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## STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

*WATER & WASTES DIGEST* is published exclusively for the 90,000+ decision makers in the municipal and industrial water, wastewater and water pollution industries. These individuals actively design, specify, buy, operate and maintain the equipment, chemicals and services used for water treatment. Editorial content in this audited publication highlights new products and literature concerning the supply, collection, treatment and distribution of drinking water; the collection, treatment and disposal of wastewater; and hazardous waste pollution control. Regular Product Emphasis and High-Tech Focus sections feature major equipment and systems. A product directory is included in the annual June *Buyer's Guide*.

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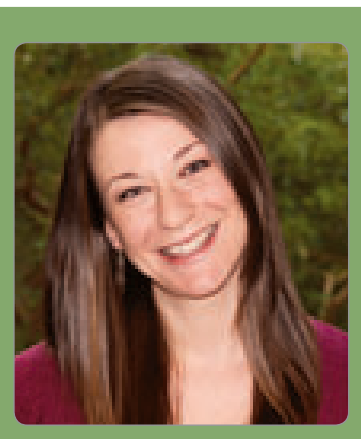
EDITORIAL *letter*

# Online Networking Matters

If one were to ask what are some of the biggest technology achievements over the last few decades, the Internet would certainly rank high on my list.

After it was first opened to commercial interests in 1988, the Internet has become the single source for easily accessible information on any subject. It has offered a fast, easy and affordable way to communicate with anyone, anywhere, anytime; is a resource of entertainment, education, shopping and knowledge sharing; and as of the last few years, serves as a great platform for discussing interests with like-minded people.



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Today, the number of Internet groups for people with similar interests is hard to gauge. Just type the word "groups" in Google and do not be surprised by the 797,000,000 sites that pop up in the search results field.

While some of the sites may have initially been mainly youth-geared, such as MySpace and Facebook, there are an overwhelming number of online groups and forums that are designed for professionals.

LinkedIn, which is widely known and free to join, is an online network of more than 30 million experienced professionals. These professionals are from all over the world and represent 150 industries, according to the site.

Joining LinkedIn allows people to create a profile that lists their professional experience. Based on this profile, members can locate former colleagues, clients, etc., and grow their network by inviting other professionals to their contact list. Additionally, LinkedIn offers groups that bring together professionals with similar interests.

One of the reasons why online groups are becoming so popular is because tackling an issue is much easier when shared with others. Because these groups are made up of people with similar professional interests—but also people that can have very diverse backgrounds, experiences and points of view—suddenly what was once a complex problem can now be more easily solved.

Time also plays a huge role in the success of online groups. Questions that took weeks and months to answer can now be addressed in an effective and timely manner—sometimes in minutes.

Finally, online groups are not limited by borders or travel. It used to be that people had to travel for face-to-face meetings. Now, with a click of a mouse button, professionals can collaborate on any issue from anywhere in the world.

The water industry is often judged for its slow pace, especially when it comes to keeping up with fast-moving trends and developments. Yes, perhaps this industry doesn't make the strides seen in other fast-moving fields; however, water professionals have taken advantage of existing focused online groups. I recently joined more than 250 professionals on a water-focused group hosted on LinkedIn and frequently follow some of the ongoing discussions. It is impressive to see how eager professionals are to share knowledge and experiences with one another, and I encourage all of you to take advantage of everything the World Wide Web has to offer.

If you would like to share which effective online groups help you address work-related questions, please e-mail *WWD* at wwdeditor@sgcmail.com.

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