

An End of the Year Nod to the Future

The New Year brings an emphasis on the future, and we figured it best to direct Flowork's end of 2008 on the same. We're finalizing the production of our newest edition of *Game of Networking* game cards, the *School to Work Transition Edition*. It's the perfect way to introduce students to the intricacies and major benefits of networking, providing a tangible way to see how successful they can be if they focus their efforts on matching resources with their chosen career path.

The article on page 2 offers additional networking strategies that teachers can share with their students.

Those students have an advantage over many adults, however, in that they live in an era when technology rules. Never before have people had the ability to connect in a way that is both instantaneous and simplistic at so many levels. Without the proper networking skills, sites like MySpace and Facebook—so popular particularly for individuals of the younger age groups—can prove completely useless if they are not utilized to their fullest. It's time we learn then teach how to tap into the potential of these social networking sites. The article on page 3 discusses how we might start leveraging the vast array of resources that exist to help accomplish goals.

I hope you and yours enjoy the end of the year celebrations, and that you are looking forward to success in the near year.

I continue to encourage you to forward newsworthy articles or ideas for future editions. Feedback and article ideas can be emailed to newsletter@flowork.com at anytime to be evaluated for placement in the next suitable edition.

John-Paul Hatala, Ph.D., Flowork Founder



This month's FlowTIP:
In these tough economic times, it is important to understand that posted job opportunities will be less available than in past years.
See page 4 for more information.

What's New?

Game of Networking Board Game Ready for Shipping!

The Game of Networking Board Game is ready to ship. If you haven't already ordered a copy of the game now you can. Go to www.gameofnetworking.com and submit an order form. Games are being shipped now.

Certification Training Sessions Coming to Toronto

January 2009 will bring a Flowork Certification Training session to Toronto, Ontario. Included in the two day training session, scheduled for January 28 and 29 of the new year, will be social network management and strategic job search management. If you or someone you know is interested in attending, follow this link to register: http://www.socialnetworkaudit.com/about_flowork_certification.php. There will be a total of 30 seats available and only a few remain, so please register now so you're not disappointed.

Have you checked out the new website for *The Game of Social Networking: The Board Game*? Housing complete information on playing the game, downloadable instructions and online ordering, the site is located at www.gameofnetworking.com



The 21st Century Skill: Social Networking In The Classroom

Statistics clearly show that, over the last few years, the number of students completing high school has dramatically decreased. Students who start the ninth grade have become much less likely to reach grade 12. This has an obvious economic impact on a city, region and country, but is problematic for a vast array of reasons.

So how do we encourage students to stay in school and get their high school diploma?

The answer is by no means simple, and there are a number of ways to tackle this issue. Fundamental to the graduation process is finding support that encourages and provides resources to help the student maintain a clear academic path. Obviously, the most logical resources are found in individuals directly involved in the student's life.

This could be both positive and negative. If a student is having a difficult time in school, for example, but is surrounded by individuals who value education, the opportunity to be influenced positively to stay in school is more likely to occur. On the flip side, if a student associates with individuals who do not promote the importance of education, the likelihood of the student remaining in school dramatically decreases.

The power of influence by those around you is extremely strong. It is not limited by those influences outside of the classroom, either.

A common approach to classroom management is to assign students the same seat for the entire semester. Each time a student comes to class, they sit in the same seat surrounded by the same students. There are three reasons this can be problematic. First, information shared between the students will quickly become redundant. Second, the opportunity to practice connecting with other students won't occur. Third, new opportunities to accomplish their goals will be limited. The simple concept of changing a student's seat on a regular basis will force them to connect with others and increase the chances of running into information that will help them.

Creating group activities that encourage students to partner and work with different individuals will also expand and promote networking opportunities. The teacher's goal is to illustrate the potential resources that are available from the network to support and help students accomplish their goals.

We are, of course, making the assumption that goals have been created, which unfortunately is not always the case. Students need to set clear, well-articulated goals that can easily be communicated to the network. Research shows that when goals are set, people become more motivated to network regardless of their ability.

