Course-XVII Social Media

Social Networking Sites

A social networking service is a platform to build social networks or social relations among people who share interests, activities, backgrounds or real-life connections. A social network service consists of a representation of each user (often a profile), his or her social links, and a variety of additional services. Social networks are web-based services that allow individuals to create a public profile, to create a list of users with whom to share connections, and view and cross the connections within the system. Most social network services are web-based and provide means for users to interact over the Internet, such as e-mail and instant messaging. Social network sites are varied and they incorporate new information and communication tools such as mobile connectivity, photo/video/sharing and blogging. Online community services are sometimes considered as a social network service, though in a broader sense, social network service usually means an individual-centered service whereas online community services are group-centered. Social networking sites allow users to share ideas, pictures, posts, activities, events, interests with people in their network.

The main types of social networking services are those that contain category places (such as former school year or classmates), means to connect with friends (usually with self-description pages), and a recommendation system linked to trust. Popular methods now combine many of these, with American-based services such as Facebook, Google+,YouTube, LinkedIn, Instagram, Pinterest, Vine, Tumblr, and Twitter widely used worldwide; Nexopia in Canada; Badoo, Bebo, Vkontakte (Russia), Delphi, Draugiem.lv (mostly in Latvia), Hyves (mostly in The Netherlands), iWiW (mostly in Hungary), Nasza-Klasa, Soup (mostly in Poland), Glocals in Switzerland, Skyrock, The Sphere, StudiVZ (mostly in Germany), Tagged, Tuenti (mostly in Spain), Myspace, Xanga and XING in parts of Europe; Hi5 and Orkut in South America and Central America; Mxit in Africa; Cyworld,Mixi, Orkut, Renren, Friendster, Sina Weibo and Wretch in Asia and the Pacific Islands.

There have been attempts to standardize these services to avoid the need to duplicate entries of friends and interests (see the FOAF standard and the Open Source Initiative. A study reveals that India has recorded world's largest growth in terms of Social Media users in 2013. A 2013 survey found that 73% of U.S adults use social networking sites.

History:

The potential for computer networking to facilitate newly improved forms of computer-mediated social interaction was suggested early on. Efforts to support social networks via computer-mediated communication were made in many early online services, including Usenet,

ARPANET, LISTSERV, and bulletin board services (BBS). Many prototypical features of social networking sites were also present in online services such as America Online, Prodigy, CompuServe, ChatNet, and The WELL. Early social networking on the World Wide Web began in the form of generalized online communities such as Theglobe.com (1995), Geocities (1994) and Tripod.com (1995). Many of these early communities focused on bringing people together to interact with each other through chat rooms, and encouraged users to share personal information and ideas via personal webpages by providing easy-to-use publishing tools and free or inexpensive webspace. Some communities - such as Classmates.com - took a different approach by simply having people link to each other via email addresses. PlanetAll started in 1996. In the late 1990s, user profiles became a central feature of social networking sites, allowing users to compile lists of "friends" and search for other users with similar interests. New social networking methods were developed by the end of the 1990s and many sites began to develop more advanced features for users to find and manage friends. This newer generation of social networking sites began to flourish with the emergence of SixDegrees.com in 1997, followed by Makeoutclub in 2000, Hub Culture and Friendster in 2002 and soon became part of the Internet mainstream. Friendster was followed by MySpace and LinkedIn a year later, and eventually Bebo. Friendster became very popular in the Pacific Island. Orkut became the first social networking in Brazil and than also grow fast in India. Attesting to the rapid increase in social networking sites' popularity, by 2005, it was reported that MySpace was getting more page views than Google. Facebook, launched in 2004, became the largest social networking site in the world in early 2009. Facebook was first introduced (in 2004) as a Harvard social networking site, expanding to other universities and eventually, anyone.

Social Impact of Social Sites

Web-based social networking services make it possible to connect people who share interests and activities across political, economic, and geographic borders. Through e-mail and instant messaging, online communities are created where a gift economy and reciprocal altruism are encouraged through cooperation. Information is suited to a gift economy, as information is a nontribal and can be gifted at practically no cost.

Facebook and other social networking tools is increasingly the object of scholarly research. Scholars in many fields have begun to investigate the impact of social-networking sites, investigating how such sites may play into issues of identity, privacy, social capital, youth culture, and education.

Several websites are beginning to tap into the power of the social networking model for philanthropy. Such models provide a means for connecting otherwise fragmented industries and small organizations without the resources to reach a broader audience with interested users. Social networks are providing a different way for individuals to communicate digitally. These

communities of hypertexts allow for the sharing of information and ideas, an old concept placed in a digital environment.

In 2011, HCL Technologies conducted research that showed that 50% of British employers had banned the use of social networking sites/services during office hours.

Features:

Typical Features

According to Boyd and Ellison's (2007) article, "Why Youth (Heart) Social Network Sites: The Role of Networked Publics in Teenage Social Life", social networking sites share a variety of technical features that allow individuals to: construct a public/semi-public profile, articulate a list of other users that they share a connection with, and view their list of connections within the system. The most basic of these are visible profiles with a list of "friends" who are also users of the site. In an article entitled "Social Network Sites: Definition, History, and Scholarship," Boyd and Ellison adopt Sunden's (2003) description of profiles as unique pages where one can "type oneself into being.A profile is generated from answers to questions, such as age, location, interests, etc. Some sites allow users to upload pictures, add multimedia content or modify the look and feel of the profile. Others, e.g., Facebook, allow users to enhance their profile by adding modules or "Applications.Many sites allow users to post blog entries, search for others with similar interests and compile and share lists of contacts. User profiles often have a section dedicated to comments from friends and other users. To protect user privacy, social networks typically have controls that allow users to choose who can view their profile, contact them, add them to their list of contacts, and so on.

Additional Features

Some social networks have additional features, such as the ability to create groups that share common interests or affiliations, upload or stream live videos, and hold discussions in forums. Geosocial networking co-opts Internet mapping services to organize user participation around geographic features and their attributes.

There is a trend towards more interoperability between social networks led by technologies such as OpenID and OpenSocial. In most mobile communities, mobile phone users can now create their own profiles, make friends, participate in chat rooms, create chat rooms, hold private conversations, share photos and videos, and share blogs by using their mobile phone. Some companies provide wireless services that allow their customers to build their own mobile community and brand it; one of the most popular wireless services for social networking in North America and Nepal is Facebook Mobile.

Emerging Trends:

While the popularity of social networking consistently rise new uses for the technology are frequently being observed. At the forefront of emerging trends in social networking sites is the concept of "real-time web" and "location-based." Real-time allows users to contribute contents, which is then broadcast as it is being uploaded - the concept is analogous to live radio and television broadcasts. Twitter set the trend for "real-time" services, wherein users can broadcast to the world what they are doing, or what is on their minds within a 140-character limit. Facebook followed suit with their "Live Feed" where users' activities are streamed as soon as it happens. While Twitter focuses on words, Clixtr, another real-time service, focuses on group photo sharing wherein users can update their photo streams with photos while at an event. Facebook, however, remains the largest photo sharing site - Facebook application and photo aggregator Pixable estimates that Facebook will have 100 billion photos by Summer 2012 . In April, 2012, the image-based social media network Pinterest had become the third largest social network in the United States.

Companies have begun to merge business technologies and solutions, such as cloud computing, with social networking concepts. Instead of connecting individuals based on social interest, companies are developing interactive communities that connect individuals based on shared business needs or experiences. Many provide specialized networking tools and applications that can be accessed via their websites, such as LinkedIn. Others companies, such as Monster.com, have been steadily developing a more "socialized" feel to their career center sites to harness some of the power of social networking sites. These more business related sites have their own nomenclature for the most part but the most common naming conventions are "Vocational Networking Sites" or "Vocational Media Networks", with the former more closely tied to individual networking relationships based on social networking principles.

Foursquare gained popularity as it allowed for users to "check-in" to places that they are frequenting at that moment. Gowalla is another such service that functions in much the same way that Foursquare does, leveraging the GPS in phones to create a location-based user experience. Clixtr, though in the real-time space, is also a location-based social networking site, since events created by users are automatically geotagged, and users can view events occurring nearby through the Clixtr iPhone app. Recently, Yelp announced its entrance into the location-based social networking space through check-ins with their mobile app; whether or not this becomes detrimental to Foursquare or Gowalla is yet to be seen, as it is still considered a new space in the Internet technology industry.

One popular use for this new technology is social networking between businesses. Companies have found that social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter are great ways to build their brand image. According to Jody Nimetz, author of Marketing Jive, there are five major uses for businesses and social media: to create brand awareness, as an online reputation management tool, for recruiting, to learn about new technologies and competitors, and as a lead generation tool to intercept potential prospects. These companies are able to drive traffic to their

own online sites while encouraging their consumers and clients to have discussions on how to improve or change products or services.

As of September 2013, 71% of online adults use Facebook, 17% use Instagram, 21% use Pinterest, and 22% use LinkedIn.

Social networking services have also become a mainstream topic of academic study in various disciplines. For example, social networking services are highly relevant to technoselfstudies which focus on all aspects of human identity in a technological society.

Social networks and science

One other use that is being discussed is the use of social networks in the science communities. Julia Porter Liebeskind have published a study on how new biotechnology firms are using social networking sites to share exchanges in scientific knowledge. They state in their study that by sharing information and knowledge with one another, they are able to "increase both their learning and their flexibility in ways that would not be possible within a self-contained hierarchical organization." Social networking is allowing scientific groups to expand their knowledge base and share ideas, and without these new means of communicating their theories might become "isolated and irrelevant".

In fact, researchers use social networks frequently to maintain and develop professional relationships. They are interested in consolidating social ties and professional contact, keeping in touch with friends and colleagues and seeing what their own contacts are doing. This can be related to their need to keep updated on the activities and events of their friends and colleagues in order to establish collaborations on common fields of interest and knowledge sharing. Social Networks are used also to communicate scientists research result and as a public communication tool and to connect people who share the same professional interests, their benefits can vary according to the discipline. The most interesting aspects of social networks for professional purposes are their potentialities in terms of dissemination of information and the ability to reach and multiply professional contacts exponentially. Social networks like LinkedIn, Facebook, Researcher Gate give the possibility to join professional groups and pages, to share papers and results, publicise events, to discuss issues and create debates.

Social networks and education

The advent of social networking platforms may also be impacting the way(s) in which learners engage with technology in general. For a number of years, Prensky's (2001) dichotomy between Digital Natives and Digital Immigrants has been considered a relatively accurate representation of the ease with which people of a certain age range—in particular those born before and after 1980—use technology. Prensky's theory has been largely disproved, however, and not least on account of the burgeoning popularity of social networking sites and other metaphors such as White and Le Cornu's "Visitors" and "Residents" (2011) are greater currency.

The use of online social networks by school libraries is also increasingly prevalent and they are being used to communicate with potential library users, as well as extending the services provided by individual school libraries.

Social networks and their educational uses are of interest to many researchers. According to Livingstone and Brake (2010), "Social networking sites, like much else on the Internet, represent a moving target for researchers and policy makers." Recent trends indicate that 47% of American adults use a social network. A national survey in 2009 found that 73% of online teenagers use SNS, which is an increase from 55% three years earlier. (Lenhart, Purcell, Smith, & Zickuhr, 2010). Recent studies have shown that social network services provide opportunities within professional education, curriculum education, and learning. However, there are constraints in this area. Researches, especially in Africa, have disclosed that the use of social networks among students have been known to negatively affect their academic life. This is buttressed by the fact that their use constitutes distractions, as well as that the students tend to invest a good deal of time in the use of such technologies.

Professional uses within education

Professional use of social networking services refers to the employment of a network site to connect with other professionals within a given field of interest. SNSs like LinkedIn, a social networking website geared towards companies and industry professionals looking to make new business contacts or keep in touch with previous co-workers, affiliates, and clients. Not only does LinkedIn provide a professional social use, but it also encourages people to inject their personality into their profile–making it more personal than a resume. Other network sites are now being used in this manner, Twitter has become [a] mainstay for professional development as well as promotion and online SNSs support both the maintenance of existing social ties and the formation of new connections. Much of the early research on online communities assume that individuals using these systems would be connecting with others outside their preexisting social group or location, liberating them to form communities around shared interests, as opposed to shared geography. Other researchers have suggested that the professional use of network sites produce "social capital." For individuals, social capital allows a person to draw on resources from other members of the networks to which he or she belongs. These resources can take the form of useful information, personal relationships, or the capacity to organize groups. As well, networks within these services also can be established or built by joining special interest groups that others have made, or creating one and asking others to join.

Curriculum uses within education

According to Doering, Beach and O'Brien, a future English curriculum needs to recognize a major shift in how adolescents are communicating with each other. Curriculum uses of social networking services also can include sharing curriculum-related resources. Educators tap into user-generated content to find and discuss curriculum-related content for students. Responding to

the popularity of social networking services among many students, teachers are increasingly using social networks to supplement teaching and learning in traditional classroom environments as they can provide new opportunities for enriching existing curriculum through creative, authentic and flexible, non-linear learning experiences. Some social networks, such as English, baby! and LiveMocha, are explicitly education-focused and couple instructional content with an educational peer environment. The new Web 2.0 technologies built into most social networking services promote conferencing, interaction, creation, research on a global scale, enabling educators to share, remix, and repurpose curriculum resources. In short, social networking services can become research networks as well as learning networks.

Learning uses within education

Educators and advocates of new digital literacies are confident that social networking encourages the development of transferable, technical, and social skills of value in formal and informal learning. In a formal learning environment, goals or objectives are determined by an outside department or agency. Tweeting, instant messaging, or blogging enhances student involvement. Students who would not normally participate in class are more apt to partake through social network services. Networking allows participants the opportunity for just-in-time learning and higher levels of engagement. The use of SNSs allow educators to enhance the prescribed curriculum. When learning experiences are infused into a website, students utilize everyday for fun, students realize that learning can and should be a part of everyday life.[citation needed] It does not have to be separate and unattached. Informal learning consists of the learner setting the goals and objectives. It has been claimed that media no longer just influence our culture. They are our culture. With such a high number of users between the ages of 13-18, a number of skills are developed. Participants hone technical skills in choosing to navigate through social networking services. This includes elementary items such as sending an instant message or updating a status. The development of new media skills are paramount in helping youth navigate the digital world with confidence. Social networking services foster learning through what Jenkins (2006) describes as a "Participatory Culture." A participatory culture consists of a space that allows engagement, sharing, mentoring, and an opportunity for social interaction. Participants of social network services avail of this opportunity. Informal learning, in the forms of participatory and social learning online, is an excellent tool for teachers to sneak in material and ideas that students will identify with and therefore, in a secondary manner, students will learn skills that would normally be taught in a formal setting in the more interesting and engaging environment of social learning. Sites like Twitter provide students with the opportunity to converse and collaborate with others in real time. Social networking services provide a virtual "space" for learners. James Gee (2004) suggests that affinity spaces instantiate participation, collaboration, distribution, dispersion of expertise, and relatedness. Registered users share and search for knowledge which contributes to informal learning.

Constraints of social networking services in education

In the past, social networking services were viewed as a distraction and offered no educational benefit. Blocking these social networks was a form of protection for students against wasting time, bullying, and invasions of privacy. In an educational setting, Facebook, for example, is seen by many instructors and educators as a frivolous, time-wasting distraction from schoolwork, and it is not uncommon to be banned in junior high or high school computer labs. Cyberbullying has become an issue of concern with social networking services. According to the UK Children Go Online survey of 9-19 year olds, it was found that a third have received bullying comments online. To avoid this problem, many school districts/boards have blocked access to social networking services such as Facebook, MySpace, and Twitter within the school environment. Social networking services often include a lot of personal information posted publicly, and many believe that sharing personal information is a window into privacy theft. Schools have taken action to protect students from this. It is believed that this outpouring of identifiable information and the easy communication vehicle that social networking services opens the door to sexual predators, cyberbullying, and cyberstalking. In contrast, however, 70% of social media using teens and 85% of adults believe that people are mostly kind to one another on social network sites. Recent research suggests that there has been a shift in blocking the use of social networking services. In many cases, the opposite is occurring as the potential of online networking services is being realized. It has been suggested that if schools block them [social networking services], they're preventing students from learning the skills they need. Banning social networking is not only inappropriate but also borderline irresponsible when it comes to providing the best educational experiences for students. Schools and school districts have the option of educating safe media usage as well as incorporating digital media into the classroom experience, thus preparing students for the literacy they will encounter in the future.

Social networks and grassroots organizing

Social networks are being used by activists as a means of low-cost grassroots organizing. Extensive use of an array of social networking sites enabled organizers of the 2009National Equality March to mobilize an estimated 200,000 participants to march on Washington with a cost savings of up to 85% per participant over previous methods. The August 2011 England riots were similarly considered to have escalated and been fuelled by this type of grassroots organization.

Social networks and employment

A final rise in social network use is being driven by college students using the services to network with professionals for internship and job opportunities. Many studies have been done on the effectiveness of networking online in a college setting, and one notable one is by Phipps Arabie and Yoram Wind published in Advances in Social Network Analysis.

Many schools have implemented online alumni directories which serve as makeshift social networks that current and former students can turn to for career advice. However, these alumni

directories tend to suffer from an oversupply of advice-seekers and an undersupply of advice providers. One new social networking service, Ask-a-peer, aims to solve this problem by enabling advice seekers to offer modest compensation to advisers for their time.

Social network hosting service

A social network hosting service is a web hosting service that specifically hosts the user creation of web-based social networking services, alongside related applications.

Social trading networks

A social trading network is a service that allows traders of financial derivatives such as Contracts for Difference or Foreign Exchange Contracts to share their trading activity via trading profiles online. Such services are created by financial brokers.

Business model

Few social networks charge money for membership. In part, this may be because social networking is a relatively new service, and the value of using them has not been firmly established in customers' minds. Companies such as MySpace and Facebook sell online advertising on their site. Their business model is based upon large membership count, and charging for membership would be counter productive.Some believe that the deeper information that the sites have on each user will allow much better targeted advertising than any other site can currently provide. In recent times, Apple has been critical of the Google and Facebook model, in which users are defined as product and a commodity, and their data being sold for marketing revenue.

Social networks operate under an autonomous business model, in which a social network's members serve dual roles as both the suppliers and the consumers of content. This is in contrast to a traditional business model, where the suppliers and consumers are distinct agents. Revenue is typically gained in the autonomous business model via advertisements, but subscription-based revenue is possible when membership and content levels are sufficiently high.

Social interaction

Put simply, social networking is a way for one person to meet up with other people on the Internet. People use social networking sites for meeting new friends, finding old friends, or locating people who have the same problems or interests they have, called niche networking.

More and more relationships and friendships are being formed online and then carried to an offline setting. Psychologist and University of Hamburg professor Erich H. Witte says that relationships which start online are much more likely to succeed. Witte has said that in less than 10 years, online dating will be the predominant way for people to start a relationship. One online

dating site claims that 2% of all marriages begin at its site, the equivalent of 236 marriages a day. Other sites claim one in five relationships begin online.

Social networking sites play a vital role in this area as well. Being able to meet someone as a "friend" and see what common interests you share and how you have built up your friend base and "likes" you can truly see a fuller picture of the person you are talking with. Most sites are free instead of being pay based which allows younger people with stricter budgets to enjoy some of the same features as those of adults who are more likely to be able to afford pay based sites. While not the intended or original use for these social sites, a large area of their current function has stemmed from people wanting to meet other people in person and with the extremely busy schedules of most people, it is a fast, reliable and easy way in which to do so that costs you little time and money (if any). Users do not necessarily share with others the content which is of most interest to them, but rather that which projects a good impression of themselves. Social Networking Sites proves to be very good source of media campaign as well. A very recent example is of Lok Sabha Elections 2014 where Narendra Modi motivated people through SNS to vote and got victory in the elections.

Issues:

Privacy

Privacy concerns with social networking services have been raised growing concerns amongst users on the dangers of giving out too much personal information and the threat of sexual predators. Users of these services also need to be aware of data theft or viruses. However, large services, such as MySpace and Netlog, often work with law enforcement to try to prevent such incidents.

