

■ Social Media

It's not just about Facebook ...

Social media is all the rage these days. It's like the dot com craze in the 90s with hundreds of companies forming and advertising their website. Unlike the dot com years which saw a plethora of industries pop up, social media sites are centered on one overarching theme - sharing.

Companies want you to connect with others freely and frequently. They're not doing it out of the goodness of their hearts though - social media sites know that information is king in our society and the more information they have about people - where they live, what they buy, who they know - the more money they make by selling this information to companies who hope you'll buy their products or services.

■ Tip of the Month

Google's Privacy Policy

Google is enacting a new privacy policy on March 1st. They will now link all of your information across all of your accounts you have with them, including Gmail, YouTube, Google+, Blogger, and Picasa in addition to any search requests you may enter.

This change in policy, according to Google, will allow them to provide you with more relevant and targeted advertisements and provide you with more tailored search results. To others, this is an invasion of privacy.

For instance, if you enter a meeting into Google calendar and the scheduled time is approaching, you can receive a notification that you should leave now based on your location and current traffic conditions. Some would see this as helpful but others don't want their lives tracked and recorded for an unspecified timeframe. Since Google's services are free, we'll each have to determine how much free is worth.

So as you venture into the social media world, keep in the back of your mind that the information you share is being watched, recorded and saved, not just by the people you know and trust.

Web icon



<http://www.facebook.com>



Facebook is the most well known social media site on the Web today. With over 800 million users, it reigns supreme. The site has changed considerably in the past few years, adding functionality in some areas while battling privacy concerns in others.

Overall, Facebook enables you to stay in touch with others in a richer environment than with email or web chats. You can share pictures, videos, and recent events in your life while also being able to find people you haven't spoken to in years.

Businesses are also an active part of Facebook. It's become a common medium for distribution of coupons, freebies, event notices and special contests. "Like Us on Facebook" is everywhere.

If you're concerned about privacy and don't want to share your entire life with everyone, you'll have to stay vigilant with what information you share on the site. While there are a lot more controls for people to adjust privacy settings, they're not always intuitive. Marking items private is no assurance as Facebook has the option to change their policy at any time.

Something to Consider:

1. Facebook makes money by tracking your browsing habits and selling this information to advertisers. There's very little you can do to control this barring not logging in.

■ Website Worth Watching

- ▶ www.flackcheck.org - project of the Annenberg Public Policy Center in Phila. Uses parody and humor to debunk false political ads.

Pinterest

<http://pinterest.com/about/>

[Web icon](#)



Are you visually oriented? Do you like to acquire and/or create things? Pinterest is for you. Images are “pinned” to this site and are perused by people who are looking for ideas or items to potentially purchase.

As many have said, the site can be addicting as there are a seemingly endless amount of images to peruse. You can view all images grouped together on the home page or narrow your search by clicking the drop down link, *Everything*, at the top of the page and choosing a sub-link like Kids, Design, Humor or Photography.

The site is predominantly geared towards women and features themes of wedding ideas, recipes, home decorating, clothing, hair styles and much more.

Things to Consider:

1. You don't need to create an account to use Pinterest. You can just browse the site without logging in.
2. If you do create an account, you'll be asked to sign in with your Facebook or Twitter account. If you sign in under either of these accounts, your followers and those following you will automatically be tied to your Pinterest account. You'll need to opt out of this requirement rather than opting in.
3. Look for the symbol below on websites to pin images to the pinterest site.



[Web icon](#)

twitter

<http://www.twitter.com>



If you like communicating in 140 characters or less, you'll love Twitter. 140 characters (max) per tweet ensures messages are kept short. *[Note: the first two sentences have 140 characters with spaces.]*

Twitter is basically an International text message application where people sign up to follow one another and read each other's tweets. Many crisis and aid organizations have found the service to be invaluable in getting important messages out to followers.

Likewise, those enamored with celebrities can have a

field day knowing when their favorite actor or musician eats breakfast.

Things to consider:

1. Tweets remain in the system forever so think twice before posting.
2. There are two types of tweets: public and protected. If you are concerned about your privacy, you may want to enable protection.
3. Twitter has an extensive Help Center. Check it out at: <http://support.twitter.com>

LinkedIn

<http://www.linkedin.com>

[Web icon](#)



Geared for business users, LinkedIn predates Facebook as a sharing site. It is primarily used for networking opportunities and has over 150 million members in 200 countries. Overall, there are mixed reviews.

