

# Do mobility engineers use social media?

A white paper on social media usage of mobility engineers.

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[www.sae.org](http://www.sae.org)

facebook

Linked in

myspace

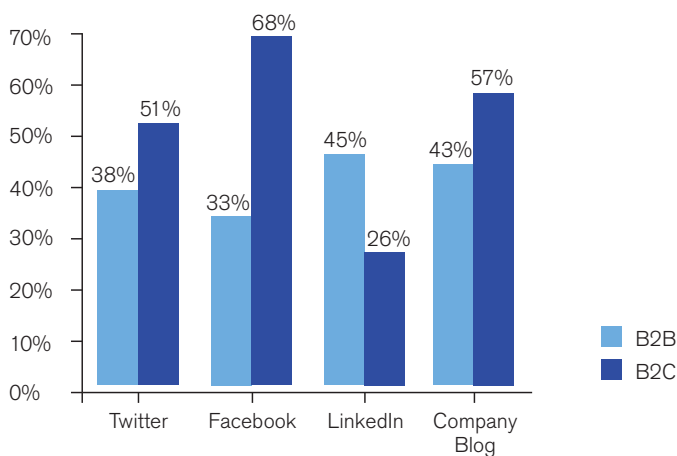
twitter foursquare YouTube

# INTRODUCTION

Social media is a networking and communication tool that is causing significant changes in our society. It has made the world smaller by easily facilitating global connections but it has also raised concerns about privacy and ethics. Nonetheless, social media is playing an increasingly important role in our business and personal lives. Through social media, companies are communicating directly with individuals who in turn have altered B2B decision-making and sales. And, individuals have greater access to larger communities to gain their own knowledge and information, thus becoming less reliant on brand and marketing messages. This shift has not escaped those in marketing and advertising. According to Outsell, social networking spending is one of the fastest growing categories of new media marketing<sup>1</sup>. Among B2B spending, social networks, vertical search engines, and blog sites were the top three new media tools used in 2009. They are also the three leading new media tools marketers plan to use in 2010.<sup>2</sup> Many studies, including the 2010 State of Inbound Marketing Report, are beginning to confirm that companies are seeing results from the inclusion of social media in their communication tool kits.

**Percentage of Companies Using Specific Social Media Channels and/or Blogs Who Have Acquired a Customer From That Channel**

Source: 2010 State of Inbound Marketing Report, HubSpot



Talk around social media and findings such as these have spurred individuals and businesses alike to ask: "Why are people doing this? What should I be doing? What is the value?" These questions are what lead SAE International to conduct its own survey to determine if the mobility engineering community was using social media and, if so, what opportunities did it present for communication with this audience.

SAE International is a global society of more than 128,000 engineers and related technical experts in the aerospace, automotive, and commercial vehicle industries. With members in more than 100 countries throughout the world, SAE International has served the mobility community by providing standards, technical knowledge, and life-long learning to aid engineers and industry in the design and development of vehicles and their systems.

Mobility industry experts donate time to serve on SAE International committees. Through their efforts, SAE International has created 2,600-plus global standards for the automotive, construction and agricultural equipment, heavy trucks, buses and specialty-vehicle industries. SAE International's Aerospace Standards' repository includes 6,800 documents and is the largest such collection in the world.

Since 1905, SAE International has strived to understand and address the needs of mobility engineers. Through this survey, it continues this mission by seeking to determine if and how mobility engineers use social media thereby helping to ensure that SAE communicates messages and information to this audience via channels most used by them. This white paper outlines the results of the SAE International Social Media Survey and will provide some insight on how mobility engineers are using social media today.

<sup>1</sup> Outsell Annual Advertising and Marketing Study 2010: Total US and Consumer Advertising

<sup>2</sup> Outsell Annual Advertising and Marketing Study 2010: Total US and B2B Advertising

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Many people believe that the words “social” and “engineer” are unlikely to ever appear in the same sentence. The advent of social media websites puts an end to this misperception. Mobility engineers are technically adept, have a need to share information and data, and work in heavily globalized industries — automotive, aerospace, and commercial vehicle. As a result, they show relatively high levels of engagement with social media for both business and personal purposes.

