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### Get linked in to your business

Social business networking has already been operating for some time.

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If a year has to be identified with some particular theme, what will identify 2010? To me, this upcoming decade is certain to be shaped by social business networking — the wonderful world of the blog, the tweet, the podcast and the various online channels with their 24/7 inter-group dialogue.

True, social business networking has already been operating for some time. Or more strictly, its component parts have been in place, available to be utilised. But there is a time-lag before it comes properly into focus, and people can see just what is this topic called social business networking.

I believe it can best be described in terms of what it has replaced. It is an astonishing new version of the first handshake, the interview, the shortlist and the new-business pitch rolled into one. It has taken over from the reception desk, the telephone enquiry, the formal letter of application.

It is also a remarkably efficient way to retrieve lost contacts, perhaps from years back — but is a two-edged sword, as you can guess. To have an application to join a group rejected, is a painful but salutary experience. To have it accepted is a most satisfying endorsement of your credibility and standing.

It is not hard to see how social business networking has revolutionised the entire process of new-business hunting and recruitment, across all sizes of organisation, although its benefits show up most vividly in the Small Medium Enterprise, especially at its launch and early growth-stages.

#### Teleseminars

The top social business networking sites are currently dominated by the global online business network, LinkedIn. Let me suggest that you start as I did, with Jan Vermeiren's book *How to REALLY use LinkedIn*, which I have studied carefully, page by page. This could usefully be backed-up by a training course or perhaps even one of the many tele-seminars being offered.

At any rate, when you've created your LinkedIn profile, you are cordially invited to connect with me by typing in "carole spiers" and I will be delighted to connect with you.

Another popular branch of social business networking is Twitter, where your own group of followers automatically receives your mini-posts in the form of a single statement restricted to 140 characters — providing an intriguing new test of the writing skill.

You will find that the quality of your Twitter profile makes a measurable difference to results from the business networking community, and you may like to personalise the

standard template as I have done.

### **Key points**

The next decade will be shaped by social networking. These media are a unique mix of the comprehensive and the selective. Social business networking need to be studied in-depth like a language.

Otherwise, there are many other well-known social business networking outlets, which you may already have identified as a self-marketing channel relevant to your own business. There is, also, YouTube, on which you can make quality video broadcasts, amongst others.

Podcasts are another medium to enable you to build credibility in your field, as are Mastermind groups that bring together "inner circles" of expertise, equally suitable either for those in the corporate world, or self-employed — while tele-seminars can brainstorm ideas from around the world.

A cautionary note is that you really do need to study social business networking media, in-depth, rather like learning fluency in a new language and not merely a few phrases. But you'll be glad you did — take it from me!

So, Happy Networking in 2010!