If teachers want to simplify the task of teaching successful networking they must first stress its true importance, making the students more conscious about the value of networking. The teacher must remember, however, that the students do not become good networkers simply because they have taken the idea of networking to the conscious level. Talking about the value of networking and then providing them with a means of accessing and utilizing the opportunities they come across will not only help the student, it will lessen the burden on the teacher as a central resource.

Imagine a school where students are encouraged to link their academic and career goals to individuals other than their teachers. Aligning goals with these other individuals will motivate students to travel down a specific path, but it will only occur if they start to experience small successes along the way. This can only be accomplished by setting 'bite size' goals that are easily attainable through the help of others. For example, a student who wants to get an "A" on a math test (a big goal) may choose to ask a number-savvy classmate to explain equation structures (a mini goal).

The ability to network plays an important role in moving down the student's chosen path. Social resources (their contacts) will either support the direction or suggest alternative ways to reach the end. The path for students in high school takes them on a four year journey; the more support they get along the way,

the greater the likelihood they will graduate. Social networking is one of the most important 21st century skills for students, and there isn't a better moment in time to leverage social resources for accomplishing goals and becoming successful. Whether it's completing high school or starting a career, networking provides the links to individuals who could potentially mean the difference between failure and success.



Time Is Running Out: *The Problem with Social Networking Websites*

Let's face it, we live in an era when technology rules. Never before have people had the ability to connect in a way that is both instantaneous and simplistic at so many levels. With the advent of social networking sites and email, connectivity, at least in theory, should be skyrocketing. Lists of friends or contacts are limitless, access to resources is plentiful, and the ability to connect with a diverse group of individuals is but elementary knowledge. These modern conveniences have the potential to increase the likelihood of individuals tapping into their networks and accomplishing their goals.

Potential, of course, is the key word.

How many contacts do you have on your friends list? How many contacts do your children have on their friends list? Some individuals have well over 500 contacts listed while others are short of 100. This exemplifies the perceived connectivity that exists in the world today. With those numbers, access to resources is plentiful and goal attainment is a piece of cake. Right?

Well, in most cases the answer is probably wrong. The potential of these sites is remarkable, but the utility of them is still uncertain. Just because you or someone you know is signed up on a social networking website doesn't mean that they are tapping into their network. Most likely it's simply a dormant entity that is used to claim they know many people, nothing more.

The problem with online social networking communities is that they represent an opportunity for most of us to collect contacts and store them in a central place for people to see. What this means is that the goal (subconscious or not) is to put as many people on our lists as possible because it represents some ill-conceived notion that we are connected—when in fact it's actually the complete opposite.

The fact that we claim to know a multitude of individuals does not mean we know much about them, how we can positively leverage them to help us, or more importantly how we can help them. This lengthy contact list can provide a sense of false support and a total lack of connectivity.

The need for society to be connected is a good thing, a healthy condition of human living. With technology at the forefront of our world, social net-

working websites are a natural forum for connecting, but for a majority of us they only serve to provide the potential to connect. If this is true, how do we then turn this potential into reality?

Potential means that a great opportunity has presented itself, but that opportunity is fleeting. The social networking trends are starting to show a leveling out in comparison to the meteoric rise over the last couple of years. It is now critical to unleash the potential of this medium and increase the user's ability to tap into the resources that exist within the networks that have been created.

The first and easiest way to frame this would be to suggest that users set goals, then to utilize their contact list to find help. The websites have provided simple access to social resources, but the tricky part is in being able to utilize those contacts to help us accomplish our goals. Access is always important, but utilization trumps it tenfold. The common user's network of contacts is likely comprised by a majority of weak ties. The frequency of contact would be minimal.

In this case, the ability to approach those individuals involves a different tactic than approaching someone who is fairly close to the user. A connection strategy needs to be developed in order to leverage the resource and help accomplish the goal, otherwise the opportunity for engaging the contact to help is lost. How we connect to one another needs to be a conscious activity or else the chances of converting the contact into real help may never happen.

