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The State of Social Networking, 2011 Update

March 30, 2011

Debbie Ginsberg



Facebook 101

Facebook's interface and features are constantly changing. The basic site now includes:

- **News Feed** – Displays updates from your friends and pages you “like.”
- **Profile Pages** – Displays personal information, your updates, photos in which you are tagged, and messages posted to your wall.
- **Privacy Settings** – Use the settings to control who sees your information (warning: these are complicated and change often).
- **Latest features**-- Questions (create instant polls); Profile Pages (they have been simplified); Groups (organize your Facebook friends into personal or professional communities).



Other Social Networks

Facebook is great for maintaining personal connections, but other social networks are better for public conversations and managing professional connections.

- **Twitter** – Follow short posts from other users to learn the latest news and trends. Great for following conferences remotely or participating in conference backchannels.
- **LinkedIn** – Manage your professional reputation and contacts.



Trends for 2011

Social networking has become increasingly ubiquitous. Recent trends include:

- **Geolocation** – *Where are you?*
Foursquare (<http://foursquare.com/>): check-in and let your friends and followers know where you are. Can be used for status updates or to organize groups.
- **Photo Sharing** – *What did you see?*
Instagram (<http://instagr.am/>): edit iPhone photos and share them instantly.
- **Group Buying** – *What's on sale?*
Groupon (<http://www.groupon.com>): features a local “deal of the day” – generally about 50% off a local restaurant or service, but only if enough people agree to buy the deal.
- **Question & Answer** – *What would you like to know?*
Quora (<http://www.quora.com>): Ask questions and post answers on any topic.
- **Mobile** – Sharing all of this anywhere
All of the above social networks have iPhone apps (note that the Quora app is not official).

Why use social networking?

At 500,000,000 registered users, Facebook is the most popular social network. But others are catching up – Twitter now has 175,000,000 users and LinkedIn has 100,000,000. What are these networks used for?

- **Establish personal and professional connections** – users can easily find family, friends, and colleagues on social networks.
- **Control personal and professional reputations** – active participation allows users to better control the personal and professional information they wish to showcase as well as track what others are posting about them.
- **Share information** – social networks are increasingly becoming the main forum for sharing news and important updates.
- **Have fun** – social games like Farmville aren't for everyone, but they can be a great way to take a short break and connect with friends.

More Information

Gina Dietrich, Eight Social Media Trends for 2011, Spin Sucks, Oct. 18, 2010 (available at: <http://www.spinsucks.com/social-media/eight-social-media-trends-for-2011/>). Features a short list of popular trends.

Rand Fishkin, An Illustrated Guide to the Science of Influence & Persuasion, SEOmoz, June 2, 2010 (available at: <http://www.seomoz.org/blog/an-illustrated-guide-to-the-science-of-persuasion-influence>). Explains how professionals participate in social networks.

Mashable (<http://mashable.com/>). Useful blog for learning more about social media trends.

Wikipedia's "List of social networking websites," (available at: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_social_networking_websites). Includes usage numbers and Alexa Page Rankings for the major active social networking sites.