professionals to find you, but if an executive is in LinkedIn and has a blog or webpage then you are already discoverable, so I wonder about the value add. But, like Plaxo, if someone invites you to join you are not risking much by signing up.

[SecondLife](#) is just the beginning of future ways to collaborate. I recommend all executives dive in so you can learn both the strengths and weaknesses of this environment. Some of the strengths include the ability to virtually check out technologies from all the major IT vendors. Some of the weaknesses include the very primitive ways of finding information and the very slow ways of interacting with others (mostly via keyboard). So, although it is not the best way to find others it is a great way of thinking about the future and I recommend all try it out.

[Facebook](#) is used by an increasing number of technologists, and most college students are in it (so most of your future

workforce is there). I use it for a couple purposes, including the fact that I need to stay up to speed with the technology of things like Facebook. I also point my blog feed to Facebook so what I publish gets pushed to my page and is visible to those I connect with (this is a feature similar to Plaxo's). I get some traffic from Facebook to my blog and this was very easy to set up so that was worthwhile. I also use Facebook to stay up to speed with the whereabouts of some friends, a few of which are very mobile. But my sense is those features are not going to be of use to most executives.

My bottom line: Executives should be in LinkedIn and possibly Facebook. Plaxo and Spoke are just ok. SecondLife is important to experience whether or not you use it to collaborate.



Now how might you use LinkedIn to kickstart your collaboration? Here is an example: Lets say you could use some advice from an enterprise-class CIO, and perhaps you worked with one a few years ago and want to reconnect. In this example, I'll use Charles Church. I remember him as an award winning CIO in the federal space. But I seem to recall he has moved on somewhere (pretend I didn't just read the ExecutiveBiz article spelling that out). I can open LinkedIn and look through my contacts. I connected to him quite a while ago, and he is still here. By clicking on his name I see he has changed jobs. Charles is now the VP of Homeland Security and Defense at Affiliated Computer Services. Since he configured LinkedIn to authorize me, his e-mail address and other contact info is available to me. Now I can connect in person and seek his counsel.

A thought to close this post: there are many other collaborative tools at your disposal. My advice is not to try to pick one, but to be aware of the entire spectrum of collaborative tools and have the agility to pick the right one for the right reason. Use social networking sites like LinkedIn to stay up to date with your network, and when it is time to execute the collaboration, chose from IM, e-mail, phone, VTC or [Adobe Connect](#). Or, if you are so inclined, hold a good old fashioned face to face meeting.

Bob Gourley is the co-founder and CTO of Crucial Point LLC and is the former CTO of the Defense Intelligence Agency. Bob blogs on enterprise IT at <http://ctoivision.com>

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3 Responses to “Executive use of LinkedIn, Plaxo, Spock, SecondLife and Facebook”

1. [Marsha Marinich](#) said on March 13th, 2008 at 10:05 pm

I agree with you about LinkedIn and Plaxo. I use both as well as Facebook. My position on social networking is that executives should use and explore social networking. As you say, the future workforce is now using these technologies and they aren't going to stop when they go into the workforce. Some of the early indicators are that the younger generations eshews e-mail in favor of these tools.

Social networking will not replace business networking but it is a good complement and helps build those relationships that are started offline.

Marsha Marinich
President/CEO
Performance Interventions, Inc.

2. [Penny Jo Welsch](#) said on March 19th, 2008 at 2:37 pm

Social Networking and Mobile Marketing to Baby Boomers Top What's Next Boomer Business Summit Agenda

What's Next Boomer Business Summit
March 26, 2008 — Washington DC

<http://www.boomersummit.com>

Baby boomers, though aging, are not much different than the under-25 set when it comes to mobile technology adoption. Social networking, mobile marketing, and texting are exploding among the boomer population, creating unlimited new opportunities for organizations marketing to consumers between the ages of 45 – 64 years old.

These trends will be among the key agenda items to be explored at the What's Next Boomer Business Summit on Wednesday, March 26 from 8 a.m. – 6 p.m. at the Omni Shoreham Hotel, 2500 Calvert Street, Washington, D.C.

Boomers are catching up to younger consumers in their embrace of mobile technology adoption and mobile phone penetration is spreading equally across the generations, according to research published in 2007 by InsightExpress. Although Gen Y (18-24) leads the pack at 85 percent, it is followed closely by Gen X (25-44) at 82 percent, younger baby boomers (45-54) at 80 percent and older baby boomers (55-64) at 79 percent.

Jeff Hasen, CMO of HipCricket, a mobile marketing company, will speak at the Summit about how to use mobile marketing to create relationships between consumers, broadcasters and brands. “While some believe texting is a young person’s activity, the average age of texters is 38,” Hasen notes. “The fastest growth group is folks 35-54. The mobile phone is a personal device – and the ideal way to reach boomers who opt in for information, reminders and offers.”

Jenna Woodul, another What's Next speaker and founder of LiveWorld, Inc., a global leader in building customer relationships through social networking and online community, points to the importance of word of mouth and peer referrals in the growth of social networking opportunities for this demographic. “As social networking expands among boomers, shopping is often most satisfying as a social experience, and any transaction is potentially social, given mobile connection to one’s network of trusted advisors,” said Woodul. “We will see huge growth in boomers connecting on line to consult each other, stay in touch with their children, and just plain socialize and have fun.” On its 5th anniversary the What's Next Boomer Business Summit provides a unique opportunity for influential boomer thinkers and entrepreneurs to share proprietary research, innovations, market strategies and success stories. The theme for the conference is “Master the Big Boomer Deal.”

“The value this event will provide to anyone interested in marketing to boomers is truly significant,” said Dr. Mary Furlong, president and CEO of Mary Furlong & Associates, the event’s producer and a leading authority on the baby boomer generation. “You’ll walk out with great leads, insight that will inform your business strategy and an understanding of the technologies, causes, products, and services that are transforming the boomer marketplace.”

<http://www.boomersummit.com>

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3. [Can Facebook grow-up without going to jail? | Career Management Alliance Blog](#) said on April 8th, 2008 at 12:02 am

[...] does this news jive with the advice of business bloggers like Bob Gourley, who recently suggested that Executives should use LinkedIn and [...]

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