A list of Social Media platforms that help you to network with others…

POPULAR SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

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Social Media Platforms that help you Network

Blab: Think of blab as Periscope or Meerkat, only better. It allows you to broadcast your content to your followers and, better still, allows you to invite them into the video conversation. This two-way dialogue is what makes blab a game changer in the industry. Strengths: The two-way capabilities make blab stand out in a crowded field. Weaknesses: It has a small (but growing) user base.

Facebook: Mark Zuckerberg started Facebook out of his dorm room for his fellow students at Harvard. Today, toddlers to grandmothers can be found on Facebook. Strengths: Widely-adopted by large segments of the population. Weaknesses: Will the younger generation stay on Facebook once Grandma has "friended" them?

Google+: The clean, simple interface makes connecting with friends, family and business associates a piece of cake. Google+ was the fastest-growing social network in history and looks as though it's here for the foreseeable future. Strengths: Ease-of-use and uncluttered environment. Weaknesses: Competition from other well-established social media platforms.

Friendster: A way to stay connected with everything that's important to you — hobbies, interests, causes, business, etc. Strengths: A simple web-interface makes this easy-to-use. Weaknesses: Not as widely adopted as some other platform-runs. Might have peaked.

hi5: This is a social networking platform that skews a little younger than LinkedIn. Members can play games, watch videos, flirt, give gifts or just hang out. Strengths: It's a great alternative to MySpace and/or Facebook for the younger crowd. Weaknesses: It may not be the best social networking platform for business.

LinkedIn: This is the Grand Pooh Bah of them all. They've been around since 2003, which, in social media terms is also known as "since the beginning of time." Strengths: Everybody's on LinkedIn. Weaknesses: Most people have trouble knowing what to do with LinkedIn after they upload their business information.

Meerkat: This live streaming social media platform is perfect for people who want to share videos of the special moments in their lives. Perfect for business, social networking, or for close friends, this mobile-only social network is growing quickly and rapidly. (Check out our Meerkat vs. Periscope comparison by clicking here.)

MyLife: A clean, simple site that helps people connect with family, friends and other relationships. Over 750 million profiles. Strengths: The easy-to-use interface is one of the site's great strengths. Perfect if you're looking for an engaging, simple way to connect with old friends. Weaknesses: Not as widely adopted as some other sites.

Ning: This site connects groups of people who are passionate about particular interests, topics or hobbies. Co-Founded by Marc Andreessen, who helped launch Netscape. Strengths: Great for connecting with others who are interested in your area of expertise. Weaknesses: The user interface is so simple and uncluttered that getting started can be confusing. But once you've figured it out, it can be a good tool.

Periscope: Like its close relative Meerkat, this new video sharing platform is taking the world by storm. Are you interested in using live video to share parts of your life with the world around you? If so, then Periscope is for you. (Check out our Meerkat vs. Periscope comparison by clicking here.)

Plaxo: Currently hosts address books for more than 40 million people. Helps people stay in touch with "Pulse," which is a dashboard that lets you see what the people you know are sharing all over the web. Strengths: Graphical user

interface makes it easy-to-use. Weaknesses: It's not as widely-adopted as some other platforms such as LinkedIn.

Twitter: A surprisingly-successful tool that is widely-adopted and used for everything from business to fun and games. Strengths: Used by large segments of the population. Weaknesses: Can be a distraction, especially if you have Attention Deficit Disor … wow, look at that bird outside my window!

XING: XING has more than 8 million subscribers worldwide. It has over 34,000 specialized groups and over 150,000 live networking events each year. Strengths: XING adds new developments to their platform on a regular basis. Weaknesses: Not as widely-adopted as some other platforms such as LinkedIn.

Social Media Platforms that help you Promote:

Bing: Bing, Google and Yahoo aren't technically social media platforms, but they are tools that can be used to promote your product or service, so we're including all three in this overview. The technique for using any search engine to promote your product or service is the same so you'll want to optimize your website so that the search engines see it. By doing so, you'll drive traffic to your website from the people doing searches on specific topics. Strengths: Bing uses "intelligent search" to make searches even more relevant for the user. Weaknesses: It's fighting against Google, which is a tough battle.

Blogging Platforms: These are tools that are used to create blogs. Some of them, like Blogger, Tumblr, Vox or Xanga are straightforward platforms that are great for people who want to do a simple blog about their vacation, their company or their family reunion. If you're ready to create a more robust blog that adds a lot of SEO value for your website, you'll want to

useJoomla, Drupal, Typepad or WordPress. These are the blogging platforms used by serious bloggers.

