

Social Media - Friend or Foe?

Web 2.0 is a term used to describe Internet communications through interactive commentary or written discussions between a sender and a receiver of information, including social networking media (“Social Media”).

There are three primary types of Social Media, namely:

- Web log or “blog” which contains information or commentary by the person who authors the blog;
- Interactive community of people creating profiles and providing information for the purpose of connecting or communicating with others for personal or business purposes; and
- Interactive community of users that participate due solely to similar interests for individual, professional, or commercial purposes (e.g. hobbies, college classes, listservs for professional organizations, among others).

Social Media functions in “real time” so that the users can contribute, respond to or interact with other users instantaneously. Instant Messaging, Facebook and Twitter are prominent examples of real time Social Media, and each is now ubiquitous in our culture. Instant Messaging allows immediate responses by a particular individual to messages or posts directed to the participants. Facebook enables a member to create a profile and invite “friends” to view messages or other information placed by the member on his or her “wall.”

Once the friend consents to participate, a friend’s comments or posts will be visible to anyone who is allowed by the member to view the member’s wall. The member can create varying degrees of privacy within the policies set by Facebook. See, <http://www.facebook.com/policy>. In contrast to both Instant Messaging and Facebook, Twitter is a micro-blogging Social Media site that enables the user to post messages on the Internet that contain no more than 140 characters to convey in real time the user’s thoughts, information and message. Such a microblog is known as a “tweet”, and it may contain a link to another blog or website. Twitter states in its terms of service that what you say on Twitter may be viewed all around the world instantly, and that you are what you Tweet. See, <http://twitter.com/tos>.

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