In addition, there is a perceived privacy threat in relation to placing too much personal information in the hands of large corporations or governmental bodies, allowing a profile to be produced on an individual's behavior on which decisions, detrimental to an individual, may be taken.

Furthermore, there is an issue over the control of data—information that was altered or removed by the user may in fact be retained and passed to third parties. This danger was highlighted when the controversial social networking site Quechup harvested e-mail addresses from users' e-mail accounts for use in a spamming operation.

In medical and scientific research, asking subjects for information about their behaviors is normally strictly scrutinized by institutional review boards, for example, to ensure that adolescents and their parents have informed consent. It is not clear whether the same rules apply to researchers who collect data from social networking sites. These sites often contain a great deal of data that is hard to obtain via traditional means. Even though the data are public, republishing it in a research paper might be considered invasion of privacy.

Privacy on social networking sites can be undermined by many factors. For example, users may disclose personal information, sites may not take adequate steps to protect user privacy, and third parties frequently use information posted on social networks for a variety of purposes. "For the Net generation, social networking sites have become the preferred forum for social interactions, from posturing and role playing to simply sounding off. However, because such forums are relatively easy to access, posted content can be reviewed by anyone with an interest in the users' personal information".

Following plans by the UK government to monitor traffic on social networks schemes similar to e-mail jamming have been proposed for networks such as Twitter and Facebook. These would involve "friending" and "following" large numbers of random people to thwart attempts at network analysis.

Privacy concerns have been found to differ between users according to gender and personality. Women are less likely to publish information that reveals methods of contacting them. Personality measures openness, extraversion, and conscientiousness were found to positively affect the willingness to disclose data, while neuroticism decreases the willingness to disclose personal information.

Data mining

Through data mining, companies are able to improve their sales and profitability. With this data, companies create customer profiles that contain customer demographics and online behavior. A recent strategy has been the purchase and production of "network analysis software". This software is able to sort out through the influx of social networking data for any specific company. Facebook has been especially important to marketing strategists. Facebook's controversial "Social Ads" program gives companies access to the millions of profiles in order to tailor their ads to a Facebook user's own interests and hobbies. However, rather than sell actual user information, Facebook sells tracked "social actions". That is, they track the websites a user uses outside of Facebook through a program called Facebook Beacon.

Notifications on websites

There has been a trend for social networking sites to send out only "positive" notifications to users. For example sites such as Bebo, Facebook, and MySpace will not send notifications to users when they are removed from a person's friends list. Likewise, Bebo will send out a notification if a user is moved to the top of another user's friends list but no notification is sent if they are moved down the list.

This allows users to purge undesirables from their list extremely easily and often without confrontation since a user will rarely notice if one person disappears from their friends list. It also enforces the general positive atmosphere of the website without drawing attention to unpleasant happenings such as friends falling out, rejection and failed relationships.

Access to information

Many social networking services, such as Facebook, provide the user with a choice of who can view their profile. This is supposed to prevent unauthorized users from accessing their information. Parents who want to access their child's MySpace or Facebook account have become a big problem for teenagers who do not want their profile seen by their parents. By making their profile private, teens can select who may see their page, allowing only people added as "friends" to view their profile and preventing unwanted viewing of the profile by parents. Most teens are constantly trying to create a structural barrier between their private life and their parents.

To edit information on a certain social networking service account, the social networking sites require you to login or provide a password. This is designed to prevent unauthorized users from adding, changing, or removing personal information, pictures, or other data.

Impact on employability

Social networking sites have created issues among getting hired for jobs and losing jobs because of exposing inappropriate content. Social networking sites are places on the Internet where users can update their statuses and express their personal opinions about life issues to their friends. This is controversial because employers can access their employee's profiles, and judge them based on their social behavior. According to Silicon Republic's statistics, 17,000 young people in six countries were interviewed in a survey. 1 in 10 people aged 16 to 34 have been rejected for a job because of comments on an online profile. This shows the effects that social networks have had one people's lives.

There have been numerous cases where employees have lost jobs because their opinions represented their companies negatively. In September 2013, there was a case when a woman got fired over Facebook because she posted disruptive information about her company stating that military patrons should not receive special treatment or discounts. A manager of the company found her opinion online, disagreed with it, and fired her because it completely went against the companies mission statement. In November 2012 there was a case in which a woman posted a racist remark about the President of the United States and mentioned content about a possible assassination. She lost her job, and was put under investigation by the secret service.

Not only have employees lost their jobs in the United States, but it has happened with social network users internationally. In April 2011, a Lloyd's banking group employee in the United Kingdom was fired for making a sarcastic post about the higher salary of her boss in relation to hers. In February 2013 there was another case where a flight attendant working for a Russian airline lost her job because she posted a photo of herself giving the middle finger to a plane full of passengers. The photo went viral exposing it all over the Internet. In November 2009, a women working for IBM in Quebec, Canada, lost her company's health insurance benefits

because she posted photos displaying her mental health problem. The company decided to cut her benefits because it was costing them additional funds.

Cases like these have created some privacy implications as to whether or not companies should have the right to look at employee's social network profiles. In March 2012, Facebook decided they might take legal action against employers for gaining access to employee's profiles through their passwords. According to Facebook Chief Privacy Officer for policy, Erin Egan, the company has worked hard to give its' users the tools to control who sees their information. He also said users shouldn't be forced to share private information and communications just to get a job. According to the network's Statement of Rights and Responsibilities, sharing or soliciting a password is a violation to Facebook. Employees may still give their password information out to get a job, but according to Erin Egan, Facebook will continue to do their part to protect the privacy and security of their users.

Potential for misuse

The relative freedom afforded by social networking services has caused concern regarding the potential of its misuse by individual patrons. In October 2006, a fake MySpace profile created in the name of Josh Evans by Lori Janine Drew led to the suicide of Megan Meier. The event incited global concern regarding the use of social networking services for bullying purposes.

In July 2008, a Briton, Grant Raphael, was ordered to pay a total of GBP £22,000 (about USD $44,000) for libel and breach of privacy. Raphael had posted a fake page on Facebook purporting to be that of a former schoolfriend Matthew Firsht, with whom Raphael had fallen out in 2000. The page falsely claimed that Firsht was homosexual and that he was dishonest.

At the same time, genuine use of social networking services has been treated with suspicion on the ground of the services' misuse. In September 2008, the profile of Australian Facebook user Elmo Keep was banned by the site's administrators on the grounds that it violated the site's terms of use. Keep is one of several users of Facebook who were banned from the site on the presumption that their names aren't real, as they bear resemblance to the names of characters like Sesame Street's Elmo.

Unauthorized access

There are different forms where user data in social networks are accessed and updated without a user's permission. One study[96] highlighted that the most common incidents included inappropriate comments posted on social networking sites (43%), messages sent to contacts that were never authored (25%) and change of personal details (24%). The most incidents are carried out by the victim's friends (36%) or partners (21%) and one in ten victims say their ex-partner has logged into their account without prior consent.[98][99]The survey found that online social network accounts had been subject to unauthorised access in 60 million cases in 2011.

Risk for child safety

Citizens and governments have been concerned with misuse of social networking services by children and teenagers, in particular in relation to online sexual predators. Overuse of social networking may also make children more susceptible to depression and anxiety.

A certain number of actions have been engaged by governments to better understand the problem and find some solutions.[specify] A 2008 panel concluded that fixes such as age verification and scans are relatively ineffective means of apprehending online predators. In May 2010, a child pornography social networking site with hundreds of members was dismantled by law enforcement. It was deemed "the largest crimes against children case brought anywhere by anyone".Girls in particular are also known to be at more of a risk online using social networks than boys. According to the article, High Tech or High Risks: Moral Panics About Girls Online, it suggests that young girls are more at risks because they are often represented through "products of play" in transgressive poses because they often manipulate other users online by making themselves look older than what they actually appear which can attract sexual predators. Also girls are at a higher risk than boys because they are more vulnerable and naive to becoming victims of assault or harassment from any sexual predators online. Many parents of teenage girls worry about their safety online because of the many manipulations there are online and on social networking sites.

Social networking can also be a risk to child safety in another way; parents can get addicted to games and neglect their children. One instance in South Korea resulted in the death of a child from starvation.

Law enforcement agencies have published articles with their recommendations to parents about their children's use of social networking sites.

Trolling

A common misuse of social networking sites such as Facebook is that it is occasionally used to emotionally abuse individuals. Such actions are often referred to as trolling. It is not rare for confrontations in the real world to be translated online. Trolling can occur in many different forms, such as (but not limited to) defacement of deceased person(s) tribute pages, name calling, playing online pranks on volatile individuals and controversial comments with the intention to cause anger and cause arguments.

Online bullying

Online bullying, also called cyber-bullying, is a relatively common occurrence and it can often result in emotional trauma for the victim. Depending on the networking outlet, up to 39% of users admit to being "cyber-bullied". Danah Boyd, a researcher of social networks quotes a teenager in her article, "Why Youth (Heart) Social Network Sites". The teenager expresses

frustration towards networking sites like MySpace because it causes drama and too much emotional stress. There are not many limitations as to what individuals can post when online. Individuals are given the power to post offensive remarks or pictures that could potentially cause a great amount of emotional pain for another individual.

Interpersonal communication

Words, phrases, and topics most highly distinguishing English-speaking females and males in social media in 2013

Interpersonal communication has been a growing issue as more and more people have turned to social networking as a means of communication. "Benniger (1987) describes how mass media has gradually replaced interpersonal communication as a socializing force. Further, social networking sites have become popular sites for youth culture to explore themselves, relationships, and share cultural artifacts".

Many teens and social networking users may be harming their interpersonal communication by using sites such as Facebook and MySpace. Stated by Baroness Greenfield, an Oxford University neuroscientist, "My fear is that these technologies are infantilizing the brain into the state of small children who are attracted by buzzing noises and bright lights, who have a small attention span and who live for the moment".

The convenience that social network sites give users to communicate with one another can also damage their interpersonal communication. Sherry Turkle, the founder and director of the MIT Initiative on Technology and Self, stated, "Networked, we are together, but so lessened are our expectations of each other that we feel utterly alone. And there is the risk that we come to see others as objects to be accessed--and only for the parts we find useful, comforting, or amusing". Furthermore, social network sites can create insincere friendships, Turkle also noted, "They nurture friendships on social-networking sites and then wonder if they are among friends. They become confused about companionship".

Psychological effects of social networking

As social networking sites have risen in popularity over the past years, people have been spending an excessive amount of time on the Internet in general and social networking sites in specific. This has led researchers to debate the establishment of Internet addiction as an actual clinical disorder. Social networking can also affect the extent to which a person feels lonely. In a Newsweek article, Johannah Cornblatt explains "Social-networking sites like Facebook and MySpace may provide people with a false sense of connection that ultimately increases loneliness in people who feel alone". John T. Cacioppo, a neuroscientist at the University of Chicago, claims that social networking can foster feelings of sensitivity to disconnection, which can lead to loneliness. Fabio Sabatini and Francesco Sarracino found that if an individual tends to (a) trust people and (b) have a significant number of face-to-face interactions, the individual is

likely to assess their own well-being as relatively high. The researchers found that online social networking plays a positive role in subjective well-being when the networking is used to facilitate physical interactions, but networking activities that do not facilitate face-to-face interactions tend to erode trust, and this erosion can then negatively affect subjective well-being (independent of the online social interaction itself). Sabatini and Sarracino conclude that "The overall effect of networking on individual welfare is significantly negative." However, some scholars have expressed that concerns about social networking are often exaggerated and poorly researched .

Patents

Number of US social network patent applications published per year and patents issued per year

There has been rapid growth in the number of U.S. patent applications that cover new technologies related to social networking. The number of published applications has been growing rapidly since 2003. There are now over 3,500 published applications. As many as 7,000 applications may be currently on file including those that haven't been published yet. Only about 400 of these applications have issued as patents, however, due largely to the multi-year backlog in examination of business method patents and the difficulty in getting these patent applications allowed.

It has been reported that social networking patents are important for the establishment of new start-up companies. It has also been reported, however, that social networking patents inhibit innovation. On June 15, 2010, the United States Patent and Trademark Office awarded Amazon.com a patent for a "Social Networking System" based on its ownership of PlanetAll. The patent describes a Social Networking System as a networked computer system provides various services for assisting users in locating, and establishing contact relationships with, other users. For example, in one embodiment, users can identify other users based on their affiliations with particular schools or other organizations. The system also provides a mechanism for a user to selectively establish contact relationships or connections with other users, and to grant permissions for such other users to view personal information of the user. The system may also include features for enabling users to identify contacts of their respective contacts. In addition, the system may automatically notify users of personal information updates made by their respective contacts.

The patent has garnered attention due to its similarity to the popular social networking site Facebook.

Worker's rights

What types of speech workers are protected from being fired for on social networking websites has been an issue for American companies with over 100 complaints as of 2011 on this topic having been made to the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB). The National Labor Relations

Act protects workers from being fired for "protected concerted activity", which prevents workers from being fired for collective action, while allowing companies the right to fire workers for individual actions they take against the company. Companies are concerned with the potential damage comments online can do to public image due to their visibility and accessibility, but despite over 100 cases being presented thus far to NLRB only one has led to a formal ruling, leaving uncertainty as to the boundaries of what types of speech the NLRB will ultimately put in place.

Decentralized architecture

Most of the existing SNS sites use one or multiple dedicated data centers to serve all its users. Such infrastructure-based systems faces over-provisioning during non-peak hours, while may encounter service outage during peak hours, due to the highly dynamic of SNS users' activities. There are several proposals, leveraging a decentralized architecture to ensure the scalability of SNS sites with low infrastructure cost.

Virtual identity suicide

There is a growing number of social network users who decide to quit their user account by committing a so-called virtual identity suicide or Web 2.0 suicide. A 2013 study in the journal CyberPsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking investigated this phenomenon from the perspective of Facebook users. The number one reason for these users was privacy concerns (48%), being followed by a general dissatisfaction with the social networking website (14%), negative aspects regarding social network friends (13%) and the feeling of getting addicted to the social networking website (6%). Facebook quitters were found to be more concerned about privacy, more addicted to the Internet and more conscientious.

Breaking up

Breaking-up with a significant other is never easy to do, and new technologies are starting to make the process easier, but also less personal. Sites such as Facebook are becoming increasingly popular tools for methods of ending relationships, proving that although new media is being used as a tool for connecting with individuals, it is now creating new problems associated with disconnecting from others. Instead of the traditional phone call or face-to-face interaction between individuals, people are now starting to end relationships by simply changing their relationship status, knowing full-well that their significant other will see it shortly. The problem with that is that you are left with no closure and the entire online world now knows you are no longer in a relationship. In a 2010 study conducted online, nearly one-quarter of the 1,000 individuals surveyed found out that their own relationship was over by seeing it on Facebook. New media websites have made our private lives much more public, especially when it comes to breaking up, since updates are able to be immediately viewed by everyone in our networks (which tend to be more people than we would normally tell personally); for example, having

friends comment on your newly changed "single" relationship status, and having to explain what happened can be distressing.

This creates further problems, as it is even more crucial to 'save face' after one's relationship has been broken when one is connected to new media technologies. Erving Goffmanargues that all social life boils down to face-to-face interactions. These interpersonal interactions are mediated by what Goffman terms as "face-work", which are the actions undertaken to maintain consistency with one's face, and to uphold the expressive order of social situations. Individuals attempt to keep a positive image of the self when interacting with others, and in order to do so, they may have to alter their appearance or manner in some way. Such face-work can also be seen in new technologies, especially social media websites such as Facebook. If someone breaks-up with you, you can actively choose what "face" you want to present to your friends, including your ex. You can choose to either post sad updates, which is the most natural thing you would want to do, or you can "save face" by posting happy updates and pictures of you going out with your friends. Even though you may be absolutely heartbroken within, Facebook allows you to hide your true feelings from the online world, and from your ex, by manipulating your profile. New media is being utilized as a tool for helping users present a desirable image of themselves, enabling them to save face in difficult situations. Nearly 35% of respondents in a study admitted to using their Facebook status to make someone think that they had plans, even if they did not.

Many people find that the only way to really move on from a past relationship is to cut the person out of their life completely. Social media has made this process much more complicated and difficult. In a 2012 study, 48% of the participants stated they had remained friends with their ex on Facebook, and of these people, 88% stated they 'creeped' their ex after the breakup. Keeping your ex on Facebook can cause much distress, as you are forced to see what they are doing (and often, it can be with a new partner). Moreover, the fact that Facebook acts as a digital archive can also make it difficult to move on after a breakup, as re-reading and over-analyzing old messages and wall posts, and looking through tagged photos with an ex can be a major source of distress. This is due to the fact it often causes one to remember the good parts of a relationship, leading to feelings of confusion about the breakup. These digital social networking sites leave behind a trail of one's interactions, so deleting content it is an arduous process, and it forces us to re-read the content, thus re-creating the memories. This is much more difficult than simply burning or throwing away an entire box of letters, photos, and mementos. Additionally, this content can still remain online; for example, after you un-tag yourself from a photo, the photo may still remain in a mutual friend's photo album that is easily accessible. These digital traces make it extremely difficult to forget the relationship and leave it behind. For those who do wish to remove their ex from Facebook without going through the hassle of sifting through their content can turn to the Killswitch application, which removes all traces of your relationship with your ex for a fee. This does not ensure the complete removal of your ex from your life though, as 70% of those who deleted their ex still attempted to creep their page in other ways, such as through using a friend's account.

There are several proposed reasons behind why some individuals choose to keep their ex-partner as a friend on Facebook, such as: it is hard to re-add them later, your ex could be offended, it could be socially awkward if you run into them, it feels very final, you still may hear about your ex through friends, and concerns about what your mutual friends will think.

In her 2012 study, Lukacs suggests there are multiple strategies one can use to cope with a breakup in the age of social media:

- Deleting/blocking one's ex
- Unsubscribing from posts by one's ex
- Deleting mutual friends
- Using self-restraint
- Purging old photos from Facebook
- Not specifying an individual in one's relationship status
- Removing one's relationship status altogether
- Staying busy; minimizing computer usage
- Changing one's password
- Deactivating or deleting one's Facebook account

The 'dark side' of social networking sites: social overload

The increasing number of messages and social relationships embedded in SNS also increases the amount of social information demanding a reaction from SNS users. Consequently SNS users perceive they are giving too much social support to other SNS friends. This dark side of SNS usage is called 'social overload'. It is caused by the extent of usage, number of friends, subjective social support norms, and type of relationship (online-only vs offline friends) while age has only an indirect effect. The psychological and behavioral consequences of social overload include perceptions of SNS exhaustion, low user satisfaction, and high intentions to reduce or stop using SNS.

Investigations

Social networking services are increasingly being used in legal and criminal investigations. Information posted on sites such as MySpace and Facebook has been used by police (forensic profiling), probation, and university officials to prosecute users of said sites. In some situations, content posted on MySpace has been used in court.

Facebook is increasingly being used by school administrations and law enforcement agencies as a source of evidence against student users. This site being the number one online destination for college students, allows users to create profile pages with personal details. These pages can be viewed by other registered users from the same school, which often include resident assistants and campus police who have signed up for the service. One UK police force has sifted pictures

from Facebook and arrested some people who had been photographed in a public place holding a weapon such as a knife (having a weapon in a public place is illegal).

Applications of Social Sites

Government applications

Banner in Bangkok, observed on the 30th of June 2014 during the2014 , informing the Thai public that 'like' or 'share' activity on social media could land them in prison.

Social networking is more recently being used by various government agencies. Social networking tools serve as a quick and easy way for the government to get the opinion of the public and to keep the public updated on their activity, however this comes with a significant risk of abuse, for example to cultivate a culture of fear such as that outlined in Nineteen Eighty-Four or THX-1138.

