



Issue 21 - Winter 2008

Welcome to **Coaching Concepts**, the quarterly newsletter brought to you by the consultants at **ConvergenceCoaching, LLC**.



Wilson's Writings

Happy Holidays! 2008 has been a year of change – in our economy, our nation's leadership, and also in the focus and conversations inside the firms we serve. For the smallest window of time (mark my words on this), the crushing need for qualified people has eased and our clients have begun talking again about practice development, marketing, and sales again.

That's why **we're dedicating this issue of Coaching Concepts to the subject of social networking** – a new way of marketing and recruiting that will revolutionize the way we interact with each other professionally forever. Please don't shy away from this issue if your initial reaction is lukewarm. Take the time to read both [Leadership Lessons](#), to explore the benefits of social networking, and [Practice Perspectives](#), where we'll share how to use some specific social networking technologies such as LinkedIn and blogs. These critical technologies are not just for the young and can provide a genuine competitive advantage for your firm. If you feel inspired after reading the articles, consider inviting me to join your social network at <http://www.linkedin.com/in/jenniferwilsonprofile> and visit our blog at <http://blog.convergencecoaching.com>.

Don't miss this issue's installment of [New News](#) where you'll find our **2008 team photo** taken at our planning meeting in November, among other important information. And lastly, please be sure to click below for our holiday e-greeting.

Change may be afoot in many areas of our lives and practices, but one thing does not waiver – and that's our appreciation for our relationship with you. As this year draws to a close, please accept our gratitude for your friendship and our wishes for a peaceful and joyous holiday season and a bright and prosperous New Year.

Jen



[Click here for a special holiday greeting from CC, LLC](#)

Leadership Lessons

Social Networking Is Not Just for the Young

Facebook, LinkedIn, Plaxo. Blogs, Podcasts, You Tube. Wikis, RSS, and widgets. Oh my! Social networking technologies are here to stay and new ones are emerging almost daily! That is why we're dedicating this edition of Coaching Concepts to cutting through the "techno-speak" and exploring the amazing new social technologies that will help you connect with others and position your firm as an attractive workplace for the young.

In this [Leadership Lessons](#) article, we'll explore social networking and the benefits for you and your firm when you embrace them. Then, in our [Practice Perspectives](#) article, we'll share some specific social networking technologies, including social network web sites, blogs, wikis, Twitter, and social bookmarking and explore how to get started using them today.

What is Social Networking?

Social networking is one of the most popular terms for the technologies available that create online communities, while some sources refer to all of the online community technologies as "groundswell technologies." For the purposes of this article, we'll use the term social networking when we're referring to these types of communities or groundswell technologies, including:

- Social networks such as Facebook, My Space, LinkedIn, and Plaxo
- Blogs, podcasts, and on-line videos, such as on You Tube
- Wikis, RSS, social bookmarking, and widgets

Social networks aren't just for your tweens and college kids, although most of us beyond that age would like to think so to avoid having to learn about them! Many professionals, and even executives of large corporations, have embraced social networking as a means to communicate with colleagues, clients, and their marketplace, too. Traditional marketing has consisted of "push" activities, such as sending direct mail (paper-based or e-mail), holding seminars, and telemarketing. And "old school" professional networking primarily consisted of face-to-face meetings or maybe conversations via the phone. Today, with the plethora of technologies available to individuals and organizations, you can communicate to a wider audience and build relationships by inviting others into your online network or community.

Why Should You Participate in Social Networking?

Interactive technology makes it possible for all people in all professions to network with their peers from anywhere, at any time in an online environment. Social and professional network services provide a venue to convene by creating informative and interactive meeting places. In business, social networks can:

- **Connect people** who share common business interests and goals at a low cost
- Act as a **customer relationship management** tool for companies selling products and services
- Be used for **advertising** in the form of banners and text ads
- Make it easier to **keep in touch** with contacts regionally, nationally, and around the world
- Brand or **position your firm** as experts in specific areas
- Aid in **on-campus and experienced recruiting** and reaching people looking for employment opportunities

When you participate in social networking activities, you'll reconnect with important business and social contacts that you may have lost touch with, and you'll expand your network to include those who may not be available to you otherwise. You'll open the door to potential referral sources, employee and partner candidates, and other resources that are not limited to geographic boundaries or the amount of "face time" you're able to put in. You'll be amazed by the people you can reach and new relationships that can be formed as you expand your network online.