1. While 61% of mobility engineers are using social media, a surprising 55% are using it for business purposes, with over 50% allowed access while at work
2. LinkedIn out paces Facebook as the social network of choice for mobility engineers: However, younger engineers and those outside North America show a much greater usage of Facebook and YouTube than North Americans.
3. Engineer’s employers are also using social media, with well over half maintaining a corporate presence; Facebook is used at nearly twice the rate of the next closest platform, LinkedIn.
4. Age was not a strong determinant of social media usage. However, there are marked differences in preference among age groups.
5. While connecting with friends is the most common reason for using social media, connecting with professional colleagues is at near parity, with researching business issues and exchanging technical information all showing major patterns of usage.

## STUDY OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

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### Objectives

The objectives of this project were to:

- Determine if mobility engineers are using social media. And if so, what sites are being used.
- Determine how and when they use social media.
- Determine if their employers are using social media.
- Identify if usage varies based on age or geographic location.

### Methodology and Sample Statistics

A random nth-name sample population was identified from SAE International members and non members with an equal split between North American and International participants. An email invitation and survey was launched on April 23, 2010. A reminder email sent on April 30, 2010 to individuals that had not responded to the original request. The survey was closed on May 11, 2010.

An incentive was offered to encourage response. It entitled all respondents completing the survey entry into a drawing for one of three \$100 America Express gift cards.

### Survey Sample

Total audience	10,000
Less bouncebacks/undeliverables	826
Total surveys delivered	9,174
Completes	1,153
Response Rate	12.6%

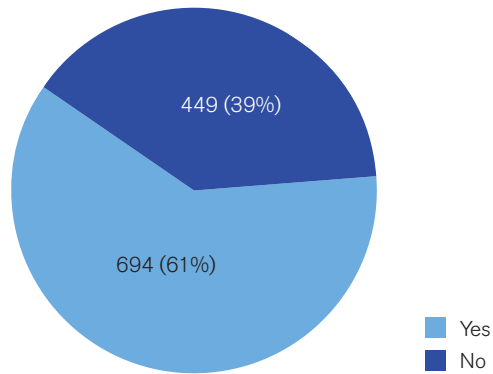
# SURVEY RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

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## USE OF SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES

**SAE International Social Media Survey Question 1:** Are you currently using social networking (Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, MySpace, YouTube, Foursquare) websites:

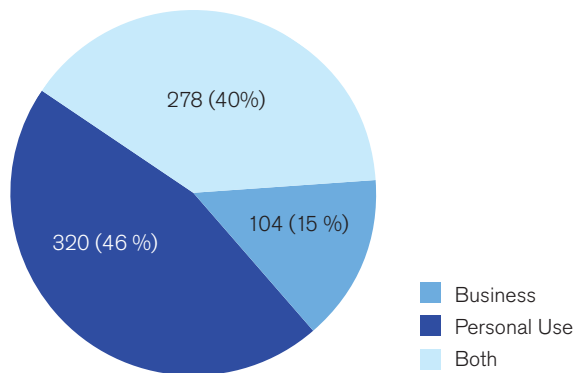
Over half (61%) of the respondents are currently using social networking websites.



