Connect with SAS Professionals Around the World with LinkedIn and sasCommunity.org
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Abstract
Accelerate your career and professional development with LinkedIn and sasCommunity.org. Establish and manage a professional network of trusted contacts, colleagues and experts. These exciting social networking and collaborative online communities enable users to connect with millions of SAS users worldwide, anytime and anywhere.

This paper explores exciting features found in both virtual communities. Topics include creating a profile and social network content, developing a network of friends and colleagues, joining special-interest groups, accessing a Wiki-based web site where anyone can add or change content on any page on the web site, sharing biographical information between both communities using a built-in widget, exchanging ideas in Bloggers Corner, viewing scheduled and unscheduled events, using a built-in search facility to search for desired wiki-content, collaborating on projects and file sharing, reading and responding to specific forum topics, and much more.

Introduction
SAS users have a powerful social networking application with more than 40 million professionals in LinkedIn and a "virtual" website in sasCommunity.org where they can collaborate with other users anywhere in the world; access content; learn about upcoming events, forums and user group conferences; and discuss anything and everything that is related to SAS software, from SAS users to SAS users.

LinkedIn Social Networking
LinkedIn is a powerful contact and relationship management application boasting more than 40 million professionals worldwide. Professionals control their identity online while staying informed by exchanging information, ideas and opportunities with like-minded individuals. Joining LinkedIn, creating a profile and connecting with professionals around the world is free. It also provides access to a directory of groups sharing a common experience, interest, affiliation or goal. Figure 1 and 2 illustrates sample profiles.

![Figure 1. Sample LinkedIn Profile](http://www.linkedin.com/in/kirkpaulafler)
The sasCommunity.org Main Page

To get the most from sasCommunity as well as the numerous features within, you’ll want to become familiar with the Main Page, shown in Figure 3. The Main Page is the primary interface that users see as they access and interact with sasCommunity.org. The first thing you will notice about the main page, besides the beautiful graphics, is that it is organized into a number of parts: 1) on the left side is a grouping of hyperlinked keywords related to the main menu, page activity, getting started, search, and toolbox; 2) at the very top-right are two hyperlinks, Log in and Create account; 3) at the top are a grouping of special tabs related to articles, discussions, view source, and history; 4) in the body portion are the Bloggers’ Corner and Forums; and 5) at the bottom of the body portion are a number of icons related to joining sasCommunity, getting involved, Sasopedia, events and user groups.
Joining sasCommunity – Creating an Account
At some point during your online experience, and particularly before you are permitted to contribute to sasCommunity, you will need to create an account. To create an account you will need to click the “log in / create account” hyperlink located at the top-right of the Main Page. This will automatically display the Log in / create account special page, see Figure 4. Click the “Create an account” hyperlink to proceed. The Log in / create account page will automatically display.

With the Create account page displayed, you are now ready to enter a unique Username, password, E-mail address, and optional Real name. Once this information is entered, click the Create account button, see Figure 5. Note: Although an e-mail address is required to be entered, an entry for Real name is optional and can be left blank. A password is your secret sequence of typed characters and is required for accessing your account. Anyone who knows your password can sign on to your account and could potentially cause a world of havoc such as deleting mail messages, sending bogus messages that look like they are coming from you, post messages on public forums that appear to be coming from you, and so on. Also, don’t choose a password that is too obvious or too easy to guess. Because a password is so important, you should really select one with the utmost care.

If your account is successfully created, a special Welcome message will display indicating that your account has been created, see Figure 6. You can then click the Return to Main Page hyperlink to display the Main Page.

As part of the verification process, an e-mail containing a confirmation code is automatically sent to the e-mail address you provided during the account creation process. Before you can activate e-mail activities on sasCommunity you will need to open the link displayed in the e-mail by clicking the listed hyperlink, see Figure 7.
After clicking the hyperlink displayed in the e-mail, a confirmation page will automatically display indicating that the account belongs to you. As soon as this confirmation page displays sasCommunity e-mail features will be enabled, see Figure 8.