Join the Groundswell

Getting started doesn't have to be hard or time consuming, although it will take some time, especially initially, to identify the right technology that you can use to achieve your objectives. Learn about specific social technologies in our [Practice Perspectives](#) article and identify one that you can commit to – whether it's connecting with a network of people using LinkedIn, creating a presence for your firm with college students by building a firm profile on Facebook, or branding yourself or your firm as an expert or specialist in a particular area by creating your own blog.

As you embrace social networking technologies, use the time management technique of scheduling an allotted time to work on your selected social networking technology, typically outside of your typical office hours, just as you would schedule the time to network in person before or after work. Some might think social technologies fall into Stephen R. Covey's **The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People** Quadrant IV - "not important and not urgent" time wasters - but they can be strategic and important Quadrant II work when you use them with intention, set goals around them, and integrate them into your other practice management activities.

One of the challenges with social networking is that new technologies are emerging continuously, and their easy accessibility can be overwhelming and confusing, so you need to be judicious about which ones you commit to learn and use and when. While you don't have to be a master of all of them, stay abreast of new technologies as they emerge even if you're not ready to embrace them so you understand who is using them, why, and how you may benefit in the future. Consider asking someone on your team who has an interest in social networking to research current technologies and update your leadership team quarterly on the emerging technologies and possible benefits for your people and your firm.

In the meantime, pick **one** of these technologies that you can learn about, become proficient in, and actively work. It may be as simple as following someone else's blog to start and then posting a comment or two. Or,

you might accept one of those LinkedIn (or other social networking site) invitations you've received and begin getting connected with others. Where will we see you in the groundswell of social technologies?

For additional information about how you can benefit from social technologies, e-mail Tamera Loerzel at tamera@convergencecoaching.com or call her at (952) 226-1780. Connect with some of our team members on LinkedIn at:

- www.linkedin.com/in/tameraloerzel
- www.linkedin.com/in/jenniferwilsonprofile
- www.linkedin.com/in/kristaremer
- www.linkedin.com/in/michellebacaprofile
- <http://www.linkedin.com/pub/8/360/6a8>

Practice Perspectives

Gain a Competitive Edge with Social Networking

You may hear social networking and think of tweens and college kids wasting time on the internet chatting and sharing photos, but social networking has evolved into a professional networking strategy with many business applications including recruiting, brand-building, and business networking. Social networking sites and other "groundswell technologies" are rapidly gaining in popularity. It is critical that you become informed and involved now in using these tools to gain a competitive advantage.

In our [Leadership Lessons](#) article, we defined social technologies and the benefits you can expect when you embrace them. In this article, we'll go deeper into some specific social technologies, including social networking web sites, blogs, wikis, Twitter, and social bookmarking and how you can start using them today.

Social Networking Sites

Networking has traditionally meant getting dressed in your business attire and heading out to a networking event with your business cards in hand. Social networking has changed the landscape of business networking. Now you can connect with people twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week in your pajamas or with your laptop from Starbucks! This convenience and accessibility makes social networking a very attractive strategy for those interested in making and maximizing their business connections while minimizing time invested, recruiting, and establishing a firm image that is attractive to younger generations.

While MySpace is probably the social networking site that comes immediately to mind when this topic is raised, it isn't where "real" professional social networking is occurring. Instead, we suggest you focus on LinkedIn and Facebook, which are designed more for professional use.

With both LinkedIn and Facebook, you can create a personal or company profile and then start connecting with others already using the platform. You can also invite people not currently using the platform to join the community and become part of your network. The first step is to create your profile by entering your basic information into the form provided. Visit www.linkedin.com or www.facebook.com to get started. For a couple examples of how companies are using Facebook click [here](#) or [here](#). Another business networking site that you may want to also consider is Plaxo (www.plaxo.com).