The Centers for Disease Control demonstrated the importance of vaccinations on the popular children's site Whyville and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration has a virtual island on Second Life where people can explore underground caves or explore the effects of global warming. Likewise, NASA has taken advantage of a few social networking tools, including Twitter and Flickr. The NSA is taking advantage of them all. NASA is using such tools to aid the Review of U.S. Human Space Flight Plans Committee, whose goal it is to ensure that the nation is on a vigorous and sustainable path to achieving its boldest aspirations in space.

Business applications

The use of social networking services in an enterprise context presents the potential of having a major impact on the world of business and work (Fraser & Dutta 2008).

Social networks connect people at low cost; this can be beneficial for entrepreneurs and small businesses looking to expand their contact bases. These networks often act as a customer relationship management tool for companies selling products and services. Companies can also use social networks for advertising in the form of banners and text ads. Since businesses operate globally, social networks can make it easier to keep in touch with contacts around the world.

Applications for social networking sites have extended toward businesses and brands are creating their own, high functioning sites, a sector known as brand networking. It is the idea that a brand can build its consumer relationship by connecting their consumers to the brand image on a platform that provides them relative content, elements of participation, and a ranking or score system. Brand networking is a new way to capitalize on social trends as a marketing tool.

The power of social networks it beginning to permeate into internal culture of businesses where they are finding uses for collaboration, file sharing and knowledge transfer. The term Enterprise Social Software is becoming increasingly popular for these types of applications.

Dating applications

Many social networks provide an online environment for people to communicate and exchange personal information for dating purposes. Intentions can vary from looking for a one time date, short-term relationships, and long-term relationships.

Most of these social networks, just like online dating services, require users to give out certain pieces of information. This usually includes a user's age, gender, location, interests, and perhaps a picture. Releasing very personal information is usually discouraged for safety reasons.This allows other users to search or be searched by some sort of criteria, but at the same time people can maintain a degree of anonymity similar to most online dating services. Online dating sites are similar to social networks in the sense that users create profiles to meet and communicate with others, but their activities on such sites are for the sole purpose of finding a person of interest to date. Social networks do not necessarily have to be for dating; many users simply use it for keeping in touch with friends, and colleagues.

However, an important difference between social networks and online dating services is the fact that online dating sites usually require a fee, where social networks are free. This difference is one of the reasons the online dating industry is seeing a massive decrease in revenue due to many users opting to use social networking services instead. Many popular online dating services such as Match.com, Yahoo Personals, and eHarmony.com are seeing a decrease in users, where social networks like MySpace and Facebook are experiencing an increase in users.

The number of Internet users in the United States that visit online dating sites has fallen from a peak of 21% in 2003 to 10% in 2006 Whether its the cost of the services, the variety of users with different intentions, or any other reason, it is undeniable that social networking sites are quickly becoming the new way to find dates online.

Educational applications

The National School Boards Association reports that almost 60% of students who use social networking talk about education topics online, and more than 50% talk specifically about schoolwork. Yet the vast majority of school districts have stringent rules against nearly all forms of social networking during the school day—even though students and parents report few problem behaviors online.

Social networks focused on supporting relationships between teachers and their students are now used for learning, educator professional development, and content sharing. Ning for teachers, TermWiki, Learn Central, TeachStreet and other sites are being built to foster relationships that include educational blogs, eportfolios, formal and ad hoc communities, as well as communication such as chats, discussion threads, and synchronous forums. These sites also have content sharing and rating features.

Social networks are also emerging as online yearbooks, both public and private. One such service is MyYearbook, which allows anyone from the general public to register and connect. A new trend emerging is private label yearbooks accessible only by students, parents, and teachers of a particular school, similar to Facebook's beginning within Harvard.

Finance applications

The use of virtual currency systems inside social networks create new opportunities for global finance. Hub Culture operates a virtual currency Ven used for global transactions among members, product sales and financial trades in commodities and carbon credits. In May 2010, Carbon pricing contracts were introduced to the weighted basket of currencies and commodities that determine the floating exchange value of Ven. The introduction of carbon to the calculation price of the currency made Ven the first and only currency that is linked to the environment.

Medical and health applications

Social networks are beginning to be adopted by healthcare professionals as a means to manage institutional knowledge, disseminate peer to peer knowledge and to highlight individual physicians and institutions. The advantage of using a dedicated medical social networking site is that all the members are screened against the state licensing board list of practitioners.

A new trend is emerging with social networks created to help its members with various physical and mental ailments.For people suffering from life altering diseases, PatientsLikeMe offers its members the chance to connect with others dealing with similar issues and research patient data related to their condition. For alcoholics and addicts, SoberCircle gives people in recovery the ability to communicate with one another and strengthen their recovery through the encouragement of others who can relate to their situation. DailyStrength is also a website that offers support groups for a wide array of topics and conditions, including the support topics offered by PatientsLikeMe and SoberCircle.

Some social networks aim to encourage healthy lifestyles in their users. SparkPeople offers community and social networking tools for peer support during weight loss. Fitocracy and QUENTIQ are focused on exercise, enabling users to share their own workouts and comment on those of other users.

Social and political applications

Social networking sites have recently showed a value in social and political movements. In the Egyptian revolution, Facebook and Twitter both played an allegedly pivotal role in keeping people connected to the revolt. Egyptian activists have credited social networking sites with providing a platform for planning protest and sharing news from Tahrir Square in real time. By presenting a platform for thousands of people to instantaneously share videos of mainly events

featuring brutality, social networking can be a vital tool in revolutions. On the flip side, social networks enable government authorities to easily identify, and repress, protestors and dissidents.

Crowdsourcing applications

Crowdsourcing social media platform, such as Design Contest, Arcbazar, Tongal, combined group of professional freelancers, such as designers, and help them communicate with business owners interested in their suggestion. This process is often used to subdivide tedious work or to fund-raise startup companies and charities, and can also occur offline.

Open source software

There are a number of projects that aim to develop free and open source software to use for social networking services. The projects include Anahita, Diaspora, Appleseed Project, OneSocialWeb, Kune, and Friendica. These technologies are often referred to as Social engine or Social networking engine software.

Facebook

Facebook (formerly [thefacebook]) is an online social networking service headquartered in Menlo Park, California. Its name comes from a colloquialism for the directory given to students at some American universities. Facebook was founded on February 4, 2004, by Mark Zuckerberg with his college roommates and fellow Harvard University students Eduardo Saverin, Andrew McCollum, Dustin Moskovitz and Chris Hughes. The founders had initially limited the website's membership to Harvard students, but later expanded it to colleges in the Boston area, the Ivy League, and Stanford University. It gradually added support for students at various other universities and later to their high-school students. Facebook now allows anyone who claims to be at least 13 years old worldwide to become a registered user of the website, although proof is not required.

After registering to use the site, users may create a personal profile, add other users as friends, exchange messages, post status updates and photos, and receive notifications when others update their profiles. Additionally, users may join common-interest user groups, organized by workplace, school or college, or other characteristics, and categorize their friends into lists such as "People From Work" or "Close Friends". Facebook had over 1.3 billion active users as of June 2014. Due to the large volume of data collected about users, the service's privacy policies have faced scrutiny, among other criticisms. Facebook, Inc. held its initial public offering in February 2012 and began selling stock to the public three months later, reaching a peak market capitalization of $104 billion.

History

College-only service

Zuckerberg wrote a program called Facemash on October 28, 2003 while attending Harvard as a sophomore. According to The Harvard Crimson, the site was comparable to Hot or Not and "used photos compiled from the online facebooks of nine houses, placing two next to each other at a time and asking users to choose the 'hotter' person"

To accomplish this, Zuckerberg hacked into protected areas of Harvard's computer network and copied private dormitory ID images. Harvard did not have a student "Facebook" (a directory with photos and basic information) at the time, although individual houses had been issuing their own paper facebooks since the mid-1980s. Facemash attracted 450 visitors and 22,000 photo-views in its first four hours online.

The site was quickly forwarded to several campus group list-servers, but was shut down a few days later by the Harvard administration. Zuckerberg faced expulsion and was charged by the administration with breach of security, violating copyrights, and violating individual privacy. Ultimately, the charges were dropped. Zuckerberg expanded on this initial project that semester by creating a social study tool ahead of an art history final. He uploaded 500 Augustan images to a website, and each image was featured with a corresponding comments section. He shared the site with his classmates and people started sharing notes.

The following semester, Zuckerberg began writing code for a new website in January 2004. He said he was inspired by an editorial about the Facemash incident in The Harvard Crimson. On February 4, 2004, Zuckerberg launched "Thefacebook", originally located at thefacebook.com.

Six days after the site launched, three Harvard seniors (Cameron Winklevoss, Tyler Winklevoss, and Divya Narendra) accused Zuckerberg of intentionally misleading them into believing he would help them build a social network called HarvardConnection.com. They claimed he was instead using their ideas to build a competing product. The three complained to The Harvard Crimson and the newspaper began an investigation. They later filed a lawsuit against Zuckerberg, subsequently settling in 2008 for 1.2 million shares(worth $300 million at Facebook's IPO).

Membership was initially restricted to students of Harvard College; within the first month, more than half the undergraduates at Harvard were registered on the service. Eduardo Saverin (business aspects), Dustin Moskovitz (programmer), Andrew McCollum (graphic artist), and Chris Hughes joined Zuckerberg to help promote the website. In March 2004, Facebook expanded to the universities of Columbia, Stanford, and Yale. It later opened to all Ivy League colleges, Boston University, New York University, MIT, and gradually most universities in Canada and the United States.

In mid-2004, entrepreneur Sean Parker (an informal advisor to Zuckerberg) became the company's president. In June 2004, Facebook moved its operations base to Palo Alto, California. It received its first investment later that month from PayPal co-founder Peter Thiel. In

2005, the company dropped the from its name after purchasing the domain name facebook.com for $200,000.

In May 2005, Accel partners invested $12.7 million in Facebook, and Jim Breyer added $1 million of his own money. A January 2009 Compete.com study ranked Facebook the most used social networking service by worldwide monthly active users. Entertainment Weekly included the site on its end-of-the-decade "best-of" list, saying, "How on earth did we stalk our exes, remember our co-workers' birthdays, bug our friends, and play a rousing game of Scrabulous before Facebook?"

Mark Zuckerberg co-creator of Facebook in his Harvard dorm room, 2005.

A high-school version of the site was launched in September 2005, which Zuckerberg called the next logical step.(At the time, high-school networks required an invitation to join.)Facebook expanded membership eligibility to employees of several companies, including Apple Inc. and Microsoft.

Service available to the general public

On September 26, 2006, Facebook was opened to everyone at least 13 years old with a valid email address.

In late 2007, Facebook had 100,000 business pages (pages which allowed companies to promote themselves and attract customers). These started as group pages, but a new concept called company pages was planned. Pages began rolling out for businesses in May 2009.

On October 24, 2007, Microsoft announced that it had purchased a 1.6% share of Facebook for $240 million, giving Facebook a total implied value of around $15 billion. Microsoft's purchase included rights to place international adverts on the social networking site. In October 2008, Facebook announced that it would set up its international headquarters in Dublin, Ireland. In September 2009, Facebook said that it had turned cash-flow positive for the first time. In November 2010, based on SecondMarket Inc. (an exchange for privately held companies' shares), Facebook's value was $41 billion; it slightly surpassed eBay's to become the third largest American web company afterGoogle and Amazon.com.

Facebook headquarters entrance sign at 1 Hacker Way, Menlo Park, California

Traffic to Facebook increased steadily after 2009. More people visited Facebook than Google for the week ending March 13, 2010. Release of statistics by DoubleClick showed that Facebook reached one trillion page views in the month of June 2011, making it the most visited website tracked by DoubleClick. According to the Nielsen Media Research study, released in December 2011, Facebook had become the second most accessed website in the US, behind Google.

In March 2011, it was reported that Facebook was taking approximately 20,000 profiles offline every day for infractions including spam, inappropriate content and underage use, as part of its efforts to boost cyber security.

In early 2011, Facebook announced plans to move its headquarters to the former Sun Microsystems campus in Menlo Park.

Facebook eventually filed for an initial public offering on February 1, 2012; it is headquartered in Menlo Park, California. Facebook held an initial public offering on May 17, 2012, negotiating a share price of $38 apiece. The company was valued at $104 billion, the largest valuation to date for a newly listed public company. Facebook Inc. began selling stock to the public and trading on the NASDAQ on May 18, 2012. Based on its 2012 income of US$5 billion, Facebook joined the Fortune 500 list for the first time on the list published in May 2013, being placed at position 462.

In March 2012, Facebook announced App Center, a store selling applications that operate via the site. The store will be available to iPhone, Android and mobile web users.

In 2012, Facebook was valued at $104 billion, and by January 2014 its market capitalization had risen to over $134 billion. At the end of January 2014, 1.23 billion users were active on the website every month, while on December 31, 2013, 945 million of this total were identified by the company as mobile users. The company celebrated its tenth anniversary in the week of February 3, 2014. In each of the first three months of 2014, over one billion logged into their Facebook account on a mobile device.

On January 2014, during the week previous to the company's tenth anniversary, chief operating officer of Facebook, Sheryl Sandberg, clarified: "He [Mark] always said Facebook was started not just to be a company, but to fulfill a vision of connecting the world".

Initial public offering

Facebook filed their S1 document with the Securities and Exchange Commission on February 1, 2012. The company applied for a US$5 billion initial public offering (IPO); one of the biggest in the history of technology and the biggest in Internet history. Facebook valued its stock at $38 a share which priced the company at $104 billion – the largest valuation to date for a new public company. The IPO raised $16 billion, making it the third largest in U.S. history. The shares began trading on May 18; the stock struggled to stay above the IPO price for most of the day, but set a record for the trading volume of an IPO (460 million shares). The first day of trading was marred by technical glitches that prevented orders from going through; only the technical problems and artificial support from underwriters prevented the stock price from falling below the IPO price on the day.

Billboard on the Thomson Reutersbuilding welcomes Facebook to Nasdaq, 2012

It was revealed later[when?] that Facebook's lead underwriters, Morgan Stanley (MS), JP Morgan (JPM), and Goldman Sachs (GS) cut their earnings forecasts for the company in the middle of the IPO roadshow. The stock continued its freefall in subsequent days, closing at 34.03 on May 21 and 31.00 on May 22. A 'circuit breaker' was used in an attempt to slow down the stock price's decline. Securities and Exchange Commission Chairman Mary Schapiro and Financial Industry Regulatory Authority (FINRA) Chairman Rick Ketchum called for a review of the circumstances surrounding the IPO.

Facebooks' IPO is now under investigation and has been compared to pump and dump schemes. A class-action lawsuit was filed in May 2012 due to the trading glitches, which led to botched orders. Apparently, the glitches prevented a number of investors from selling the stock during the first day of trading while the stock price was falling – forcing them to incur bigger losses when their trades finally went through.

Lawsuits have been filed alleging that an underwriter for Morgan Stanley selectively revealed adjusted earnings estimates to preferred clients. The other underwriters (MS, JPM, GS) and Facebook's CEO and board are also facing litigation. It is believed that adjustments to earnings estimates were communicated to the underwriters by a Facebook financial officer, who used the information to cash out on their positions while leaving the general public with overpriced shares.

By the end of May 2012, the stock lost over a quarter of its starting value, which led to the Wall Street Journal calling the IPO a "fiasco."

After going public

In July 2012, Facebook added a same-sex marriage icon to its timeline feature. On August 23, 2012, Facebook released an update to its iOS app (version 5.0), which changed how data was collected and displayed to make it faster. On January 15, 2013, Facebook announced Graph Search, which provides users with a "precise answer" rather than a link to an answer by leveraging the data present on its site. Facebook emphasized that the feature would be "privacy-aware," returning only results from content already shared with the user. The company is the subject of a lawsuit by Rembrandt Social Media for patents involving the "Like" button. On April 3, 2013, Facebook unveiled Home, a user-interface layer for Android devices offering greater integration with the site. HTC announced the HTC First, a smartphone with Home pre-loaded. On April 15, 2013, Facebook announced an alliance across 19 states with the National Association of Attorneys General to provide teenagers and parents with information on tools to manage social networking profiles. On April 19, 2013, Facebook officially modified its logo to remove the faint blue line at the bottom of the "F" icon. The letter F moved closer to the edge of the box.

Following a campaign by 100 advocacy groups, Facebook agreed to update its policy on hate speech. The campaign highlighted content promoting domestic and sexual violence against women, and used over 57,000 tweets and more than 4,900 emails that caused withdrawal of advertising from the site by 15 companies, including Nissan UK, House of Burlesque and Nationwide UK. The social media website initially responded by stating that "while it may be vulgar and offensive, distasteful content on its own does not violate our policies". It decided to take action on May 29, 2013 after it "become clear that our systems to identify and remove hate speech have failed to work as effectively as we would like, particularly around issues of gender-based hate."

On June 12, 2013, Facebook announced on its newsroom that it was introducing clickable hashtags to help users follow trending discussions or search what others are talking about on a topic. A July 2013 Wall Street Journal article identified the Facebook IPO as the cause of a change in the U.S.' national economic statistics, as the company home (San Mateo County, California) became the top wage-earning county in the country after the fourth quarter of 2012. The Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that the average weekly wage in the county was US$3,240, 107% higher than the previous year. It noted the wages were "the equivalent of $168,000 a year, and more than 50% higher than the next highest county, New York County (better known as Manhattan), which came in at $2,107 a week, or roughly $110,000 a year."

Russian internet firm Mail.Ru sold its Facebook shares for US$525 million on September 5, 2013, following its initial US$200 million investment in 2009. Partly owned by Russia's richest man Alisher Usmanovhe, the firm owned a total of 14.2 million remaining shares prior to the sale. In the same month, the Chinese government announced that it will lift the ban on Facebook in the Shanghai Free Trade Zone "to welcome foreign companies to invest and to let foreigners live and work happily in the free-trade zone." Facebook has been blocked in China since 2009.

Facebook is part of The Alliance for Affordable Internet (A4AI) (which was launched in October 2013). The A4AI is a coalition of public and private organisations that includes Google,Intel and Microsoft. Led by Sir Tim Berners-Lee, the A4AI seeks to make Internet access more affordable so that access is broadened in the developing world, where only 31% of people are online. Google will help to decrease Internet access prices so that they fall below the UN Broadband Commission's worldwide target of 5% of monthly income.

A Reuters report, published on December 11, 2013, stated that Standard & Poor's announced the placement of Facebook onto its S&P 500 index "after the close of trading on December 20."[87] Facebook announced Q4 2013 earnings of US$523 million (20 cents per share), an increase of $64 million from the previous year.

In February 2014, Facebook announced that it would be buying mobile messaging company Whatsapp for US$19 billion in cash and stock. In June 2014, Facebook announced the acquisition of Pryte, a Finnish mobile data plan firm that aims to make it easier for mobile phone

users in underdeveloped parts of the world to use wireless Internet apps. As part of the company's second quarter results, Facebook announced in late July 2014 that mobile accounted for 62% of its advertising revenue, which is an increase of 21% from the previous year.

At the start of July 2014, Facebook announced the acquisition of LiveRail, a San Francisco, California-based online video advertising company. LiveRail's technology facilitates the sale of video inventory across different devices. The terms of the deal were undisclosed, but TechCrunch reported that Facebook paid between US$400 million and $500 million.

Orkut

Orkut was a social networking website owned and operated by Google. The service was designed to help users meet new and old friends and maintain existing relationships. The website is named after its creator, Google employee Orkut Büyükkökten.

On June 30, 2014, Google announced it would be closing Orkut on September 30, 2014. No new accounts could be created starting from July 2014. Users can download their profile archive by Google Takeout.

Orkut was one of the most visited websites in India and Brazil in 2008. In 2008 Google announced that Orkut would be fully managed and operated in Brazil, by Google Brazil, in the city of Belo Horizonte. This was decided due to the large Brazilian user base and growth of legal issues.

An Orkut user can also add videos to their profile from either YouTube or Google Video with the additional option of creating either restricted or unrestricted polls for polling a community of users. There is an option to integrate GTalk (An instant messenger from Google) with Orkut enabling chatting and file sharing. Currently GTalk has been integrated in Orkut – users can directly chat from their Orkut page. Similar to Facebook, users may also use a "like" button to share interests with friends.

