



## Ask SCORE for Business Advice

“Ask SCORE” Column  
Green Bay Press Gazette  
Sat., April 4, 2009

### Linking In by Tina Dettman-Bielefeldt

Many of our SCORE clients have been asking about the benefits of online social networking for professionals. Especially for those already in business, they've heard that they should be active in this area, but aren't certain how to get started. Now, a Green Bay couple is trying to make it easier to participate.

Stacie and Mark Hackl have long been proponents of networking. They saw the value in building professional contacts and have been active members of local networking groups. Then, a few years ago, Mark decided to join LinkedIn, a free online site. LinkedIn is a network of professionals that was founded in 2003. Since then, it has grown to a 35 million-member network with a new member joining approximately every second. In Northeastern Wisconsin alone, there are over 50,000 members. As Mark had success, Stacie also joined.

“I wanted to use social media to build relationships with new people and expand/reinforce existing relationships,” Stacie explained, “We saw LinkedIn as a way to bring the business professionals of Green Bay together online.”

When joining LinkedIn, members create a profile that summarizes their professional experience and qualifications. Your network consists of your connections, your connections' connections, and the people they know. Stacie says you can't join and wait for something magical to happen, you have to make sure your profile is complete, participate in online discussions, link people to your website or blog, and build relationships with people in your network.

The Hackls decided to enhance their online relationships by adding personal contact. A few months ago, they formed Link Greater Green Bay. About 65 business professionals, ranging in age from the early-20s to middle-60s, attended the first meeting in February and almost double that number attended in March. The next meeting will be held from 4:30 to 7 p.m. on April 14 at Townline Pub and Grill in Howard. All area LinkedIn members are welcome and are asked to RSVP to [mhackl1@new.rr.com](mailto:mhackl1@new.rr.com).

“We have created our group around the needs of the Greater Green Bay area. There is not training available from LinkedIn. There are thousands of groups on LinkedIn.

However, we decided to take our group one step further by providing the opportunity to meet face-to-face,” Stacie noted.

The meetings include networking and education. The setting is business casual with times to socialize and meet new people. Stacie thinks this new group offers an advantage over typical networking groups.

She said, “You have the capability to learn about people and their companies before you start to network with them because you can see their professional profiles online. You are not limited to the people who attend an event, you have the capability to make connections through the people you are connected with.”

If you have business questions, contact the Green Bay Chapter of SCORE. Visit [www.greenbayscore.org](http://www.greenbayscore.org) or call Cindy Gokey at 920-496-8930 for information.

Tina Dettman-Bielefeldt is co-owner of DB Commercial Real Estate in Green Bay and Assistant District Director for SCORE, Wisconsin.