



LinkedIn provides specific areas for those seeking business connections, consulting opportunities, and recommendations on potential employees. For better or worse, the site is a hot bed for recruiters as they are able to review peoples experience and resumes online and then contact them directly.

## Twitter

While gaining a lot of publicity recently in the media, Twitter is primarily a tool used by businesses to communicate with other businesses. A user signs up to Twitter and then selects other users (friends, companies, movie stars etc) to 'follow'. When one of the people they are following sends out a message or "tweet" they can receive it on their computer or phone. "Tweets" are short messages limited to 140 characters in length, so the message needs to be direct and concise.

The main advantages for companies on Twitter are the ability to search for what other people are saying about their business, to communicate with their 'followers', and to generally monitor things that are going on in their industry. At this stage, Twitter appears to have little benefit for professionals or individuals besides monitoring news in their industry (unless many of their friends and colleagues are also on it).

## YouTube

YouTube is all about videos. There are videos on virtually every topic, from homemade instructional movies to professional programs. The sheer volume of videos on the site provides a huge resource for anyone doing research or wanting to understand a concept visually. Besides researching information, the most likely use for mining companies would be to post their promotional or other videos on the site to improve public image or marketing efforts. Some companies also produce video-diary style videos to inform stakeholders and shareholders of news and important events within the company.

## Forums

Forums are an interactive tool that exist on a wide range of websites, and enable people to discuss with each other topics relevant to their industry or interest area. One user will start a discussion on a particular topic, and then any other users are welcome to sign in and reply or comment on the discussion. Forums are also usually searchable so that it is possible to find previous conversations on any topic of interest.

The AusIMM website now has a forum section, with sub-forums dedicated to areas such as Health and Safety, Mining, Women in Mining, and Sustainability. The main benefit of being involved with forums is the ability to share or gather knowledge, either from experts in the field or from people who are willing to share their experience.

## Blogs

Blogs are a form of communication now becoming very widespread on the internet. A blog is like an online diary or live newsletter. The person or company who writes the blog will update it with 'posts' or articles on a periodic basis (from once a day to once a month). All their previous posts are always displayed, creating a searchable record of articles on particular topics. Blogs are becoming an excellent source of free information on nearly any topic imaginable, including many mining and minerals relevant areas.

Some companies are also finding great value in having one of the senior executives "blog" on a regular basis, either to the public or to just employees. This method of communication is much more personal than company newsletters, press releases or websites, and allows the senior executives to communicate their thoughts directly to employees, stakeholders, and/or the public.

## Benefits for companies and individuals

The main benefits that individuals in the mining and minerals industries should be seeking from interacting with these online media include:

- Networking and connecting with others in their industry, particularly as more and more people move to mobile; networks and 'smart phone' technologies;
- Collaborating and sharing knowledge;
- Accessing leaders in their field;
- Accessing free information and discussions;
- Getting reviews on products, vendors or new technologies;
- Researching markets and business decisions; and
- Career information and job searches.

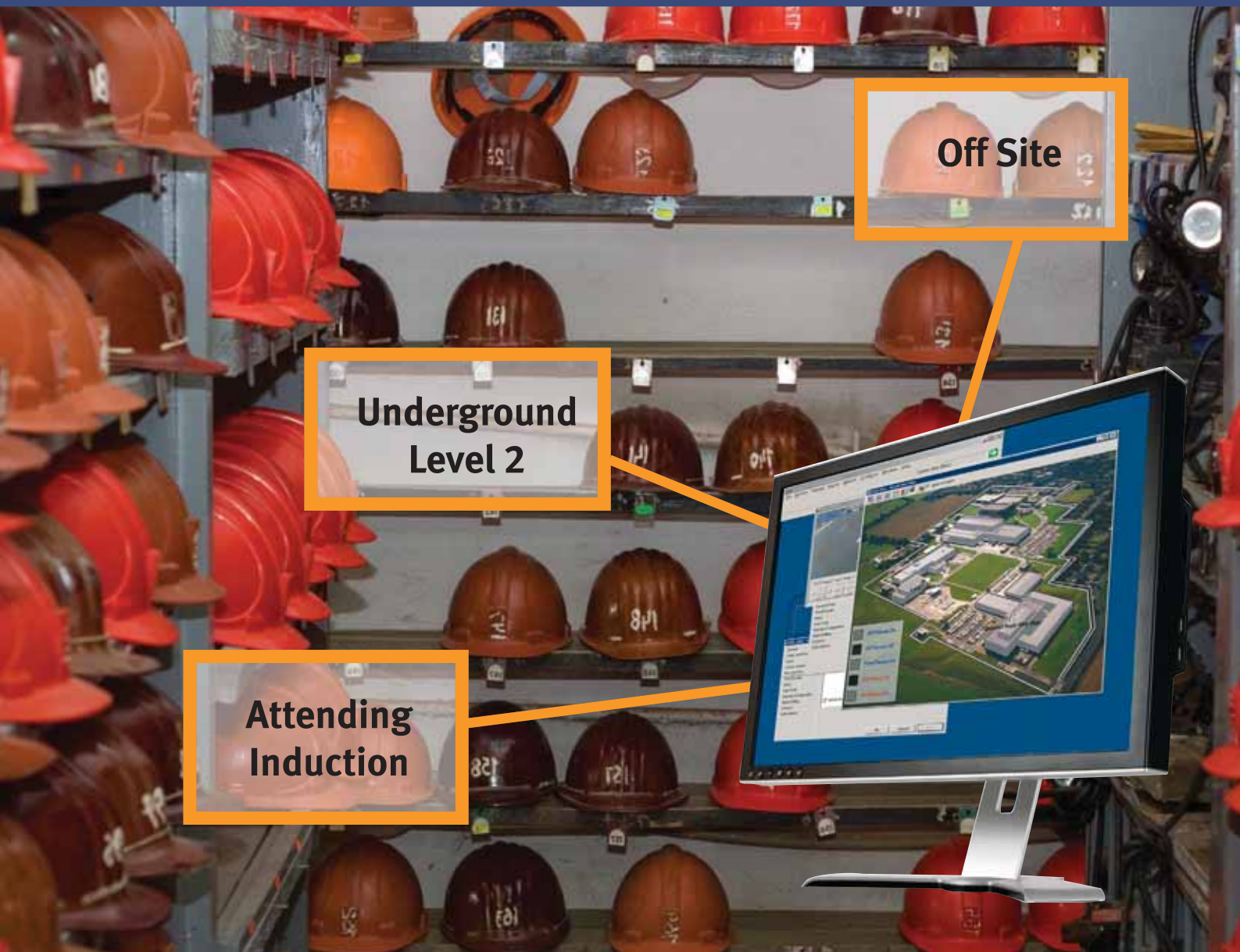
While it can take some creative use of the online tools, there is value to be gained by mining companies and related businesses by participating. The value can come from:

