

Case 12



The Ups and Downs of Social Networking



Background Information

In the past, if friends wanted to communicate with one another, they had to either send a letter, visit, or call on the telephone. Today, there are more advanced ways of communicating, such as email, webcams, and social networking. Social networking is the grouping of individuals into specific groups, like small rural communities or a neighborhood subdivision (Brown, 2009).

Social networking has become even more popular in recent years. Parents feel more comfortable because they are able to view their children's pages if they are added as a "friend." In 2007, David Cassel said "the Internet is not as dangerous as people think, and teachers should let student use social networks at school" (¶ 1). He also notes that 76% of parents expected social networking to improve their child's reading and writing skills as well as help them express themselves more clearly. Cassel found that "only a minority of students has had any kind of negative experience with social networking in the last three months" (2007, ¶ 6). If parents at home feel like social networks are fine, then school administrators and teachers should as well, right? The parents "expect schools to take advantage of potentially powerful educational tools, including new technology" (Cassel, 2007, ¶ 13).

It is also a concern that social networking will eventually fail. Luis Suarez prompts readers to think about issues related to social networks in general. He says that the one reason social networks fail is because there are too many privacy concerns. He also says that social networks fail because there is no real reward or penalty system and that they are not granular enough. Suarez further explains that context is missing from most social network sites and he suggests that they are not integrated with other apps. Finally, Suarez believes that social networks fail because they are walled gardens. These walled gardens prevent networks from sharing information with others for fear that it will dilute their powers as THE central hub for all relationships (Suarez, 2006).



Preview

Although social networking can occur on the job or at school, it is most popular online. Because it is popular online, teachers and parents have a growing concern for the safety of their children. The dangers often involve online predators or individuals who claim to be someone that they are not. Although danger does exist with networking online, it also exists with networking in the real world, too (Brown, 2009). Although social networks may have some problems, many believe that they are good for the kids. Sarah Lacy (2009) explains that most people no longer go to the Internet with a fake user name and pretend to be someone else. She promotes Facebook and Twitter by explaining that these sites, in particular, are more about extending your real identity and connecting with family and friends.

Focus Questions

As you read this case study, keep the following questions in mind:

- 1.) Should Natalie refrain from using social networking?
- 2.) Should Natalie report the damaging and stealing of her personal belongings to the Dean of Students?
- 3.) What are the dangers of using social networking?

The Case

Natalie's Nightmare

Natalie is a second semester freshmen at the University of Education. She decided to go to UE because her older brother has been there for two years and he is always talking about how awesome college life is at UE. Natalie is considering moving back home because she is having trouble making friends and she feels as if she does not fit in.

Recently, her resident assistant (RA) told her to join Facebook so that she could get to know some friends on campus as well as reunite with her friends back home. She decided to listen to the advice and join. She was so glad that she did. She was able to loosen up and share her personal thoughts and feelings without the worry of being teased or ridiculed. She enjoyed updating her status and adding people as friends on a daily basis. By the end of her first week, she already had over 100 new friends. Natalie became so comfortable that she even decided to post some pictures that she wanted to share with her friends at home. After Natalie posted the pictures, she started getting messages about how cute she was and how awesome she looked in her Halloween cat costume. She even got asked out on a date.

During her date, the guy asked her why she dressed like a slut all the time. Natalie had no clue of what he was referring to because she was wearing jeans and a sweater. He told her that he saw the pictures of her in the cat costume and also read about how easy she was on Juicy Campus. Natalie really became offended and confused because she had never heard of Juicy Campus. Natalie explained to her date that the cat costume was from Halloween and that she only posted that picture

The University of Alabama Computers and Applied Technology Program (2009). *Technology Education: A series of Case Studies*. Available at <http://www.ua.edu/edtechcases>.

because she thought her friends back home would get a kick out of it. The guy refused to believe her so he left Natalie at the date and she had to call her RA to come and get her.

As soon as Natalie got back to her dorm room, she told her RA about what happened and they immediately logged on to Juicy Campus. Natalie was appalled! She saw that people had gone in and made anonymous comments about her. Someone wrote that she was a slut, she had been pregnant by two different football players, and that she was a stuck up rich kid. Someone even posted a comment saying she slept around with a particular girl's boyfriend. Later on that week, Natalie's car got keyed and some of her clothes were stolen from her dorm room. Someone in her dorm told her who they thought had done all of this. When Natalie called the police, they questioned the alleged suspect; she told them that she did it because of what she had read on Juicy Campus.

* *Juicy Campus is no longer available. However, it has been replaced with <http://collegeacb.com>.*

Questions for Discussion

- 1.) What should the University of Education do to the girl who keyed Natalie's car and stole her clothes?
- 2.) Should Juicy Campus be held responsible for what happened to Natalie's belongings?
- 3.) When does social networking become cyber-bullying?
- 4.) Could Natalie's situations have been prevented?

Links

<http://collegeacb.com/>

www.facebook.com

<http://twitter.com/>

Resources

Brown, K. (2009). What is Social networking? Retrieved February 2, 2009:

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

Cassel, D. (2007). Schoolboards: net dangers over-rated; bring social network to school.

Retrieved January 27, 2009: <http://tech.blorge.com>.

Suarez, L. (2006). 5 reasons why social network fail. Retrieved January 28, 2009:

[http://www.tnl.net/.](http://www.tnl.net/)

Lacy, S. (2009). Why social networks are good for the kids. Retrieved January 27, 2009:

<http://www.washingtonpost.com>.

Twitter Image from: mediamemo.allthingsd.com/tag/funding

Facebook Image from: justgiving.wordpress.com

The University of Alabama Computers and Applied Technology Program (2009). *Technology Education: A series of Case Studies*. Available at <http://www.ua.edu/edtechcases>.