## BUSINESS VERSUS PERSONAL USE OF SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES

**SAE International Social Media Survey Question 2:** If yes, are you using them for business, personal use or both:

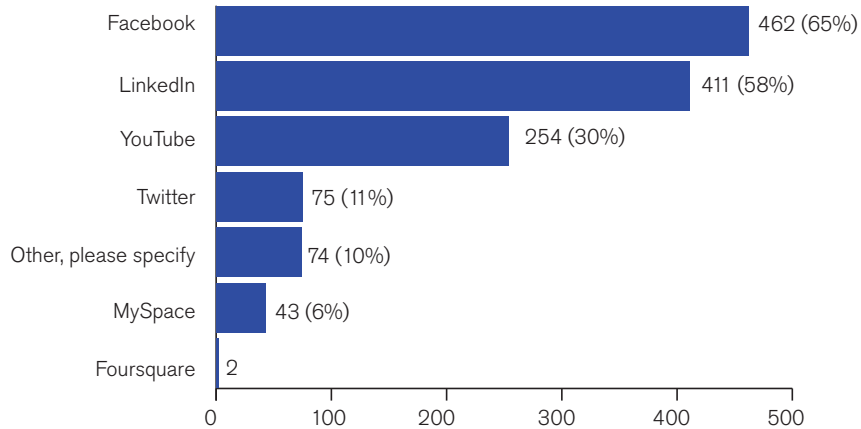
A majority (55%) are using social media for business reasons.



## SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES USED

**SAE International Social Media Survey Question 3:** Which of the following social networks are you currently using (Check all that apply):

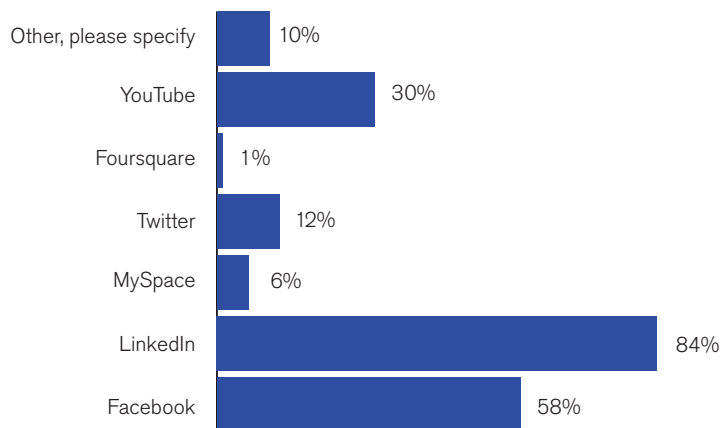
Facebook (65%) and LinkedIn (58%) were the leading social media websites.



## BUSINESS USE OF SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES

Of respondents citing business use or both (business and personal use):

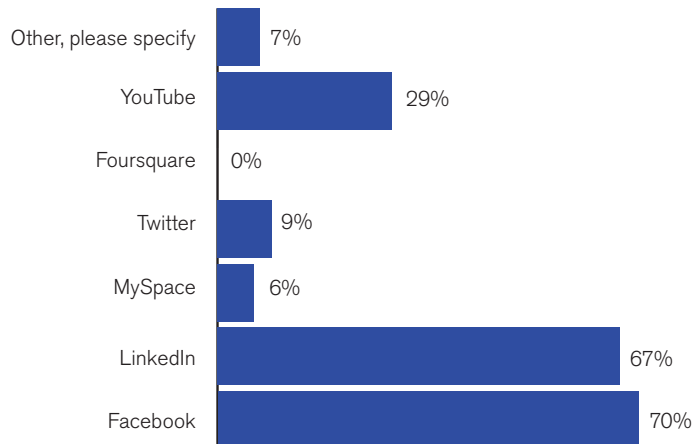
LinkedIn was favored for business by 84% of respondents and while Facebook ranked second with 58%.



