

The Toolbox-SCM Information Resources--May 2010

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Over the last few months, I've visited old familiar stomping grounds in Northern Indiana, the West, East & North sides of Detroit, and central and Northern Ohio. Time and again, I pass businesses, which less than a year ago, were open, viable and active. Now those businesses are vacant--weeds standing high in their parking lots. Also, I've spotted new businesses that a year ago weren't there. That's a positive sign. In the past year, I've examined many, new and different (to me) SCM websites, downloaded numerous whitepapers, and explored some of the vast social networking options.

This month, I'll attempt to give you some current links to resources that may be of use, and my take or insight into social networking. This submission is longer than originally planned. In part because there are so many new and ever expanding resources, and partly due to recent current events changing the landscape, forcing revisions to what had already been written which was already out of date. I include brief descriptions and comments which may be helpful, as I proceed.

"Inside Supply Management"—is ISM's primary trade publication. Many take it for granted, skimming it at best. I'm gradually weaning myself from hard copies of magazines, by utilizing the digital downloads I receive. I'm both a former bookstore owner, and manager, with the printed word of high importance to both my wife and I.

Traveling frequently in the tri-state area, a) I download the digital e-zines, b) keep the most recent issues on my memory stick, then c) catch up on reading, in my spare time while in waiting rooms, airport terminals, or when I have time to kill between appointments.

How we obtain our information, news, and the resources we use, is changing for everyone. Bookstores' sales are declining, newspapers are getting smaller or completely folding, **e-books**, the **Ipod**, the **Ipad**, and **the internet**, are changing what we do, read and how we search for info. Office Depot sells **Sony Readers** in 5" & 6" screen editions, Best Buy now sells the **"nook"** by Barnes & Noble, which has 4X the memory capacity of the **Sony Readers** and comes 3G cellular, and WiFi ready. This is a **bold** move by Barnes and Noble, given that just a week ago--Yahoo News, reported **Borders Books** in Ann Arbor, among 10 major retailers, in danger of bankruptcy, and further indication of the many changes yet ahead in publishing and the information/data industry. Iconic publications are biting the dust, one by one. Just this past week, Reed Business Publications, announced that with a buyout of their group, the ceasing of the publishing of **Purchasing Magazine**, an Icon in trade publications. Other trade magazines, also a part of Reed Business' group, are also seeing their final issues in April 2010, like **Logistics Magazine**. Before I finished writing this monthly installment, much of it was no longer factual, as many of the resources were closing up shop and disappearing!

When first unemployed last year, I came across a unique toolbar tool, so I will start with that:

- ✓ **Acronym Finder**—Google it, then save it as a favorite in your tool bar. It has a black icon with a Red "AF" in it. When to use it? While searching through a webpage, reading an article, or reading job postings, you often come across an

