

Social Networking Overview

(YouTube video on social networking “Social networking in plain English” http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6a_KF7TYKVC)

Years ago social networking existed of personal interaction, via regular mail, and traditional telephones. People would have to make plans in person, by phone, or by mail. In a short time, communication has moved verbalizing to a much less vocal world.

Communication has moved from face-to-face to text. Years ago, planning a social event or a simple outing sometimes took time.

Today, it can be accomplished in mere minutes. People can text, tweet, email, blog or interact with others on a social site within minutes. This information can be received on a computer or phone within minutes. People are constantly communicating with one another, maybe more so than in the past – perhaps not face-to-face but yet communication is occurring and at a much faster scale.

Many people are using on-line social networking tools as their primary means of communication. Social networking has become widely used in this day and age by both consumers and corporations. Social networking has made a change in the way people communicate. There is a shift from traditional interaction to interactive and collaborative communication for both businesses and consumers as well.

Social networking has become “viral.” If the content sparks an interest it will be quickly shared with others. Social media content can be more than just a conversation it can be used to promote a company and or product – or the opposite. Organizations must realize

and accept that content on these sites can often be controversial. They may initially be afraid of this controversy but this feedback if embraced can lead to improved products and services.

This evolution of social networking has been made possible because of the interactive and user-centric technologies of Web 2.0. Not only are these technologies inexpensive they are also easily accessible. The early types of social networks were those that only generated and organized content such as blogs, videos and podcasts. They were easy to develop and broadcast. However, the meaning and the use of social networking has grown to a much more interactive form. Users can post content, share that content and receive comments on that content with a wide user base.

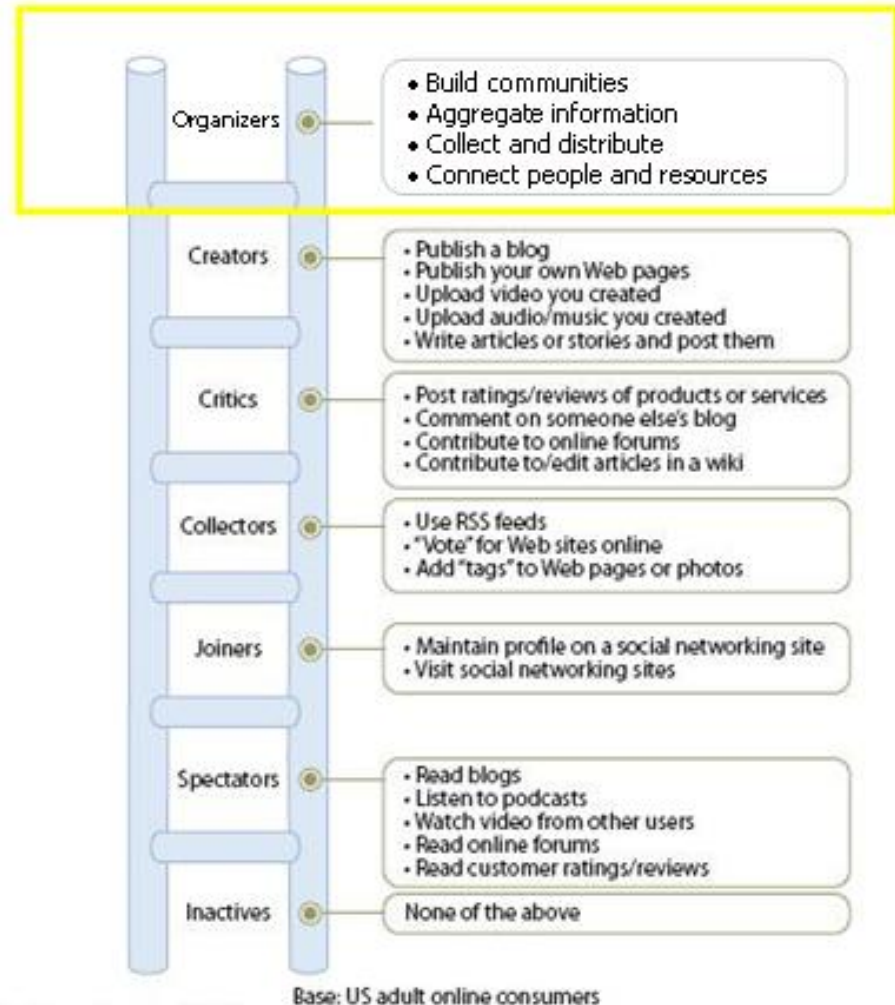
According to Wikipedia, “A *social network* is a social structure made of individuals (or organizations) called “nodes,” which are tied (connected) by one or more specific types of interdependency, such as friendship, kinship, financial exchange, dislike, sexual relationships, or relationships of beliefs, knowledge or prestige.” (Wikipedia) Social networking provides the ability to connect people who have a common bond. Society as a whole is spending more and more time on social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, MySpace and LinkedIn. An article in Computer World, by Gaudin, states that social networking is driving technology development and there are “efforts underway to improve social networking and expand its usefulness.” (Gaudin, 2010)