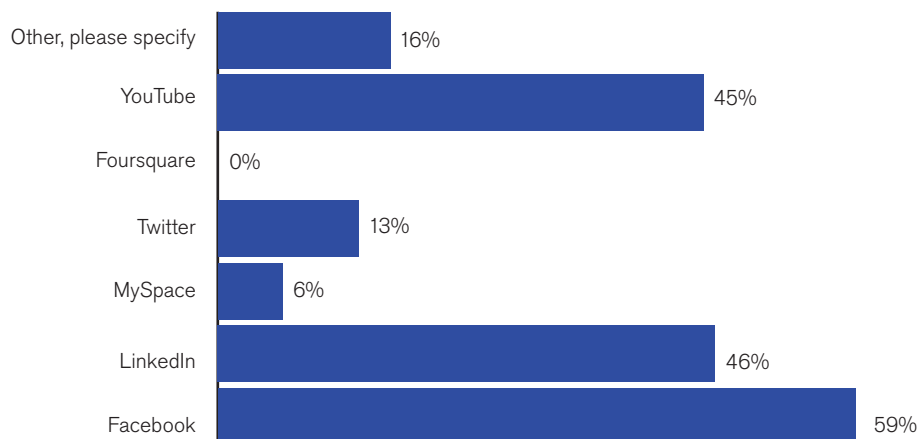
## NORTH AMERICAN VERSUS INTERNATIONAL USE OF SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES

When analyzing social media website usage for North American versus International respondents, both chose Facebook as the most popular social media website. LinkedIn ranked a close second. While YouTube was third for both groups, it was more widely used by international respondents (45% vs. 29% respectively).

### North American



### Global



## USE OF SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES BY AGE GROUP

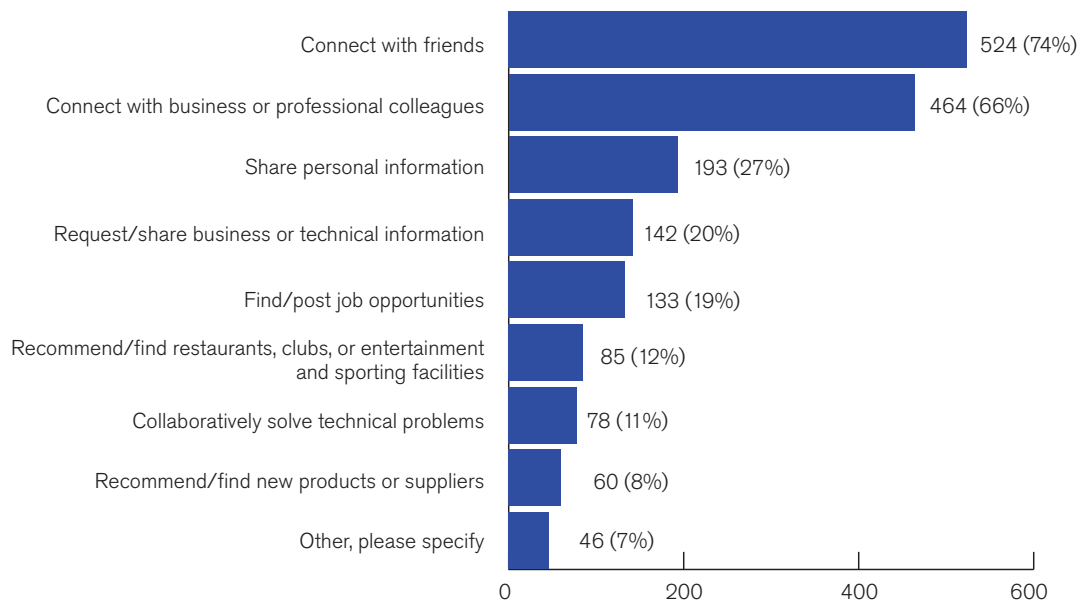
Age did not seem to impact the popularity of one site over another, however, those 35 and under had a higher usage of YouTube — approximately 20% higher than all other age groups. LinkedIn was ranked most popular for the 45-55 age group.

