

# 13 "Survival Guide: Online Social Networking"

In the world of business, building and exploiting an online network is no longer a matter of gaining competitive advantage but of survival, Shally Steckerl suggests.

# 20 "Digital Literacies for Learning"

Allan Martin and Dan Madigan have pulled together a very wide range of perspectives on digital literacy skills and the implications of developing them for educational institutions and society. Suzie Kitchin evaluates this expansive new volume.

# "Social Tools for Business Use: Messages from a Web 2.0 Conference"

How seriously should businesses be taking the new social tools? Alexia Miller highlights positive messages that emerged from a recent conference.



Plus ...

Jobs, Discussion, Tips, Reviews and Events



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# About FreePint

FreePint is a global network of people who find, use, manage and share work-related information. Members receive this free twice-monthly newsletter, which is packed with tips, features and resources.

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The FreePint Newsletter is available online in several formats and can be read, saved and forwarded at <a href="http://www.freepint.com/issues/">http://www.freepint.com/issues/</a>>.



#### **Editorial**



It was just over a decade ago that I was a young journalist working at the business desk of a newspaper. Looking back on it now, I can't fathom how I managed. If I needed to find sources for an article, I might leaf through notes I'd jotted on who might be useful in an upcoming piece. If I didn't find anyone, I'd ask my desk mates if they knew anyone. Then I might call a few associations to see if they could recommend anyone. Then I called directory enquiries - who knew me by voice - and asked for a phone number that matched a likely name I'd seen or heard somewhere else. I contacted them out of the blue and hoped they would be amenable to an interview.

It was an enormously labour-intensive way of increasing my personal network, and it involved notes, press cuttings, chatting with my associates and many, many phone calls. But that's the way everybody did it. Networks lived in brainspace and address books.

Much can happen in the space of 11 years. Now I spend my days alone in my office and thousands of miles away from the rest of FreePint's staff and our many contributors. If I want to find someone, I send an email or look at an online database or comb through my LinkedIn network to see who I can find. I know, or can potentially know, so many more people than I ever have in my life, and it makes reporting a different game altogether.

We look more closely at the evolution of networks in this issue of FreePint. Shally Steckerl gives us a tour of the most popular social networks in his article, and Alexia Miller reports on her findings on how to use social tools for business purposes. Suzie Kitchin reviews "Digital Literacies for Learning", which talks about how online tools have changed education. You can also check out last month's issue of VIP <a href="http://www.vivaVIP.com/">http://www.vivaVIP.com/</a> for more reporting on Web 2.0 technologies.

When you've read through this issue, help me build my network by dropping me a line at . Tell me what you think and how your networks have changed in the past few years or where you think it's likely to head in the future. As ever, we'll report on it in these pages.

Sincerely,

Monique Cuvelier Editor, FreePint e: monique.cuvelier@freepint.com w: <a href="http://www.onopoly.com/support/team/">http://www.onopoly.com/support/team/</a>>

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Hannah Stern is a consultant with <http://www.hyper knowledge.com>, which specializes in Governance, Risk Management and Compliance (GRC) solutions, as well as business process alignment. You can learn more about SOX, or ask her questions on her new blog at < http://411onthe40 4sarboxforsmallbus

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## My Favourite Tipples

by Hannah Stern

The Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002 is a complex set of accounting standards that are rigidly enforced, and which affect a variety of departments within a company. The act is also referred to as SOX, or SarbOx, and will soon be implemented in small businesses. If you're new to Sarbanes Oxley, the following are five sites that can help you learn a bit about the background of the Act, as well as some of the terms floating around:

- Sarbanes-Oxley 101 < <a href="http://www.sarbanes-oxley-101.com/">http://www.sarbanes-oxley-101.com/</a>> provides free background on the Act and highlights controversial sections such as 302, 409 and 404. A good start for anyone just learning the basics; however the information is a bit dated.
- The Sarbanes-Oxley Act Community Forum < <a href="http://www.sarbanes-oxley-forum.com/">http://www.sarbanes-oxley-forum.com/</a> allows registered users to post questions and exchange information on compliance or SOX-related rumours. Think gossip site for SarbOx enthusiasts.
- The Public Company Accounting Oversight Board < <a href="http://www.pcaobus.org/">http://www.pcaobus.org/</a>>
  was created as a part of the SOX act as a governance system to address
  auditing standards for control and compliance. The site is free.
- CFO Magazine < <a href="http://www.cfo.com/">http://www.cfo.com/</a>> is free online and has an archive of well-written and well-researched articles. If you don't have time to do all the research on SarbOx yourself, you might try reading CFO regularly to keep up.
- The bleeding edge of information on SarbOx can be found at the free Committee on Capital Markets Regulation < <a href="http://www.capmktsreg.org/">http://www.capmktsreg.org/</a>>. Click the Education & Research tab to see the latest news on SarbOx analysis, news and SEC reports. Good for the more advanced.
- \*\* Submit your top five favourite web sites. See the guidelines at <a href="http://www.freepint.com/author/">http://www.freepint.com/author/</a>>.