- acronym or word that you're unsure of the normal meaning--click on the **AF** icon, then type the item you need clarification on. A couple seconds later, you will see several listings of the most common use of that acronym, as well as its definition. Then toggle back to your reading, a bit more knowledgeable and wiser!
- ✓ **Inside Supply Management**, several days after the mailing of the printed edition, an e-mail follows, with a link to "*supplemental articles*", on topics related to the magazine focus. For one reason or another, these articles were not included in the final cut for publication, or were retrieved from archival files which were pertinent to the current issue's focus.
 - ✓ **ISM groups & forums**- one early form of networking with SC managers from groups with interests similar to yours. It continues, but loses ground to LinkedIn and other social networking options.
 - ✓ ISM's **Member's Edge**, monthly e-mail newsletter- a listing of press releases and tid-bits of this-n-that, not in the trade journal, including new items from CAPS Research.
 - ✓ ISM's **CAPS Research**--joint research studies through ISM, Arizona State University, funded by major businesses, done in collaboration with research by professors at other colleges and universities like MSU, Penn State, Oregon State, St. Johns and Northwestern. The studies, white papers and back articles, are open to any ISM member, and can be searched by topic, title or author and read on-line or downloaded.
 - ✓ **ADR Int'l**, a local, Ann Arbor, supply chain management consulting firm, with global ties, now has a strong presence with ISM and ASU-Arizona State University. Some of you may have met Bill Michels, the CEO of ADR North America, or may have known Dr. Laura Birou, while she was in the doctoral program at MSU, and later one of ADR's associate consultants for several years. Laura, has now returned to the university setting once again, as a professor down in Louisiana.
 - ✓ ISM's **ROB—Report on Business**, continues to be a predictor of market activity by tracking key, lead indicators for mfg and non-mfg. Following it's trends and reviewing it monthly, will keep you ahead of the Tsunami's and earthquakes in various commodities and market sectors this year.
 - ✓ ISM's **eSide Supply Management newsletter**—filled with links to training, articles or news releases related to IT Sourcing, Negotiation and Leadership. Sort of reminds me of: **Purchasing Magazine**--April 2010 **last issue!** Inside cover section, just past table of contents, has always noted commodities pricing trends & business news—and for years has been right on the money. Now we will have to use other websites and sources for the same info.
 - ✓ **Purchasing.BizConnect** —also ceasing operation 4-30-09 per Reed Business.
 - ✓ **Reed Business Publications**--provided many of the key trade journals in each professional category. Purchasing Magazine was published by them. Check their website for other changes—definitely shrinking in size as overall sales have plummeted & advertising shrinks as well. Most subscriptions were free—wait and see what happens now. It's anyone's guess what they will do next!
 - ✓ New ISM feature announced April 2010: **eVendor Check**: free trial, 10% discount subscription to members. Seems like a modern internet site, providing

some of the same info of a Dunn & Bradstreet report from a Dbase, to help you and your company 1) choose effective, reliable suppliers, 2) minimize supplier risk, 3) reduce supply chain disruptions, 4) search for back-up suppliers, etc. Once again, another form of paid, subscription information services.

Subscriptions are available to various other research services providing indices, graphs, trends, research boards and white papers, possibly specific to your market sector, such as:

- ✓ Capgemini—Consulting, Technology and Outsourcing Services. Website: www.Capgemini.com
- ✓ **ProPurchaser.com** : www.ProPurchaser.com “AN INFORMATION RESOURCE FOR THE PROFESSIONAL PURCHASER”
- ✓ **Purchasing Management Association of Canada**: <http://www.pmac.ca/> They promote SCM in Canada and have the certification designations of **C.P.P.**-certified Purchasing Professional, and their new: SCMP – Supply Chain Management Professional.
- ✓ Another SCM magazine & website: www.supplychainbrain.com This was listed on the last page of the April 2010 Inside Supply Management, in the section “beyond borders”. Appears to be a logistics oriented publication, by Keller Publishing, LLC, (with whom I am currently unfamiliar). More international in focus than domestic. Comments by many of the company executives. Appears to be free subscription base, with advertising by freight forwarders, shipping lines and software companies oriented towards shipping/freight/3PL issues.

The above websites you can visit their website openly, and obtain trial subscriptions. Much of the research tables & indices are restricted to members only. Some of these services are heavily promoted now by ISM and APICS is doing the same. It is time that we arm ourselves for serious battle. It's not going to get any easier. Most of the major software publishers also have blogs and newsletters to keep in contact with you, for all their new upgrades, with emails sent with ads for whitepapers and such, which you can download.

- ✓ **APICS**-still another resource and website available to us for info. Competitor to ISM—you decide for yourself. I think of both organizations together. Your own job focus and emphasis, may dictate either ISM or APICS may be better for you specifically. In overview, both organizations now seek to serve the same customer/member base, as our profession gets broader in scope, and more specialized by function over time. I myself use the APICS site less frequently. APICS does have an excellent **Dictionary of Terms** that I purchased a couple years ago, available through the website store. Much of that information is now available through Acronym Finder or Wikipedia.
- ✓ **Wikipedia**: <http://www.wikipedia.org/> once on this website, select your language. Then search.

