

## **Social Networking and Networking Socially**

By: G.C.Silva

Recently a friend who works in the medical field woke up, wasn't feeling well, and updated their Facebook status to "Not feeling good, I think I've got the flu." Three of her coworkers, including her immediate supervisor had also logged into Facebook that morning before work and saw her latest post. This supervisor called her and said that if she wasn't feeling well there was no need to come into the office and risk getting others in the office sick.

With the advent of social networking sites like My Space and Facebook, staying constantly connected has gone beyond email and instant messaging. Facebook has over 300 million active users while My Space's has over 125 million active users. It is hard not to stay connected when everyone is doing it.

But is there a time where we can be too connected? Status updates are a major component of social networking and most people do not completely understand the way to configure the information they share with others and the amount of data they can see about others. The type of information one shares on their profile can sometimes be too much information or (TMI). While it might be great to know that someone just got a new job, it might not be as interesting to know that someone got his or her hair trimmed.

What compounds the issue of TMI is the fact that people add people as friends and then have the tendency to add their friends as friends. People end up with people on their friends list that they do not really know and receive their updates and end up sharing information with them as well. Friend's lists can grow into the hundreds where you may only really know a few.

This brings me to two very interesting aspects of social networking. The first is that the information you post could end up on the Internet forever. Well after you might have deleted it from your profile or deleted your account. The terms of service (TOS) of most sites state in the fine print that the information you upload to their sites including photos is the property of their site, meaning they can republish and or use the information as they see fit. It is also equally important to know that people that have access to your profile (friends) can copy that

information for a later use. Those pictures of you drinking from that gallon jug of vodka you posted to your profile might come back to haunt you some day.

In the first week of November 2009 hundreds of Facebook group accounts were hijacked by a group known as “Control your Info” for the pure purpose of warning people that the system is still flawed and that people have to learn what they are doing when they post and share information on the web.

The second thing is that as popular as people might think they are, unless you are a celebrity, you cannot possibly have 100 friends that you need to stay in touch with. (Facebook averages 130 friends per user.) More people are realizing this with the recent changes in which updates are being published and have started a process called “defriending” and deleting them from their friends list. For some people this is just a natural process but for others it has become a form of anonymous rejection even when someone they did not know defriends them. After all, what criteria needs to be met for you to become someone’s Internet friend these days?

As technology advances, the look and feel of these social networking sites will continue to change. With common sense and a manageable friends list social networking can be a fun way to stay in touch with old friends and make some new ones as well.

Glenn Silva, owner of Fairhaven Computer Repair and HTE Computer Consulting+ has been servicing local individuals and businesses in the community for 20+ years. He is self-syndicated and his column can be read in numerous printed and online sources. He can be contacted at: [your-computerguy@comcast.net](mailto:your-computerguy@comcast.net).