Themes

 A new feature in Orkut is Changing Themes. Users can change their interface from a wide range of colorful themes in library. Themes are currently only available in India, Brazil and Pakistan.

Other features

Each member can become a fan of any of the friends in their list and can also evaluate whether their friend is "Trustworthy", "Cool", "Sexy" on a scale of 1 to 3 (marked by icons) and this is aggregated in terms of a percentage. Unlike Facebook, where a member can view profile details of people only on their network, Orkut allows anyone to visit anyone's profile, unless a potential visitor is on your "Ignore List" (this feature has been recently changed so that users can choose between showing their profile to all networks or specified ones). Importantly, each member can

also customize their profile preferences and can restrict information that appears on their profile from their friends and/or others (not on the friends list). Another feature is that any member can add any other member on Orkut to his/her "Crush List" and both of them will be informed only when both parties have added each other to their "Crush List".

When a user logs in, they see the people in their friends list in the order of their logging into the site, the first person being the latest one to do so. Orkut's competitors are other social networking sites including Myspace and Facebook. Ning is a more direct competitor, as they allow creation of social networks which are similar to Orkut's communities.

Redesign

First redesign

On August 25, 2007, Orkut announced a redesign and the new UI contained round corners and soft colors, including small logotype at upper left corner, this redesign has been announced on the official Orkut Blog. By August 30, 2007, most users on Orkut could see changes on their profile pages as per the new redesign. On August 31, 2007, Orkut announced its new features including improvements to the way you view your friends, 9 rather than 8 of your friends displayed on your homepage and profile page and basic links to your friends' content right under their profile picture as you browse through their different pages. It also announced the initial release of Orkut in 6 new languages: Hindi, Bengali, Marathi, Tamil, Kannada and Telugu. Profile editing can take place by clicking the settings button under the user profile photo (or alternatively, clicking the blue settings link at the top of any page). On September 4, 2007, Orkut announced another new feature. user would be able to see an "Updates from your friends" box on the homepage, where it's possible to get real-time updates when friends make changes to their profiles, photos and videos. Moreover, in case someone wants to keep some things on their profile private, Orkut has added an easy opt-out button on the settings page. Scraps were also HTML-enabled letting users post videos or pictures. On November 8, 2007, Orkut greeted its Indian users Happy Diwali by allowing them to change their Orkut look to a Diwali-flavored reddish theme. On April Fools' Day 2008, Orkut temporarily changed its name on its webpage to yogurt, apparently as a prank. On June 2, 2008, Orkut has launched its theming engine with a small set of default themes. Photo tagging also was available.

Second redesign: New Orkut

On October 27, 2009, Orkut released their 2nd redesigned version. It was available to very few users at first (the chosen ones as they were called). These users were able to send invites to their Orkut friends to join this new version. The new version uses Google Web Toolkit (GWT) and thus makes extensive use of AJAX in the user interface. However, the users of the new version of Orkut can switch back to the older version by clicking the "Older Version" link near the top right corner of the page.

Google stated the new Orkut is faster, simpler, and more customizable. More particular features includes video chat, promotions and easy navigation.

The look is completely new, leaving all traces of past designs. User interface and workflow are also drastically changed. As part of "more customizable", Orkut added many different colours for your profile. The Themes were removed and an Orkut badge is visible for those who haven't changed to the new Orkut. The new logo also has the word "My" in it, as in My Orkut. Mouse over to logo scrolls out list of 4 most frequently used links. Vertical scroll bars have been added in the friend and community list in the home page to allow viewing all friends/communities from the home page itself. In the home page, the recent visitor's list now displays six most recent visitor's profile image as small clickable icons. Orkut allows users to sign in with their Google Mail, or Gmail, credentials.

Messages Black Hole

Before the introduction of the New Orkut, users had two options to message friends: via the scrapbook (equivalent to the Facebook wall) or by sending a private message (identical to the Facebook feature). Since the New Orkut introduced a privacy control for scraps posted to the scrapbook, the messages system was disabled in this version, but not for those still using the old version. This created a strange situation in which messages sent by a user of the old version to someone using the New Orkut go completely unnoticed by its recipient (the New Orkut does not inform the user of these lost messages, that can only be read if he/she switches back to the old version).

Controversy

Fake profiles

As with any online social networking community, a number of fake and cloned profiles exist on Orkut. Due to the large number of users and the deactivation of the jail system, the profiles were often left unremoved or, when removed, recreated easily.

Hate groups

In February 2011, there was controversy revolving around the use of Orkut by various hate groups. Several hate communities focusing on racism, Nazism and white supremacy have been deleted due to guideline violation.

In 2005, various cases of racism were brought to police attention and reported on in the Brazilian media. In 2006, a judicial measure was opened by the Brazil federal justice denouncing a 20-year-old student accused of racism against those of Black African ancestry and spreading defamatory content on Orkut. Brazilian Federal Justice subpoenaed Google on March 2006 to explain the crimes that had occurred in Orkut.

Anti-national, and anti-ethnic hate groups have also been spotted. Recently an Indian court has issued notices to Google on some of the groups. The Mumbai Police are seeking a ban on Orkut after objections were raised by political groups. Groups denigrating various political leaders and celebrities have also emerged.

Orkut has a Report Abuse feature available for all communities. Orkut communities can be reported if they contain hateful/violent content. Any Orkut user (even those who are not the members of such a community) can report the abuse. The reasons for reporting abuse can be nudity or sexual content, theft of identity or personal information, child abuse, promoting illegal activities, any kind of personal attacks against any individual and a few others.

State censorship

In Iran

Orkut was very popular in Iran, but the website is now blocked by the government. According to official reports, this is due to national security issues, and Islamic ethical issues about dating and match-making. To get around this block, sites such as orkutproxy.com (now defunct) were made for Iranian users. Other websites such as Yahoo! Groups and Google Groups have communities dedicated to receiving updates on the newest location of Iran's Orkut proxy. At one time it was possible to bypass governmental blockage of Orkut, but the site has closed its HTTPS pages on all anonymous proxies. Now it is almost impossible for ordinary users to visit this site inside Iran.

Many other sites have been published in Iran since Orkut's blockage, using the same social-networking model – examples include MyPardis, Cloob and Bahaneh.

In the United Arab Emirates

In August 2006, the United Arab Emirates followed the footsteps of Iran in blocking the site. This block was subsequently removed in October 2006. On July 3, 2007, Gulf Newsrevisited the issue, publishing complaints from members of the public against Orkut communities like "Dubai Sex", and officially bringing the complaints to the attention of the state telecom monopoly Etisalat. By July 4, 2007, Etisalat had placed a renewed ban on the site, which remains in effect despite Google's promise to negotiate the ban with the UAE.

In Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia is another country that has blocked access to Orkut, while Bahrain's information ministry was also under pressure to follow suit.

Privacy

Earlier in Orkut it was possible for anybody to view anyone's pictures, videos as well as scraps, but people started misusing the photos and videos and placing them on the Internet with fake

details. Many of them were vulgar, especially pictures of women. Moreover, the features like scraps, videos, photo albums, and testimonials were public. Orkut developers later introduced another privacy update that allow users to restrict viewing of their albums to certain number of friends, as well as selected e-mail contacts. The user can limit visibility of her/his profile to a certain region or group of regions (known as a "network"); in this case outside of these regions no user information is available.

Security and safety

In December 2007, hundreds of thousands of users accounts were affected, using XSS vulnerability and a worm. A user's account was affected when the user simply read a particular scrap containing an embed which caused the user to automatically become a part of a community on the site, without approval. The affected user's account was then used to send this scrap to everyone present in the user's friend list thereby creating a huge influx of people into said community.

Session management and authentication

On June 22, 2007 Susam Pal and Vipul Agarwal published a security advisory on Orkut vulnerabilities related to authentication issues. The vulnerabilities are considered very dangerous in cybercafes, or in the case of man-in-the-middle attack as they can lead to session hijacking and misuse of legitimate accounts. The vulnerabilities are not known to be fixed yet and therefore pose threat to the Orkut users.

A week later, on June 29, 2007 Susam Pal published another security advisory which described how the Orkut authentication issue can be exploited to hijack Google and Gmail sessions and misuse the compromised account of a legitimate user under certain conditions.

Joseph Hick performed an experiment on the basis of the advisories published by Susam Pal, to find out how long a session remains alive even after a user logs out. His experiment confirmed that the sessions remain alive for 14 days after the user has logged out. It implies that a hijacked session can be used for 14 days by the hijacker because logging out does not kill the session.

Legal issues

India

On October 10, 2006, the Bombay High Court's Aurangabad bench served a notice on Google for allowing a hate campaign against India. This referred to a community on Orkut called 'We Hate India', which initially carried a picture of an Indian flag being burned and some anti-India content. The High Court order was issued in response to a public-interest petition filed by an Aurangabad advocate. Google had six weeks to respond. Even before the petition was filed, many Orkut users had noticed this community and were mailing or otherwise messaging their contacts on Orkut to report the community as bogus to Google, which could result in its removal.

The community has now been deleted but has spawned several 'We hate those who hate India' communities. Prior to the 60th Independence Day of India, Orkut's main page was revamped. The section which usually displayed a collage of photos of various people, showed a stylized Orkut logo. The word Orkut was written in Devanagiri script and was coloured in Indian national colours. Clicking on the logo redirects to a post by the Orkut India ProductManager, Manu Rekhi, on the Orkut internal blog. There has also been some media outcry against Orkut after a couple of youngsters were apparently lured by fake profiles on the site and later murdered.

On November 24, 2006, Bombay High Court asked the state government to file its reply in connection with a petition demanding a ban on social networking site, Orkut, for hosting an anti-Shivaji Web community.

In 2007, the Pune rural police cracked a rave party filled with narcotics. The accused have been charged under anti-narcotic laws, the (Indian) Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropics Substances Act, 1985 (NDPS). Besides the NDPS, according to some media reports, the police were deliberating on the issue of charging the accused under the (Indian) Information Technology Act, 2000 perhaps because Orkut was believed to be a mode of communication for drug abuses of this kind.

The police in India have entered into an agreement with Orkut to have a facility to catch and prosecute those misusing Orkut since complaints are rising.

Brazil

On August 22, 2006, Brazilian Federal Judge José Marcos Lunardelli ordered Google to release by September 28 Orkut user's information of a list of about twenty four Brazilian nationals, believed to be using Orkut to sell drugs and to be involved in child pornography. The judge ordered Google to pay $23,000 per day in fines until the information is turned over to the Brazilian government. According to the Brazilian government, the information would also be used to identify individuals who are spreading child pornography and hate speech. As of September 27, 2006 Google has stated that it will not release the information, on the grounds that the requested information is on Google servers in the U.S. and not Google servers in Brazil, and is therefore not subject to Brazilian laws.90-Percent Of Pedophilia Complaints In Brazil Come From Google's Orkut.

Shutdown

On June 30, 2014, Google announced that Orkut would be shutting down completely on September 30 of that year. Users can export their photo albums before the final shutdown date of September 30, 2014. Orkut profile, scraps, testimonials, & community posts can be exported until September 2016. Google engineering director Paul Golgher said in a blog post: "Over the past decade, YouTube, Blogger and Google+ have taken off, with communities springing up in every corner of the world. Because the growth of these communities has outpaced Orkut's growth, we've decided to bid Orkut farewell. Orkut was the result of a 20 percent project in

which Google workers got to spend a fifth of their time on ideas not necessarily related to their job responsibilities", and finally Internet search titan Google has finally downed the shutters of its social networking website Orkut on 30 September 2014 after 10 years of run. However, users can save their profiles, scraps, testimonials and community posts via Google Takeout service till September 2016.

Twitter

Twitter is an online social networking service that enables users to send and read short 140-character messages called "tweets".

Registered users can read and post tweets, but unregistered users can only read them. Users access Twitter through the website interface, SMS, or mobile device app. Twitter Inc. is based in San Francisco and has more than 25 offices around the world

Twitter was created in March 2006 by Jack Dorsey, Evan Williams, Biz Stone and Noah Glass and by July 2006 the site was launched. The service rapidly gained worldwide popularity, with more than 100 million users who in 2012 posted 340 million tweets per day. The service also handled 1.6 billion search queries per day. In 2013 Twitter was one of the ten most-visited websites, and has been described as "the SMS of the Internet." As of July 2014, Twitter has more than 500 million users, out of which more than 271 million are active users.

History

Creation and initial reaction

A blueprint sketch, c. 2006, by Jack Dorsey, envisioning an SMS-basedsocial network.

Twitter's origins lie in a "daylong brainstorming session" held by board members of the podcasting company Odeo. Dorsey, then an undergraduate student at New York University, introduced the idea of an individual using an SMS service to communicate with a small group. The originalproject code name for the service was twttr, an idea that Williams later ascribed to Noah Glass, inspired by Flickr and the five-character length of American SMS short codes. The developers initially considered "10958" as a short code, but later changed it to "40404" for "ease of use and memorability." Work on the project started on March 21, 2006, when Dorsey published the first Twitter message at 9:50 PM Pacific Standard Time(PST): "just setting up my twttr". Dorsey has explained the origin of the "Twitter" title:

...we came across the word 'twitter', and it was just perfect. The definition was 'a short burst of inconsequential information,' and 'chirps from birds'. And that's exactly what the product was.

The first Twitter prototype, developed by Dorsey and contractor Florian Weber, was used as an internal service for Odeo employees and the full version was introduced publicly on July 15, 2006.

In October 2006, Biz Stone, Evan Williams, Dorsey, and other members of Odeo, formed Obvious Corporation and acquired Odeo, together with its assets—including Odeo.com and Twitter.com—from the investors and shareholders. Williams fired Glass, who was silent about his part in Twitter's startup until 2011. Twitter spun off into its own company in April 2007. Williams provided insight into the ambiguity that defined this early period in a 2013 interview:

With Twitter, it wasn't clear what it was. They called it a social network, they called it microblogging, but it was hard to define, because it didn't replace anything. There was this path of discovery with something like that, where over time you figure out what it is. Twitter actually changed from what we thought it was in the beginning, which we described as status updates and a social utility. It is that, in part, but the insight we eventually came to was Twitter was really more of an information network than it is a social network.

The tipping point for Twitter's popularity was the 2007 South by Southwest Interactive (SXSWi) conference. During the event, Twitter usage increased from 20,000 tweets per day to 60,000. "The Twitter people cleverly placed two 60-inch plasma screens in the conference hallways, exclusively streaming Twitter messages," remarked Newsweek's Steven Levy. "Hundreds of conference-goers kept tabs on each other via constant twitters. Panelists and speakers mentioned the service, and the bloggers in attendance touted it."

Reaction at the conference was highly positive. Blogger Scott Beale said that Twitter "absolutely ruled" SXSWi. Social software researcher Danah Boyd said Twitter "owned" the conference. Twitter staff received the festival's Web Award prize with the remark "we'd like to thank you in 140 characters or less. And we just did!"

The first unassisted off-Earth Twitter message was posted from the International Space Station by NASA astronaut T. J. Creamer on January 22, 2010. By late November 2010, an average of a dozen updates per day were posted on the astronauts' communal account, @NASA_Astronauts. NASA has also hosted over 25 "tweetups", events that provide guests with VIP access to NASA facilities and speakers with the goal of leveraging participants' social networks to further the outreach goals of NASA.

In August 2010, the company appointed Adam Bain from News Corp.'s Fox Audience Network as president of revenue.

Growth

The company experienced rapid growth. It had 400,000 tweets posted per quarter in 2007. This grew to 100 million tweets posted per quarter in 2008. In February 2010, Twitter users were sending 50 million tweets per day. By March 2010, the company recorded over 70,000 registered applications. As of June 2010, about 65 million tweets were posted each day, equaling about 750 tweets sent each second, according to Twitter. As of March 2011, that was about 140 million

tweets posted daily. As noted onCompete.com, Twitter moved up to the third-highest-ranking social networking site in January 2009 from its previous rank of twenty-second.

Jack Dorsey, a co-founder and the chairman of Twitter, in 2009

Twitter's usage spikes during prominent events. For example, a record was set during the 2010 FIFA World Cup when fans wrote 2,940 tweets per second in the thirty-second period after Japan scored against Cameroon on June 14. The record was broken again when 3,085 tweets per second were posted after the Los Angeles Lakers' victory in the 2010 NBA Finals on June 17, and then again at the close of Japan's victory over Denmark in the World Cup when users published 3,283 tweets per second. The record was set again during the 2011 FIFA Women's World Cup Final between Japan and the United States, when 7,196 tweets per second were published. When American singer Michael Jackson died on June 25, 2009, Twitter servers crashed after users were updating their status to include the words "Michael Jackson" at a rate of 100,000 tweets per hour. The current record as of August 3, 2013 was set in Japan, with 143,199 tweets per second (beating the previous record of 33,388, also set by Japan after a television screening of the movie "Castle In The Sky").

Twitter acquired application developer Atebits on April 11, 2010. Atebits had developed the Apple Design Award-winning Twitter client Tweetie for the Mac and iPhone. The application, now called "Twitter" and distributed free of charge, is the official Twitter client for the iPhone, iPad and Mac.

From September through October 2010, the company began rolling out "New Twitter", an entirely revamped edition of twitter.com. Changes included the ability to see pictures and videos without leaving Twitter itself by clicking on individual tweets which contain links to images and clips from a variety of supported websites including YouTube and Flickr, and a complete overhaul of the interface, which shifted links such as '@mentions' and 'Retweets' above the Twitter stream, while 'Messages' and 'Log Out' became accessible via a black bar at the very top of twitter.com. As of November 1, 2010, the company confirmed that the "New Twitter experience" had been rolled out to all users.

On April 5, 2011, Twitter tested a new homepage and phased out the "Old Twitter." However, a glitch came about after the page was launched, so the previous "retro" homepage was still in use until the issues were resolved; the new homepage was reintroduced on April 20.

On December 8, 2011, Twitter overhauled its website once more to feature the "Fly" design, which the service says is easier for new users to follow and promotes advertising. In addition to the Home tab, the Connect and Discover tabs were introduced along with a redesigned profile and timeline of Tweets. The site's layout has been compared to that of Facebook.

On February 21, 2012, it was announced that Twitter and Yandex agreed to a partnership. Yandex, a Russian search engine, finds value within the partnership due to Twitter's real time

news feeds. Twitter's director of business development explained that it is important to have Twitter content where Twitter users go.

On March 21, 2012, Twitter celebrated its sixth birthday while also announcing that it has 140 million users and sees 340 million tweets per day. The number of users is up 40% from their September 2011 number, which was said to have been at 100 million at the time.

In April 2012, Twitter announced that it was opening an office in Detroit, with the aim of working with automotive brands and advertising agencies. Twitter also expanded its office in Dublin.

On June 5, 2012, a modified logo was unveiled through the company blog, removing the text to showcase the slightly redesigned bird as the sole symbol of Twitter.

On October 5, 2012, Twitter acquired a video clip company called Vine that launched in January 2013. Twitter released Vine as a standalone app that allows users to create and share six-second looping video clips on January 24, 2013. Vine videos shared on Twitter are visible directly in users' Twitter feeds. Due to an influx of inappropriate content, it is now rated 17+ in Apple's app store.

On December 18, 2012, Twitter announced it had surpassed 200 million monthly active users. Twitter hit 100 million monthly active users in September 2011.

On April 18, 2013, Twitter launched a music app called Twitter Music for the iPhone.

On August 28, 2013, Twitter acquired Trendrr, followed by the acquisition of MoPub on September 9, 2013.

As of September 2013, the company's data showed that 200 million users send over 400 million tweets daily, with nearly 60% of tweets sent from mobile devices.

On June 4, 2014, Twitter announced that it will acquire Namo Media, a technology firm specializing in "native advertising" for mobile devices.

On June 19, 2014, Twitter announced that it has reached an undisclosed deal to buy SnappyTV, a service that helps edit and share video from television broadcasts. The company was helping broadcasters and rights holders to share video content both organically across social and via Twitter's Amplify program.

