

SOCIAL COMPUTING

WHAT IS SOCIAL MEDIA?

Social media is a dynamic online medium that has changed the way we work. Similar to traditional media, social media offers opportunities to collect and share news, communicate with audiences and advocate for change. However, unlike traditional media, social media allows for this to happen on the Web in real-time through highly interactive global or regional social networks. The most popular social media platforms include Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Google+, LinkedIn, Instagram and Pinterest. However, new platforms emerge daily, and staying abreast of these developments is critical to social media success. Sharing quality content is also important. Content should be honest and genuine to help build trust, and engaging to organically grow an audience. Posting simply out of obligation is not a good strategy. Posting interesting, compelling and thought-provoking content is the key to success.

WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF SOCIAL MEDIA?

There are a wide range of social media platforms, from social networking sites designed to link people with common interests through an online community to sites designed purely for photo and video sharing. These platforms are constantly evolving and new platforms are emerging daily. A basic breakdown of the main types of social media platforms is listed here. There are a variety of options available to suit a range of individual needs.

1. BLOG

Blogs are a valuable tool for development because they allow organizations to easily expand beyond their traditional communications mediums and social networks, and curate a content rich platform for their followers. Organizations can share meaningful stories from the field through the personal voice of staff members, volunteers or partners, without the hassle of updating their website. They are also a great venue to share other news or information, relevant to the organization and its partners or stakeholders.

2. WIKI

A wiki is a special web application that allows open content editing by users, thus encouraging the democratic use of the Web. The tool serves as an information clearinghouse and learning centre for an array of stakeholders and users. Users can add, modify or delete content in a collaborative environment.

3. PHOTO AND VIDEO SHARING SITES

Photo and video sharing sites have become increasingly popular with the proliferation of smartphones. The sites host user-generated photos and videos that users can upload to their profiles. The most popular video sharing site is YouTube, which requires a user account to upload videos. Though, anyone can view videos posted on YouTube. Vimeo is another platform to upload and share videos. Popular photo sharing sites include Flickr, Instagram and Pinterest, each catering to a different niche.

4. SOCIAL NETWORKING SITE

A social networking site is an online community that allows users to create a profile and cultivate a social network of friends and followers. Users may communicate with others in the network by sharing ideas, activities and events through updates and photos.³ With over one billion active users, Facebook is the most popular social networking site globally, but there are also many other sites that cater to regional or personal interests.⁴ In China, for example, Tenecent Qzone is a widely popular social networking site while in Latin America, Orkut is among the most popular social networking sites. Twitter and Tumblr are other social networking sites with global popularity, otherwise known as microblogging sites.

BENEFITS OF SOCIAL COMPUTING

Social networking allows organizations to do many things, including disseminating information among its various users, keeping them up to date on new knowledge and experience, reducing interruptions, and connecting them with the best experts for particular needs. The notion of “social computing” refers to increasing knowledge access speed. In addition, it allows for a wide range of information to be shared through interactions with numerous people. By connecting people and thus lowering the cost of communication, computer technology improves communication among many users. The methodology improves user performance and efficiency, increasing access to specialists. Users obtain a better performance and greater efficiency due to this method.

Mining Twitter

Twitter is a free social networking site where users broadcast short posts known as tweets. These tweets can contain text, videos, photos or links. A rich source of social data that is a great starting point for social web mining because of its inherent openness for public consumption, clean and well-documented API, rich developer tooling, and broad appeal to users from every walk of life. Twitter data is particularly interesting because tweets happen at the “speed of thought” and are available for consumption as they happen in near real time, represent the broadest cross-section of society at an international level, and are so inherently multifaceted. Tweets and Twitter’s “following” mechanism link people in a variety of ways, ranging from short (but often meaningful) conversational dialogues to interest graphs that connect people and the things that they care about. Twitter is used to share information quickly. Because tweets can be delivered to followers in real time, they might seem like instant messages (IM) to the novice user. But unlike IMs that disappear when the user closes the application, tweets are also posted on the Twitter website. They are permanent, searchable and public. There is also an option to protect tweets so only followers can read tweets.