

BY SAM LONGO



## LinkedIn to Aviation

Leaning heavily towards the “old school” state of mind tends to make me rather skeptical of the quantitative values of social media . . .

While some of these venues leave me cold, others are clearly worth further investigation. Despite remaining in the dark ages and refusing to carry a cell phone, I am not entirely out of touch with modern reality. I generally don't like answering the phone at home, so why on earth would I agree to place one in my pocket? People who really know me usually know exactly where I am, and it's likely the garage. However, on the social media front, I have become a little more involved.

I am on Facebook, though I rarely sign in to see what is transpiring among friends and their families' lives. I seem to have totally avoided Twitter. Perhaps it's just too much to handle, along with unending social updates on Facebook, or maybe it's that name. Somehow it just makes me feel like I will be labeled a twit if I choose to get involved.

The one worthwhile network that I have discovered while stumbling through cyberspace is LinkedIn. For those who are unaware of this particular social media network, let me explain. It is a more business-oriented networking tool, similar to Facebook but without the mindless photos and text reporting “what I had for lunch today.”

If you have been in the aviation business for any length of time you probably already know that the single most valuable tool for success is networking. Whether you are an AME looking for new opportunities or a vendor looking for new customers, knowing the right contacts will almost always make things happen quicker. This is the first way that LinkedIn can be a valuable asset to your career or company.

Once you get involved (it is free, by the way), building up your personal profile page can also be beneficial. If done well, it is a great showcase for what you have accomplished so far and what potential you may have to offer in the future. It is like having an up-to-date résumé circulating on the Internet, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Speaking of which, it is a proven fact that over 80 percent of employers looking for new staff now check LinkedIn first.

OK, so enough with the infomercial you say. But wait, there's more. As most of my loyal readers and ex-aviation students know, I am now happily retired, so why would I be so

enamored with this specific networking phenomenon. Despite rumors to the contrary, I am not looking for new employment. However, it does present a really terrific opportunity to get back in touch with colleagues who I have worked with in the past, as well as keeping track of where many of my previous students are presently employed.

My current profile shows that I have in excess of 350 contacts. Although many of these are within the aviation community, many others are spread across a diverse array of backgrounds and careers. Just within the scope of this summer I have re-connected with over a dozen ex-colleagues and students, which will in turn lead to additional connections in the future. Although 350 may sound like a lot, many LinkedIn devotees have in excess of 500 contacts. It's not rocket science to realize how all this relates to a lot of networking potential.

So if you are already involved, I am likely preaching to the converted, but if you are not, then I suggest that you check it out. I think you will be surprised at how many people in the industry who you already know will pop up. Believe me, you don't have to be a computer whiz to figure it out (I'm not). Before you know it, you will be networking your way to new opportunities and a better future. Heck, you may even happily reconnect with some old friends. You have nothing to lose and no one will solicit at your door. So why wait? Log on now, strut your stuff and see what happens. You won't be sorry.

Oh, and speaking of strutting your stuff, in reference to my non-existent, unofficial job search? As mentioned earlier, I really am enjoying this whole writing/retirement thing. However, there are still a few career possibilities on the bucket list that might just coax me out of my cozy cocoon. If you are looking for someone to work on your vintage airplane, or perhaps become curator of your classic car, motorcycle or aviation museum, please feel free to get in touch. I may not be cheap but I am always cheerful and only a click or two away on LinkedIn. Hey, I may be old school, but you are never too old to stop networking.

Cheers.

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