# Online Information Conference 2007

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#### Researcher

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Country: United Kingdom

<http://www.jinfo.com/go/j7521>

# Information and Research Officer

Work within a national law firm's London offices. Assist with the provision of an effective research, library and information.

Recruiter: Aslib, The Association for Information Management
Country: United Kingdom
<a href="http://www.jinfo.com/go/j7524">http://www.jinfo.com/go/j7524</a>

#### Research Services Manager

Overall responsibility for the running of a central Research Centre and departmental libraries. *Recruiter: Weekes Gray Recruitment* Country: United Kingdom <a href="http://www.jinfo.com/go/j7522">http://www.jinfo.com/go/j7522</a>

## Business Information Researcher - Investment Bank

Work in a well established team and provide a research service to all departments of the Bank and its overseas offices.

Recruiter: Glen Recruitment

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<a href="http://www.jinfo.com/go/j7544">http://www.jinfo.com/go/j7544</a>

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<http://www.jinfo.com/go/j7560>

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Recruiter: TFPL

Country: United Kingdom

<http://www.jinfo.com/go/j7603>

# Records Management Officer

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<http://www.jinfo.com/go/j7088>

# Archivist, Fixed Term Appointment for 18 months

Almshouse charity, est.1174. Archivist to maintain the archive and to establish a new records management system. Recruiter: St Johns Hospital

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Monique Cuvelier is editor of the FreePint Newsletter. She has edited, launched and written for many magazines, newspapers and websites in the US and UK. Learn more about her at http://www.onopol y.com/support/tea m/.

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<del>69</del>>.

<del>60</del>>.

From Regency-era novels to quirky computers, the Bar currently has an array of useful threads. Find out what's happening

<a href="http://www.freepint.com/bar/">http://www.freepint.com/bar/</a>.

Several questions come from students.

Make sure to check out the Student Bar for more advice and information.

- People seem to love old libraries almost as much as old books. So it's no surprise a discussion on libraries from the 17th and 19th centuries is creating a buzz. Interesting historical titbits are in Jane Austen and Georgette Heyer novels, one Bar member suggests, and the British Library may have information. Find out more
   http://www.freepint.com/go/b1728
- The roads certainly feel like they're choking up more and more. But by how much? A researcher is looking for numbers; how many people are commuting in to and out of geographic areas? Some very useful tips here
   <a href="http://www.freepint.com/go/b1682">http://www.freepint.com/go/b1682</a>
- Many of those drivers are commuting to businesses, and another 'Pinter is looking for information on how many businesses are in a particular postcode. Although he found companies willing to sell the information, he guessed rightly that it must be available for free. Look at some sources other Bar members shared < <a href="http://www.freepint.com/go/b1780">http://www.freepint.com/go/b1780</a> 60>.

- A university student is looking for a way to research the size and scale of the North American rental industry (everything but homes) on the cheap. Some good resources are at <<a href="http://www.freepint.com/go/b1733">http://www.freepint.com/go/b1733</a>
   48>. Have a look and share your own knowledge.
- An aged computer has been retired to home use, but it's not cooperating with playing DVDs. Pick up some tips on how to troubleshoot video card problems, but more importantly, find out handy sources elsewhere for finding free tech advice
   <a href="http://www.freepint.com/go/b1764">http://www.freepint.com/go/b1764</a>
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## "Survival Guide: Online Social Networking"

By Shally Steckerl

Shally got his start in research in 1996 when he realized that as a contingency recruiter he could beat the competition and make more money by finding people who were not easily available in mainstream sources. Since then he has built several centralized sourcing and research organizations from the ground up for large multinational organizations like Cisco, Motorola, Coke, Google and Microsoft. Shally now spends his time consulting with organizations on how to build research teams and develop their advanced sourcing skills. Visit: <http://www.jobm achine. net/shally> for a complete bio, and to learn more about what Shally has to offer recruiters check out: <http://jobmachin e.net/card> Online social networking provides you with a venue to connect with people whom you already know, grow your relationships and find new people connected to you by a common contact. Effective utilisation of your personal network is no longer a competitive advantage, it is a survival tool.