Once you have supplied your profile information, you can begin searching for people that you already know. You can search by employer or company name, university name, professional association, and of course, by individual name. You can also allow the program to search your Outlook or other collection of contacts to generate a list of people already in that community so you can optionally invite them into your network.

LinkedIn is one of the most popular professional networks being used by people in the accounting and IT professions. Some of the potential uses and applications of LinkedIn include:

- Joining groups of **people with similar interests** such as professional and alumni associations
- Establishing and building a **network of contacts**, including clients, colleagues, potential clients, past clients and associates, and referral sources
- Creating and re-enforcing your **brand image** by establishing an online presence and developing a community of followers
- Establishing your firm as an **attractive place to work** by appealing to younger recruits who value

- technology and companies that are embracing them
- Conducting **research on your competitors** and potential business associates
 - **Staying in touch** with previous colleagues, employers, business associates, and clients
 - Identifying a contact within your personal network who may know someone at one of your target prospect's organizations and **asking for a warm introduction** or some insight that can help you in your marketing and sales approach
 - **Recruiting individuals** who meet a specific set of criteria using features such as LinkedIn's people search or their hiring solutions that include job postings, reference searches, and targeted e-mail campaigns to subscribers who have indicated that they are open to receiving job offers

At ConvergenceCoaching, we have used LinkedIn in most of the ways mentioned above and have had real success generating new business and reconnecting with important contacts from our past. In addition, we have seen clients benefit by identifying experienced hire candidates using the platform's people search capability and then determining who within their network has a connection to that prospective experienced hire, gaining an introduction, and, in at least one case, making a successful hire.

Blogs

Blogs (or web logs) are web sites where collections of journal entries called "posts" are displayed in reverse chronological order. Blogs are typically developed around a central theme, and posts are made on a regular basis (usually daily or weekly). The posts or journal entries contain thoughts, comments, opinion pieces, ideas, and suggestions pertaining to the blog's central theme. Readers post comments in response to the posts and can then view the original entries as well as other readers' comments, creating a "running commentary" on the subject.

Blogs are used to share information, offer ideas and suggestions, and establish credibility and position the authors as experts on a particular subject. They can serve as a way for your readers to get to know you better and on a more personal level. Blogs can help you add value to your readers by offering access to your expert point of view.

Although most people realize that blogs are a forum for offering one's opinion or point of view and should not be considered "professional advice or consultation," you may want to consider displaying a disclaimer to that effect.

Visit our blog, [Inspired Ideas](#), which is designed to share new ideas and resources, explore issues, and generate discussion on topics relating to the CPA and IT professions and life in general, too.

Newer and Emerging Technologies

New technologies within the "groundswell" are constantly emerging, and we want to share some of the tools and technologies that seem to be gaining in popularity. Among these are Twitter, Wikis, and Social Bookmarking.

Twitter is one of the latest technologies being used by increasing numbers and is also referred to as "micro-blogging" because it enables people to publish short posts (no more than 140 characters) similar to blog entries. These entries are called "tweets." "Tweets" are sent via the web or mobile phones to the author's "followers" who are interested in that person's thoughts. President-elect Barack Obama used Twitter during the election to encourage voting and link to live rallies, and some progressive tax accountants use it to update their followers on changes in tax laws.

Wikis are online collaboration tools that allow individuals to post and contribute to shared files, documents, calendars, images, lists, etc. They are also perfect for posting firm-wide, read-only announcements, tools, and reference documents. Wikis can be used as a means for collaborating on group projects and for sharing files and other content. [Click here](#) to read a post on our ConvergenceCoaching blog dedicated to helping you understand wikis and their potential uses.