(From The Free Dictionary website definition):

Wikipedia: “The world's largest encyclopedia available on the Web at www.wikipedia.com. Using wiki software, Jimmy Wales started Wikipedia in 2001. By the end of 2005, there were 1.8 million entries in more than 100 languages on every

conceivable subject, written and edited by hundreds of thousands of contributors from all walks of life. Since Wikipedia is an unrestricted wiki, anyone can create or edit an entry (see [wiki](#)).” “Admired and Admonished-Wikipedia is widely praised for its incredible breadth, covering subjects, sometimes in great depth, that would never appear in any encyclopedia, online or print. There are so many "eyes" looking at an entry that erroneous information is often caught rather quickly. However, Wikipedia is also disparaged because people can make edits without divulging any of their credentials or experience in the subject. Of course, this is the case with any information on the Web. In addition, if vendors see comments about their category of products, nothing stops them from editing a definition that tilts it toward their particular expertise.”

- ✓ **TFD-The Free Dictionary (by Farlex)**—another toolbar website: <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/> (in their own words): "The world's most comprehensive dictionary: English, Spanish, German, French, Italian, Chinese, Portuguese, Dutch, Norwegian, Greek, Arabic, Polish, Turkish, Russian, Medical, Legal, and Financial Dictionaries, Thesaurus, Acronyms and Abbreviations, Idioms, Encyclopedia, a Literature Reference Library, and a Search Engine all in one!"
- ✓ **Ethisphere Magazine** focused on Ethics Knowledge, and Corporate Focus, Brand Promise: What's Your Ethical Brand Value? : www.ethisphere.com emphasis for corp. CEOs, paid subscription @ \$59.95/year, yet website articles (highlights from previous issues) can be viewed, read and downloaded. Some good stuff here, even a new corporate metric!
- ✓ **The Hackett Group**- Research center for defining World Class and Best Practices –see their website: www.thehackettgroup.com

Social Networking:

- ✓ **YouTube**—yes, YouTube--it has video clips, interviews & music, from companies and universities regularly, besides just individuals. Often individuals use it for their quick 15 seconds of fame. This is quickly becoming the new format for News Releases today, using video clip format, **or** you see them making announcements on **Twitter**. I don't do text messaging, so Twitter and Tweeting aren't for me. I do enough keyboarding on the computer, without chaining myself to my cell-phone.

Recruiters also post videos on interview tips, and other topics, on YouTube. Eg: You want to know what the NSCL- National Super Conductor Laboratory at MSU is doing? Check out NSCL on YouTube. MSU even links you to **YouTube** from the MSU website. There you can view interviews, video clips on what is going on currently on campus.

- ✓ **My Space**—social networking, no holds barred, anything goes, nothing is discreet or modest here! If you are trying to portray a professional image, be cautious and careful. Security & personal information here is very careless for most users. I find much of the content to be over the top and not in good taste.
- ✓ **Facebook**—social networking again, a little more tame, but people should still be more careful of the photos they use. Recently I connected with a recruiter through their posting on LinkedIn and various job postings on Michigan Talent Bank--through Michigan Works. Later that day, he asked via email to be my friend on Facebook, which I don't even mention on my resume or LinkedIn profile. He obviously had checked me out there, and found me just the same! He

has since been in touch with me about some job postings, so my social networking is portraying the image I want. Facebook, I use mainly to keep in touch with a few select friends, various family in Ohio, some of my former co-workers, and our sons. I only check it every 7-10 days, unlike others who check it every time they turn on their computer.

- ✓ **LinkedIn**-this is the primary place to start to create your professional, business image, and even your “personal branding” if you are serious about networking. There is an affiliate site called **Slide-Share**, where you can post your PowerPoint presentations, Photos or Video clips. Another tool for sharing—**WordPress**, allows you to post other documents of yours, including blogs, to link them back to your LinkedIn account and profile. LinkedIn also offers advanced subscriptions features/services for a fee. Considerations—how many people do you want to have access to it? Is it your work for which you would like to be paid or protect a copyright?
- ✓ **Bing**: “Bing is a search engine that finds and organizes the answers you need so you can make faster, more informed decisions.” (Per Google search) Bing is a Microsoft designed site, to bring them into stronger competition with Google and others. (I myself seldom if ever use it. Find what works best for you.—dt)