Discussion Boards and Forums: Are you interested in creating an online forum where members of your community can engage with each other and offer each other advice? Then a discussion board or forum is for you. The best-known platforms for forums include Lefora, Zoho, Drupal, PhpBB,Simple Machines, Vanila, JavaBB and vBulletin. Strengths: Forums are a great way to build a relationship with customers and prospects. Weaknesses: They require regular, ongoing time and energy to keep them running properly.

Google: Google is technically not a social media platform, but can be used as a social tool to drive visits to your well-optimized website. Strengths: Ease-of-use and pervasiveness. Weaknesses: Are they spreading their brand across too many channels? Does this confuse people? (Answer: Probably not, but we're struggling to come up with any weakness for Google. They're just so darn nice, it's hard to figure out what they're *not* good at. They're even good at not being evil, you know?)

Email Marketing Platforms: Email can often get overlooked in the world of social media, but if you define social media as tools that help you have a dialogue with your customers and prospects, then email falls into the social media category. Popular email marketing tools include AWeber (affiliate link), Constant Contact, iContact, ExactTarget and others. Strengths: Email is a highly measurable way to connect with customers and prospects. Weaknesses: Email marketing requires a concerted, ongoing effort if you're going to do it right.

Flickr: This is a photo-sharing site that can be used to build awareness and drive traffic to your product pages. If you're selling hunting rifles or tennis rackets or widgets, you'll want to use Flickr to a) build awareness for your

product and b) drive people from Flickr to your website. Strengths: Flickr is easy-to-use and has a clean user-interface. Weaknesses: Photo-sharing sites are important, but they're not the very first thing you'll want to work on in your social media campaign.

Howcast: Wouldn't it be cool if there was a website where you could watch "How To" videos on the topic of your choice? Well, there is and it's called Howcast. It's an extremely worthy-competitor to YouTube. Strengths: A great place to upload high-quality content. Weaknesses: The default is still YouTube. Most people are conditioned to automatically type "YouTube" into their browser.

iTunes: This is not the only podcasting site, but it's the best-known and most popular. If you're doing interviews with industry experts or if you're creating mini-radio shows, iTunes is the place to be. Strengths: It's a well-known, well-respected platform. Weaknesses: If you don't create scintillating content, people won't come back for more.

MySpace: Ahhhhh, MySpace. They arguably started this whole social media thing to begin with. Today, MySpace is primarily used as a congregation point for younger people interested in pop culture. They're evolving and seem to be finding a niche. Strengths: A well-known social media platform that most everybody has visited at one time or another. Weaknesses: They're not the ubiquitous social media platform they once were.

Picasa: This is a photo organizing, editing and sharing site that's owned by Google. You can tag photos to enable quick searches by users. Strengths: As with most Google services, Picasa is easy-to-use and loads very quickly. Weaknesses: Photo sharing is important, but it's not the very first thing you'd want to work on in your social media campaign.

Vimeo: Think of Vimeo as a high-end YouTube. It's perfect for people interested in sharing their videos with a community of positive, encouraging

creative professionals. Strengths: You gotta love a site that oozes upbeat, optimistic, life-affirming energy that Vimeo does. Weaknesses: It's not a default site the way YouTube is, but that may change in the near future.

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Yahoo: Like Google and Bing, this is not technically a social media platform. But it is a tool that ultimately can drive traffic to your website. Be sure to optimize your website so that search engines like Yahoo can see it. Strengths: Yahoo is one of the work horses of the search engine world, so it's always a good idea to keep it on your radar screen. Weaknesses: Is Yahoo a search engine? An online portal? A web magazine? Perhaps it's all of these things. And perhaps that's not a weakness after all.

YouTube: Of course, YouTube is one of the better-known platforms used to promote businesses. The key to YouTube is to keep the videos short and sweet. Make sure they solve the "what's in it for me" equation. YouTube is perfect for "How To" videos, but it's not a good place to upload the CEOs annual speech to shareholders. Strengths: YouTube is ubiquitous. Weaknesses: It's a cluttered environment that can sometimes have some pretty racy videos on it. (Or so we've heard.)

Social Media Platforms that help you Share:

Buffer: This social media management tool allows you to schedule Tweets and Facebook updates quickly and easily from your web browser. It's perfect for people not interested in using TweetDeck or HootSuite. Just sign up, install on your browser and the next time you're at a web page you want to share, hit the Buffer button and schedule it for sometime in the future. Strengths: An easy way to schedule updates on Twitter and Facebook. Weaknesses: Other platforms offer the same functionality.

Delicious: This is a social bookmarking service owned by Yahoo. When someone tags your article, video or blog post with a Delicious bookmark, it's the equivalent of a "vote." The more votes you get, the more visibility your content has on the Delicious website. Strengths: It's everywhere. Weaknesses: You have to have a lot of traffic and a lot of votes to show up on the radar screen.