Keeping up with and organizing the blogs and web sites that you find useful can be cumbersome if you simply add them to your list of favorites in your browser. A more efficient way to keep up with new and changing content is to engage in "Social Bookmarking." Social Bookmarking sites allow you to create a customized and centralized web page that contains all of your favorite web sites, blog updates, and content in one convenient place. Consider creating a free account using one of the many sites dedicated to helping you organize and

streamline the content that you want to keep up with:

- www.bloglines.com/myblogs
- <http://delicious.com>
- <http://digg.com>

Join the Groundswell and Start Reaping the Benefits

As we suggested in [Leadership Lessons](#), consider identifying one thing that you can commit to and start using or expanding your use of “groundswell technologies” by:

- Accepting one of those LinkedIn invitations that is sitting in your e-mail inbox
- Creating a personal LinkedIn or Facebook account and start connecting or re-connecting with the people you already know
- Building a firm profile on LinkedIn or Facebook to begin creating an online presence for your firm
- Reading a blog of interest (and maybe even post a few comments). You can visit Google Blog Search (<http://blogsearch.google.com>) or Technorati (<http://technorati.com>) to search by keyword
- Creating a wiki to promote a more collaborative and efficient work environment

For additional information on how to get started using social technologies or expand your use of them, e-mail Michelle Baca at michelle@convergencecoaching.com or call her at (505) 217-2094. Connect with some of our team members on LinkedIn at:

- www.linkedin.com/in/michellebacaprofile
- www.linkedin.com/in/tameraloerzel
- www.linkedin.com/in/jenniferwilsonprofile
- www.linkedin.com/in/kristaremer
- <http://www.linkedin.com/pub/8/360/6a8>

News News

Planning for 2009

It won't be long before we turn the calendar page to another year, and at ConvergenceCoaching, we are getting ready! Our team met in Bellevue, Nebraska last month for our annual planning meeting where we reviewed our firm's accomplishments, brainstormed our collective vision for the future, discussed current and potential initiatives, and chose our “top 3” new initiatives for 2009 which include the launch of our new distance learning initiative, furthering our training and development programs, and partnering with firms to implement 360 degree feedback and coaching systems. We assigned owners and by-when dates for each priority and have already scheduled follow up meetings to keep our plans on track. We also had some team fun with a night out to celebrate our accomplishments and just “hang out!” See the team photo taken at our meeting below.



Back Row (L-R) Michelle Baca, Ruth Richter, Jennifer Eby, Krista Remer, Sylvia Lane; Front row (L-R) Tamera Loerzel, Lisa Spear, Jennifer Wilson; Not pictured: Kelly Trella, Amy Denman, Lori Grant

If you'd like more information about how to identify your "top 3" priorities for the year ahead and implement a unified strategy, please contact Krista Remer at krista@convergencecoaching.com.

Inspired Ideas Blog!

Our new blog, "***Inspired Ideas***," is gaining momentum, and we want to invite you to participate in this new "groundswell" technology with us! Recent posts on our blog include ideas for maintaining your "mojo," an exploration of positivity, our relationship with the word "busy," and methods for visualizing your firm's success.

Read our blog at <http://blog.convergencecoaching.com>, and receive an e-mail notice each week when we post by entering your e-mail address and clicking the "Get e-mail updates" link on the right-side panel. **Then, add your voice to the discussion** by posting a comment or taking a poll! We welcome your participation and would love to hear your inspired ideas and opinions, too.

To find out more about Inspired Ideas, please contact Michelle Baca at (505) 217-2094 or michelle@convergencecoaching.com.

Jennifer Wilson Featured in Inside Public Accounting's Most Recommended Consultants List

[Inside Public Accounting](#) recently conducted a survey asking their readers, Managing Partners of the top 250 CPA firms, who are the "best of the best consultants" – those they would call when they need strategic or operational help. Jennifer Wilson and ConvergenceCoaching received a significant share of the responses and was among the top 10 most recommended consultants that survey participants listed!

Congratulations to Jennifer for this recognition of her contribution to the CPA profession!

Ruth Richter of CC, LLC Honored for Local Leadership

Our own Ruth Richter recently received a Distinguished Alumni Award from the 2008 class of Leadership Bellevue because of her stellar leadership in organizing her second local RiverFest 5k Run and for organizing and leading a new informational session called "Recycling in Nebraska." Her recycling presentation has already sparked changes in the city's recycling efforts and will continue to impact their plans going forward. Ruth also

introduced a new resolution on environmental stewardship which was passed by the Episcopal Diocese of Nebraska in September 2008.