This document will describe and provide statistics for three common sites: Twitter, Facebook, and Linked In. Although we see many social media statistics, we should not just look at the numbers alone. We need to look at the following items:

- Trends and trend movement or changes over time
- Unique users or active or returning users since active users are more engaged

Forrester uses a “Social Technographics Ladder” to categorize social media users. Steve Woodruff, “Pharma Marketing / Training Consultant who writes about branding, marketing, social media, and other stuff,” has added the top rung to the model.

Please see the area in box. (Woodruff, 2009)



Base: US adult online consumers
 Source: North American Social Technographics® Survey, Q2 2007
 Note: Groups include people participating in at least one of the activities monthly.
 46071 Source: Forrester Research, Inc.

Figure 3 The Social Technographics Ladder

The Informa Mobile Social Networking report shows the following model and usage for mobile media. This would apply to any social media user as well:

- **Joiners:** they establish a presence on a mobile community platform for the purpose of learning how to use the service and/or finding others with like interests with whom to engage in some sort of a relationship.
- **Collectors:** they are actively creating connections between people and between pieces of content/social media. They frequently use community search functions and pay attention to the new content generated by others. They like to be the first to see and link to exceptional content and are regular purchasers (hence Collectors) of digital content. Unlike the online users described by Forrester Research's technographics report, mobile community collectors do not (yet) use RSS, partly because these are rarely if ever found on mobile portals. Where and when they are available, Collectors are avid users of tagging. In the future, when tools become more readily available on their handsets, Collectors will become avid reactors in a 'virtuous circle' of content as described in the market study entitled "A Glimpse at the Next Episode" by Nokia (published December 5, 2007).
- **Critics:** like the category proposed by Forrester, mobile community critics are those who first digest the content of others and subsequently take n active comments, ratings and voting tools to provide creators the feedback on which they thrive. The critics are vital to the health of mobile as well as online communities because they return value to those who have created original comments or content. Though they may not be striving for fame, they can establish a reputation in a community and drive log-ins from other user groups who trust and seek the critic's point of view.

- **Creators:** at the top of the community engagement ladder are those who are actively (at least weekly) generating new social media for themselves and others. They capture and upload or document their world, or create new music, photographs or video clips for their friends, family members, fans, and – in some mobile communities - to generate income for themselves.

(Perey C., 2008)

Key Social Networking Sites – Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn

For a long list of social network sites: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_social_networking_websites

Twitter

(You Tube video on Twitter “Twitter in plain English” <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ddO9idmax0o&NR=1&feature=fvwp>)

Twitter, a social networking site, similar to a blog, is used to keep others posted on what a person is doing. However, messages using twitter are limited to 140 characters. This makes Twitter a Short Messaging Service (SMS) and micro-blogging site. Twitter is relatively new on the social circuit and has been incorporated only since 2007. It is easy to sign up for a twitter account. Once a user signs up he or she can send messages called tweets. In addition to sending tweets, users can be followed, follow other users, and subscribe to lists on Twitter. One of the latest features on Twitter includes corporate presence tweets, promotional tweets by various companies (i.e., Wal-Mart) and job boards. Organizations use Twitter to update consumer about products and events. Employers are using the site to recruit employees. Users can even access Twitter from their phone by dialing 40404. In addition, users can set up their accounts to receive tweets to their cell phones.

Twitter has its own language, as follows:

- Twitter → the site
- Tweet (n) → a post
- Tweet (v) → action of posting a Tweet
- RT → Retweet (re-posting someone else's tweet)
- DM → direct message (private messages sent from one person to another)
- @Replies → public message sent from one person to another that anyone can view
- Tweetdeck → allows a user to screen messages (Twitter Support)

Twitter is very protective about their statistics and an educated guess at how many total users on Twitter is that it had about 75 million users at the end of 2009 (New Data On Twitter's users and Engagement). According Feb 2009 statistics by Corbett:

- 53% of all Twitter users are females
- 47% of the total users are between the ages of 18-34
- 82% of the total users are Caucasian
- 46% users are college grads (Corbett, 2009)

In January 2010, Hubspot reported decrease in the use of Twitter. Many Twitter users are not active. Many users sign up tweet once or twice and then just review other tweets and do not comment after their first experience (Cavely, 2010).