Although the hackneyed phrase 'it's who you know' has been abused by companies touting their latest and greatest flavour of social networking software, it's not far off the mark. The truth is that in today's over-informed digital business world, where bloated data moves at the speed of thought, it is not who you know that really counts, but who knows you. Professional online social networking tools are invaluable in creating personal brand equity and raising awareness about who you are.

#### Forging relationships

There is a significant business need for these tools as aids to help us expand our professional influence beyond the Dunbar number.

According to theories evolving from Social Networking Architecture research, anthropologist Robin Dunbar <a href="http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dunbar's\_number">http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dunbar's\_number</a> estimates that humans can only maintain stable relationships with around 150 people. That number refers to significant relationships such as those in a family or tribe and other purposeful groups.

However, in "The Tipping Point", Malcolm Gladwell explores the Dunbar number's effects on the dynamics of social groups, and those theories have been popularised and given rise to many business-related applications.

Systems for managing and sharing relationships have been around for a long time. From the original contact management systems like ACT! and GoldMine, to the very first networking sites like sixdegrees.com, they all walk a fine line between sharing too much information and not enough to be of use. However, they have all tried to multiply our ability to maintain business relationships with hundreds, or even thousands, of people.

There is one important weakness in this new generation of collaborative social networking. If users do not trust the system to protect their relationships, then they will not use the application effectively and gain very little incremental advantage from their connections. On the other hand, too much protection limits the effective range or depth of penetration achievable within a user's extended 'friend of a friend' network, thus also limiting the effectiveness of such a network.

Somewhere between those two extremes lies the advantage of a well-utilised and semi-trusted professional social network.

#### **Major benefits**

Online social networking software enables you to find quality people



who may not be familiar with you or with your organisation, and creates an opportunity to connect with them and sell them on your opportunities. They may be unfamiliar with your company or business, or may not have even been looking for something.

Because you already know someone who knows them, you can feel more comfortable that they are a quality prospect. Also, because of that mutual connection, you can more easily overcome cumbersome barriers and begin a relationship with a little more trust and warmth than with a total stranger. Like 'six degrees of Kevin Bacon', social networking sheds light on the contacts you never knew you had. Here are some advantages:

You can contact people in your network to:

- Rekindle old connections
- Maximise value in your weak connections
- Build business relationships with clients or hiring managers
- Find and meet prospective jobseekers
- Grow a referral network
- Heighten your corporate and personal brand
- Make new connections and grow your sphere of influence
   Some are better suited to find a date while others are more serio
- Open doors to future career

opportunities, increased pay or promotions

 Increase visibility, which improves influence and effectiveness internally with your organisation as well as externally.

Find new leads for networking into companies to:

- Educate yourself and ask questions about other organisations
- Conduct competitive intelligence on companies, industries or individuals
- Make fewer cold calls and better prepare for them
- Leverage contacts you already have.

#### **Major players**

With most services, the initial sign up is free. Users begin by filling out a form with personal data and then inviting friends. Some networks allow for uploading current contacts, but others ask users to invite contacts directly through the application's interface. The connections then invite their own contacts, and that's how the network grows.

There are hundreds of online social networking sites. Most of the applications competing for your attention offer a combination of professional and personal networking. Some are better suited to find a date while others are more seriously oriented to business. After joining and reviewing the top 20 players, three of them stand out:



#### LinkedIn.com

- Profiles look very much like a cv, excellent mix of people from different levels in the organisation, and many industries
- Endorsements set trusted people apart
- Search for: industry experts, potential employees, hiring managers, dealmakers, people from specific geographies, or people with particular keywords in their profiles
- Particular focus on business networking. Over 8.5 Million members.

#### Plaxo.com

- Keeps all of your current contacts' information updated automatically thus is extremely useful in rekindling old relationships and staying in touch.
- Not a tool to build your network yet, though it does have a very useful 'mini blog' feature to help you keep friends informed. About 15 million people use Plaxo.

#### Spoke.com

- Focused on providing sales prospects
- Deeply integrated, extracts contact data from enterprise applications (eg, Outlook, Notes, etc) to establish and leverage connections. About 30 million contacts.