Identity and reputation management;

- Ability to communicate instantly with people who have subscribed as being interested in what your company is doing;
- Having the same enormous exposure to the community as other organisations with online presences who might want to communicate negative comments about the company;
- Ability for senior executives to communicate their thoughts directly to employees, stakeholders, and/or the public;
- Ability for employees to connect and network internally and externally; and
- Networking, advertising and generating leads for work or partnerships.

Mining companies need to be aware that their staff, stakeholders and customers now have unparalleled ability to share their thoughts and

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perceptions of their organisation with the entire world, whether positive or critical. But in return, companies are also provided with the ability to immediately and widely support or rebuke these thoughts to the exact same audience.

Companies and organisations have a choice to build their reputations through engaging widely in the social sphere, or allow their reputations to be formed by the voices of others if they neglect to engage.

There is a common reluctance to use online social media tools for fear of divulging personal information and therefore risking identity theft or privacy invasion. These concerns are addressed by the site applying various levels of privacy control, such that only those people who are accepted to a person's network may view information about that person. It should be recognised that the potential value in online networking far outweighs any potential concerns about loss of privacy.

### Future possibilities

The concepts and tools behind social networking also seem likely to be able to be translated for use in collaboration and sharing within companies and projects. The features of these sites can be applied to project teams, relationships with clients in the mining services area, or geographically spread work groups

– features such as status update messages, photo and video sharing, document sharing, etc.

Do you think your staff would benefit from reading your thoughts once a week on how the company is progressing (via a blog), or maybe you'd like to ask your team to "tweet" you once a day with a status update? Could a project team spread out geographically use a LinkedIn group to communicate, create discussions, and share updates?

A wide spread and pro-active commitment to the application of social media tools across the mining industry will help to alleviate social and professional isolation experienced by many working in remote areas of the world. Its prevalence as an acceptable means of inter-personal communication and information sharing will appeal to those younger people seeking to pursue a career in the resources sector.

By ignoring the growing strength of online networking sites, whether they are social or business oriented, mining companies and professionals risk missing huge opportunities to build their knowledge bases, networks, and reputations. By understanding the ways in which these different online tools work, companies and individuals will be much better placed to extract value from them in new and creative ways.

### AusIMM discussion forums

The AusIMM is pleased to advise members that work has been completed on its new discussion forums and these are now available for all members to access. The forums can be accessed via the following link: <http://www.ausimm.com.au/forum/default.aspx>, or from links on The AusIMM homepage or the Members Only page.

Only current members of The AusIMM will be able to access and participate in these discussion forums and as a member, you may be asked for your username and password to access them. Ten forums have been created covering:

- Geoscience;
- Graduates;
- Health and Safety;
- Heritage;
- Management;
- Metallurgy;
- Mining;
- Students;
- Sustainability; and
- Women in Mining.

The forums will allow you to post ideas, ask questions, seek advice or reply to such items. Users have complete control over how they stay update with the forums – from nominating alerts for all entries through to selecting alerts. For particular threads only or not receiving any alerts. Usage is subject to the Terms of Use and all forums will be moderated with appropriate action taken if these terms or The AusIMM Code of Ethics are breached.

The AusIMM invites all members to utilise this feature of The AusIMM website which we believe will advance the exchange of information and ideas throughout The AusIMM's Australasian and global network. ■



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In such isolated, ultra-harsh environments, safety and performance are always top of mind, making parts that are designed specifically for and tested on Toyota vehicles the most reliable choice.

