



THREE PARK AVENUE
NEW YORK, NY
10016-5991
www.aiche.org

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Cynthia F. Mascone
(646) 495-1345
cynfm@aiche.org

ASSISTANT EDITORS

Michelle Bryner
(646) 495-1349
michb@aiche.org

Gordon Ellis
(646) 495-1348
gorde@aiche.org

CONTRIBUTORS

T. Kevin Swift
kevin_swift@
americanchemistry.com

Arjun Gopalratnam
arjug@aiche.org

Loraine Kasprzak
lkasprzak@
advantage-marketing.com

Suzanne A. Shelley
suzanneashelley
@yahoo.com

PRODUCTION COORDINATOR

Karen Simpson
(646) 495-1346
kares@aiche.org

ART DIRECTOR

Paula Angarita
(646) 495-1328
paula@aiche.org

AICHE

GENERAL INQUIRIES
1-800-AICHEM
(1-800-242-4363)

MEETINGS &
EXPOSITIONS
(646) 495-1315

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

June C. Wispelwey
junew@aiche.org

GROUP PUBLISHER

Stephen R. Smith
steps@aiche.org

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Consulting Services

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* AICHE Fellow



Social Media and the ChE

The headline of a recent *New York Times* article caught my attention: “The Facebook Resisters.” That certainly describes me. I don’t have a Facebook page. A few years ago I wanted to see what Facebook was all about, so I created an account. After receiving friend requests from people I really didn’t want to be friends with, I cancelled it.

Nor do I tweet or follow other tweeters. As an editor, I love the idea of forcing people to be concise. But sifting through even the most concise report of where people shop or what someone is eating for lunch to find the useful information seems daunting.

I do have a LinkedIn profile and belong to about a dozen LinkedIn groups. It has been a very useful tool for me. For example, when I needed to hire a new editor, I found Michelle Bryner by searching on LinkedIn and making contact. I have also found authors to write articles for *CEP*, including this month’s cover feature, “Getting Started in Social Media” (pp. 37–39), by Loraine Kasprzak.

Loraine and I worked together years ago (more than either of us would like to acknowledge), and we reconnected through LinkedIn over the summer. I saw on LinkedIn that she was speaking at a workshop entitled “Supercharging Your Consulting Business via Blogging and LinkedIn,” and I was intrigued. I thought that might be a good topic for a Career Catalyst article in *CEP*, so we reconnected in person over dinner and drinks to discuss it.

The article evolved into a series of articles on the broader topic of social media — specifically, how chemical engineers can use social media tools effectively and professionally in their careers. The process of writing the articles is, itself, an example of one way to use social media. To get a feel for the audience and to gather input from AICHE members, Loraine is using two of AICHE’s social media tools, ChEnected (<http://chenected.aiche.org>) and the AICHE LinkedIn Group (www.linkedin.com/groups?gid=109329).

ChEnected — Where Chemical Engineers Mix It Up — is AICHE’s online community created for and by chemical engineers. Visitors can read, contribute, and engage around such topics as chemical engineering practice, biological engineering, safety, environment, sustainability, career and professional development, and much more. Since its launch in March 2010, ChEnected has grown more than 300%, with more than 11,000 unique monthly visitors from over 162 countries checking out nearly 50,000 pages per month. More than 60 authors and contributors have written over 800 posts for the Reactor blog and contributed over 1,200 comments. ChEnected’s Facebook page and Twitter presence have grown to more than 1,200 “likes” and 1,449 followers, respectively. Its YouTube channel now has more than 70 proprietary video interviews of industry professionals, which are also featured on the ChEnected video channel, ChEtube.

Even more exciting is what’s to come. Starting later this month and throughout the year, Loraine and the ChEnected staff will integrate the *CEP* articles into the blog and explore how AICHE members are using social media. She will discuss some of the articles’ topics in more detail, answer your questions, solicit your thoughts and insights — in other words, with your help she will bring social media to life for ChEs. Please visit ChEnected often, and get involved.

After reading Loraine’s article and seeing the ChEnected statistics, I’m convinced that social media do have value for certain things — even if I still don’t want a Facebook account.

Cynthia F. Mascone, Editor-in-Chief