The Future’s Bright, The Future’s Niche Social Networks
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CIPS and Procurious Social Media for Procurement Knowledge Partnership
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Social media has enabled global collaboration on an unprecedented scale. But as attitudes towards the major platforms change, it's actually niche social networks where the future lies.

It might seem strange to talk about a more narrow focus when technological advancements have ensured that we can speak to anyone, in any corner of the world, at any time. But as the world grows, it's important to ensure that you are speaking to the right audience.

We only have a finite amount of time during the day to engage with colleagues, peers and stakeholders, read interesting articles, and share our experiences with others. If you're spending that time talking to the wrong people, then you are potentially missing out on great new opportunities.

Facebook-isation

Does this post look familiar to you?
How about this one?

These and countless others pop up on the major social networks on an hourly basis. And while you may think I'm talking about Facebook, these were actually lifted from LinkedIn in the past week or so.

Yes, that's right, the world's largest networking site is now beset with endless maths problems, selfies, family photos and quizzes. While presumably posted by well-meaning members, they serve to create friction on what constitutes an 'appropriate' post for LinkedIn.

And it doesn't stop at the main network feed either. Speaking to procurement professionals at conferences and events in recent weeks, many have voiced the opinion that LinkedIn's Groups and Discussions have become "spammy".

There are a couple of possible explanations for this turn of events. The first is that, with over 300 million members, the network has grown too large while trying to cater for too wide an audience. The other is possibly that for many users, LinkedIn represents their entire social media presence, which is why there are Facebook-type posts appearing on it.

Both LinkedIn and Facebook aren't going anywhere. They are great networks for connecting with people and, on a professional side, LinkedIn remains the place to be for marketers and recruiters. But for individual professions, the future lies in niche social networks.
Finding Your Niche

For many professions, relevant discussions, content and connections are lost in the noise on the larger networks. This was one of the primary reasons that Procurious was founded, and why it has grown as it has. People know that the site provides up to date, relevant content for procurement and supply chain, all in one place.

Procurious caters to the procurement and supply chain audience, but there are many others you can find, depending on your profession and interests.

- **Spiceworks** - A network for over a million global IT professionals, providing content, and a free IT help desk for all its members.
- **RESAAS** - Over 300,000 global real estate professionals, providing leads and listings.
- **Doximity** - Over 60 per cent of US-based doctors as verified members, and possible expansion to overseas markets.

The list doesn't end there, and there are countless others for a whole host of professions that are getting started every week.

Benefits of Niche

The benefits of a niche social network are along the lines of what I have said already. Joining one of these network allows you the following:

- **Connections** - Surely the Number 1 aspect of social media are the connections we make. Niche social networks offer people who could really help with your latest issues or questions.

- **Content** - Is a post about global politics interesting? Probably. Is it relevant to your next negotiation? Maybe not. Niche social networks offer articles relevant to your day-to-day work (although we do throw in the occasional off-the-wall topic to keep you interested!).

- **Learning** - Whether it is eLearning, or learning by asking questions to other network members, niche networks are more likely to offer a more focused, better answer.
• News Feed - What all the sites I have mentioned have in common is a collated news feed. This means up-to-date, relevant headlines, brought together in one place.

• Events - An events calendar for all the major events for your profession. Quickly see what is near you and decide which one you want to attend.

By being able to access all of this in one place, you can spend less time wading through irrelevant posts to find good information, and more time connecting and collaborating with the right people.

So if you're only going to use one platform for your social media activities, why not think about a niche network.