On the one hand, the site can put you in touch with people you would not normally interact with but it is also laden with advertisements since it has morphed into a sales generation tool. As with most things in life, you get out what you put in.

Something to Consider:

1. If you're active and motivated to reach out to people and can ignore the ads, LinkedIn will provide the framework for networking that many people crave these days.

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www.readynetgo.net/newsletter.htm



<https://plus.google.com>

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Google+ is Facebook's new rival as a social sharing site. They offer similar features like the ability to share events, photos, links and video. The one distinguishing feature that Google+ has over Facebook is the multi-person videoconferencing feature called Hangouts. When you sign up for an account you can join other groups or start your own and interact via webcam (no additional software needed).

Many self help groups are using the video service to connect people from around the world. Businesses are using it to connect with customers or vendors. Regular folks are using it to connect with family and friends (up to 10 connections at a time).

Google+ has been around for less than a year now but has amassed over 90 million users. It is considered by many to be more of an interest network than social network since it encourages you to branch out and

meet new people rather than staying within the "friends of friends" environment of Facebook. Google has an uphill battle though considering the ubiquitousness of Facebook advertising on millions of websites.

Things to Consider:

1. Privacy is certainly an issue with all sharing sites on the web but Google+ has created more opt-in features than Facebook (i.e., you have to sign up for features rather than having to opt out). This policy makes it a little easier to protect your identity.
2. Both companies make a profit through advertising and selling your information however. The more you interact and share, the more targeted advertising you will likely receive.



<http://www.tumblr.com>

Web icon



Tumblr is a microblogging site where users can post nearly anything they want; essays, random posts, audio, quotes, photos. If you have a need for personal expression (within certain legal requirements), Tumblr is the place to go - be creative, go on a rant, share a funny photo with the world - the sky's the limit.

You can create both private and public posts and follow others' posts as well. With over 46 million blogs on the site, you can stay busy for quite some time.

Some of the benefits include being able to call Tumblr and leave an audio post to update your blog, a Question & Answer section to get feedback and/or interact with your readers, customizable themes to make it truly unique, and no ads, banners or logos cluttering up your page.

Things to Consider:

1. One of the best features of Tumblr is the ability to re-post other blogs while giving due credit.
2. Tumblr has a simple, intuitive interface compared to other popular blogging platforms. If you are looking for something easy to begin blogging, try Tumblr. If you are looking for something that has all the bells and whistles, try Blogger.
3. Tumblr was developed with mobile in mind, making it seamless to update your blog and read others on Smartphones and tablets.

myspace

<http://www.myspace.com>

Web icon



Can you believe it? Myspace is making a comeback. Originally begun in 2005, the site went through some turbulent times as a music sharing portal. Bands and music lovers flocked to the site but it grew too fast, too quickly and downgraded as fast as it rose. New owners, notably Justin Timberlake, bought Myspace in 2011 and are seeking a revival.

So far, so good. Myspace has attracted over a million new members since changing hands and is primarily focused, once again, on sharing music. Some features of the site include access to 42 million songs, a new music player that allows unlimited, free, on-demand listening to both established as well as new artists, personalized radio modes and easy integration with Facebook.

For many, Myspace is beginning to rival Spotify and may succeed in being your go-to music service.

Things to Consider:

1. The new Myspace website has freely streaming music and videos and interviews of celebrities and artists. You don't need an account to listen, read or purchase songs directly from iTunes or Amazon.
2. If you sign up, you can create your own playlists, share songs, play online games and interact with other users on the site.

StumbleUpon

<http://www.stumbleupon.com>

Web icon



If you're looking for something to do on a rainy day, visit StumbleUpon. It's a different kind of search engine giving you random websites as results. If you click the StumbleUpon button (top left corner), you can't predict what will appear (but the pages are pre-screened). If you create an account and log in, you can teach the StumbleUpon software what types of sites you like and it will give you similar results.

You can use StumbleUpon to follow your favorite news channel (if they happen to have a channel) and tailor the stories that are of most interest to you such as science, health or business news. As the StumbleUpon website states, "Every Stumble is an adventure, and something amazing is always just a click away."

Things to Consider:

1. You have to be at least 13 years of age to use the service.
2. StumbleUpon reserves the right to charge fees although currently it is free to use.
3. Companies pay to have their websites appear in the search results.
4. If you are looking for something specific, stick with another search engine but if you want to browse and have some time, StumbleUpon could be pleasantly surprising.

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