There are so many social networks that they are too numerous to list

in this article. A majority of them, like friendster.com, flickr.com and orkut.com among hundreds of others tend to revolve around strictly social categories like dating, common interests, finding friends and photo sharing. Arguably, community Web logging sites like MySpace.com, Windows Live Spaces, LiveJournal.com and Blogger.com are also networking sites. Here are some other notable networks with a decidedly business or professional purpose, ranked by size:

- Hi5.com 50 million users. General social networking and business
- Passado.com 4.7 million users.
   Europe's largest business network
- Xing.com 'Crossing' has 4 million users. Was OpenBC. Business networking
- Ryze.com 250,000 users. Business networking
- Ecademy.com 100,000 users.
   Business networking.

#### **Concerns with networking sites**

#### Privacy

- Online networking is safe. The major players are mindful of your privacy.
   That said, each network has its own privacy policy - so read it, and if you don't like it don't join!
- Uploading your contacts doesn't mean they get to keep them or use them in any way. They use your



contacts only to tell you who is already registered, or to help you with your connections. Be careful, however, because if you invite someone who wasn't already a member and they join now, that person will be available to others who may want to connect directly with them

- If someone gains access to your passwords they could log in and export all your contacts. Use good judgment protecting your account
- Remember, the more you share the more you are exposed. But, you will increase your benefit from the network with more exposure
- The basic concept involves a little trust. I scratch your back, you scratch mine. For the network to be most useful to you there needs to be a little reciprocity. People who are very guarded about their privacy may not get great results from using these networks.

#### Barriers to entry

- Getting started means investing time to enter your information into the application. This can take anywhere from a few minutes to a few hours, depending on how much you want to get out of using the network. The more you share about yourself the easier it will be to make connections
- f you only upload a few contacts you get very little benefit since these systems only search for connections through people you already know

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- You need to know at least one person with a large network or else you are very limited with whom you can reach. Search for people you know who may already be in the network and ask them for a connection, particularly if they are well connected themselves
- The most challenging barrier is getting people from your 'in person' real life network to sign up. You know they have lots of connections, and they would be willing to help you, but they are not already signed up. If you get them to sign up, you can both benefit from each other's connections, but then you become their mentor and may feel obligated to help them more than you would otherwise.



#### Maintenance

- If you have a large network you could get to a point where you are getting barraged with requests. The good news is you can turn on or off e-mails about your accounts or from your network, and with some networks you can even change your settings to accept requests from specific levels. The other side of turning off the communication is that you lose out on reminders that help you to remember to groom your network
- Evaluating new 'friends' is difficult.
   You may get requests from people
   you don't know or don't remember
   and it can be awkward to write back
   telling them you don't remember
   them. Just like meeting someone in
   person, you may have to bite the
   bullet and confront them with a 'have
   we met?' or you may need to just
   ignore them
- Don't add everyone indiscriminately. Be just a little picky in adding new friends you don't know. Remember, you are a reflection of your networks. People know you not only by who you are but also by whom you choose to associate.

Integration with software and between networks

- With Plaxo you can export your data in a flat file format making it easy to transfer your contacts to a new application
- Some networks like LinkedIn have useful toolbars that integrate with Outlook and make it easier to keep your network fresh

- With most of the networks you can export your contacts. Do this regularly so that if for some reason your account is lost you can still retain your connection's contact information. You can also take it with you to import it into another network
- Note that it's impossible to synchronise across networks. You may find some of the same people in several networks, but the best strategy is to choose your favourite three or five and stick to them or else you will be spending all your time maintaining several networks.

Losing touch with the 'Real'

• E-mail is very cold and unemotional. Relying on e-mail and similar

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messaging to connect with people can wash out the emotional side of building relationships

 Remember to pick up the phone and call your contacts every once in a while. This way they are more likely to forward your requests, and ask you for requests, making your network stronger.

Free now, pay later?

 Many of these services are not currently charging fees to get started in them but they may begin to impose membership fees for even the basic accounts or activities.

Social Networking is getting involved and getting your name out every chance you get. Like meeting people in person, it can be hit or miss.

The single most powerful advantage of online networking is finding new connections you didn't know you already had. It takes time and energy to build a network, either in person or online. With the Internet we have the ability to reach more people.

Don't be afraid to connect, stay connected, share, participate, be vulnerable, open yourself to the world. Being connected in this way is an incredible leverage that will prove invaluable in your business development. Connections can have many unexpected positive results.