In July, 2014, Twitter announced that it intends to buy a young company called CardSpring for an undisclosed sum. CardSpring enables retailers to offer online shoppers coupons that they can automatically sync to their credit cards in order to receive discounts when they shop in physical stores.

On July 31, 2014, Twitter announced that it has acquired a small password-security startup called Mitro.

Initial public offering (IPO)

Twitter's San Francisco, California headquarters, as seen from a corner on Market Street

On September 12, 2013, Twitter announced that it had filed papers with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission ahead of a plannedstock market listing. It revealed its prospectus in an 800-page filing. Twitter planned to raise US$1 billion as the basis for its stock market debut. The IPO filing states that "200,000,000+ monthly active users" access Twitter and "500,000,000+ tweets per day" are posted.

In an October 15, 2013 amendment to their SEC S-1 filing, Twitter declared that they would list on the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE), quashing speculation that their stock would trade on the NASDAQ exchange. This decision was widely viewed to be a reaction to the botched initial public offering of Facebook. On November 6, 2013, 70 million shares were priced at US$26 and issued by lead underwriter Goldman Sachs.

On November 7, 2013, the first day of trading on the NYSE, Twitter shares opened at $26.00 and closed at US$44.90, giving the company a valuation of around US$31 billion. This was $18.90 above the initial offering price and Twitter ended with a market capitalization of $24.46 billion. The paperwork from November 7 shows that among the founders, Williams received a sum of US$2.56 billion and Dorsey received US$1.05 billion, while Costolo's payment was US$345 million.

As of 13 December 2013, Twitter had "a market capitalization of $32.76 billion".

On February 5, 2014, Twitter published its first results as a public company, showing a net loss of $511 million in the fourth quarter of 2013.

Leadership

As chief executive officer, Dorsey saw the startup through two rounds of capital funding by the venture capitalists who backed the company.

On October 16, 2008, Williams took over the role of CEO, and Dorsey became chairman of the board.

On October 4, 2010, Williams announced that he was stepping down as CEO. Dick Costolo, formerly Twitter's chief operating officer, became CEO. According to a Twitter blog, dated October 4, 2010, Williams was to stay with the company and "be completely focused on product strategy."

According to The New York Times, "Mr. Dorsey and Mr. Costolo forged a close relationship" when Williams was away. According to PC Magazine, Williams was "no longer involved in the day-to-day goings on at the company". He was focused on developing a new startup, and became a member of Twitter's board of directors, and promised to "help in any way I can". In 2011, Stone was still with Twitter but was working with AOL as an "advisor on volunteer efforts and philanthropy". In January 2014 Stone announced the release of Jelly, a 'social Q&A network for mobile'.

Dorsey rejoined Twitter in March 2011, as executive chairman focusing on product development. At that time he split his schedule with Square (where he is CEO), whose offices are within walking distance of Twitter's in San Francisco.

In September 2011, board members and investors Fred Wilson and Bijan Sabet resigned from Twitter's Board of Directors.

In October 2012, Twitter announced it had hired former Google executive Matt Derella to become their new director of business agency development.

Twitter has become internationally identifiable by its signature bird logo. The original logo was in use from its launch in March 2006 until September 2010. A slightly modified version succeeded the first style when the website underwent its first redesign.

On February 27, 2012, a tweet from an employee that works on the company's platform and API discussed the evolution of the "Larry the Bird" logo with Twitter's creative director and it was revealed that it was named after Larry Bird of the NBA's Boston Celtics fame. This detail had previously been confirmed when the Boston Celtics' director of interactive media asked Twitter co-founder Biz Stone about it in August 2011.

June 5, 2012–present.

On June 5, 2012, Twitter unveiled its third logo redesign, replacing Larry the Bird with an updated icon simply named as the "Twitter Bird." As of this logo revision, the word "Twitter" and the lowercase letter "t" are no longer used, with the bird becoming the sole symbol for the company's branding. According to Douglas Bowman, designer of Twitter, the new logo resembles a Mountain Bluebird.[92] Twitter explains on their website not to modify the logo (e.g. rotate the bird, change the logo's color, etc.).

Features

Tweets

The Twitter account page for Wikipedia, demonstrating the account-customized timeline view which shows tweets in reverse chronological order

Tweets are publicly visible by default, but senders can restrict message delivery to just their followers. Users can tweet via the Twitter website, compatible external applications (such as for smartphones), or by Short Message Service (SMS) available in certain countries. Retweeting is when a tweet is forwarded via Twitter by users. Both tweets and retweets can be tracked to see which ones are most popular. While the service is free, accessing it through SMS may incur phone service provider fees.

Users may subscribe to other users' tweets – this is known as "following" and subscribers are known as "followers" or "tweeps", a portmanteau of Twitter and peeps. Users can check the people who are unsubscribing them on Twitter ("unfollowing") via various services. In addition, users can block those who have followed them.

Twitter allows users to update their profile via their mobile phone either by text messaging or by apps released for certain smartphones and tablets.

Twitter has been compared to a web-based Internet Relay Chat (IRC) client. In a 2009 Time essay, technology author Steven Johnsondescribed the basic mechanics of Twitter as "remarkably simple":

As a social network, Twitter revolves around the principle of followers. When you choose to follow another Twitter user, that user's tweets appear in reverse chronological order on your main Twitter page. If you follow 20 people, you'll see a mix of tweets scrolling down the page: breakfast-cereal updates, interesting new links, music recommendations, even musings on the future of education.

According to research published in April 2014, around 44 percent of user accounts have never tweeted.

Content

Content of tweets according to Pear Analytics

News (3.6%)

Spam (3.8%)

Self-promotion (5.9%)

Pointless babble (40.1%)

Conversational (37.6%)

Pass-along value (8.7%)

San Antonio-based market-research firm Pear Analytics analyzed 2,000 tweets (originating from the United States and in English) over a two-week period in August 2009 from 11:00 am to 5:00 pm (CST) and separated them into six categories:

Pointless babble – 40%

Conversational – 38%

Pass-along value – 9%

Self-promotion – 6%

Spam – 4%

News – 4%

Despite Jack Dorsey's own open contention that a message on Twitter is "a short burst of inconsequential information", social networking researcher Danah Boyd responded to the Pear Analytics survey by arguing that what the Pear researchers labelled "pointless babble" is better characterized as "social grooming" and/or "peripheral awareness" (which she justifies as persons "wanting to know what the people around them are thinking and doing and feeling, even when co-presence isn't viable").Similarly, a survey of Twitter users found that a more specific social role of passing along messages that include a hyperlink is an expectation of reciprocal linking by followers.

Format

Users can group posts together by topic or type by use of hashtags – words or phrases prefixed with a "#" sign. Similarly, the "@" sign followed by a username is used for mentioning or replying to other users. To repost a message from another Twitter user and share it with one's own followers, a user can click the retweet button within the Tweet.

In late 2009, the "Twitter Lists" feature was added, making it possible for users to follow (as well as mention and reply to) ad hoc lists of authors instead of individual authors.[96][108]

Through SMS, users can communicate with Twitter through five gateway numbers: short codes for the United States, Canada, India, New Zealand, and an Isle of Man-based number for international use. There is also a short code in the United Kingdom which is only accessible to those on the Vodafone, O2 and Orange networks. In India, since Twitter only supports tweets from Bharti Airtel, an alternative platform called smsTweet was set up by a user to work on all networks. A similar platform called GladlyCast exists for mobile phone users in Singapore, Malaysia, and the Philippines.

The tweets were set to a largely constrictive 140-character limit for compatibility with SMS messaging, introducing the shorthand notation and slang commonly used in SMS messages. The

140-character limit has also increased the usage of URL shortening services such as bit.ly, goo.gl, and tr.im, and content-hosting services, such as Twitpic, memozu.com and NotePub to accommodate multimedia content and text longer than 140 characters. Since June 2011, Twitter has used its own t.co domain for automatic shortening of all URLs posted on its website.

Trending topics

Countries and cities with local trending topics in Twitter.

A word, phrase or topic that is tagged at a greater rate than other tags is said to be a "trending topic". Trending topics become popular either through a concerted effort by users, or because of an event that prompts people to talk about a specific topic. These topics help Twitter and their users to understand what is happening in the world.

Trending topics are sometimes the result of concerted efforts and manipulations by preteen and teenaged fans of certain celebrities or cultural phenomena, particularly musicians like Lady Gaga (known as Little Monsters), Justin Bieber (Beliebers), and One Direction (Directioners), and fans of the Twilight (Twihards),Rihanna fans (Rih Navy), and Harry Potter (Potterheads) novels. Twitter has altered the trend algorithm in the past to prevent manipulation of this type to limited success.

Twitter's March 30, 2010 blog post announced that the hottest Twitter trending topics would scroll across the Twitter homepage.

There have been controversies surrounding Twitter trending topics: Twitter has censored hashtags that other users found offensive. Twitter censored the #Thatsafrican and the #thingsdarkiessay hashtags after users complained that they found the hashtags offensive. There are allegations that Twitter removed #NaMOinHyd from the trending list and added an Indian National Congress-sponsored hashtag.

Adding and following content

There are numerous tools for adding content, monitoring content and conversations including Telly (video sharing, old name is Twitvid), TweetDeck, Salesforce.com, HootSuite, and Twitterfeed. As of 2009, fewer than half of tweets were posted using the web user interface with most users using third-party applications (based on analysis of 500 million tweets by Sysomos).

Verified accounts

A verified Twitter account formally validates the identity of the person or company that owns the account—the aim of the "verified" status is to prevent impersonation through the placement of a small blue checkmark by the top-right corner of a user's page, or next to the username in the platform's Search function. Twitter is responsible for assigning the blue checkmark, and it is

frequently applied to the accounts of notable people in politics, music, movies, business, fashion, government, sports, media, and journalism.

The owners of verified accounts can also access additional features that are not available to standard Twitter-account holders. These features include the following:

1. The ability to choose how their notifications and mentions are presented. Since verified accounts typically receive a lot of followers, account holders can filter these notices based on whether or not they are from verified accounts.

2. The ability to view information about their followers and their involvement on Twitter.

3. The ability to receive direct messages from all followers or only selected followers.

4. In a breach of Twitter's rules, some users placed the verified checkmark in their background—Twitter confirmed that such conduct is invalid. Following a design update of the Twitter platform, it is more difficult for users to impersonate a verified account because of the layout.

Mobile

The mobile version of Twitter,mobile.twitter.com

Twitter has mobile apps for iPhone, iPad, Android, Windows Phone, BlackBerry, Firefox OS, and Nokia S40. There is also version of the website for mobile devices, SMS and MMS service. Twitter limits the use of third party applications utilizing the service by implementing a 100,000 user limit.

Authentication

As of August 31, 2010, third-party Twitter applications are required to use OAuth, an authentication method that does not require users to enter their password into the authenticating application. Previously, the OAuth authentication method was optional, it is now compulsory and the user-name/password authentication method has been made redundant and is no longer functional. Twitter stated that the move to OAuth will mean "increased security and a better experience".

Related headlines feature

This feature adds websites to the bottom of a tweet's permalink page. If a website embedded a tweet onto one of their stories, the tweet will show the websites that mentioned the tweet. This feature was added onto Twitter so if the viewer doesn't understand what the tweet means, they can click on the sites to read more about what the person is talking about.

Usage

Rankings

Twitter is ranked as one of the ten-most-visited websites worldwide by Alexa's web traffic analysis. Daily user estimates vary as the company does not publish statistics on active accounts. A February 2009 Compete.com blog entry ranked Twitter as the third most used social network based on their count of 6 million unique monthly visitors and 55 million monthly visits. In March 2009, a Nielsen.com blog ranked Twitter as the fastest-growing website in the Member Communities category for February 2009. Twitter had annual growth of 1,382 percent, increasing from 475,000 unique visitors in February 2008 to 7 million in February 2009. In 2009, Twitter had a monthly user retention rate of forty percent.

In 2009, Twitter was mainly used by older adults who might not have used other social sites before Twitter, said Jeremiah Owyang, an industry analyst studying social media. "Adults are just catching up to what teens have been doing for years," he said. According to comScore only eleven percent of Twitter's users are aged twelve to seventeen. comScore attributed this to Twitter's "early adopter period" when the social network first gained popularity in business settings and news outlets attracting primarily older users. However, comScore also stated in 2009 that Twitter had begun to "filter more into the mainstream", and "along with it came a culture of celebrity as Shaq, Britney Spears and Ashton Kutcher joined the ranks of the Twitterati."

According to a study by Sysomos in June 2009, women make up a slightly larger Twitter demographic than men — fifty-three percent over forty-seven percent. It also stated that five percent of users accounted for seventy-five percent of all activity, and that New York City has more Twitter users than other cities.

According to Quancast, twenty-seven million people in the US used Twitter as of September 3, 2009. Sixty-three percent of Twitter users are under thirty-five years old; sixty percent of Twitter users are Caucasian, but a higher than average (compared to other Internet properties) are African American/black (sixteen percent) and Hispanic (eleven percent); fifty-eight percent of Twitter users have a total household income of at least US$60,000. The prevalence of African American Twitter usage and in many popular hashtags has been the subject of research studies.

On September 7, 2011, Twitter announced that it has 100 million active users logging in at least once a month and 50 million active users every day.

In an article published on January 6, 2012, Twitter was confirmed to be the biggest social media network in Japan, with Facebook following closely in second. comScore confirmed this, stating that Japan is the only country in the world where Twitter leads Facebook.

On March 31, 2014, Twitter announced there were 255 million monthly active users (MAUs) and 198 million mobile MAUs. In 2013, there were over 100 million users actively using Twitter daily and about 500 million Tweets every day, with about 29% of users checking Twitter multiple times a day.

In 2012, the country with the most active users on Twitter was the United States.

Finances

Funding

Twitter's San Franciscoheadquarters located at 1355 Market St.

Twitter raised over US$57 million from venture capitalist growth funding, although exact numbers are not publicly disclosed. Twitter's first A round of funding was for an undisclosed amount that is rumored to have been between US$1 million and US$5 million. Its second B round of funding in 2008 was for US$22 million and its third C round of funding in 2009 was for US$35 million from Institutional Venture Partners and Benchmark Capital along with an undisclosed amount from other investors including Union Square Ventures, Spark Capital, and Insight Venture Partners. Twitter is backed by Union Square Ventures, Digital Garage, Spark Capital, and Bezos Expeditions.

In May 2008, The Industry Standard remarked that Twitter's long-term viability is limited by a lack of revenue. Twitter board member Todd Chaffee forecast that the company could profit from e-commerce, noting that users may want to buy items directly from Twitter since it already provides product recommendations and promotions.

By March 2009 communications consultant Bill Douglass predicted in an interview that Twitter would be worth $1 billion within six months, which came to pass when the company closed a financing round valuing it at $1 billion in September of that year.

The company raised US$200 million in new venture capital in December 2010, at a valuation of approximately US$3.7 billion. In March 2011, 35,000 Twitter shares sold for US$34.50 each on Sharespost, an implied valuation of US$7.8 billion. In August, 2010 Twitter announced a "significant" investment lead by Digital Sky Technologies that, at US$800 million, was reported to be the largest venture round in history.

In December 2011, the Saudi prince Alwaleed bin Talal invested $300 million in Twitter. The company was valued at $8.4 billion at the time.

Revenue sources

In July 2009, some of Twitter's revenue and user growth documents were published on TechCrunch after being illegally obtained by Hacker Croll. The documents projected 2009 revenues of US$400,000 in the third quarter and US$4 million in the fourth quarter along with 25 million users by the end of the year. The projections for the end of 2013 were US$1.54 billion in revenue, US$111 million in net earnings, and 1 billion users. No information about how Twitter planned to achieve those numbers was published. In response, Twitter co-founder Biz Stone published a blog post suggesting the possibility of legal action against the hacker.

On April 13, 2010, Twitter announced plans to offer paid advertising for companies that would be able to purchase "promoted tweets" to appear in selective search results on the Twitter website, similar to Google Adwords' advertising model. As of April 13, Twitter announced it had already signed up a number of companies wishing to advertise, including Sony Pictures, Red Bull, Best Buy, and Starbucks.

The company generated US$45 million in annual revenue in 2010, after beginning sales midway through that year; the company operated at a loss through most of 2010.

Users' photos can generate royalty-free revenue for Twitter, and an agreement with World Entertainment News Network (WENN) was announced in May 2011. In June 2011, Twitter announced that it would offer small businesses a self-service advertising system.[170] Twitter generated US$139.5 million in advertising sales during 2011.

The self-service advertising platform was launched in March 2012 to American Express card members and merchants in the U.S. on an invite-only basis. Twitter later reported that numerous small businesses and people who used the self-service tool provided feedback that indicated they were impressed by the feature. To continue their advertising campaign, Twitter announced on March 20, 2012 that promoted tweets would be introduced to mobile devices. In April 2013, Twitter announced that its Twitter Ads self-service platform, consisting of promoted tweets and promoted accounts, was available to all U.S. users without an invite.

Twitter's financial revenue statistics for the first quarter of 2014 was reported as US$250 million.

Technology

Implementation

Twitter places great reliance on open-source software. The Twitter Web interface uses the Ruby on Rails framework, deployed on a performance enhanced Ruby Enterprise Edition implementation of Ruby.

In the early days of Twitter, tweets were stored in MySQL databases that were temporally sharded, that is the databases were split by time of posting. MySQL was causing problems with both reading and writing to Twitter and the company decided that the system needed re-engineering.

As of April 6, 2011, Twitter engineers confirmed they had switched away from their Ruby on Rails search stack, to a Java server they call Blender.

From Spring 2007 to 2008 the messages were handled by a Ruby persistent queue server called Starling, but since 2009 implementation has been gradually replaced with software written in Scala. The switch from Ruby to Scala and the JVM has given Twitter a performance boost from 200—300 requests per second per host to around 10,000–20,000 requests per second per

host. This boost was greater than the 10x improvement that Twitter's engineers envisioned when starting the switch. The continued development of Twitter has also involved a switch from monolithic development of a single app to an architecture where different services are built independently and joined through remote procedure calls.

The service's application programming interface (API) allows other web services and applications to integrate with Twitter.

Individual tweets are registered under unique IDs using software called snowflake and geolocation data is added using 'Rockdove'. The URL shortner t.co then checks for a spam link and shortens the URL. The tweets are stored in a MySQL database using Gizzard and acknowledged to users as having been sent. They are then sent to search engines via theFirehose API. The process itself is managed by FlockDB and takes an average of 350 ms.

On August 16, 2013, Twitter's Vice President of Platform Engineering Raffi Krikorian shared in a blog post that the company's infrastructure handled almost 143,000 tweets per second during that week, setting a new record. Krikorian explained that Twitter achieved this record by blending its homegrown and open source technologies.

Interface

On April 30, 2009, Twitter adjusted its web interface, adding a search bar and a sidebar of "trending topics" — the most common phrases appearing in messages. Biz Stone explains that all messages are instantly indexed and that "with this newly launched feature, Twitter has become something unexpectedly important – a discovery engine for finding out what is happening right now."

In March 2012, Twitter became available in Arabic, Farsi, Hebrew and Urdu, the first right-to-left language versions of the site. About 13,000 volunteers helped with translating the menu options. In August 2012, beta support for Basque, Czech and Greek was added, making the site available in 33 different languages.

Outages

The Twitter fail whale error message.

When Twitter experiences an outage, users once saw the "fail whale" error message image created by Yiying Lu, illustrating eight orange birds using a net to hoist a whale from the ocean captioned "Too many tweets! Please wait a moment and try again.". In a November 2013 WIRED interview Chris Fry, VP of Engineering at that time, noted that the company had taken the "fail whale" out of production as the platform was now more stable.

Twitter had approximately ninety-eight percent uptime in 2007 (or about six full days of downtime). The downtime was particularly noticeable during events popular with the technology industry such as the 2008 Macworld Conference & Expo keynote address.

May 2008 – Twitter's new engineering team made architectural changes to deal with the scale of growth. Stability issues resulted in down time or temporary feature removal.