Digg: Similar to Delicious in that people vote for articles, videos and blog posts they like. If your content receives enough Diggs, it's promoted to the front page for millions of visitors to see. Strengths: Like Delicious, Digg is everywhere. Weaknesses: You have to have a lot of traffic and a lot of votes to show up on the radar screen.

HootSuite: This is a tool that allows you to manage multiple social media channels through one dashboard. If you have a company with more than one contributor to your social media program, HootSuite is a good solution. Strengths: A very easy-to-use interface. Simple set-up, yet still powerful. Weaknesses: If your social media program is no more extensive than updating a Twitter account, then HootSuite would be over-kill.

Instagram: A surprisingly fun photography app that's sweeping the globe. Install Instagram on your smartphone and, next time you take a photo, use it to enhance, stylize and share the photo with others in your network. Strengths: A fun, easy-to-use app. Weaknesses: Other apps provide a similar experience.

LocalVox: This is a social media dashboard that's similar to HootSuite and TweetDeck. It's perfect for people who are interested in drilling down a little deeper than either HootSuite or TweetDeck allow you to do. You wouldn't want to use LocalVox in addition to the others, but instead of. If you need a more in-depth experience, LocalVox may be just what you need.

Path: A location-based social sharing app that allows you to share photos, memories, music, thoughts and other moments with friends in your social media circle. Strengths: A fun way to share your life journey with friends. Weaknesses: Heavy competition from intrenched competitors like Facebook, Google+ and others.

Pinterest: We live in a visual world and Pinterest leverages that. Tired of reading long blog posts (like this one) but still enjoy skimming through images that are worth 1,000 words? If so, then Pinterest is for you. Just visit the site, sign up and start sharing images by re-pinning them to your profile. Strengths: A visually-appealing way to share information with followers. Weaknesses: Competition from a wide variety of other social media platforms.

Quora: This is the perfect place to go if you're interested in asking a question that requires an expert answer. Just type in a question you have about any topic and Quora will provide answers from other users. Quora is frequented by smart, well-educated users, so the answers tend to be very helpful and well-thought-out. Strengths: A simple, easy-to-use platform. Weaknesses: A simple Google search can sometimes offer the same quality of answers.

Reddit: Similar to Digg and Delicious. Reddit is a source for what's new and popular on the web. Users can vote articles up or down on the site, so readers can check out the hot, trending topics from blogs, newspapers and other sources around the globe. Strengths: Like Digg and Delicious, Reddit is everywhere. Weaknesses: You have to have a lot of traffic and a lot of votes to show up on the radar screen.

Scribd: This is the largest social publishing and reading site in the world. You simply upload your speech, ebook or PowerPoint presentation to the site so that others can be awed by your wisdom and expertise. Strengths: A great

way to potentially get your content in front of thousands of readers. Weaknesses: There are a lot of other people competing for the same eyeballs.

SlideShare: One of the better-known places to upload your content for sharing with others. Take your PowerPoint, your ebook, your Podcast or just about any other content and share it with the SlideShare community. Strengths: Like Scribd, SlideShare is a great way to get in front of a large number of visitors. Weaknesses: There are a lot of other people competing for the same eyeballs.

StumbleUpon: Very similar to Digg, Delicious and Reddit. When you rate a website that you like using StumbleUpon, it's automatically shared with like-minded people. And it helps you find great sites your friends recommend. Strengths: StumbleUpon helps spread your content to people not regularly exposed to your products and/or services. Weaknesses: Competes with several other well-established tools, like Digg, Delicious and Reddit.

TweetDeck: Like HootSuite, TweetDeck provides a way to track many of your social media channels on one dashboard. It can be a time-saver and a productivity-enhancer, assuming you're not easily distracted. Strengths: It's very easy to set-up and get started. Weaknesses: Like all dashboard tools, it can lead to distractions for employees who are easily … Whoa! Is that a fly on the ceiling or just a speck of dust?

Wikipedia: It still amazes us that this user-generated encyclopedia is run by just a few dozen employees (along with hundreds of thousands of contributors around the globe). It's a great tool for *legitimate* entries. Don't try to game the system by adding overly-promotional posts. But if your entry will be helpful to the Wikipedia community at large, have at it. Strengths: It's a great tool for uploading legitimate, helpful content about your product, service or company. Weaknesses: If your target market is over the age of 40, they might struggle with Wikipedia's miniscule type.

Yelp: This platform offers user-generated reviews on cool places to eat, shop, drink, relax and play. Yelp has an augmented reality Smart Phone application that makes using it on the run a blast. Strengths: User-generated reviews are a great way for customers and prospects to find out about your business. Weaknesses: Some people try to game the system with faux reviews, but Yelp does a pretty good job of keeping those faux reviews at bay.

Do we accurately describe the platforms? Are there any important platforms that we're missing? Are there any that should be deleted from the list?

Do tell.

Thanks!

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