Social Media Website	35 and under	36-45	45-55	56 and over
Facebook	77%	72%	59%	59%
LinkedIn	42%	65%	65%	54%
MySpace	9%	6%	5%	5%
Twitter	17%	14%	6%	8%
FourSquare	1%	1%	0%	0%
YouTube	53%	33%	32%	32%
Other	17%	8%	11%	8%

## REASON FOR USING SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES

**SAE International Social Media Survey Question 4:** How are you using social network websites (Check all that apply):

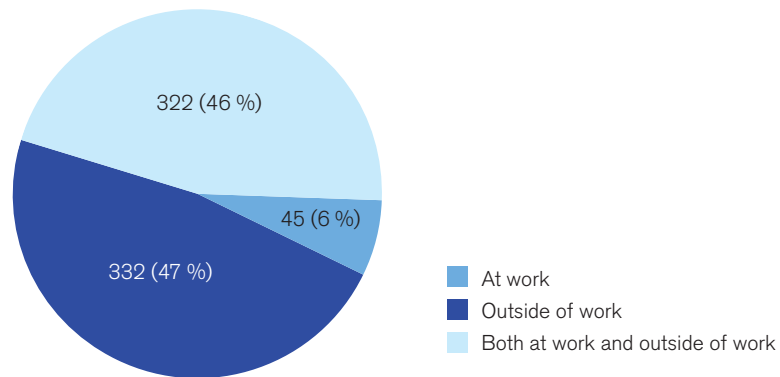
The second most popular reason cited by 66% of respondents for using social media sites is to connect with business or professional colleagues.



## ACCESS AT WORK TO SOCIAL NETWORKS

**SAE International Social Media Survey Question 5:** Do you use/can you use social network media while at work, outside of work, or both at work and outside of work:

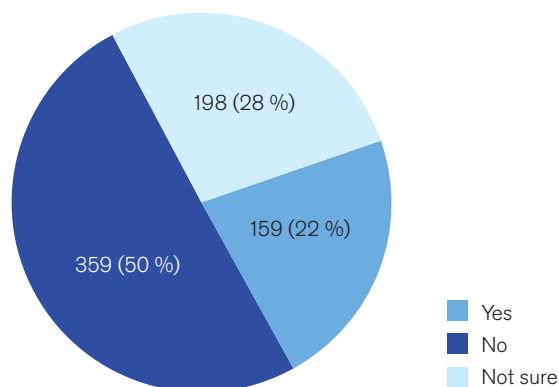
When asked if social networking websites are accessible at work just over half (52%) of respondents have access at work.



## EMPLOYER USE OF SOCIAL NETWORKS

**SAE International Social Media Survey Question 6:** Does your employer have an official presence on social media sites:

Over half (55%) of respondents employers maintained an official presence on social networking sites.