Social networking websites are a marvelous 21st century phenomenon. The only problem is that we need to acquire 21st century skills to tap into the potential that exists within them. The need to teach users how to effectively maneuver these sites is critical if we wish that they remain available. After all, users will eventually get bored if they get nothing out of them.



In short, social networking websites are only as good as what you get out of them. Some may find that updates on contacts lives are all they require, while others are looking for more. It's time we tap into that potential and start leveraging the vast array of resources that exist to help accomplish our goals. Let's take these social networking websites and truly tap into the value that exists within them.

Students Can Use Networking Sites To Their Advantage

*From the Augusta Chronicle, Nov. 21, 2008
by Greg Gelpi, Staff Writer*

Augusta State University freshman Miguel Morell first signed up for the popular social networking Web site Facebook to keep in touch with friends.

His reasons for using Facebook, however, have evolved. As he sat in the Jaguar Student Activities Center, the 18-year-old computer engineering major said he now uses it to network with others who have similar career interests.

For good and for bad, potential employers are using social networking Web sites also.

Facebook began as an online arena for college students to keep up to date on each other, but the site has developed into a place for employers to keep tabs on job applicants, said Melissa Hudson, assistant director of the Augusta State career center.

That's why ASU held the first of a series of workshops Thursday to guide students in how to use Facebook and other sites to their advantage.

"I don't put any stupid stuff on there," Mr. Morell said of the potential risk.

Once it's on the Internet, it's permanent, Ms. Hudson said. Some Web sites specialize in archiving information, and allow visitors to view sites as they were published on various dates.

ASU career adviser Amanda Boland said 20 percent of managers use networking sites to learn about job applicants, citing statistics from CareerBuilder.com.

And a third decided not to hire an applicant based on information they found, including references to drugs and alcohol, inappropriate pictures and poor communication skills.

Speaking with businesses in the Augusta area, she has found this to be true locally.

In 2006, three Richmond County deputies were disciplined for their MySpace profiles.

Freshman Danielle Candy, 19, took a break from class Thursday to check her Facebook profile. She compared Facebook to clothing.

"It's kind of like what you wear in public," she said. "Just because you can doesn't mean you should."

Ms. Candy said important people look at Facebook now and so she knows to keep her profile appropriate.

Social networking sites, for example, are fair game for anyone applying to work at the White House under President-Elect Obama's administration, Ms. Boland said.

Although Facebook and similar sites can contain pitfalls for job-seekers, they can also prove quite beneficial, Ms. Hudson said. The sites, especially business networking sites, enable job-seekers to find employers and vice versa, she said. Sites can also be used to bolster a person's resume.

This Month's FLOWtip:

In these tough economic times, it is important to understand that posted job opportunities will be less available than in past years. This is not to say that jobs won't be available, it simply means that they will be harder to find. More than ever, accessing the hidden job market will become the key to finding employment. This means that accessing these jobs will involve understanding and working within the networking process. Those that are not networking will obviously have a more difficult time accessing these jobs. One way to combat your reluctance to network is to be clear on what you want to accomplish and then share that with as many people as possible. Don't just tell people you're looking for a job, tell them what type of job, where you would like to work, what level of pay you're looking for and when you're willing to start. The more specific you are the more likely someone is going to help.

Flowwork offers the benefits of social capital to anyone of any age. The Education Flowwork Program offers educational institutions (Kindergarten through higher education) to ensure their students, faculty and staff become aware of the power of information by networking. Corporate Flowwork and the Flowwork Workforce Development Program introduces corporations, non-profit organizations, government, and workforce development groups to ways they might increase the flow of information between individuals, departments, divisions and units. Flowworks founder Dr. John-Paul Hatala is available for speaking engagements nationwide. If you are interested in booking him for an on-site speaking engagement, please call us at 1-877-flowwork or visit www.flowwork.com and click "contact us" to discuss your needs.



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