

# Case 06



## One More Look at Social Networking

### Background Information

Social networking web sites have had negative publicity in recent years, due to them being targeted by pornography and predators (Bird, 2006, ¶4). Businesses still see profitability in social networking, and many are starting to show how social networking is suited for more than the teenage population. Furthermore, a study conducted in 2006 entitled "Engaging the Social Networking Generation" (Roach, 2006), reported new ways universities were communicating with high school juniors through the use of social networks. The study found that over half of respondents would, "read a blog authored by a faculty member" (Roach, 2006, ¶4) for further student and faculty information, and upcoming activities occurring at the institution.

Social networking encompasses many different communities and includes resources such as dating networks and, teen social networks (e.g. MySpace.com). Media outlets all over the country are buying into social networking. The Hearst Corporation bought eCrush.com, a relationship finder website. Other media companies have jumped on the social networking band wagon, "the Walt Disney Company, the CBS Corporation, Viacom, and NBC have all been busy planning new social networking features for their various Web sites" (Siklos, 2007, ¶9). Due to the overhead expense, but potential of profit gains, companies continue to invest and are also marketing (e.g. IBM and Microsoft) social networking software products (Whiting, 2007).

Youth ministers and religious affiliates are using social networks to, "to stay *connected* with their students" (Bird, 2006, ¶3), because many of their youth group members are *real* with their lives in terms of topics they will discuss about their personal lives. Many musicians promote themselves, as did Lily Allen who, "built up a huge fan base on the social networking site before her UK breakthrough last year" (*Music Week*, P.8, 2007). Social networking is becoming big business as many companies are realizing, and for many working in the business world LinkedIn.com is where they stay up with friends, business associates, and daily business transactions that may occur.

The digital music company Snocap has struck a deal with MySpace.com and Youtube.com to allow independent record labels to sell downloads on their websites. For many social network fanatics who have a desire to gain access to music not already played on the radio, "music downloads will be available in the MP3 format, enabling purchasers to play them on any portable music player" (*Internet Business News*, 2007, ¶4). The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) announced earlier this year they would launch their own social networking website in order to heighten its online presence (*Internet Business News*, 2007), in an attempt to market more products to consumers in the UK.

Social networks have found major popularity throughout many populations. MySpace recently became the most visited website on the planet and has proven to be an advertisement pot of gold. The other social networks have attracted similar attention from, “other media groups and investors” (*The Economist*, 2006, ¶3) for what they hope will be a similar outcome.

## Preview

The teenage culture has given much popularity to social networking websites, mainly due to the ease of accessibility the websites offer to the other teens in many parts of the world. Social sites are usually created around a theme, such as sharing music and finding relationships, and many are not governed so members are able to post any content they choose to their personal web space. Recently, a negative light has fallen on some social networking companies since people can gain access to personal information. Social network members may post any personal information on their web pages in addition to posting scantily clad, as well as nude pictures along with vulgarity that may be accessed by anyone with a connection to the internet.

Over fifty million visitors logged on MySpace.com in one month last year, which suggests that, the popularity of social networking web sites is not going anywhere for quite a while. Teens all over the world have shown they enjoy the use of social networking, and the lack of supervision of the sites themselves can only continue to add chaos to an already established craze. The education profession must first learn these social sites, and then teach students successful ways to govern their personal use of the web sites. There are many positive aspects to social networks members are using today to “get ahead” in the technology world.

## Focus Questions

As you study the following case, keep these questions in mind: (1) Are social networks appropriate resources for use in education? (2) Do students develop the social skills needed for their future careers, through the use of social networks? (3) Do social networks nullify ethics practices in education and business?

## The Case

### For A Good Cause

The sixth period Entrepreneurship and Small Business Management Class at Lemon Bay High School is made up of juniors and seniors. The class is split right down the middle with twelve boys and twelve girls. All of the students in the class have taken at least one other business course while attending high school. The teacher, Mr. Jimmy Edwards, enjoys this group of students very much. He has considered giving the class a final project, as he always does, but this time he gives the students a bit more liberty to complete the task. Normally Mr. Edwards assigns a fundraising task to donate the proceeds to a local charity, however this year a neighboring community has been devastated by a natural disaster that tore through the community.

The class is split evenly into two teams, the blue team and the orange team. Both groups are given the task of developing a promotional campaign to raise as much money as possible with, all proceeds collected by both teams going to the neighboring

communities' relief effort. The fundraising project will take place for a four week time period and the goal for the class is to raise approximately four thousand dollars.

The orange team gets right to work using their creative and decorative skills to create a banner, posters, and flyers to be posted all over school. The team also decides to set up a table before and after school outside of Mr. Edwards's room, and they set up a table in the lunchroom for the whole school to donate.

The blue team realizes the orange team will decorate posters and flyers, yet they choose to use this approach as well. They avoid creating a banner to post in the school, but they do collect money before and after school, as well as at lunch by alternating guys to wear signs and carry money cans all throughout the day. Ted is the Chief Executive Officer of the blue team. His brother is in a rock band, and they post songs and videos of the band on the popular social networking site MySpace.com. Ted's brother has commented numerous times about the band's popularity growing because of the free promotion they get online. Ted has the idea to create a MySpace page discussing the fundraiser, and puts links to photos of the devastation on the webpage. At the top of the page Ted posts the comment "Please help us help them" with the school address and phone number on the web page.

Mr. Edwards is a bit leery of the use of any social networks as a marketing and promotional tool, because of all the negative publicity some of the web sites have had in the past. His fear is that comments published to the web pages may be detrimental to the outlook of the school and community, if the web space is not governed properly. Another concern of Mr. Edwards is that the county which he teaches in has established a county wide block of any social networking websites. He is very excited that Ted has come up with an innovative promotional strategy, and would like to see if the social network can help to generate some much needed fund raising dollars.

## Discussion Questions

- (1) Should the blue team be prohibited from the use of social networks on school premises for this fundraising opportunity?
- (2) Is the county wide block of social networks hindering the students' ability to develop critical communication skills?
- (3) Should Mr. Edwards be less concerned with the students' promotional methods, and more concerned with the amount of money each team is bringing in?
- (4) Would the blue team lose a substantial amount of donations if Mr. Edwards were to stop them from using the social network as a promotional method?

## Links

[www.myspace.com](http://www.myspace.com)

[www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com)

[www.linkedin.com](http://www.linkedin.com)

[www.blackplanet.com](http://www.blackplanet.com)

## Resources

BBC to launch social networking websites. (British Broadcasting Corporation) (2007, January, 11). *Internet Business News*, Retrieved March 15, 2007, from *General Reference Center Gold*. Thomson Gale database. Alabama Virtual Library Remote Access. 23 Mar. 2007

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