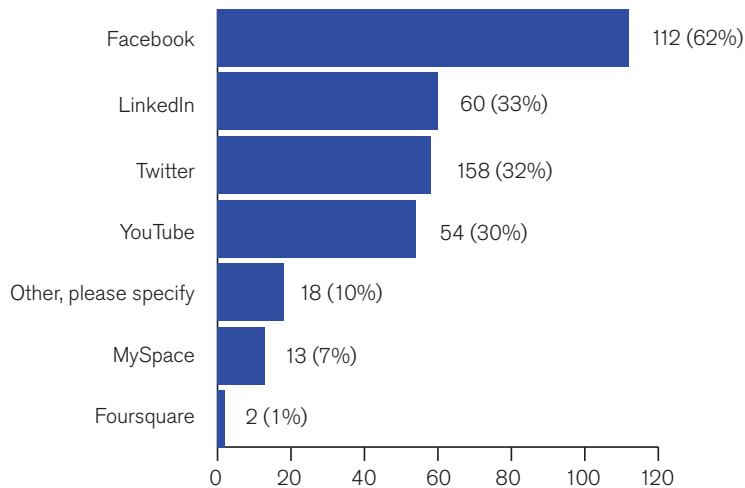




## EMPLOYER PREFERENCE IN SOCIAL NETWORKS

**SAE International Social Media Survey Question 7:** If yes, which ones:

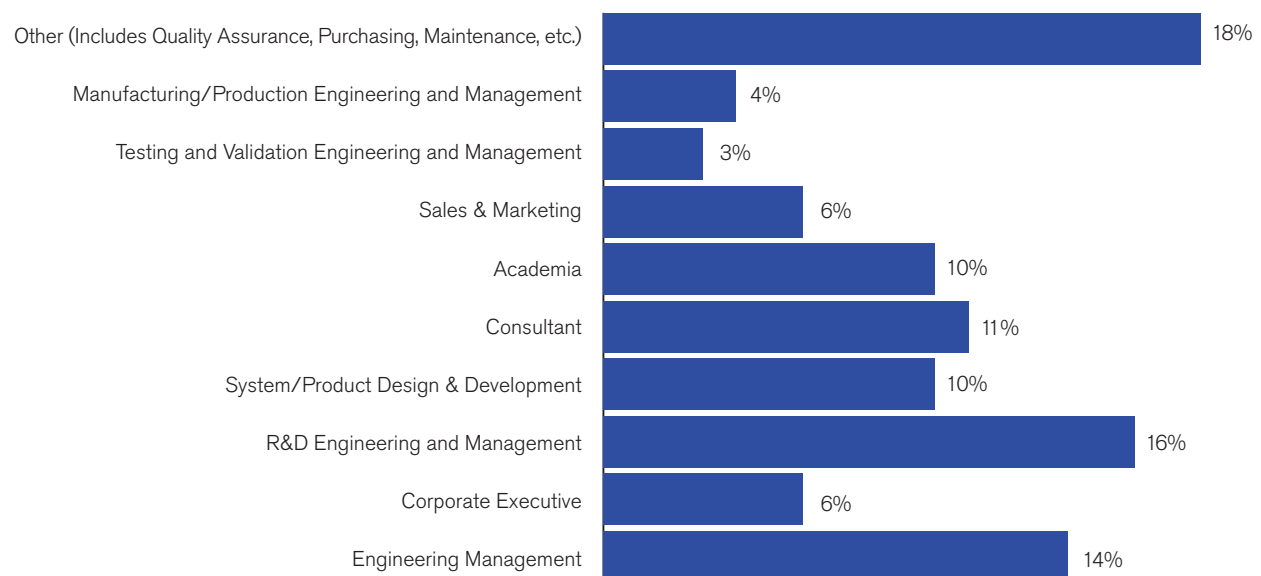
Facebook was site of choice (62%) for companies that have a social media presence.



The following is demographic information on the survey respondents.

## JOB FUNCTION

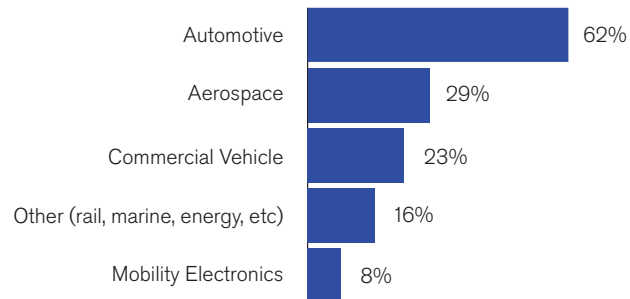
**SAE International Social Media Survey Question 8:** What is your primary job function:



## INDUSTRY SECTOR

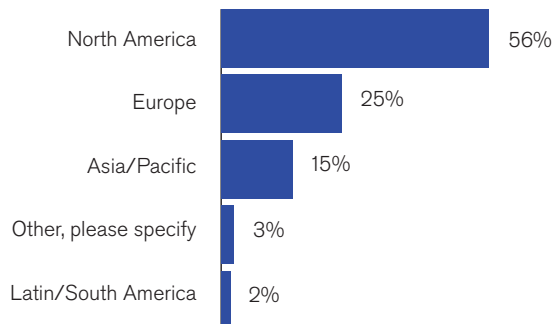
**SAE International Social Media Survey Question 9:** In which of the following industries is your company involved (check all that apply):

When asked to identify all mobility sectors that respondent's employers were involved, 38% listed more than one industry sector. Industry sectors that were identified in the other category included: marine, rail, military, energy, fuels and medical.



