



E52 Creating a Positive Connection for Your Forensic Science Discipline

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After attending this presentation, attendees will better understand a solution for connecting disparate forensic practitioners within a specific field such as forensic art.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by describing the process whereby social media has been used as a platform for professional communication.

Using the LinkedIn[®] social networking service, the Forensic Artists Discussion Group was established in 2009. It has more than 300 members globally connecting approximately 275 working forensic art professionals as well as representing affiliated disciplines including anthropology, odontology, pathology, and anatomy. Nurturing the development of this group and encouraging cross-discipline discussion is the primary purpose. Finding common ground in a forensic field where most practitioners are widely distributed and singular in their organization is an issue that has long needed to be addressed. Creating a platform for input, discussion, and exchange of ideas is the first step in developing cohesion. This development included identifying and personally contacting unattached practitioners and inviting them to the group. This is an example of a discipline taking the onus upon itself to create an outlet to advance professionalism, develop goals for advancement, and generate consensus.

The Forensic Artists Discussion Group focuses on professional concerns of the field including updates on new techniques, sponsored training, national events that affect the discipline, and employment opportunities. The group is a moderated, unbiased venue for information and materials. Discussion is monitored and guidelines have been established for professional conduct from participants. It serves as a communication conduit for all professional groups including the International Association for Identification (IAI), American Academy of Forensic Sciences (AAFS), British Association for Human Identification (BAHID), and National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST).

There are currently 30 forensic art units in law enforcement agencies, universities, and non-profit agencies that employ 55 full-time artists in the United States. There are approximately 20 forensic art units internationally which are similarly distributed among law enforcement, educational institutions, and non-profits or Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs).

The Forensic Art Discussion Group has developed into an invaluable resource that allows participants to learn from one another, improve their craft, and control the future of their discipline. Positive feedback is continually received from members about the group, which demonstrates the need for such a professional network. The next step is to energize members to improve the profession and increase the perceived and actual value of forensic artists. This is a means of attracting attention to the need for creating and implementing best practices across the discipline and is essential in demonstrating to NIST the need and demand for attention to the forensic art field.

Forensic Art, Communication, Forensic Team Building