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**Q&A with Wendy Soucie***Wendy Soucie**January 19, 2010* | COMMENTS 

**Question: As a LinkedIn trainer, can you help me understand the value of tons of connections? Now that I am getting invitations and links from customers, colleagues, and prospects, I find it muddies up my connections that I actually spend time networking with. I am struggling with the relevance of a big network.**

One of the biggest reasons to have a network at all is to be social. Next is that when you have something to say, you are engaged with like-minded people, or those whose problems you may be able to solve.

Last but not most important, on LinkedIn, the business-focused social media networking site, having many connections allows you to search based on first-, second- and third-level connections. In other words, people you know directly, those that they know, and their connections. This means it opens up more connections for you to view in a specific industry, new prospects, and existing customers.

The statement "It's who you know and who know you" is very important in that regard. The latest feature added to LinkedIn for profile management should help you since it allows you to put your most important contacts that you want to watch in an organized area. Unfortunately you will have to pay for that ability. No free version yet.

When you have something to promote, having a network to shout it out to can really help (for example, let's say you wrote a book or have an event to which you'd like to invite your connections).

Sometimes special interest groups on LinkedIn can be your extended messaging network and you don't need to connect directly with so many people. This doesn't get you the same extended search capabilities as direct connections, but is still very valuable for targeted conversations. In some of the large networking groups on LinkedIn, such as 48-hour networking, the goal is to rapidly grow your network and connect directly. Others are merely for conversations, discussions, and knowledge transfer. If you want to go global, these are the groups for you.

One tip I give people is that after you join a group, offer a direct connect invitation to the manager of the group. That person is typically the most connected person in the group and likely connecting directly to everyone in the group. That way you have extended your network even further.

Some people just don't want or need a huge network. They want to keep it at a very high executive level and with only people they know very well. That's OK too. Just decide what your business goals are and what you want to do on a strategic level and move forward. Maybe your big extended network is better served on another location, like Facebook.

I believe lists will become a feature on all social sites. Twitter just came up with one, Facebook has them, and LinkedIn will likely have something in the future that supports this type of option.

One blog to follow for all types of advice and tips is the [Integrated Alliances Blog](#). IA is a national company focused on user training for LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter to name a few. As a regional executive director in Wisconsin for IA, I reference this blog first in searching for tips or a work around. Follow if you are interested in further discussion on LinkedIn strategy.

*Wendy Soucie is a social media/marketing strategist based in Madison, WI. Send your questions to [info@endresultmarketing.com](mailto:info@endresultmarketing.com).*

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