

Connect the Dot Coms

STORM WATER SOLUTIONS

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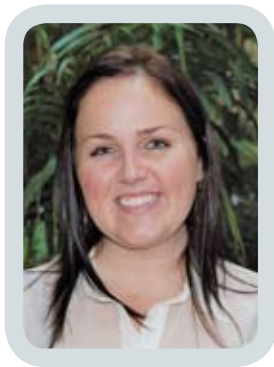
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*“Come gather ‘round people!
Wherever you roam!
And admit that the waters!
Around you have grown!
And accept it that soon!
You’ll be drenched to the bone.
If your time to you!
Is worth savin’!
Then you better start swimmin’!
Or you’ll sink like a stone!
For the times they are a-changin’.”*

— Bob Dylan

The digital age has changed the way we communicate in our personal and professional lives. From blogs to PDAs to the recent explosion of social media, our toolbox of information-exchange technologies is expanding rapidly.

Many storm water and erosion control groups are embracing new media—think Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook, YouTube and the like—as outreach mechanisms. Why? They can reach target audiences with customized messages in real time and at a low cost. And the online community is a broad and engaged one: The top eight social networking sites boasted 248 million unique monthly users in the U.S. as of December 2009, a 41% increase over January 2009 numbers, according to independent research group Mintel.

Before readily hopping on the social media bandwagon, be mindful of potential disadvantages as well—staff time allocation, the possibility of critical posts being published, the “information overload” phenomenon, etc. Every group’s audience and goals are distinct, and their online involvement should be tailored accordingly.

Consider the “The Times They Are a-Changin’” lyrics printed here. This is not to say that all industry professionals must sign up for these sites today, lest sink like a stone. What I mean to emphasize is the importance of recognizing, keeping abreast of (this issue’s closing Q&A is an excellent place to start) and exploring the communication changes taking place. If, in the process, you find value in a particular option, it is an added advantage to have grown your professional information-exchange toolbox.

Caitlin Cunningham, managing editor
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