



Why is Everyone Talking about Social Networking?

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originally printed February, 2009

You have probably heard about Internet applications like Facebook, LinkedIn, or Twitter. Perhaps you have received email invitations to join these online communities. These software platforms are collectively referred to as social networking- a term applied to people and groups using technology to connect, talk, and make connections. Just as people gather at the local VFW or the country club, people meet online to share common interests and make friends. These software platforms give users the ability to share photos, videos, and opinions. People can create online diaries called blogs (web logs), send updates to friends, or make new friends. Social Networking is about people connecting through the use of technology and is also called Web 2.0. I distinctly remember asking a good friend over a year ago what Web 2.0 really meant. I thought it was a new technology standard for the Internet backbone, but actually it is about not the technology. Web 2.0 is about the people using technology to be in contact with each other.

Web 2.0 is the collective term for a kinder, friendlier version of the Internet. The term Web 2.0 was coined at a conference by technology guru and book publisher Tim O'Reilly. O'Reilly noted that the bursting of the dot-com bubble in the fall of 2001 marked a turning point for the web in that new applications were frequently debuting. The companies that had survived the dotcom collapse seemed to have things in common. He postulated that the dot-com collapse

marked some kind of turning point for the web, a new chapter, and he coined it Web 2.0.

In the years since 2001, Web 2.0 applications and services have created a more natural state of communication between people. Instant Messaging allow a user to send messages with other people in near real time across the globe. Skype allows for online video and real time question and answers. Guests on the Oprah Winfrey show can speak with Oprah and audience members from the comfort of their own home. When traveling, business people can talk with their loved one back home on the Internet using Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP). Web 2.0 software applications have provided a less structured and more creative way for people to converse. Strangers can discuss their favorite books, share recipes for apple pie, and recommend a good hotel while on vacation. The Internet did not always allow for this unstructured and creative communication. To really appreciate the value of social networking, we should look at the origins of the Internet.

Prior to the global availability of communication networks like Sprint and ATT, networks were sparse and expensive. "Networking" meant a few terminals or "green screens" connected to a mainframe computer. Mainframe computers were primarily located in military and academic organizations, and these organizations could not easily share information. Each computer system had its own machine code and rules for entering data.



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The output from one computer could not necessarily be understood by another computer.

In October 1962, J.C.R Licklider, a pioneer for global networking, was appointed head of ARPA (as it was then called), the United States Department of Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency. ARPA created ARPANET, whose original purpose was to help universities, the American military and the U.S. Defense Department contractors maintain internal communication (even during natural disasters and wars) and exchange information easily.

The first ARPANET link was established between the University of California, Los Angeles and the Stanford Research Institute at 10:30 PM on October 29, 1969, and communication was limited. This communication network required users to think in highly structured commands that allowed no room for errors. It was a very different communication style from just talking to one and other. Networking required users to memorize commands for sending information and memorizing the address location of the receiving computer. When ARPA created ARPANET, they pioneered the research of how to best exchange information across this "internetwork." Their research led to the development of TCP/IP (Transmission Control Protocol/Internet Protocol), the standard by which your computer sends and receives information. Users no longer have to memorize computer address to communication with each other.

Networking on the Internet has evolved from highly scientific, formal methods to more informal, creative communications, thanks to the efforts of computer scientists, hobbyists, and other computer aficionados. When Tim O'Reilly coined the phrase Web 2.0, he articulated the shift away from conforming to technology to creatively utilizing technology. Using the Internet for social networking, contacting customers, and finding new friends has never been easier. If you have not had a chance to look at social networking sites such as Facebook, LinkedIn, or Fast Pitch, go check them out! Look for me, and we will start a conversation online.

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