



## Social Media Helps Global “Dream Teams” Come Together

**Academic international collaboration is now evolving beyond conferences or formal networks as constantly improving social media connects more researchers.**

Social media serves to amplify messages. It’s used to address **marketing** needs, **promote** a brand from within or **spread** true and false information. But it can do more: Social media can help create a diverse team. Our recent **work** with **Anna Górska** and **Francesca Pucciarelli** shows how social media can be leveraged to bring together international, diverse researchers to write top journal articles.

When creating international teams to work on research projects, how can academics find the right pieces of the puzzle? Previously, these teams were centred on universities and the networks of senior researchers. Social media has disrupted the traditional path used by junior academics to directly connect with established authors.

International collaboration is increasing in academia for several reasons. The growing complexity of many research problems, the specialisation of disciplines and the rising **cost** of research tools combined with the rise of faster telecommunication networks and Zoom all make an international research team more attractive.

### Professional platforms

For our purposes, social media is not only Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn. We include academic social network sites like **ResearchGate** and

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**Academia.edu** in our research. These professional networks allow users to comment and share work within verified groups.

In recent years, researchers have been able to post their projects so other users can easily search for relevant work-in-progress. We found that academics who are present on social media, especially on these academic sites, are more likely to engage in international collaboration. Diversity adds a new perspective to a group, which is important in knowledge creation.

### Internationally diverse authors

Diverse teams generate well-regarded work. For our study, we used data from the *Financial Times’s* top 45 journals from 2013 to 2015. We reviewed articles from the following journals: *Academy of Management Journal*, *Academy of Management Review*, *Journal of International Business Studies*, *Management International Review* and *Strategic Management Journal*.

We analysed the number of authors and the international makeup of the research teams behind more than 826 articles. As not all first authors had social media profiles, we reduced the number of articles studied to 797. The first authors, we found, were often senior researchers, and their online

presence tended towards the academic social network sites. We found that if a scholar had a presence on ResearchGate or Academia.edu, their rate of international collaboration increased. Social media platforms, especially professional networks, can help grow diverse teams.

We also examined the authors' number of platforms and followers, but this didn't have an impact on the academics' international collaboration. It might change in the future as professional social media increase in popularity and continue to introduce new functionalities. Some differences in the audience may start to appear on specific social media platforms. If so, it will be more beneficial to use several platforms to reach various audiences.

The academic social network platforms not only mirror reality, they allow for the creation of a new world of research. Promoting new projects on ResearchGate gives young researchers an unparalleled transparency on senior academics' upcoming work.

Social media also provides research communities with an unprecedented capability to disseminate research outputs. This directly influences fundamental questions about the nature and value of research and can create alternative metrics for academic research's impact on society.

### **Building trust online**

Not only does social media make it easier for international collaborators to join forces, but it may also increase the quality and duration of collaborative relationships. The social aspects of social media can help build **trust** across diverse teams, which provides an important foundation for further collaboration. Recently Pawel had an online conversation scheduled with a board member whom he hadn't met before. Looking at the board member's LinkedIn profile, Pawel discovered that this person had participated in an INSEAD Executive Education course. When the two were speaking, a reference to the course naturally came up and a mutual acquaintance with a faculty member established a shared connection. These commonalities infused trust into the conversation, enhancing the communication.

Social media is seen as a catalyst as it builds social capital via both bridging and bonding. It creates networked communication channels that facilitate future professional interactions. It also allows information to proliferate within key academic communities.

### **Developing international teams on non-academic professional networks**

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Professional networks aren't limited to the academic sphere, of course. Maintaining an online presence is important for most everyone, especially on professional social networks. For instance, it can help managers build diverse teams. LinkedIn is a well-known platform for executive talent search and has a **track record** of international collaboration. Recruiters search for team members from different countries, sometimes based on labour costs, other times based on particular talent sets. It's possible for a recruiter to create a kind of "dream team" with each member adding value.

Social media isn't all bluster. It can be used to build meaningful networks and diverse teams. **Connect** with other professionals on LinkedIn to find out more about groups with similar profiles in other countries. The more you interact, the more likely you are to find an ideal collaborative network for your next project.

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