We are proud of your work to make this world a better, greener place, Ruth!

Service Spotlight: Distance Learning – Training Any Time, Anywhere

We know how hard it is to get away from the office, and the high cost of travel these days makes investing in CPE expensive. At ConvergenceCoaching, we recognize the need for our clients to have access to high-quality, difference-making soft skills CPE without having to travel. That's why we've developed an online distance learning program that will enable you, and members of your team at virtually all levels, to take high-quality courses any time from anywhere.

Our first courses, including maximizing professionalism and time management are perfect for busy season soft skills training, as a retention strategy, and for firms who want to train everyone on the same courses, in the same way, over time. New people can easily “catch up” on what others have learned at their convenience - after hours, from home if they choose, and at their own pace.

Watch for more news about our distance learning program and how you can get your firm members enrolled. For more information, contact Lisa Spear at lisa@convergencecoaching.com or (615) 292-9321.

Upcoming Speaking Events!

The ConvergenceCoaching team will attend and speak at several events over the next several months, including:

December 10

New York Society of CPAs

Buffalo Chapter

Buffalo, NY

www.nysscpa.org

Presentation:

> Proven CPA Marketing Strategies

January 28

Association for Accounting Marketing

Minn-DAK Chapter

www.cpaadmin.org

Presentation:

> Maximizing Professional Success through Positive Thinking

April 26-28

Information Technology Alliance

Spring Members Meeting

Atlanta, GA

www.italliance.com

May 4-6

AICPA

Practitioners Symposium

Las Vegas, NV

www.cpa2biz.com/conferences

Presentation:

> Developing Your Team for the Future

We hope to see you at these events and others in the future. Plan your calendars and register today! Let us know if you will be attending any of the venues where we will be speaking. We'd love to catch up with you!

For our catalog with a complete listing of topics we offer for speaking, teaching, and custom in-firm programs and future updates to our speaking calendar, please visit www.convergencecoaching.com/speakingevents.htm.

Upcoming Web Seminars

The ConvergenceCoaching team offers a complimentary web seminar series designed to help you develop “soft” skills in a variety of areas, including **leadership, marketing, sales,** and **human resources**. We are also able to provide continuing professional education (CPE) credit for a small administration fee of \$39.

Please watch your e-mail inbox for invitations and plan to join us for our upcoming 75-minute web seminars, which will be held at 11:00 a.m. Eastern Time on the following dates:

- **January 20** – Harness the Power of Positive Thinking
- **February 17** – Exceptional Client Service

Client Corner

2008 PCPS/TSCPA National MAP Survey Results are In

Do you wonder how your firm stacks up against others in your region and firms of similar size around the country? The 2008 PCPS/TSCPA National MAP Survey results are in to provide these valuable comparables.

For those firms that participated in the survey, an e-mail with details on how to access their customized results report containing key performance metrics was sent out in October. The targeted results will help you easily extract the data you need to make important decisions and build a more profitable practice.

Results are now available for firms that did not participate as well. Non-PCPS firms that did not participate can purchase the results from a secure transaction tool at <https://www.2008MapSurvey.com/run/map8buy2>

PCPS member firms can download complimentary results. Find out more by visiting www.aicpa.org/pcps.

Welcome New Clients!

The ConvergenceCoaching team welcomes our new clients to the Convergence circle of friends! Warmest welcome to:

Barfield, Murphy, Shank & Smith, PC of Birmingham, AL
New York Society of CPAs Buffalo Chapter
Tronconi, Segarra & Associates of Williamsville, NY

We are excited that you have taken the ConvergenceCoaching leap of faith and look forward to making a difference for you and introducing you to our network of clients and friends!

Spread the Word!

If you know someone who would benefit from receiving their own copy of our Coaching Concepts e-newsletters along with invitations to our web seminars and other events, e-mail their information to us at info@convergencecoaching.com.