August 2008 – Twitter withdrew free SMS services from users in the United Kingdom[190] and for approximately five months instant messaging support via a XMPP bot was listed as being "temporarily unavailable".

October 10, 2008 – Twitter's status blog announced that instant messaging (IM) service was no longer a temporary outage and needed to be revamped. It was announced that Twitter aims to return its IM service pending necessary major work.

June 12, 2009 – In what was called a potential "Twitpocalypse", the unique numerical identifier associated with each tweet exceeded the limit of 32-bit signed integers(2,147,483,647 total messages). While Twitter itself was not affected, some third-party clients could no longer access recent tweets. Patches were quickly released, though some iPhone applications had to wait for approval from the App Store.

June 25, 2009 – Twitter ran slowly for some time after over 50,000 tweets on Michael Jackson's death were recorded in an hour.

August 6, 2009 – Twitter and Facebook suffered from a denial-of-service attack, causing the Twitter website to go offline for several hours. It was later confirmed that the attacks were directed at one pro-Georgian user around the anniversary of the 2008 South Ossetia War, rather than the sites themselves.

September 22, 2009 – The identifier exceeded the limit for 32-bit unsigned integers (4,294,967,296 total messages) again breaking some third-party clients.

December 17, 2009 – A hacking attack replaced the website's welcoming screen with an image of a green flag and the caption "This site has been hacked by Iranian Cyber Army" for nearly an hour. No connection between the hackers and Iran has been established.

June–July 2010 – Twitter had a very high service rejection rate (10–20%) during the 2010 FIFA World Cup period, also, the response latency increased substantially.

November 2010 – A number of accounts encountered a fault that resulted in them seeing the "fail whale" when they tried to login to their accounts. The accounts themselves were not locked out as account holders could still see their "mentions" page, and post from there, but the timeline and a number of other features were unavailable during this outage.

June 21, 2012 – The site was down for around one hour and forty minutes, with the cause being described by Twitter as a "cascading bug".

July 26, 2012 – Twitter users in the UK could not post messages for part of the day in advance of the 2012 Summer Olympics.

March 2, 2014 - During the 86th Academy Awards, Ellen DeGeneres posted a selfie of herself and other celebrities as seen on the telecast, which shut down Twitter for more than 20 minutes.

Privacy and security

Twitter messages are public but users can also send private messages. Twitter collects personally identifiable information about its users and shares it with third parties. The service reserves the right to sell this information as an asset if the company changes hands. While Twitter displays no advertising, advertisers can target users based on their history of tweets and may quote tweets in ads directed specifically to the user.

A security vulnerability was reported on April 7, 2007, by Nitesh Dhanjani and Rujith. Since Twitter used the phone number of the sender of an SMS message as authentication, malicious users could update someone else's status page by using SMS spoofing. The vulnerability could be used if the spoofer knew the phone number registered to their victim's account. Within a few weeks of this discovery Twitter introduced an optional personal identification number (PIN) that its users could use to authenticate their SMS-originating messages.

On January 5, 2009, 33 high-profile Twitter accounts were compromised after a Twitter administrator's password was guessed by a dictionary attack. Falsified tweets — including sexually explicit and drug-related messages — were sent from these accounts.

Twitter launched the beta version of their "Verified Accounts" service on June 11, 2009, allowing famous or notable people to announce their Twitter account name. The home pages of these accounts display a badge indicating their status.

In May 2010, a bug was discovered by İnci Sözlük, involving users that allowed Twitter users to force others to follow them without the other users' consent or knowledge. For example, comedian Conan O'Brien's account, which had been set to follow only one person, was changed to receive nearly 200 malicious subscriptions.

In response to Twitter's security breaches, the US Federal Trade Commission brought charges against the service which were settled on June 24, 2010. This was the first time the FTC had taken action against a social network for security lapses. The settlement requires Twitter to take a number of steps to secure users' private information, including maintenance of a "comprehensive information security program" to be independently audited biannually.

On December 14, 2010, the United States Department of Justice issued a subpoena directing Twitter to provide information for accounts registered to or associated with WikiLeaks. Twitter decided to notify its users and said in a statement, "...it's our policy to notify users about law enforcement and governmental requests for their information, unless we are prevented by law from doing so".

A "MouseOver" exploit occurred on September 21, 2010, when an XSS Worm became active on Twitter. When an account user held the mouse cursor over blacked-out parts of a tweet, the worm within the script would automatically open links and re-post itself on the reader's account. The exploit was then re-used to post pop-up ads and links to pornographic sites. The origin is unclear but Pearce H. Delphin (known on Twitter as @zzap) and a Scandinavian developer, Magnus Holm, both claim to have modified the exploit of a user, possibly Masato Kinugawa, who was using it to create coloured Tweets. Kinugawa, a Japanese developer, reported the XSS vulnerability to Twitter on August 14. Later, when he found it was exploitable again, he created the account 'RainbowTwtr' and used it to post coloured messages. Delphin says he exposed the security flaw by tweeting a JavaScript function for "onMouseOver", and Holm later created and posted the XSS Worm that automatically re-tweeted itself. Security firm Sophos reported that the virus was spread by people doing it for "fun and games", but noted it could be exploited by cybercriminals. Twitter issued a statement on their status blog at 13:50 UTC that "The exploit is fully patched". Twitter representative Carolyn Penner said no charges would be pressed.

In May 2011, a claimant known as "CTB" (subsequently identified as Ryan Giggs) in the case of CTB v Twitter Inc., Persons Unknown took legal action at the High Court of Justice in London against Twitter, requesting that Twitter release details of account holders. This followed gossip posted on Twitter about Giggs' private life, causing conflict relating toprivacy injunctions. Tony Wang, the head of Twitter in Europe, said that people who do "bad things" on the site would need to defend themselves under the laws of their own jurisdiction in the event of controversy, and that the site would hand over information about users to the authorities when it was legally required to do so. He also suggested that Twitter would accede to a UK court order to divulge names of users responsible for "illegal activity" on the site.

On May 29, 2011, it was reported that South Tyneside council in England had successfully taken legal action against Twitter in a court in California, which forced Twitter to reveal the details of five user accounts. The council was trying to discover the identity of a blogger called "Mr Monkey" who allegedly posted libellous statements about three local councillors.

On January 23, 2012, it was reported that Twitter would be acquiring Dasient, a startup that offers malware protection for businesses. Twitter hopes that Dasient will help remove hateful advertisers on the website.

On January 26, 2012, Twitter began offering a feature which would allow tweets to be removed selectively by country. Twitter cited France and Germany as examples, where pro-Nazi content is illegal. Previously, deleted tweets were removed in all countries. The first use of the policy was to block the account of German neo-Nazi group Besseres Hannover on October 18, 2012. The policy was used again the following day to remove anti-Semitic French tweets with the hashtag #unbonjuif ("a good Jew").

On February 20, 2012, a third-party public-key encryption app (written in Python and partially funded by a grant from the Shuttleworth Foundation for private messaging in Twitter, CrypTweet, was released.

On May 17, 2012, Twitter announced it would implement the "Do Not Track" privacy option, a cookie-blocking feature found in Mozilla's Firefox browser. The "Do Not Track" feature works only on sites that have agreed to the service.

In August 2012 it was reported that there is a market in fake Twitter followers that are used to increase politicians' and celebrities' apparent popularity. The black market for the fake followers, known as "bots", has been linked to "nearly every politically linked account from the White House to Congress to the 2016 campaign trail." In June 2014, POLITICOanalyzed Twitter handles with the highest rates of fake followers: US President Barack Obama with 46.8 percent, Democratic National Committee Chairwoman Debbie Wasserman Schultz with 35.1 percent, and Senator John McCain with 23.6 percent. The culprits working to generate the fake followers, or "bots", include campaign workers or friends of political candidates. One site offers 1,000 fake followers for $20. The people creating the "bots" are often from Eastern Europe and Asia. In 2013, two Italian researchers calculated 10 percent of total accounts on Twitter are "bots" however, other estimates have placed the figure even higher.

In April 2013 Twitter warned news organizations around the world to secure their Twitter accounts after a number of high profile hacks of official accounts including those of the Associated Press and The Guardian. In May 2013, Twitter announced a two-factor login verification as an added measure against hacking.

In August 2013, Twitter announced plans to introduce a "report abuse" button for all versions of the site. A petition for making the process of complaining about harassment easier had collected over 100,000 signatures. The move followed the posting of abusive tweets, including rape and death threats to historian Mary Beard, British feminist campaigner Caroline Criado-Perez and the British MP Stella Creasy. Three men were arrested under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 in connection with the incidents.

In August 2014, Twitter said that in certain cases it would delete pictures of people who had died after requests from family members and "authorized individuals". The move followed controversy over the sharing of images on Twitter showing the killing of American journalist James Foley.

Open source

Twitter has a history of both using and releasing open source software while overcoming technical challenges of their service. A page in their developer documentation thanks dozens of open source projects which they have used, from revision control software like Git to programming languages such as Ruby and Scala. Software released as open source by the company includes the Gizzard Scala framework for creating distributed datastores, the distributed graph database FlockDB, the Finagle library for building asynchronous RPC servers and clients, the TwUI user interface framework for iOS, and the Bower client-side package manager. The popular Twitter Bootstrap web design library was also started at Twitter and is the most popular repository on GitHub.

Innovators patent agreement

On April 17, 2012, Twitter announced it would implement an "Innovators Patent Agreement" which would obligate Twitter to only use its patents for defensive purposes. The agreement went into effect in 2012.

URL shortener

t.co is a URL shortening service created by Twitter. It is only available for links posted to Twitter and not available for general use. All links posted to Twitter use a t.co wrapper. Twitter hopes that the service will be able to protect users from malicious sites, and will use it to track clicks on links within tweets.

Having previously used the services of third parties TinyURL and bit.ly, Twitter began experimenting with its own URL shortening service for private messages in March 2010 using the twt.tl domain, before it purchased the t.co domain. The service was tested on the main site using the accounts @TwitterAPI, @rsarver and @raffi. On September 2, 2010, an email from Twitter to users said they would be expanding the roll-out of the service to users. On June 7, 2011, Twitter announced that it was rolling out the feature.

Integrated photo-sharing service

On June 1, 2011, Twitter announced its own integrated photo-sharing service that enables users to upload a photo and attach it to a Tweet right from Twitter.com. Users now also have the ability to add pictures to Twitter's search by adding hashtags to the tweet. Twitter also plans to provide photo galleries designed to gather and syndicate all photos that a user has uploaded on Twitter and third-party services such as TwitPic.

Twitterbots

A Twitterbot is a computer program that automatically posts on Twitter, they are programmed to tweet, retweet, and follow other accounts. According to a recent report, there were 20 million,

less than 5%, of accounts on Twitter that were fraudulent in 2013. These fake accounts are often used to build large follower populations quickly for advertisers, while others respond to tweets that include a certain word or phrase. These 'bots' embody the automation of modern life as they connect directly to Twitter's mainline computing the information they intake and posting on a whim. Twitter's wide-open application programming interface and cloud servers make it possible for twitterbots' existence within the social networking site.

Society

Dorsey (left) said after a Twitter Town Hall with Barack Obama held in July 2011, that Twitter received over 110,000 #AskObama tweets.

Issues and controversies

Twitter has been used for a variety of purposes in many industries and scenarios. For example, it has been used to organize protests, sometimes referred to as "Twitter Revolutions", which include the 2011 Egyptian revolution, 2010–2011 Tunisian protests, 2009–2010 Iranian election protests, and 2009 Moldova civil unrest. The governments of Iran and Egypt blocked the service in retaliation. The Hillon February 28, 2011 described Twitter and other social media as a "strategic weapon ... which have the apparent ability to re-align the social order in real time, with little or no advanced warning." During the Arab Spring in early 2011, the number of hashtags mentioning the uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt increased. A study by the Dubai School of Government found that only 0.26% of the Egyptian population, 0.1% of the Tunisian population and 0.04% of the Syrian population are active on Twitter.

The service is also used as a form of civil disobedience: in 2010, users expressed outrage over the Twitter Joke Trial by making obvious jokes about terrorism; and in the British privacy injunction debate in the same country a year later, where several celebrities who had taken out anonymised injunctions, most notably the Manchester United player Ryan Giggs, were identified by thousands of users in protest to traditional journalism being censored.

Another, more real time and practical use for Twitter exists as an effective de facto emergency communication system for breaking news. It was neither intended nor designed for high performance communication, but the idea that it could be used for emergency communication certainly was not lost on the originators, who knew that the service could have wide-reaching effects early on when the San Francisco, California company used it to communicate during earthquakes. The Boston Police tweeted news of the arrest of the2013 Boston Marathon Bombing suspect. Another practical use that is being studied is Twitter's ability to track epidemics and how they spread. In addition, Twitter has acted as a sensor for automatic response to natural disasters such as bush fires.

Twitter has been used by Somalia's al-Shabaab rebels, who had their accounts suspended after they used the site to claim responsibility for an attack on the Westgate Shopping Mall in Nairobi in September 2013.

Impact

Instant and frequent communication

In May 2008, The Wall Street Journal wrote that social networking services such as Twitter "elicit mixed feelings in the technology-savvy people who have been their early adopters. Fans say they are a good way to keep in touch with busy friends. But some users are starting to feel 'too' connected, as they grapple with check-in messages at odd hours, higher cellphone bills and the need to tell acquaintances to stop announcing what they're having for dinner."

Education

Twitter has been adopted as a communication and learning tool in educational settings mostly in colleges and universities. It has been used as a backchannel to promote student interactions, especially in large-lecture courses. Research has found that using Twitter in college courses helps students communicate with each other and faculty, promotes informal learning, allows shy students a forum for increased participation, increases student engagement, and improves overall course grades.

Public figures

Tech writer Bruce Sterling commented in 2007 that using Twitter for "literate communication" is "about as likely as firing up a CB radio and hearing some guy recite the Iliad". In September 2008, the journalist Clive Thompson mused in a The New York Times Magazine editorial that the service had expanded narcissism into "a new, supermetabolic extreme—the ultimate expression of a generation of celebrity-addled youths who believe their every utterance is fascinating and ought to be shared with the world." One of the earliest documented forms of celebrity related twitter-like disclosures dates from 1980, when real estate mogul William Desmond Ryan made round the clock press releases about his relationship with comedienne Phyllis Diller, even revealing what she was making him for dinner on a nightly basis. Conversely, Vancouver Sun columnist Steve Dotto opined that part of Twitter's appeal is the challenge of trying to publish such messages in tight constraints, and Jonathan Zittrain, professor of Internet law at Harvard Law School, said that "the qualities that make Twitter seem inane and half-baked are what makes it so powerful".

The novelist Rick Moody wrote a short story for Electric Literature called "Some Contemporary Characters," composed entirely of tweets.

In 2009, Nielsen Online reported that Twitter has a user retention rate of forty percent. Many people stop using the service after a month, therefore the site may potentially reach only about

ten percent of all Internet users. In 2009, Twitter won the "Breakout of the Year" Webby Award. During a February 2009 discussion on National Public Radio'sWeekend Edition, the journalist Daniel Schorr stated that Twitter accounts of events lacked rigorous fact-checking and other editorial improvements. In response, Andy Carvin gave Schorr two examples of breaking news stories that played out on Twitter and said users wanted first-hand accounts and sometimes debunked stories. On November 29, 2009 Twitter was named the Word of the Year by the Global Language Monitor, declaring it "a new form of social interaction".Time magazine acknowledged its growing level of influence in its 2010 Time 100; to determine the influence of people, it used a formula based on famous social networking sites, Twitter and Facebook. The list ranges from Barack Obama and Oprah Winfrey to Lady Gaga and Ashton Kutcher. The U.S. government, seeing social media's role in the 2010 Arab Spring revolts, covertly developed a Cuban alternative to Twitter called ZunZuneo as part of a long-term strategy to "stir unrest". The service was active from 2010 to 2012.

During the 2012 Summer Olympics opening ceremony, in which he appeared at the London Olympic Stadium in person, Sir Tim Berners-Lee, the founder of the World Wide Web, tweeted "This is for everyone", which was instantly spelled out in LCD lights attached to the chairs of the 80,000 people in the audience.

World leaders

World leaders and their diplomats have taken note of Twitter's rapid expansion and have been increasingly utilizing Twitter diplomacy, the use of Twitter to engage with foreign publics and their own citizens. US Ambassador to Russia, Michael A. McFaul has been attributed as a pioneer of international Twitter diplomacy. He used Twitter after becoming ambassador in 2011, posting in English and Russian. On October 24, 2014, Queen Elizabeth II sent her first tweet to mark the opening of the London Science Museum's Information Age exhibition. A 2013 study by website Twiplomacy found that 153 of the 193 countries represented at the United Nations had established government Twitter accounts. The same study also found that those accounts amounted to 505 Twitter handles used by world leaders and their foreign ministers, with their tweets able to reach a combined audience of over 106 million followers.

According to an analysis of accounts, the heads of state of 125 countries and 139 other leading politicians have Twitter accounts that have between them sent more than 350,000 tweets and have almost 52 million followers. However, only 30 of these do their own tweeting, more than 80 do not subscribe to other politicians and many do not follow any accounts.

Religion

More than twenty Roman Catholic cardinals manage active Twitter accounts, nine of whom were cardinal electors for the 2013 Papal conclave.

Twitterbot effect

Twitterbots are capable of influencing public opinion about culture, products and political agendas by automatically generating mass amounts of tweets through imitating human communication. The New York Times states, "They have sleep-wake cycles so their fakery is more convincing, making them less prone to repetitive patterns that flag them as mere programs". The tweets generated vary anywhere from a simple automated response to content creation and information sharing, all of which depends on the intention of the person purchasing or creating the bot. The social implications these Twitterbots potentially have on human perception are sizeable according to a study published by the ScienceDirect Journal. Looking at the Computers as Social Actors (CASA) paradigm, the journal notes, "people exhibit remarkable social reactions to computers and other media, treating them as if they were real people or real places". The study concluded that Twitterbots were viewed as credible and competent in communication and interaction making them suitable for transmitting information in the social media sphere. While the technological advances have enabled the ability of successful Human-Computer Interaction, the implications are questioned due to the appearance of both benign and malicious bots in the Twitter realm. Benign Twitterbots may generate creative content and relevant product updates whereas malicious bots can make unpopular people seem popular, push irrelevant products on users and spread misinformation, spam and/or slander.

In addition to content generating bots, users can purchase followers, favorites, retweets and comments on various websites that cater to expanding a users image through accumulation of followers. With more followers, users' profiles gain more attention, thus increasing their popularity. Generating Web traffic is a valuable commodity for both individuals and businesses because it indicates notability. With Twitterbots, users are able to create the illusion of "buzz" on their site by obtaining followers from services such as Swenzy and underground suppliers who operate bot farms or click farms. The companies that facilitate this service create fake Twitter accounts that follow a number of people, some of these Twitter accounts may even post fake tweets to make it seem like they are real. This practice of obtaining mass amounts of twitterbots as followers is not permitted on Twitter. The emphasis on followers and likes as a measure of social capital has urged people to extend their circle to weak and latent ties to promote the idea of popularity for celebrities, politicians, musicians, public figures, and companies alike. According to the New York Times, bots amass significant influence and have been noted to sway elections, influence the stock market, public appeal, and attack governments.

Trending topics

After claims in the media that the hashtags #wikileaks and #occupywallstreet were being censored because they did not show up on the site's list of trending topics, Twitter responded by stating that it does not censor hashtags unless they contain obscenities.

GCHQ

According to documents leaked by Edward Snowden and published in July 2014, the United Kingdom's GCHQ has a tool named BIRDSONG for "automated posting of Twitter updates", and a tool named BIRDSTRIKE for "Twitter monitoring and profile collection".

Television

Twitter is also increasingly used for making TV more interactive and social. This effect is sometimes referred to as the "virtual watercooler" or social television — the practice has been called "chatterboxing". Twitter has been successfully used to encourage people to watch live TV events, such as the Oscars, the Super Bowl and the MTV Video Music Awards; however this strategy has proven less effective with regularly scheduled TV shows. Such direct cross-promotions have been banned from French television due to regulations against secret advertising.