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> Director of Business Development, United States



## "Digital Literacies for Learning"

Edited by Allan Martin and D. Madigan Reviewed by Suzie Kitchin



Suzie Kitchin is a **Learning Support** Librarian at Durham University. She liaises with a range of arts, science and social science academic departments including delivering information skills training. Suzie is responsible for coordinating services for users with disabilities in the library and provides advice, support and training in this area for colleagues. Literacy, especially information literacy, is a key area of library work that already receives attention and discussion, so do we really need another book on literacy? Yes, if it's this book that takes a refreshing approach to this and related subjects and is suitable for both librarians and educators. With 25 authors from nine countries, this book gives broad insight into developments on the topic from around the world.

With authors from Europe to South America to New Zealand, this collection of essays from librarians, researchers, educators and information technology professionals considers what learners need to thrive in educational environments that as the idea of a virtual learning exist with and through technology.

What's clear from these diverse contributions is that the term 'literacy' defines more than just reading and writing. It also includes information literacy, which is a way of life linked with economic development and citizenship. Some authors divide literacy into distinct terms, such as 'media literacy', 'information literacy' and 'visual literacy', and debate their role within society and education.

Others take a more evolutionary approach, such as one author who describes a gradual move from the three Rs (reading, writing and 'rithmetic) to a different approach of accessing, processing and

communicating information. The latter seems to me a more natural approach, rather than inventing new terms for something that did not change overnight.



The authors address theoretical philosophies, such as the 'information society' and 'knowledge' in the context of contemporary society, with an emphasis on whether information and knowledge mean the same thing.

The format makes it easy to dip into the chapters most relevant to you.

Contributors touch on concepts such environment, mirroring the physical educational environment - eg, chat rooms being like cafes, and resource links being aligned to libraries. Digital developments are examined in relation to the new research opportunities they offer, such as preprints and collaborative wikis, and authors debate the impact this may have on education.

In turn, the authors address the impact that literacy in cultural, political and historical contexts has on socio-economic developments. They look at what it means to be digitally literate in a variety of contexts, including an academic environment, or what it means for intellectual empowerment of a society.

The book considers some practical applications of these digital literacies, including Cymru Ar-lein, an e-



literacy skills development in Wales, within cultural, linguistic and geographical contexts. They highlight knowledge gaps between 'developed' countries and 'developing' countries, with consideration of impacts on knowledge production and information demand.

The book also presents the concept of 'digital natives', ie, young people who have grown up with many of these digital developments, and how educational institutions are approaching their expectations. A particularly interesting study is the innovation of investing in online learning for the continuing education of Antiquan teachers.

I encourage you to read this book and consider the themes discussed in the context and culture of your own institution. It will benefit those of you responsible for policymaking as well as those wanting to explore practical developments in student learning.

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## "Social Tools for Business Use: Messages from a Web 2.0 Conference"

By Alexia Miller



Alexia Miller spent over six years as a researcher and research manager at professional services firm Deloitte & Touche, and has recently moved to executive search firm Egon Zehnder.

In the past few months, it's been hard to ignore the phenomenon of Facebook. This online social networking tool has even caught the attention of traditional media, with many of the broadsheets carrying articles from evangelical journalists who've succumbed to the frenzy. As someone who spends most of her working life at a keyboard I've always resisted anything that keeps me at my laptop outside work hours, but I too found myself signing up to Facebook a couple of months ago. Yet I still couldn't quite get fundraising. When individuals are far the point of it. Did I really need to know that my friend in Canada was staring out of the window two hours ago? Attending the Social Tools for Business Use: Web 2.0 to Enterprise 2.0 New Development & Evolution conference in mid July has given me a great deal of insight It was great to see a case study from into exactly why people are flocking to Facebook and other Web 2.0 Information Professionals (CILIP) on tools.

The conference's aim was to examine how businesses could use social tools 'to improve creativity, productivity, collaboration and visibility within an enterprise, as well as engaging clients and partners in more fruitful collaboration.' Over two days, 14 speakers discussed a huge range of tools and sites, including wikis, blogs, mash-ups, social tagging, instant messaging, video, social bookmarking, podcasts and services like Facebook, Twitter, NetVibes and Flock.

The first two sessions, Social Tools in the Enterprise and The Beauty of Web 2.0, were key to understanding the concept of the networked individual

and how this impacts everything from the way we gather information to our preferred communication channels. A number of the conference presentations looked at the impact that video can make in communications: by adding body language and images into a recorded communication, the message becomes much more believable and engaging.

