

Part Two of our interview with Stephanie Calahan with specifics on how to more effectively use the COBAN group.

We continue our conversation with [Stephanie LH Calahan](#) '95 (BIS/HR) entrepreneur, nationally known speaker, media personality, author, publisher; and productivity / organization specialist about social networking and how she uses tools to build and maintain vital business relationships.



Q: How can our readers more effectively use the COBAN group?

Stephanie: There are a number of things you can do to leverage the COBAN group.

1 - Go to the "More" tab and select "My Settings." Review how you want to manage this group. Some find that clicking the email updates is a great way to manage their group participation because they get notified every time something new is posted. Others find the notifications distracting. If you don't have email notifications turned on then schedule time weekly (15 minutes) to check the group for activity.

2 - Look through the [members list](#) and identify people you know or people you want to get to know. Click and READ their profile to gain an understanding of the type of connections they are looking for. Then, contact them with an in-mail note and start a conversation. Send something personal rather than the system generated note. This is where real networking skills becomes valuable.

3 - Look at the discussion items and reply when you have something of value to add. Ask questions or offer resources to your fellow group members.

4 - Post job openings that you are aware of. In today's market, many of our fellow group members are job hunting. Help them out by making the openings you know about easy to find.

5 - Realize that the networking does not have to stay online. If you make a good connection, it is perfectly acceptable to set up a time to talk on the phone, via Skype or in person. LinkedIn is a tool to help you make the connections. What you do with them is up to you.

Q: Most of our readers are very busy. It sounds like what you are suggesting takes time. How often should someone go out onto LinkedIn and do the things you are suggesting?

Stephanie: Like all activities in your business, you should determine the priority you want to give your social networking. There are some sites that I check a few times a day and there are others that I only go to once a week or once a month. With LinkedIn, you should treat it like any other business building activity. The more you participate, the more credibility you are giving yourself and your brand. I suggest deciding on a length of time (say 30 minutes a week or 1 hour a week to start you off) and put it in your planner. Schedule the time or you will find that you don't get to it. When the appointment time arrives, focus that time on building solid relationships.

Q: Do you belong to more than one social networking site?

Stephanie: Yes. Participating in social networking sites allows us to meet the person on "their turf" rather than forcing them to come to mine. Any time someone is comfortable, they are more receptive to new ideas or services. My staff and I have accounts on various social networking platforms. (See

<http://www.NetworkWithSteph.com> for a sample.) This strategy fits with our focus too: *You don't have to do it our way, because we help you find your way!*TM

This technique will not work for everyone, though. I should mention that I started out slow. Pick one social networking site that you like and build a strategy there first. If you do too many at once you will end up with a jumbled mess and little results. For business to business networking [LinkedIn](#) is the best because the focus stays on business. They now have 45 million members in over 200 countries and territories around the world. That is a lot of opportunities to build relationships.

Q: Anything else you would like to share?

Stephanie: A few months ago I did an [interview with Chip Lambert](#). He shared some outstanding tips and details on how to leverage LinkedIn and get started on the right foot. ***Since I love connecting with other ISU alumni, I'll make an offer just for those reading this newsletter. Send me a message on LinkedIn and let me know that you read this article and you would like access to the interview and worksheets. I'll send you a coupon code for 50% off of our published price.***