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Keeping up...with whom?

It seems the whole world, or if you believe the figures, at least many more than a billion souls, are baring their souls on this Facebook thingy. OK, so you've already guessed I'm in a mature age group.

Down here in the South Pacific, we are a long way from the debate about the flammability of HFO-1234yf, but even so, we have to take an interest because whatever Europe does, we follow.

Facebook is something I don't have time for, I've never used it and therefore I don't understand it. When it was new,

however, I must have gone to their website and logged on to find out what it was all about, and now, my name and presumably anything else I might have put on the login form is forever stored in the bowels of their servers somewhere in cyber space. When I tried to get my name off their system, I was politely told I was being archived, just in case, because if, at any time in the future, I changed my mind, I wouldn't have to fill in more of their pesky login forms. Yeah, right.

Twitter. I thought that was an app for twits.

Why am I wasting my time discussing social media with people who have cars to fix? Because many businesses, including our own network VASA, are trying to determine the role social media can play in the generation of work for VASA workshops, or increase the public's knowledge of the value of dealing with professional workshops.

The jury is still out. In fact, it has caused a huge debate in the organisation, and not surprisingly, different age groups have different views.

So VASA decided to dip its toe in the water and has joined up to Facebook and Twitter. We are posting little news stories and trying desperately to engage with our own audience, and hopefully, with a whole new audience.

"Don't expect Facebook to generate millions of dollars worth of work for VASA members," the head nerd warned us. "So what are we doing it for?" I asked.

"To get people to like us," he responded.

I lost interest about this point and went back to answering my emails. At least they are real.

Which brings us to the issue occupying the minds of all volunteer networks like VASA – how can we keep up? How can

we communicate, especially with the auto technicians of tomorrow, the x and y generation? More importantly, how can we get people to respond, to interact with the network, to attend training, to go to an event of any kind?

The communication highway has become so cluttered and confused, it's no wonder clean, clear messages are not getting through.

We can't help the feeling that we are losing ground.

And it's not just VASA. All networks, political parties, school committees and sports clubs are losing members hand over fist.

It's like the world, en masse, has pressed the 'unlike' button. Some say subscriptions or memberships are too expensive. Money is tight, so they are rationalising on clubs and associations they join.

But most say they've simply run out of time.

Excuses for not attending weekend training are mainly based on family issues, or so they say. "I've got to spend time with my kids."

Every generation had to spend time with their kids, so what's changed?

Perhaps if they spent less time talking to people they don't even know on Facebook, they would have more time to devote to improving their knowledge and their career prospects.

VASA surveyed its members recently to ask about their social media habits. The majority didn't subscribe to any social media.

On the VASA website, members and the public are invited to 'follow' VASA. At last count, we have 15 followers. Not a lot, but it's early days.

As for Twitter, we haven't found too many twits, but that's probably a good thing. ☺

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