

# Professionals, politicians tap social-networking Web sites

Posted by Melissa Burden | The Flint Journal May 12, 2008 22:52PM

**GENESEE COUNTY, Michigan** -- Angie Ridley wants you to find her.

On [MySpace](#). On [Facebook](#). On [LinkedIn](#) and several other social-networking sites.

A broker for Complete Realty in Burton and president-elect of the Flint Area Association of Realtors' board, Ridley, 42, has embraced social networking and blogging.

"I get referral business. I refer business," said Ridley, a social networker since 2006. "I've had clients call me. I've had people call me just because they can associate with something on my blog."

And a few personal tidbits on those pages haven't hurt, Ridley said.

"They know me before they call," she said.

As [Facebook](#) and [MySpace](#) and other social-networking sites grow in popularity and as more adults log on, expect to see more friend requests from decision makers, business leaders and mom-and-pop businesses trying to make names for themselves.

Instead of -- or maybe in addition to -- lunch with the local chamber of commerce, it's listing your favorite authors on MySpace or comparing personality profiles on Facebook.

And, really, it's not just teens and college students using these social networking Web sites.

Facebook, which launched in 2004 for college students, today has broadened to more than 70 million active users and its fastest-growing demographic is those 25 and older.

Politicians such as U.S. Rep. [Dale Kildee](#), D-Flint; Lt. Gov. [John D. Cherry Jr.](#); County Treasurer [Daniel T. Kildee](#); and former Flint mayoral candidate [Dayne Walling](#) are Facebookers.

The [Michigan Association of Realtors](#), Mott Community College, Hurley Medical Center and General Motors are among the colleges, employers and organizations that have groups on Facebook.

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### Social-networking tips

- If you plan to use sites such as Facebook or MySpace for job recruitment or networking, don't post anything on your page that you wouldn't want an employer to know or anything you'd think might cause someone to pass over you as a candidate.
- Review a site's privacy settings and determine if you want to make your profile public or friends only.
- Keep your profile simple, and don't overload it with images and text.
- Limit photos you post or that friends post of you.
- Include content that is relevant to a job search or your career.
- Accept friends cautiously because friends can see information about your other friends, too.

**Sources:** Communication Professor Steve Jones, University of Illinois at Chicago and [About.com](#)

And take Elba Township businessman Craig B. Parr, 65, as an example of someone from an older generation looking to network online.

Parr, vice president of Chippewa Capital in Grand Blanc, a capital leasing company, and chief executive officer and co-owner of Evergreen Commodities, a recycling company, has joined other Facebookers in the past few months. He's also using LinkedIn, which has more than 20 million professional members.

"Folks my age tend not to gravitate toward those sort of vehicles," Parr said. "But folks of a huge younger demographic are very aware and use those types of tools."

Parr said he sees the Web sites as a way to reach out to those he might otherwise not reach.

"I think they have a very proper role in business moving forward just because it's a vehicle of choice for so many people," said Parr, who already has received some inquiries and calls through Facebook networking.

Flint attorney [Terry R. Bankert](#), 57, has more than 480 friends on his Facebook page.

He joined the site a few months back to promote his daily "Good Morning Flint" blog about local and national events, available at [www.flinttalk.com](http://www.flinttalk.com).

Since then he's joined more than 100 Facebook groups.

"I'm increasing my name awareness and indirectly" my business awareness, Bankert said of his Facebook page.

Even the Flint Area Convention & Visitors Bureau is looking to cast the social-networking net, planning to hire a Web-savvy person to boost its presence, said Jerry Preston, president of the bureau.

The Whiting, one of Genesee County's top tourist and local attractions, added a MySpace page late last year and is considering other social networks, director Christina Bellows said.

She said MySpace allows The Whiting to send to its more than 200 friends free bulletins for things such as complimentary tickets that usually are grabbed up quickly.

"It's kind of like having an e-blast service that most people charge for," Bellows said. "It also allows us to tap into artists we having coming and also connect our friends, our patrons with our artists."

And, social-networking sites also are being used by businesses to find employees, said Steve Jones, a professor of communications at the University of Illinois at Chicago.

"We are seeing some use for recruiting purposes to find people who match a particular profile," Jones

### What are these sites?

- [MySpace.com](#): Free to users, this Web site is an online community that allows people to keep connected with "friends" whom the user adds. People can create a profile, upload photos and blog to share items with their "friends."
- [Facebook.com](#): This free Web site, originally created for college students, now boasts more than 70 million active users. The site also allows people to keep up with their friends, classmates, co-workers and others; upload photos; share links; and add applications.
- [LinkedIn.com](#): More than 20 million users have created a profile on this Web site to add business networking connections. The site is free to join, but people can also pay for accounts with more tools.

said.

Nearly 17 percent of employers surveyed recently for the National Association of Colleges and Employers plan to use social-networking sites as part of recruiting, up from 11 percent surveyed in fall 2006.

Those employers aren't using profiles only to check backgrounds of candidates. More than half who will use the sites said they plan to network with potential candidates, the association says.