Facebook

Facebook originated in 2004 and it was a site that college students used to share information. Facebook has since become a site for the general public. Facebook is an easily accessible, free, and very mainstream communication tool. Anyone can set up an account. Users can enter as much or as little information as they want. In addition, Facebook has an easy search function that enables users to search for and connect with people they know. The fact that users are able to find old friends is a draw to the tool, because those who have lost touch with others want to reconnect. Users can share and connect all over the world. Facebook, like Twitter, includes corporate presence pages. Joining discussion boards and groups may inform or even introduce a user to people and employers. In addition, Facebook includes casual gaming on its site (Farmville, mafia wars, etc.)

According to Facebook

- There are more than 400 million active users
- More than 100 million users sign on at least once a day
- 50% of the active users log on in a given day
- More than 1.5 million local businesses have a Facebook page
- An average user has 130 friends (Statistics Facebook)

LinkedIn

(You Tube video on LinkedIn - What is LinkedIn --- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IzT3JVUGUzM&NR=1>)

(You Tube video on LinkedIn - Linked in part 2 -- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C1ofuNt6Abk&NR=1>)

Video – <http://www.press.linkedin.com/about>

LinkedIn is a site that is primarily used by professionals to build business contacts and broaden their professional interests. It is designed to highlight a user's work experiences and interests. The advantage of LinkedIn is that it keeps professional and personal information separate. Once a user establishes a profile he or she can develop his or her network. In addition to building a network, LinkedIn provides a feature to enable users to get introduced to others that they do not know. LinkedIn can add to a user's success by adding a recommendation to the user's profile by others. In addition, users can search for others by organizations and special interest groups. Joining special interest groups can further a user's knowledge about an area that he or she is interested in. People use LinkedIn for the following reasons: to find a job, to network with people from their work experiences, to provide and receive endorsements, to join professional organizations, ask questions and provide answers in subject areas. Joining LinkedIn can help users build credibility in there areas of expertise or interest. One of the concepts that LinkedIn was built on is that contacts can lead to more contacts. This is especially beneficial for those that are looking for employment on LinkedIn. It opens your information to others on a wider scale.

LinkedIn

- Has more than 60 million registered users
- Spans more than 200 countries worldwide
- Spans more than 170 industries
- Has one new member every second
- Has executives from all Fortune 500 companies (LinkedIn - About)

Summary

When creating a social networking site, make sure it fits the intended audience. For instance if the site will deal with professional groups, a good practice is to ensure that the social site has no inappropriate material such as pictures, words, comments or links to other inappropriate sites. Creating a professional presence may be a good investment since many employers may look at an employee's social site. Creating a company presence may be a good investment for an organization to promote itself. This provides these companies with exposure and the ability for consumers to approach them. It also helps companies reach out to new consumers and add to their customer base. Companies must also be prepared to positively react and adapt to posted customer input.

Some other thoughts:

- Forrester Research predicts that by 2013, online users will increase by 2.2 billion worldwide. It appears that the increasing use of social networking trend will continue.
- Organizations must develop new skill sets around social media solutions because social media activity is prone to problems. IT should review and embrace social media solutions and make them part of their goals and objectives.
- Organizations must determine how to develop and maintain social networks that can contribute to their bottom line (increase ROI) without driving users away. They must also become faster at dealing with issues identified from the web.
- Social networking, e-commerce, and Web 2.0, are being refined and integrated and it is becoming difficult to determine the lines of distinction between the technologies.

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Activities / Thoughts

1. Social Networking sites
 - a. Go to a social network site that you do not have a presence on – Twitter, LinkedIn (preferably), or Facebook
 - b. Establish a presence and report on your experience

2. Twitter is one of the most trafficked sites on the Internet. Increase in popularity of these types of sites created new risks to individuals and organizations. The same properties that make these sites attractive communication tools also make them well-suited for malicious activity. Following are some questions to consider.
 - a. How can privacy be assured on any social network?
 - b. Do you think that if make your attributes private that insures that all your information is private?
 - c. Do you think algorithms can be written to detect information about users who do not provide specific information?

3. Gartner believes that through 2015, only 25 percent of organizations will utilize social network analysis to improve performance and productivity. Following are some questions to consider.
 - a. Do you think companies should use social networks?
 - b. How can organizations create effective social networks, maintain privacy and yet reap benefit with minimal risk?
 - c. What can an organization do to minimize threats?

4. E-mail is a form of social networking; Gartner predicts that by 2014, social networking services will replace e-mail as the primary vehicle for interpersonal communications for 20 percent of business users.