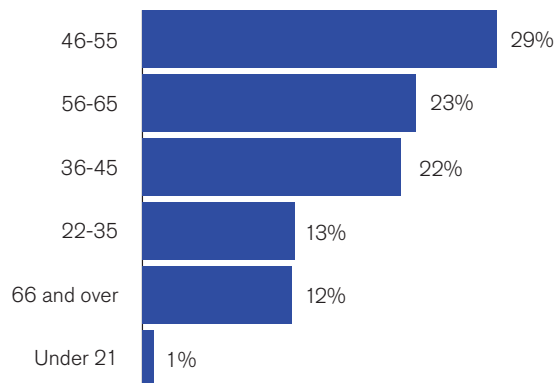
## GEOGRAPHY

**SAE International Social Media Survey Question 10:** Where do you live:



## AGE GROUP

**SAE International Social Media Survey Question 11:** What is your age group:



## CONCLUSION

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Mobility engineers *are* using social media as a communications tool and they are using it for business. The engineers' use of social media parallels that of their employers, with a surprising 51% permitting social media use at work. It follows, that parties interested in communicating with transportation engineers would be wise to use social media to advance their message. An area worth exploring is whether the global nature of the automotive, aerospace, and off-road vehicle industries is driving social media use at a faster pace than the rest of the engineering and manufacturing community. Regardless, Facebook, LinkedIn, and YouTube enjoy considerable acceptance among transportation engineers, and can serve as an important conduit into this community.

## MORE ABOUT SAE INTERNATIONAL

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SAE International is a global society of more than 128,000 engineers and related technical experts in the aerospace, automotive and commercial-vehicle industries. SAE's core competencies are voluntary consensus standards development and life-long learning, and through its charitable arm, the SAE Foundation, programs including A World In Motion® (AWIM) and the Collegiate Design Series are supported.

With members in more than 100 countries throughout the world, the heart of SAE International's activity is the creation of standards. Some 14,000 mobility industry experts donate time to serve on SAE International committees.

SAE International relies heavily on its members' guidance and knowledge when developing its programs, products and services. Esteemed member groups, like the SAE Fellows, provide a rich repository of expertise in helping to shape what SAE offers to the mobility engineering community.

SAE International has created 2,600-plus global standards for the automotive, construction and agricultural equipment, heavy trucks, buses and specialty-vehicle industries. More than 7,000 experts provide data for standards on critical industry issues.

SAE International's Aerospace Standards' repository includes 6,800 documents and is the largest such collection in the world. More than 7,000 industry experts provide expertise for aerospace standards.

In addition to standards, SAE International also provides a wide range of professional-development courses and networking opportunities, helping industry meet the challenges of a global marketplace. Annually, SAE International hosts more than 25 technical conferences that feature presentations, senior-executive panel discussions and professional development seminars. Its three premiere events include SAE World Congress, SAE Commercial Vehicle Engineering Congress, and the biennial SAE AeroTech Congress & Exhibition.

In addition, SAE maintains a database containing 73,000 technical papers; 10,000 technical standards and 773 books. It also publishes Automotive Engineering International, Aerospace Engineering and Manufacturing, and SAE Off-Highway Engineering magazines.

SAE International's AWIM program provides students in grades K-12 the opportunity to work with engineers, creating projects referred to as "challenges." Volunteers from industry partner with students, providing hands-on instruction.

The Collegiate Design Series enables university students to apply classroom theory by designing and building vehicles ranging from hybrid cars to model aircraft. About 700 teams and 6,000 students from top U.S. engineering schools participate in the events. Nearly 600 teams and 6,500 students participate in events in Europe, Asia, Australia, South America and Africa.

While the SAE Foundation supports both of these programs (which won the National Science Foundation's Public Service Award in 2008), it also funds awards and scholarships for aspiring engineers. The Foundation annually funds about 60 awards programs and 10 scholarships.

For more information or to join SAE International visit [www.sae.org](http://www.sae.org)

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