Charities 2.0 examined how social tools can help charities, which are facing huge challenges with awareness and more likely to identify with a cause than a particular charity, how can organisations emotionally engage their supporters? Social tools can help donors and beneficiaries connect one-to-one.

**Chartered Institute of Library** their recent introduction of communities for its members, and to learn how BTs R&D group was using wikis to build an intranet. From IBM and elastictime there were practical examples of how geographically dispersed organisations could improve networking, knowledge sharing and collaboration. Finally, presentations from the Guardian and BBC Five Live looked at how social tools are increasingly important to reporting. These tools are changing the way the media reports, impacting editorial style and creating two-way content for well-established channels.



#### **Putting social tools to work**

The themes that emerged from the conference were perhaps not new, but the high number of social tools advocates in attendance indicated an enthusiastic outlook.

- Organisations cannot afford to ignore social tools. If they don't consider how they can use these tools, chances are they've already lost opportunities to faster-moving competitors and may even be hampering their workforce. For example: a charity should seriously consider a presence on Facebook in order to build a network of individual supporters; a membership organisation can actively engage its members if it provides a forum to discuss issues; a business can help its staff save time searching if it encourages them to bookmark useful sites and share these. One key point: participation drives traffic. Wikipedia is far more popular than Encarta, and Flikr is used more than Kodak Gallery. If you want people to use a tool, letting them contribute to it will engage their interest.
- There's a tension between the audience participation model of Web 2.0 and business' need for confidentiality and verification. If an employee is blogging, what are they saying - even by inference - about the firm? In a world where wikis or social bookmarks and tags are popular research tools, who is ultimately responsible for the accuracy of information? If you create an online community, how will you moderate what should be an open

- and free forum? If you let your employees access Facebook at work, how can you be sure that they will remain alert to whether it's a work or social conversation they're having? Those speakers and participants who had taken the risk of opening up their organisation to social tools were much more positive than might have been expected. Their advice? Treat your networked individuals as intelligent adults and relax your need to be in control. Light, open and honest support is more constructive than a dictatorship. Do, however, stay involved - don't assume that the community can thrive without some time and attention.
- For individuals, the benefits of using social tools often feel obvious even if it is an instinctual gain, difficult to articulate and impossible to measure. For most organisations, however, there's a need to demonstrate return on investment. Those responsible for proving value have a dilemma: on the one hand, hard targets such as page hits or number of posts are easier to collect but have relatively little meaning. On the other hand, measurements such as the ability of an organisation to innovate are hard to measure or directly attribute but are of fundamental importance to its health.
- The exponential growth of the Internet means that the idea of personal referral is more important than ever. Individuals gather content gems, tag and share them with their networks via blogs or social bookmarks and rely on their network to share in return. In a virtuous circle,



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the information that is judged the most relevant gets the most attention is used to inform others. Sites such as del.icio.us continue to grow, and businesses are beginning to explore concepts such as social bookmarks. Some heavily networked individuals trust their network to a high degree, feeling that if there is information that they need to know their community will flag it up.

The idea that social tools are of no interest to anyone over a certain age is questionable. Provided that you have basic Internet literacy, the barrier is perhaps not age but participation. The more frequently and intensively you use these new tools the more obvious the rewards become. The problem is that we're often hampered by lack of time and the fact that we already have well-established social tools like mobile phones and e-mail that work well for us. But to simply dismiss the new tools is to ignore the unique benefits that some of them can offer.

It seems likely that business will find a role for social tools, but how will this impact staff training needs? Will we need to be taught the social rules of web interaction in the same way that we've learnt mobile phone text abbreviations? Blogging, user group moderation, video presentation: all these communication channels require a new skill set.

# Leveraging 'light' social contact for business

So back to my original question about Facebook - what is the point?

There are many ways to keep in touch with the people you know - by phone, via instant messenger, chatting by the water cooler or even heading down to the pub. Each channel has its benefits and its drawbacks, but tools such as Facebook or Twitter allow what speaker Suw Charman defined as 'light social contact' or 'ambient intimacy'. You're kept up to date with what's going on in that person's life without having to contact them in any active way, and Facebook or Twitter bring all your contacts together in one place in real time. The benefits of such social tools for business? This ongoing light social contact with a colleague or client can mean that face to face meetings start with a deeper personal trust and understanding.

Have I been back to Facebook? Yes - and I'll keep going back. I may find that it's not my preferred social network tool in the long run, but as I add more applications and find new contacts on there, it's becoming a lot more interesting place to be.



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