



SOCIETY OF ACTUARIES

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You Haven't Heard About the New Online SOA Directory?

by Kenneth Birk

Just when you thought you mastered the art of mingling during a professional networking reception, along comes another way to network and build your brand – creating a comprehensive profile on the Society of Actuaries Online Directory. Imagine a single place online to consolidate all of your essential professional details, including a bio, a photo and links to your professional and personal websites, such as social media, that you would be interested in sharing with others. All this would be on a website that is familiar to everyone in the actuarial profession. Well, you don't have to imagine anymore, as the Society of Actuaries has made this a reality.

This revamped version of the Society of Actuaries Online Directory operates very similar to before, but has a new section for each member to input biographical information. The biographical information that members can enter include a profile picture, a professional biography (limited to 500 characters), and personal / social media links. These personal / social media links are categorized by company link, Facebook account, LinkedIn account, personal link and Twitter account. Users can input information at their own discretion after agreeing that the information provided is true and accurate, and professionally appropriate for use in the Online Directory of Actuarial Memberships. In addition to SOA members, all of the SOA's sister organizations will be able to use this utility. Just as before the upgrade, the public will be able to view all of the posted content, so be mindful of what you display!

As you begin to assemble your newfangled profile and explore others', let me share with you a top 10 list of sometimes humorous but always important gaffes to avoid when taking your directory entry to the next level:

10. Remember the professional code of conduct and avoid advertising for business in a misleading way

The world is small when it comes to business

and much smaller when it comes to the actuarial profession. Advertising misleading information on profiles will not end pretty for your business and your career. Make sure to provide all the relevant information in your profile and refrain from including any inaccurate details. The new directory is not a place to forget about the code of conduct.

9. Cater your message to your (entire) audience

Investing in your online brand means your visibility is increased. Superiors, peers, subordinates, clients, competitors, regulatory authorities and the general public now have a direct line to your background. Don't overshare your personal details. No one wants to hear about your Saturday night karaoke endeavors. At the same time, don't forget to tailor your image to accomplish your professional goals.

8. Let your personality shine through

When you're building your brand, you want to connect with people because, who knows, you may work with them in the future. Showcase your volunteerism, your strength in organizational skills, and other unique qualities of yours that will give others an impression of who you really are and that you are passionate about what you do. Don't be afraid to include a photo that strikes a balance between professionalism and approachability.

7. Refrain from leaking your confidential new product

Looking to keep your résumé current with up-to-the-second details of the super secret product or project you're working on to highlight your true market value? Not so fast. Be mindful about the detail you're sharing and always be cognizant that everyone can see what you post.

6. Regularly take full advantage of this great capability

Just saw a great speaker at a SOA meeting? Thought this person would be a great fit to help your company? How about if you're speaking at a conference and someone needs information about you after they see you have a wealth of experience?



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Don't be afraid to use these profiles to facilitate the sharing of knowledge, content and ideas.

5. Don't use these new capabilities as a replacement for face-to-face networking opportunities

In today's fast paced world, more and more people are sitting in front of a computer and doing a great deal of networking from that exact location. It's also easy to say that in comparison, face-to-face networking is time consuming and you meet fewer people. However, face-to-face networking enables you to establish a personal connection with a particular individual. There's no substitute for earning trust and developing a working relationship by making eye contact, monitoring body language, and investing personal time. Furthermore, just because your network is developed online doesn't mean relationships stay there. Be sure to make the most of the new online SOA directory by regularly engaging with your newfound contacts in person at industry conferences and meetings.

4. Privatize unprofessional / personal photos from last year's Halloween party

Unless you were dressed up as an actuarial student frantically cramming for your upcoming fall exam, your photos might scare your professional stakeholders. Don't let this happen. Remember to use Facebook privacy settings and manage your online image the same way you manage your image in the office.

3. Communicate a consistent message: Don't list yourself as a pricing director at Company ABC on LinkedIn and the CEO of John Doe, Inc. on Facebook

We know you've done it all, but does the employment history on your résumé match what you're communicating? If the pages you are making public are conflicting with each other, you may want to spend some time making sure you're communicating a consistent message. It's okay to rework your job descriptions, as targeting your résumé is a good thing when applying for job.

What's not ideal is if your job titles, companies and dates don't line up. It doesn't look good for prospective employers and it's confusing for those trying to understand your background.

2. Don't tweet that you hate your job

We know you have followers but don't expect any from your current company (and probably others) if this is your message. Think of any non-private posts or tweets as an email to the entire SOA online directory, because it's guaranteed that someone will read it.

1. Don't let this innovation be the reason you get fired or lose professional credibility

Done properly this new capability can propel your career to the next level. For example, if you're looking for a new job or positioning yourself for career growth, an online presence where you can showcase your skills and experience can make the difference in taking you where you want to go. Your online profiles will also help you connect with contacts who can expedite your job search and assist you with moving up the career ladder.

However, with opportunity comes risk. It takes a long time to build trust with your professional network, but it doesn't take long to lose it. Monitor what information you share and you will be surprised at how many doors this new feature will open for you! ●