In December 2012, Twitter and Nielsen entered a multi-year agreement to produce social TV ratings, which are expected to be commercially available for the fall 2013 season as theNielsen Twitter TV Rating. Advertising Age said Twitter had become the new TV Guide. Then in February 2013, Twitter acquired Bluefin Labs for an estimated US$50 million to $100 million, which was the company's largest acquisition as of 2013. Founded in 2008 at the MIT Media Lab, Bluefin is a data miner whose analysis tells which brands (e.g., TV shows and companies) are chatted about the most in social media. MIT Technology Review said that Bluefin gives Twitter part of the US$72 billion television advertising market.

In April 2013, the Associated Press' Twitter account was briefly hacked into, sending out a message that US president Barack Obama had been injured in an attack on the White House. Stocks lost $134 billion in value almost instantly, before recovering in value when it was discovered the report was false.

In May 2013, it launched Twitter Amplify – an advertising product for media and consumer brands. With Amplify, Twitter runs video highlights from major live broadcasts, with advertisers' names and messages playing before the clip. Then in October 2013, Comcast announced a partnership with NBCUniversal and Twitter, to allow users to tune into live streaming from their set-top box, smartphone or tablet by tapping a 'See It' button embedded in selected tweets.

In an attempt to compete with Twitter's leadership in TV, Facebook introduced a number of features in 2013 to drive conversation around TV including hashtags, verified profiles and embeddable posts. It also opened up new data visualization APIs for TV news and other media outlets, enabling them to search for a word and see a firehose of public posts that mention it as well as show how many people mentioned a word in both public and private posts during a set time frame, with a demographic breakdown of the age, gender, and location of these people. In January 2014, Facebook announced a partnership with UK-based social TV analytics company SecondSync which saw the social network make its social TV available outside the company for

the first time. Facebook struck the partnership to help marketers understand how people are using the social network to talk about topics such as TV. However, Twitter responded by acquiring SecondSync and Parisian social TV firm Mesagraph three months later. These acquisitions, as well as a partnership with research company Kantar (which it had been working with to develop a suite of analytics tools for the British TV industry since August 2013) strengthened Twitter's dominance of the "second screen" - TV viewers using tablets and smartphones to share their TV experience on social media. With the additional analytic tools, Twitter was able to improve the firm's offering to advertisers, allowing them to, for instance, only promote a tweet onto the timelines of users who were watching a certain programme.

By February 2014, all four major U.S. TV networks had signed up to the Amplify program, bringing a variety of premium TV content onto the social platform in the form of in-tweet real-time video clips. In March 2014, ITV became the first major broadcaster in the UK to sign up to Twitter Amplify and Twitter introduced one-tap video playback across its mobile apps to further enhance the consumer experience.

In June 2014, Twitter acquired its Twitter Amplify partner in the U.S., SnappyTV, as part of its ongoing efforts to be the leader in social television. The company was helping broadcasters and rights holders to share video content both organically across social and via Twitter's Amplify program. In Europe Twitter's Amplify partner is London-based Grabyo, which has also struck numerous deals with broadcasters and rights holders to share video content across Facebook and Twitter.

Statistics

Most popular accounts

As of May 21, 2014, the Twitter accounts with the most followers were:

1. Katy Perry- 53,134,789 followers

2. Justin Bieber- 51,734,936

3. Barack Obama- 43,106,983

4. YouTube- 42,106,400

5. Lady Gaga- 41,421,791

6. Taylor Swift- 40,874,716

7. Britney Spears- 37,253,827

8. Rihanna- 35,405,688

9. Instagram- 32,707,550

10. Justin Timberlake- 32,280,340

Oldest accounts

The oldest Twitter accounts are 14 accounts which became active on 21 March 2006, all belonging to Twitter employees at the time and including @jack (Jack Dorsey), @biz (Biz Stone) and @noah (Noah Glass).

Record tweets

On February 3, 2013, Twitter announced that a record 24.1 million tweets were sent the night of Super Bowl XLVII.

A selfie orchestrated by 86th Academy Awards host Ellen DeGeneres during the March 2, 2014 broadcast is the most retweeted image ever. DeGeneres said she wanted to homage Meryl Streep's record 17 Oscar nominations by setting a new record with her, and invited other Oscar celebrities to join them. The resulting photo of twelve celebrities broke the previous retweet record within forty minutes, and was retweeted over 1.8 million times in the first hour. By the end of the ceremony it had been retweeted over 2 million times, less than 24 hours later, it had been retweeted over 2.8 million times. As of 18 March 2014, it has been retweeted over 3.4 million times. The group selfie effort was parodied by Lego, and Matt Groening with The Simpsons. It beat the previous record, 778,801, which was held by Barack Obama, following his victory in the 2012 presidential election.

The most tweeted moment in the history of Twitter was during the airing of Castle in the Sky on August 2, 2013, when fans tweeted the word "balse" at the exact time that it played in the movie. There was a global peak of 143,199 tweets in one second, beating the previous record of 33,388.

Future

Twitter emphasized its news and information-network strategy in November 2009 by changing the question asked to users for status updates from "What are you doing?" to "What's happening?" On November 22, 2010, Biz Stone, a cofounder of the company, expressed for the first time the idea of a Twitter news network, a concept of a wire-like news service he has been working on for years.

LinkedIn

LinkedIn is a business-oriented social networking service. Founded in December 2002 and launched on May 5, 2003, it is mainly used for professional networking. In 2006, LinkedIn increased to 20 million members. As of June 2013, LinkedIn reports more than 259 million acquired users in more than 200 countries and territories.

The site is available in 20 languages, including English, French, German, Italian, Portuguese, Spanish, Dutch, Swedish, Danish,

Romanian, Russian, Turkish, Japanese, Czech, Polish, Korean, Indonesian, Malay, and Tagalog. As of 2 July 2013, Quantcast reports LinkedIn has 65.6 million monthly unique U.S. visitors and 178.4 million globally, a number that as of 29 October 2013 has increased to 184 million. In June 2011, LinkedIn had 33.9 million unique visitors, up 63 percent from a year earlier and surpassing MySpace. LinkedIn filed for an initial public offering in January 2011 and traded its first shares on May 19, 2011, under the NYSE symbol "LNKD".

History

LinkedIn's CEO is Jeff Weiner, previously a Yahoo! Inc. executive. The company was founded by Reid Hoffman and founding team members from PayPal and Socialnet.com (Allen Blue, Eric Ly, Jean-Luc Vaillant, Lee Hower, Konstantin Guericke, Stephen Beitzel, David Eves, Ian McNish, Yan Pujante, and Chris Saccheri).

Founder Reid Hoffman, previously CEO of LinkedIn, is now Chairman of the Board. LinkedIn is headquartered in Mountain View, California, with offices in Omaha, Chicago, New York, London, and Dublin. It is funded by Sequoia Capital, Greylock, Bain Capital Ventures, Bessemer Venture Partners and the European Founders Fund. LinkedIn reached profitability in March 2006. Through January 2011, the company had received a total of $103 million of investment.

In late 2003, Sequoia Capital led the Series A investment in the company. In June 2008, Sequoia Capital, Greylock Partners, and otherventure capital firms purchased a 5% stake in the company for $53 million, giving the company a post-money valuation of approximately $1 billion.

In 2010, LinkedIn opened an International Headquarters in Dublin, Ireland, received a $20 million investment from Tiger Global Management LLC at a valuation of approximately $2 billion, and announced its first acquisition, Mspoke, and improved its 1% premium subscription ratio. In October of that year Silicon Valley Insider ranked the company No. 10 on its Top 100 List of most valuable start ups. By December, the company was valued at $1.575 billion in private markets.

Membership

As of 2013, LinkedIn has more than 300 million members in over 200 countries and territories. It is significantly ahead of its competitors Viadeo (50 million) and XING(10 million). The membership grows by approximately two new members every second. With 20 million users, India has the fastest-growing network of users as of 2013.

Features

User profile network

The basic functionality of LinkedIn allows users (workers and employers) to create profiles and "connections" to each other in an online social network which may represent real-world

professional relationships. Users can invite anyone (whether a site user or not) to become a connection. However, if the invitee selects "I don't know" or "Spam", this counts against the inviter. If the inviter gets too many of such responses, the account may be restricted or closed.

This list of connections can then be used in a number of ways:

Obtaining introductions to the connections of connections (termed second-degree connections) and connections of second-degree connections (termed third-degree connections)

Users can find jobs, people and business opportunities recommended by someone in one's contact network.

Employers can list jobs and search for potential candidates.

Job seekers can review the profile of hiring managers and discover which of their existing contacts can introduce them.

Users can post their own photos and view photos of others to aid in identification.

Users can follow different companies and can receive notifications about the new joining and offers available.

Users can save (i.e. bookmark) jobs that they would like to apply for.

Users can "like" and "congratulate" each other's updates and new employments.

Users can see who has visited their profile page.

The "gated-access approach" (where contact with any professional requires either an existing relationship, or the intervention of a contact of theirs) is intended to build trust among the service's users. LinkedIn participates in the EU's International Safe Harbor Privacy Principles.

Security and Technology

On May 31, 2013 LinkedIn added two-factor authentication, an important security enhancement for preventing hackers from gaining access to accounts.

To handle the large volume of emails sent to its users every day with notifications for messages, profile views, important happenings in their network, and other things, LinkedIn uses the Momentum email platform from Message Systems.

Applications

In October 2008, LinkedIn enabled an "applications platform" that allows other online services to be embedded within a member's profile page. Among the initial applications were an Amazon Reading List that allows LinkedIn members to display books they are reading, a

connection to Tripit, and a Six Apart, WordPress and TypePad application that allows members to display their latest blog postings within their LinkedIn profile.

In November 2010, LinkedIn allowed businesses to list products and services on company profile pages; it also permitted LinkedIn members to "recommend" products and services and write reviews.

Mobile

A mobile version of the site was launched in February 2008, which gives access to a reduced feature set over a mobile phone. The mobile service is available in six languages: Chinese, English, French, German, Japanese and Spanish.

In January 2011, LinkedIn acquired CardMunch, a mobile app maker that scans business cards and converts into contacts. In June 2013, CardMunch was noted as an available LinkedIn app. In August 2011, LinkedIn revamped its mobile applications on the iPhone, Android and HTML5. Mobile page views of the application have increased roughly 400% year over year according to CEO Jeff Weiner.

In October 2013, LinkedIn announced a service for iPhone users called "Intro", which inserts a thumbnail of a person's LinkedIn profile in correspondence with that person when reading mail messages in the native iOS Mail program. This is accomplished by re-routing all emails from and to the iPhone through LinkedIn servers, which security firm Bishop Fox asserts has serious privacy implications, violates many organizations' security policies, and resembles a man-in-the-middle attack.

Groups

LinkedIn also supports the formation of interest groups, and as of March 29, 2012 there are 1,248,019 such groups whose membership varies from 1 to 744,662. The majority of the largest groups are employment related, although a very wide range of topics are covered mainly around professional and career issues, and there are currently 128,000 groups for both academic and corporate alumni.

Groups support a limited form of discussion area, moderated by the group owners and managers. Since groups offer the ability to reach a wide audience without so easily falling foul of anti-spam solutions, there is a constant stream of spam postings, and there now exist a range of firms who offer a spamming service for this very purpose. LinkedIn has devised a few mechanisms to reduce the volume of spam, but recently took the decision to remove the ability of group owners to inspect the email address of new members in order to determine if they were spammers. Groups also keep their members informed through emails with updates to the group, including most talked about discussions within your professional circles.

Groups may be private, accessible to members only or may be open to Internet users in general to read, though they must join in order to post messages.

In December 2011, LinkedIn announced that they are rolling out polls to groups.

In November 2013, LinkedIn announced the addition of Showcase Pages to the platform. In 2014, LinkedIn announced they were going to be removing Product and Services Pages paving the way for a greater focus on Showcase Pages.

Job listings

LinkedIn allows users to research companies with which they may be interested in working. When typing the name of a given company in the search box, statistics about the company are provided. These may include the ratio of female to male employees, the percentage of the most common titles/positions held within the company, the location of the company's headquarters and offices, or a list of present and former employees.

In July 2011, LinkedIn launched a new feature allowing companies to include an "Apply with LinkedIn" button on job listing pages. The new plugin will allow potential employees to apply for positions using their LinkedIn profiles as resumes. All applications will also be saved under a "Saved Jobs" tab.

Skills

From September 2012, LinkedIn allows users to endorse each other's skills. This feature also allows users to efficiently provide commentary on other users profiles – network building is reinforced. However there is no way of flagging anything other than positive content.

LinkedIn solicits endorsements based on algorithms that generate skills members might have. Members cannot opt out of such solicitations; with the result that it sometimes appears that a member is soliciting an endorsement for a non-existent skill.

Influencers

The LinkedIn Influencers program launched in October 2012 and brings together 300+ of the world's top thought leaders to share their professional insights with LinkedIn's 259 million members. Influencer is an invite-only program that features notable leaders from a vast range of industries including Richard Branson, Arianna Huffington, Greg McKeown,Rahm Emanuel, Jamie Dimon, Martha Stewart, Deepak Chopra, Jack Welch, and Bill Gates.

Advertising and for-pay research

In mid-2008, LinkedIn launched LinkedIn DirectAds as a form of sponsored advertising.

In October 2008, LinkedIn revealed plans to open its social network of 30 million professionals globally as a potential sample for business-to-business research. It is testing a potential social network revenue model - research that to some appears more promising than advertising.

On July 23, 2013 LinkedIn announced their Sponsored Updates ad service. Individuals and companies can now pay a fee to have LinkedIn sponsor their content and spread it to their user base. This is a common way for social media sites such as LinkedIn to generate revenue.

Blog

A blog (a truncation of the expression weblog) is a discussion or informational site published on the World Wide Web and consisting of discrete entries ("posts") typically displayed in reverse chronological order (the most recent post appears first). Until 2009 blogs were usually the work of a single individual occasionally of a small group, and often covered a single subject. More recently "multi-author blogs" (MABs) have developed, with posts written by large numbers of authors and professionally edited. MABs from newspapers, other media outlets, universities, think tanks, advocacy groups and similar institutions account for an increasing quantity of blog traffic. The rise of Twitter and other "microblogging" systems helps integrate MABs and single-author blogs into societal newstreams. Blog can also be used as a verb, meaning to maintain or add content to a blog.

The emergence and growth of blogs in the late 1990s coincided with the advent of web publishing tools that facilitated the posting of content by non-technical users. (Previously, a knowledge of such technologies as HTML and FTP had been required to publish content on the Web.)

A majority are interactive; allowing visitors to leave comments and even message each other via GUI widgets on the blogs, and it is this interactivity that distinguishes them from other static websites. In that sense, blogging can be seen as a form of social networking service. Indeed, bloggers do not only produce content to post on their blogs, but also build social relations with their readers and other bloggers. There are high-readership blogs which do not allow comments, such as Daring Fireball.

Many blogs provide commentary on a particular subject; others function as more personal online diaries; others function more as online brand advertising of a particular individual or company. A typical blog combines text, images, and links to other blogs, Web pages, and other media related to its topic. The ability of readers to leave comments in an interactive format is an important contribution to the popularity of many blogs. Most blogs are primarily textual, although some focus on art (art blogs), photographs (photoblogs), videos (video blogs or "vlogs"), music (MP3 blogs), and audio (podcasts). Microblogging is another type of blogging, featuring very short posts. In education, blogs can be used as instructional resources. These blogs are referred to as edublogs.

On 16 February 2011, there were over 156 million public blogs in existence. On 20 February 2014, there were around 172 million Tumblr and 75.8 million WordPress blogs in existence worldwide. According to critics and other bloggers, Blogger is the most popular blogging service used today, however Blogger does not offer public statistics. Technorati has 1.3 million blogs as of February 22, 2014

History

The term "weblog" was coined by Jorn Barger on 17 December 1997. The short form, "blog", was coined by Peter Merholz, who jokingly broke the word weblog into the phrase we blog in the sidebar of his blog Peterme.com in April or May 1999. Shortly thereafter, Evan Williams at Pyra Labs used "blog" as both a noun and verb ("to blog", meaning "to edit one's weblog or to post to one's weblog") and devised the term "blogger" in connection with Pyra Labs' Blogger product, leading to the popularization of the terms.

Origins

Before blogging became popular, digital communities took many forms, including Usenet, commercial online services such as GEnie, BiX and the early CompuServe, e-mail lists and Bulletin Board Systems (BBS). In the 1990s, Internet forum software, created running conversations with "threads". Threads are topical connections between messages on a virtual "corkboard".

From 14 June 1993 Mosaic Communications Corporation maintained their "What's New" list of new websites, updated daily and archived monthly. The page was accessible by a special "What's New" button in the Mosaic web browser.

The modern blog evolved from the online diary, where people would keep a running account of their personal lives. Most such writers called themselves diarists, journalists, or journalers. Justin Hall, who began personal blogging in 1994 while a student at Swarthmore College, is generally recognized as one of the earlier bloggers, as is Jerry Pournelle. Dave Winer's Scripting News is also credited with being one of the older and longer running weblogs. The Australian Netguide magazine maintained the Daily Net News on their web site from 1996. Daily Net News ran links and daily reviews of new websites, mostly in Australia. Another early blog was Wearable Wireless Webcam, an online shared diary of a person's personal life combining text, video, and pictures transmitted live from a wearable computer and EyeTap device to a web site in 1994. This practice of semi-automated blogging with live video together with text was referred to as sousveillance, and such journals were also used as evidence in legal matters.

Early blogs were simply manually updated components of common Web sites. However, the evolution of tools to facilitate the production and maintenance of Web articles posted in reverse chronological order made the publishing process feasible to a much larger, less technical, population. Ultimately, this resulted in the distinct class of online publishing that produces blogs

we recognize today. For instance, the use of some sort of browser-based software is now a typical aspect of "blogging". Blogs can be hosted by dedicated blog hosting services, or they can be run using blog software, or on regular web hosting services.

Some early bloggers, such as The Misanthropic Bitch, who began in 1997, actually referred to their online presence as a zine, before the term blog entered common usage.

Rise in popularity

After a slow start, blogging rapidly gained in popularity. Blog usage spread during 1999 and the years following, being further popularized by the near-simultaneous arrival of the first hosted blog tools:

Bruce Ableson launched Open Diary in October 1998, which soon grew to thousands of online diaries. Open Diary innovated the reader comment, becoming the first blog community where readers could add comments to other writers' blog entries.

Brad Fitzpatrick started LiveJournal in March 1999.

Andrew Smales created Pitas.com in July 1999 as an easier alternative to maintaining a "news page" on a Web site, followed by Diaryland in September 1999, focusing more on a personal diary community.

Evan Williams and Meg Hourihan (Pyra Labs) launched Blogger.com in August 1999 (purchased by Google in February 2003)

Political impact

On 6 December 2002, Josh Marshall's talkingpointsmemo.com blog called attention to U.S. Senator Lott'scomments regarding Senator Thurmond. Senator Lott was eventually to resign his Senate leadership position over the matter.

An early milestone in the rise in importance of blogs came in 2002, when many bloggers focused on comments by U.S. Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott. Senator Lott, at a party honoring U.S. Senator Strom Thurmond, praised Senator Thurmond by suggesting that the United States would have been better off had Thurmond been elected president. Lott's critics saw these comments as a tacit approval ofracial segregation, a policy advocated by Thurmond's 1948 presidential campaign. This view was reinforced by documents and recorded interviews dug up by bloggers. (See Josh Marshall's Talking Points Memo.) Though Lott's comments were made at a public event attended by the media, no major media organizations reported on his controversial comments until after blogs broke the story. Blogging helped to create a political crisis that forced Lott to step down as majority leader.