Social networking-basic considerations or caveats:

- 1) It can be addictive and very time consuming. Don't bite off too much at one time and do a mediocre job at all of it.
- 2) My caution to you--always do it in moderation, in small steps. Test the water and grow with it gradually. When you make a change, save it, exit. Then search and review your own profile like someone else might be searching you. How does it look on first view or impression? That is how you catch glaring errors.
- 3) In the beginning you will change your format and image hundreds of times in the space of just weeks.
- 4) Use a professional looking photo or have one taken by someone that knows what they are doing. Think about how it looks to those viewing it for the first time.
- 5) Learn how to use it--in stages, try the various features to see what they can do. Let the site grow on you. If one site doesn't seem right for you, de-activate it, and forget it. Networking is not for everyone.
- 6) Connect to friends at first--those you really know, at first. Become familiar with the etiquette of inviting a person to be a friend, then accepting someone as a friend. Search for people and businesses to test your detective skills. I repeatedly see individuals who make fools of themselves, by openly networking with everyone and anyone, no questions asked, and no plan. I currently have only 42 contacts and belong to 12 groups, which send me their daily chat discussions or blogs. Even 12 groups has turned out to be too many to realistically review. Each time I go on LinkedIn, the profile shows me people that have possible interest in my profile either thru direct viewing or via another friend who I'm already connected to.
- 7) If you want to find departmental contacts in a company, such as a CFO, HR Director, Purchasing or Supply Chain Manager, do a search on LinkedIn for the company. You might find links not only to the main plant, but in one case, one

- search lead me to name-specific contacts, in 3 other company divisions and a couple of competitors. Internally their people were using it like email so I was seeing more info than I should have, but it was all there just the same. Again, be careful what you post!
- 8) Much is available on-line lately, on **personal branding**—how you can promote “Yourself” on Social Networks. Some are making money at it, in the job of a **Life Coach**, helping you find yourself (in case you are lost and need finding) and they will help you discover (for a fee) what you are supposed to be doing! Determine what image you’re trying to portray—that of a casual participant, a serious professional or just a network hungry job-seeker, wanting a job more than anything else. Think about how it looks to potential business contacts, your own company executives, and potential employers or recruiters. If your circumstance changes, does your image or profile keep pace? A poor profile, or one in apparent bad taste, can and does cost people their jobs, sometimes their career and reputation as well.
 - 9) Consider who might be viewing your posts, and even your blog or comments on-line. Eg: in January, I commented to a question on **LinkedIn** regarding the selling of printing services to Purchasing Agents. A few days later, I received an email asking if I would consider being interviewed for an article—“yes”, I replied. A few days later a Sales consultant and author, called from GA. She was working on an article for a printing industry trade publication. After a 10-15 minute phone interview, she indicated she intended to use some of my comments in her article and would send me a proof. In February, I received a full copy of magazine with the article noted on the cover. I was quoted 5 times in the article along with other buyers. Surprised me. People are watching you, observing and reading your posts and comments. If your comments and thoughts are carefully worded and well thought out, you never know where those comments might lead.
 - 10) Everything you do on-line--posts and blog comments, they **can** be traced back to you. There is a permanent paper trail of your presence. Once posted, your comments, writings and posts are out there on someone’s website or search engine. If you doubt me, Google yourself several ways, even family members. You might find a lot of your own personal information on the web just sitting there. If you do your planning properly, you won’t be ashamed to have your LinkedIn profile on your resume. I even indicate how to Google me for my Toolbox articles. Your own paper trail or web presence can be consistent or it can be spotty and hap-hazard. You make the choice. Just food for thought.
 - 11) Several years ago I found my home phone number was out there with my name, from just being on the back page of an organization’s newsletter, as an officer. All of the officers on that board, became a bit more careful what personal info they included from then on.

Hope these sites and ideas are of help. There is no right-way to do searches and research. Use tools you are comfortable with. You develop your own process or method, finding what works best and most effectively for you. If I can be of further help, contact me at:

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Thanks, dt