



ABOUT US

PEOPLE & GROUPS

PROGRAMS & EVENTS

PUBLICATIONS & RESOURCES

MARKETPLACE

YOUR CAREER

[Associations Now](#) [Journal \(JAL\)](#) [Models & Samples](#) [Knowledge Center](#) [Store](#) [Research Acronym blog](#) [Wikis](#) [Video Library](#)

[Submit a question](#) [Section E-Newsletters](#) [Case Studies](#) [Article](#) [Index](#) [Models & Samples](#) [Great Ideas](#) [Economy](#) [Resources](#) [Online](#)



## section e-newsletters

| | [Help](#)

[home](#) > [publications & resources](#) > [knowledge center](#) > section e-newsletters



### Dollars & Cents

[Current Issue](#) | [Previous Issues](#) | [Advertise](#) | [Author Guidelines](#) | [Editorial Staff](#)

Social Networking: Is It Right for Your Organization?

*Dollars & Cents*, November 2009

**By:** Heinan Landa

Each major social networking platform has its own advantages. Learn the ins and outs of the biggest networks, and find out if it is essential for the growth of your organization to be on one or all of these sites.

**Rating:**



[1 Reviews](#)

Online and off, you hear about social networking sites constantly. Lunches with colleagues are interrupted as they post a tweet on Twitter. Coworkers stay after hours to update their LinkedIn profiles. Some CEOs use Facebook more than their teenagers. But what are all of these social networking sites? Are they different from each other? Are they translating into leads? Or, are they just one of many technical distractions? Most importantly, is it essential for the growth of your organization to be on one or all of these sites?

## What exactly is a social networking service and how do the most popular differ?

A social networking service can be defined as a mechanism by which online communities of people who share interests and activities, or who are interested in exploring the interests and activities of others, are built. Pretty broad definition, huh? Well, that's because many of these social networking sites vary in purpose and professionalism. That's why it is important for you to know the essence of these sites—and their purposes—before deciding whether they are an appropriate outreach tool for your organization. Although many social networking sites are out there, we will focus on the three most popular. Below is a brief overview:

- **Facebook** ([www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com)): Facebook is primarily used to connect with close friends, family, and colleagues that you interact with in the physical world. It also can be used to reach out to those you have had a relationship with in the past. Facebook is more popular in its appeal to direct consumers or members, rather than business-to-business prospects. However, according to recent social site demographics studies, 30 percent of Facebook users have a total household income that exceeds \$100,000 every year. Twenty-nine percent of the users make a total household income

between \$60,000 and \$100,000. Perhaps this is why Facebook is becoming increasingly accepted by the business community. Associations can use Facebook to create groups for members, increase awareness about their organizations to other Facebook users, and to enhance their web presences.

- **LinkedIn ([www.linkedin.com](http://www.linkedin.com)):** LinkedIn is generally considered to be the most professionally oriented of the big three social networking sites. LinkedIn members use the service to build their professional personas and further their careers. It connects business people from similar and different industries so that they can communicate to solve problems, find jobs, and discover new business opportunities and alliances. Plus, recent social site demographic studies have concluded that LinkedIn users are older (46 percent of users are between the ages of 35 and 49), more affluent (37 percent of users make more than \$100,000 per year), and better educated (82 percent of users have a college degree; 29 percent of these users have gone to graduate school). Associations can create groups in LinkedIn to connect leaders in their communities, members, or to raise awareness for upcoming events, association announcements, etc.
- **Twitter ([www.twitter.com](http://www.twitter.com)):** Think of Twitter as a way to give business colleagues and friends a quick update. The idea behind Twitter is to constantly (and as succinctly as possible, as you only get 140 characters) answer the question: "What are you doing?" Twitter users gain "followers," people who are interested in their posts, commonly known as "tweets." Different from Facebook and LinkedIn in its approach, Twitter is a combination of professional and personal outreach. Content posted on Twitter varies from personal updates to work-related content and links. According to a myriad of social site demographic studies, 44 percent of Twitter users are between 18 and 34 years old; 33 percent of users are between 35 and 49. Sixty-three percent of Twitter users have a college degree, but only 23 percent of Twitter users make between \$60,000 and \$100,000 annually. Associations are using Twitter as a way to update members, keep them involved in the membership community, and increase communication among key stakeholders.

## Is social networking right for you?

Now that you know a little more about the platforms, you can begin to decide if using a social networking site (or all of them) would be beneficial for your organization. You can do this by considering the following:

- Decide what you are trying to accomplish by using a social networking site. What are your goals? Do you want to gain customers or members? Enhance your organization's internet presence? Recruit candidates for your company? Gain additional marketing exposure? Increase communication efforts?
- Determine your target audience. Are significant portions of your target markets using these sites? If you are trying to target stay-at-home moms who consistently update their profiles on Facebook, then that is the site you need to be on. If your target market is composed of other businesses or associations, then LinkedIn is probably more appropriate for you.
- Think about your product, and remember that social networking sites can only go so far. Understand that using social networking sites requires an investment of time and resources, just like any other marketing or networking activity. Just how much time you put in is up to you. What will determine that? In terms of your level of participation, the currency is time, not money. Whatever you put into your social networking site efforts will dictate what you get out of them. Consider which suits your personal style and business objectives best, and have fun.

## Last Word

The arrival of social networking sites has completely transformed the marketing, visibility, and technological landscapes for individuals and organizations. Before making the decision to use a social networking site, remember to review your business goals. If you decide that social networking platforms will help you achieve your objectives, decide your level of activity, and go for it.

*Heinan Landa, is president of Optimal Networks in Gaithersburg, Maryland. Email: [info@optimalnetworks.com](mailto:info@optimalnetworks.com)*

### Core Competency #4h

Technology: Internet

Understand the risk and benefits of using social networks

[Read the full FBO Core Competencies guide.](#)

Rate this item



Rate this item:



Simply click on a star to rate this item.

Comments

[Write A Comment](#)



[Kenneth Paul](#), November 18, 2009

Very good description of the platforms and uses.

More Articles From Dollars & Cents - November 2009

- [Council's Corner: Critical Resources to Help You Navigate Through Tough Times](#)
- [Core Competencies of Budgeting for Associations](#)
- [Resource Review: Ready, Set, Audit: 403\(b\) Plan Audits](#)
- [Social Networking: Is It Right for Your Organization?](#)
- [Change is Coming to Healthcare](#)
- [FBO Event: Weathering the Economic Storm](#)
- [Latest From The Listserver: Conflict of Interest and Whistleblower Policies](#)

[Top](#) ^

 [Subscribe to RSS](#)

[To ASAE & The Center home](#)