Blogger’s Corner
Blogger’s Corner displays a list of Blogs or articles defined by SAS users. You can access Blogger’s Corner from the Main Page by clicking the “Blogs” keyword hyperlink under the Main Menu category. Or, click the hyperlink, Visit Bloggers’ Corner to see what your sasCommunity.org colleagues are blogging about..., located in the Blogger’s Corner section of the Main Page. Once clicked, the Blogger’s Corner page appears, see Figure 9.
Accessing a blog is as easy as point-and-click. For example, click “SAS Global Forum” from the list of Contributors Blogs in the right panel to display the blog for SAS Global Forum, see Figure 10. Once the blog is accessed (and you are logged in), you will be able to participate in the discussion associated with that blog by clicking the 'discussion' tab located at the top of the page.

![Figure 10. SAS Global Forum Blog page](image)

To post a comment to the blog posting, click the ‘Comment’ hyperlink (and log into your account) located at the top of the blog page. With the Comment page displayed, you will be able to view and post a response (or comment) to the blog message, see Figure 11.

![Figure 11. SAS Global Forum comment page](image)
Exploring Popular Links

sasCommunity.org provides a number of popular links for users to access and explore. Click the “Popular Links” keyword from the hyperlinks located at the left of the main page to display the Popular Links page, see Figure 12. This listing of popular links is organized as a collection of frequently accessed pages for ease of use.

Figure 12. Popular Links page

Exploring Upcoming Events

SAS users have a convenient way to find out about upcoming events including user group meetings, conferences, training classes, webcasts, and other interesting events relevant to the user community. Click the “Events” keyword hyperlink under the Main Menu category to display the Events page, see Figure 13.

Figure 13. Events page
Using the Sasopedia
The Sasopedia is the place where users can access factual information and tips on using the SAS software. To access this fact-based resource, click the “Sasopedia” keyword hyperlink under the Popular Links category to display the Sasopedia page, see Figure 14. Although Sasopedia is currently being reorganized, it displays the following categories: 1) Language Elements, 2) Procedures, 3) Products, and 4) Topic for user convenience.

Figure 14. Sasopedia page

Staying Connected with User Groups
Users can access the latest goings-on with in-house, local, regional, and SAS Global Forum anytime, and anywhere. To access this fact-based resource, click the “User Groups” keyword hyperlink under the Popular Links category to display the User Groups page, see Figure 15.

Figure 15. sasCommunity User Groups page

Using a Wiki
sasCommunity uses Wikimedia software to improve the overall user experience while using the virtual community. Wiki features include: a consistent look and feel with navigation bars and short-cuts, file upload capabilities, mathematical formulas using LaTeX syntax, automatic image resizing, maintain and create a watchlist to track changes to articles, show changes using side-by-side diffs, ability to link to individual sections, support of subpages, comprehensive editing capabilities, support of discussion pages, comprehensive backend database-driven and cookie-based support, permission and security capabilities, and comprehensive full text search and query capabilities. For additional information about a Wiki and its capabilities, you are referred to the following URL http://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/Help#Feature_list, see Figure 16.
Using the Search Feature

The built-in search feature lets you search topics on anything SAS, and/or SAS-related topics. In the Search dialog box, located on the left side of the Main Page, character-string information can be entered, and either the Go or Search buttons clicked. For example, say you are searching for anything ‘consulting’ as illustrated in Figure 17.

Results matching the user-supplied character-string ‘consulting’ are automatically displayed and grouped as Article title matches and Page text matches. A partial listing of results for ‘consulting’ is displayed in Figure 18.
Our quick tour of sasCommunity.org would not be complete without showing you how to log out (or sign out) of the virtual community. Although you probably have already guessed how to do this, we thought we would complete our tour and show you how anyway. Logging-out of a session requires you to click the Log out hyperlink that is located at the very top of any page in sasCommunity.org. Once clicked, the following Log out page displays as illustrated in Figure 19.

Figure 19. Log out page

Conclusion

With the features found in LinkedIn and the comprehensive content in sasCommunity.org, users have amazing social network and content applications for connecting with SAS professionals worldwide. Those already participating are finding it to be a great resource for social networking, collaboration, tips, code examples, user group and webcast events, forums, and much more. The Wiki technology fosters user participation. As described at the annual 2007 SAS Global Forum (SGF), sasCommunity.org is a resource for all users, not just at one event. sasCommunity.org should prosper well into the future as organizations experience declining travel budgets and technological advances occur in the area of Internet access. Here’s your chance to make the most of this virtual user community – explore, learn and share.

References


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