Similarly, blogs were among the driving forces behind the "Rathergate" scandal. To wit: (television journalist) Dan Rather presented documents (on the CBS show 60 Minutes) that

conflicted with accepted accounts of President Bush's military service record. Bloggers declared the documents to be forgeries and presented evidence and arguments in support of that view. Consequently, CBS apologized for what it said were inadequate reporting techniques (see Little Green Footballs). Many bloggers view this scandal as the advent of blogs' acceptance by the mass media, both as a news source and opinion and as means of applying political pressure.

The impact of these stories gave greater credibility to blogs as a medium of news dissemination. Though often seen as partisan gossips, bloggers sometimes lead the way in bringing key information to public light, with mainstream media having to follow their lead. More often, however, news blogs tend to react to material already published by the mainstream media. Meanwhile, an increasing number of experts blogged, making blogs a source of in-depth analysis.

In Russia, some political bloggers have started to challenge the dominance of official, overwhelmingly pro-government media. Bloggers such as Rustem Adagamov and Alexei Navalny have many followers and the latter's nickname for the ruling United Russia party as the "party of crooks and thieves" and been adopted by anti-regime protesters. This led to the Wall Street Journal calling Navalny "the man Vladimir Putin fears most" in March 2012.

Mainstream popularity

By 2004, the role of blogs became increasingly mainstream, as political consultants, news services, and candidates began using them as tools for outreach and opinion forming. Blogging was established by politicians and political candidates to express opinions on war and other issues and cemented blogs' role as a news source. Even politicians not actively campaigning, such as the UK's Labour Party's MPTom Watson, began to blog to bond with constituents.

In January 2005, Fortune magazine listed eight bloggers whom business people "could not ignore": Peter Rojas, Xeni Jardin, Ben Trott, Mena Trott, Jonathan Schwartz, Jason Goldman, Robert Scoble, and Jason Calacanis.

Israel was among the first national governments to set up an official blog. Under David Saranga, the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs became active in adopting Web 2.0initiatives, including an official video blog and a political blog. The Foreign Ministry also held a microblogging press conference via Twitter about its war with Hamas, with Saranga answering questions from the public in common text-messaging abbreviations during a live worldwide press conference. The questions and answers were later posted on IsraelPolitik, the country's official political blog.

The impact of blogging upon the mainstream media has also been acknowledged by governments. In 2009, the presence of the American journalism industry had declined to the point that several newspaper corporations were filing for bankruptcy, resulting in less direct competition between newspapers within the same circulation area. Discussion emerged as to whether the newspaper industry would benefit from a stimulus package by the federal

government. U.S. President Barack Obama acknowledged the emerging influence of blogging upon society by saying "if the direction of the news is all blogosphere, all opinions, with no serious fact-checking, no serious attempts to put stories in context, then what you will end up getting is people shouting at each other across the void but not a lot of mutual understanding".

Types of Blogs

There are many different types of blogs, differing not only in the type of content, but also in the way that content is delivered or written.

Personal blogs

The personal blog is an ongoing diary or commentary written by an individual.

Microblogging

Microblogging is the practice of posting small pieces of digital content—which could be text, pictures, links, short videos, or other media—on the Internet. Microblogging offers a portable communication mode that feels organic and spontaneous to many and has captured the public imagination. Friends use it to keep in touch, business associates use it to coordinate meetings or share useful resources, and celebrities and politicians (or their publicists) microblog about concert dates, lectures, book releases, or tour schedules. A wide and growing range of add-on tools enables sophisticated updates and interaction with other applications, and the resulting profusion of functionality is helping to define new possibilities for this type of communication. Examples of these include Twitter, Facebook, Tumblr, and by far the largest WeiBo.

Corporate and organizational blogs

A blog can be private, as in most cases, or it can be for business purposes. Blogs used internally to enhance the communication and culture in a corporation or externally formarketing, branding or public relations purposes are called corporate blogs. Similar blogs for clubs and societies are called club blogs, group blogs, or by similar names; typical use is to inform members and other interested parties of club and member activities.

By genre

Some blogs focus on a particular subject, such as political blogs, health blogs, travel blogs (also known as travelogs), gardening blogs, house blogs, fashion blogs, project blogs, education blogs, niche blogs, classical music blogs, quizzing blogs and legal blogs (often referred to as a blawgs) or dreamlogs. How To/Tutorial blogs are becoming increasing popular. Two common types of genre blogs are art blogs and music blogs. A blog featuring discussions especially about home and family is not uncommonly called a mom blog and one made popular is by Erica Diamond who created Womenonthefence.com which is syndicated to over two million readers

monthly. While not a legitimate type of blog, one used for the sole purpose of spamming is known as a Splog.

By media type

A blog comprising videos is called a vlog, one comprising links is called a linklog, a site containing a portfolio of sketches is called a sketchblog or one comprising photos is called a photoblog. Blogs with shorter posts and mixed media types are called tumblelogs. Blogs that are written on typewriters and then scanned are called typecast or typecast blogs; see typecasting (blogging).

A rare type of blog hosted on the Gopher Protocol is known as a Phlog.

By device

Blogs can also be defined by which type of device is used to compose it. A blog written by a mobile device like a mobile phone or PDA could be called a moblog. One early blog was Wearable Wireless Webcam, an online shared diary of a person's personal life combining text, video, and pictures transmitted live from a wearable computer and EyeTap device to a web site. This practice of semi-automated blogging with live video together with text was referred to as sousveillance. Such journals have been used as evidence in legal matters.

Reverse blog

A Reverse Blog is composed by its users rather than a single blogger. This system has the characteristics of a blog, and the writing of several authors. These can be written by several contributing authors on a topic, or opened up for anyone to write. There is typically some limit to the number of entries to keep it from operating like a Web Forum.

Blurring with the Mass-media

Many bloggers, particularly those engaged in participatory journalism, differentiate themselves from the mainstream media, while others are members of that media working through a different channel. Some institutions see blogging as a means of "getting around the filter" and pushing messages directly to the public. Some critics worry that bloggers respect neither copyright nor the role of the mass media in presenting society with credible news. Bloggers and other contributors to user-generated content are behind Time magazine naming their 2006 person of the year as "You".

Many mainstream journalists, meanwhile, write their own blogs—well over 300, according to Cyber-Journalist. net's J-blog list.[citation needed] The first known use of a blog on a news site was in August 1998, when Jonathan Dube of The Charlotte Observer published one chronicling Hurricane Bonnie.

Some bloggers have moved over to other media. The following bloggers (and others) have appeared on radio and television: Duncan Black (known widely by his pseudonym, Atrios), Glenn Reynolds (Instapundit), Markos Moulitsas Zúniga (Daily Kos), Alex Steffen (Worldchanging), Ana Marie Cox (Wonkette), Nate Silver (FiveThirtyEight.com), and Ezra Klein (Ezra Klein blog in The American Prospect, now in the Washington Post). In counterpoint, Hugh Hewitt exemplifies a mass media personality who has moved in the other direction, adding to his reach in "old media" by being an influential blogger. Similarly, it was Emergency Preparedness and Safety Tips On Air and Online blog articles that captured Surgeon General of the United States Richard Carmona's attention and earned his kudos for the associated broadcasts by talk show host Lisa Tolliver and Westchester Emergency Volunteer Reserves-Medical Reserve Corps Director Marianne Partridge.

Blogs have also had an influence on minority languages, bringing together scattered speakers and learners; this is particularly so with blogs in Gaelic languages. Minority language publishing (which may lack economic feasibility) can find its audience through inexpensive blogging.

There are many examples of bloggers who have published books based on their blogs, e.g., Salam Pax, Ellen Simonetti, Jessica Cutler, ScrappleFace. Blog-based books have been given the name blook. A prize for the best blog-based book was initiated in 2005, the Lulu Blooker Prize. However, success has been elusive offline, with many of these books not selling as well as their blogs. Only blogger Tucker Max made The New York Times Best Seller list. The book based on Julie Powell's blog "The Julie/Julia Project" was made into the film Julie & Julia, apparently the first to do so.

Social Media Policy

What is a social media policy?

A good social media policy is a living document that provides guidelines for your organization's social media use. It covers your brand's official channels, as well as how employees use social media, both personally and professionally.

A social media policy (also called a social networking policy) is a corporate code of conduct that provides guidelines for employees who post content on the Internet either as part of their job or as a private person.

Because social media is constantly changing—platform popularity shifts all the time, let alone the specifics of how they're used—a social media policy can't just sit quietly in a drawer (or a Google Doc.)

You need a straightforward, up-to-date document that is easy to understand and act on whether the person reading it is a new hire or a social media manager in the middle of a PR crisis. The goal of a social media policy is to set expectations for appropriate behavior and ensure that an

employee's posts will not expose the company to legal problems or public embarrassment. Such policies include directives for when an employee should identify himself as a representative of the company on a social networking website, as well as rules for what types of information can be shared. Almost all social media policies include restrictions on disclosing confidential or proprietary business secrets or anything that could influence stock prices.

Some social media policies are ten pages long with very specific rules -- mandating that employees can not use their enterprise account passwords for social networking sites, for example. Other policies are quite broad. The Twitter policy at Zappos simply says "Be real and use your best judgement."

Benefits of a social media policy

Maybe you've skirted some social media issues already. Or maybe your social media strategy is going swimmingly. Either way, why go to the trouble of crafting, revising and launching an official social media policy for your organization?

There are a few compelling reasons. An official policy can help you:

- Maintain your brand identity consistently across channels
- Treat legal and regulatory sensitivities with awareness
- Prevent a security breach
- Prevent a full-blown PR crisis
- Act quickly if a crisis or breach does happen
- Be upfront with your employees regarding their own social media responsibilities
- Encourage your employees to own and amplify your brand's message

What to include in a social media policy

1. Define your team's roles

Who owns which social accounts? Who covers which responsibilities on a daily, weekly or as-needed basis? It might be helpful to include names and email addresses so that employees from other teams know who to contact.

Responsibilities to assign might include:

Daily posting and engagement

Daily customer service

Strategy and planning

Advertising

Security and passwords

Monitoring and listening

Approvals (legal, financial, or otherwise)

Crisis response

Social media training for other employees

At the very least, this section should establish who is authorized to speak for your brand on social media—and who isn't.

2. Establish security protocols

There are a lot of social media security risks out there. In this section you have the opportunity to provide guidance on identifying and dealing with them.

How often do your account passwords get changed? Who maintains them, and who has access to them? Is your organizational software updated regularly? What about devices? Who should employees talk to if they want to escalate a concern?

3. Make a plan of action for a security or PR crisis

The goal of your social media policy is to prevent the need for a social media crisis management plan. However, it's best to have both. Do consider whether these should be two separate documents—especially if the social media policy will be public-facing.

Your crisis management plan should include an up-to-date emergency contact list with specific roles: not just the social media team, but your legal and PR experts, all the way up to the C-suite.

Guidelines for identifying the scope of the crisis, an internal communication plan, and an approval process for response will also help you handle it as quickly as possible.

4. Outline how to stay compliant with the law

Details will vary from country to country, or even state to state, so consult your legal counsel. But at minimum your policy might touch on the following:

Copyright isn't a no-brainer, so it's best to explain how to comply with copyright law on social media, especially when using third-party content.

Privacy is key. Do all of your employees know how to handle customer information, for instance?

Confidentiality refers to respecting your organization's internal information. Whether you have your people sign non-disclosure agreements or not, they should be aware of the ramifications of disclosing information on social media that the organization considers private.

5. Provide guidance on how employees behave on their personal social media accounts

Posting hate speech, threats of violence, harassment, or racial epithets on social media may violate the law, or the organization's code of ethics, or both. Regardless, employees should know that they will be held responsible for what they say.

How to implement a social media policy

In five simple steps:

1. Download our social media policy template

2. Seek input from stakeholders

3. Decide where your policy will live

4. Launch it (or relaunch it)

5. Flag it for review at this time next year

Social media policy examples

While your brand's social media policy probably isn't going to make headlines by enacting six-figure fines for tweets, here are some other high-stakes, best-in-class examples.

Adidas Group

This breezy, respectful and permissive one sheet (ok, two sheet) is a clear and direct code of conduct that encourages employees to engage online, but also reminds them of their responsibilities—not just as employees, but humans.

FedEx

FedEx has a lot of employees on the ground, and this visually appealing set of guidelines includes a lot of practical, real-world FAQs to keep everything as clear as possible for them.

Mayo Clinic

As one would expect from a trusted healthcare brand, this policy places special emphasis on patient-employee interactions, privacy, and confidentiality.

Reuters

A thoughtful, well-written policy that acknowledges the risks as well as the necessity of social media for journalists and media professionals. This type of policy has a high opinion of its audience's decision-making abilities, and is less prescriptive than educational, or even ethical.

US Air Force

While you'd expect the military to be on the restrictive side when it comes to policy, the US Air Force's guidelines for its service members surprisingly focus on how useful social media is for keeping in touch with family and telling individual stories for a wider audience.

General Motors

GM built out a long and short version of their policy, and even the long version is impressively clear for such a thorough document.

Hootsuite makes it easy to protect your brand across all social channels. From a single dashboard you can easily manage permissions, approve posts, edit messages, take advantage of compliance and security tools, and more.

How to Develop Policies and Procedures

An overview of the stages in policy development.

Policy development involves identifying need, gathering information, drafting, consulting and review.

Stages in policy development

The following steps summarise the key stages involved in developing policies:

1. Identify need

Policies can be developed:

In anticipation of need (e.g. child protection policies should be in place once an organisation starts to work with children or young people); and

In response to need (e.g. a policy position on a government strategy may be developed in response to a consultation paper).

The organisation needs to constantly assess its activities, responsibilities and the external environment in order to identify the need for policies and procedures. (More on what policies you need to develop).

2. Identify who will take lead responsibility

Delegate responsibility to an individual, working group, sub-committee or staff members, according to the expertise required. (More on the management committee's role in policy development).

3. Gather information

Do you have any legal responsibilities in this area? Is your understanding accurate and up to date? Have other organisations tackled the same issue? Are there existing templates or examples that you could draw on? Where will you go for guidance?

4. Draft policy

Ensure that the wording and length or complexity of the policy are appropriate to those who will be expected to implement it.

5. Consult with appropriate stakeholders

Policies are most effective if those affected are consulted are supportive and have the opportunity to consider and discuss the potential implications of the policy. Depending on whether you are developing policies to govern the internal working of the organisation or external policy positions, you may wish to consult, for example:

6. Finalise / approve policy

Who will approve the policy? Is this a strategic issue that should be approved by the Management Committee or is the Committee confident that this can be dealt with effectively by staff? Bear in mind that, ultimately, the Management Committee is responsible for all policies and procedures within the organisation.

7. Consider whether procedures are required

Procedures are more likely to be required to support internal policies. Consider whether there is a need for clear guidance regarding how the policy will be implemented and by whom. (E.g. a policy regarding receiving complaints will require a set of procedures detailing how complaints will be handled). Who will be responsible for developing these procedures? When will this be done? What will be the processes for consultation, approval and implementation?

8. Implement

How will the policy be communicated and to whom? Is training required to support the implementation among staff and volunteers? Should the organisation produce a press release (for external policy positions)?

9. Monitor, review, revise

What monitoring and reporting systems are in place to ensure that the policy is implemented and to assess usage and responses? On what basis and when will the policy be reviewed and revised (if necessary)?

Are you prepared for what social media has in store for the future?

Social media is constantly evolving and it's exciting to think about what it will look like in just a few years time. Of course, this means that the world of Social Media Monitoring has to keep up with the demands of social media users as brands continue to modify their strategies once new trends emerge. So what will the future of social media look like from a user, brand, and Social Media Monitoring perspective? Let's take a look at the many possible trends we could be seeing as soon as next year…

What will social media look like?

cyber-security

1. More privacy and security:

In the current climate of social media, it's more important than ever for brands to find and implement methods of building consumer trust. This begins with how they connect with audiences. Privacy concerns are on the rise as social media users are becoming much more aware of how their data is being used. Because of this, the future of social media will see an increase in users opting for what's known as "Dark Social". This involves any online social interaction that happens privately, for example, messaging apps, email, and other outlets for private sharing. In fact, 84% of consumers' outbound sharing from websites now occurs via private, Dark Social channels such as these, and we will expect to see this increase in the next few years.

2. More video:

It's no secret that video consumption via social media is on the rise. It's estimated that people look at videos 5 times longer than static content, such as text and images, on both Facebook and Instagram. Because of this, it's almost guaranteed that we will see even more videos all over social media in the future, including live videos, which have gained a great deal of popularity in recent years.

3. Less personal content, but more memes:

Facebook claims that they recorded a 21% drop in original, personal updates in 2016 as users are now communicating in shared articles and memes alone. Social media users, in general, are sharing less personal information on major networks and prefer to showcase external content such as an interesting video or a funny meme they came across to their friends.

4. Premium services and fewer ads:

Ads have been the plague of social media for a long time now and social media users are starting to get fed up. However, many people have been willing to sacrifice adless experiences for free, ad-saturated ones. Premium services could be on the rise as social media users tend to prefer high-quality images, videos, and audio as that is what they have become accustomed to in recent years. But only time will tell if they are willing to spend money on it.

5. Mobile-focused experiences:

The future of social media is mobile. An estimated 3 billion people will have access to mobile phones by 2020. Additionally, more and more people are using their smartphones as their main source for accessing social platforms. That's why future platforms will be designed with smartphones in mind from the start.

6. Less typing:

According to Andrew Ng, the Chief Scientist at Baidu, at least 50% of online searches will be carried out through image and voice by 2020. With the ever-increasing popularity of voice and image search as well as audio snippet messages, social media could see the act of typing become obsolete in the future.

7. More visuals:

With the popularity of social media platforms such as Instagram and Snapchat, we are already starting to see a massive increase in visual-based content. Because camera access is so much easier now than it was a few years ago, as virtually every phone has a built-in camera, photos and videos will continue to saturate social media. Jay Singh, CEO of PHL Venture Company notes the importance of the camera:

"We continue to see a shift toward live content that is composed through a camera. The camera keeps growing in importance and the ability to see through other people's lenses in real time is becoming a powerful force in social media."

7. A.R. and V.R.'s influence has only just begun:

In the next couple of years, the world of marketing will introduce more practical applications of Virtual Reality (V.R.) and Augmented Reality (A.R.). The same will apply to social media platforms. According to Hootsuite, social messaging apps Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp, Instagram, Snapchat, Bitmoji, WeChat, and QQ will use A.R. to boost advertising revenue in the near future. Technology is one of the fastest growing industries around today, and A.R. and V.R. are no exception.

How will brands adapt to the future of social media?

1. Knowing their audience:

Rather than bombarding them with ads, which continues to frustrate many social media users, brands must connect with their audiences on a more meaningful level by treating them like individuals rather than a mass source of revenue. Consumers are consequently more likely to trust that brand once that method of communication is established. And the more brands know about their audience, the easier it is for them to target their messaging to each segment.

2. Making shareable content:

Since social media users are starting to shy away from sharing personal updates publicly online and opting to share content they find online with their friends instead, brands need to provide that content for them. Whether that's a heartwarming story or a funny video, brands need to move their audience in some way so that they engage with their brand as well as encourage them to share that content with their friends.

3. Embracing visual and technology:

It's clear that the future of social media will predominantly be made up of images and videos, so brands really need to hop on that bandwagon if they are going to keep up. A.R. and V.R. are fast becoming a vital part of many marketing campaigns, so brands also need to look at ways to incorporate these technologies into their marketing campaigns.

How will Social Media Monitoring be affected?

Due to the fact that privacy and security among social media users are holding a lot more weight in the current climate, Social Media Monitoring and Social Listening will, of course, be affected as users modify their privacy settings. It's so important for brands and Social Media Monitoring companies to take users' concerns seriously and do everything they can to ensure that they feel protected and that their trust won't be violated or exploited.

Social Media Monitoring will also need to take visual mentions very seriously. When it comes to brand logos within shared images and videos, brands need a way to monitor and measure that data, as well as the textual mentions of that brand. That is why a logo detection tool is vital for Social Media Monitoring companies to provide to their customers. To find out more about logo detection technology, for Social Media Monitoring, click here.