

it's not easy to live through a day without coming across an online community of one kind or another.

Online communities, also known as social media, are readily and easily accessible to every internet subscriber via the ubiquitous web browser. There are a wide variety of online communities to match people with similar interests including, but by no means limited to, LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, and YouTube. These communities all appear to be continually increasing their subscriber list daily. Have you considered subscribing to one or more of these communities?

want to add as many subscribers as possible, but they do so by offering completely different feature sets. The interesting aspect of LinkedIn that sets it apart from a standard paper-bound address book is that your network not only includes those who are directly connected to you, but also those who are connected to your connections, and so on. For example, my own LinkedIn profile shows 183 direct connections. LinkedIn displays that I am ultimately connected to 1,839,035 professionals in my

According to Wikipedia content, Frigyes Karinthy was the first person to write about the concept of six degrees of separation or what is now commonly known as the human web. In this concept, he proposed that any two people are separated by not more than five people. LinkedIn may be the community that proves or disproves this theory. At this point in my experience with LinkedIn, the theory of six degrees of separation has not been disproved.



Should You “Connect” or “Friend” Yourself?

The last issue of OutReach featured an article specifically on Facebook. (2010 Volume 1, No. 1 at cbservices.org.) In this issue, we'll take a closer look at LinkedIn while comparing and contrasting the two as we go along.

LinkedIn is an online community devoted to people in the workforce who want to create, build and maintain their professional networks. LinkedIn aims to attract business professionals by offering features which benefit them.

On the surface, it may appear that Facebook and LinkedIn are competing with one another, but that is not the case. Yes, they both

entire network from end to end. In theory, when you step back and look at the big picture, that's quite a group of people I could contact or leverage. By itself, seeing your network in these terms is very interesting and much easier to use than an address book.

In Facebook, you have friends instead of a network of connections. Certainly, the subscriber base of both communities overlaps. However, a person who subscribes to both communities almost certainly would not have the same number of Facebook “friends” and LinkedIn “connections”. Business is business, and personal is personal.

Online directories of business contacts and friends are nice, but what practical uses do these types of communities have to offer to individuals and/or organizations? LinkedIn offers features including an electronic version of your resume, groups and message boards for those interested in the same topics, and a variety of 3rd party applications to keep track of your travel itineraries, blogs, online polls, Amazon reading lists, and more. LinkedIn does not create content, but rather facilitates the flow of content among its subscribers. Facebook operates in the same manner.

In today's world, the pace of business and personal lives is very fast. An online community that is not accessible to a mobile person is not much of an online community. Both LinkedIn and Facebook have applications that can be loaded into smart phones like RIM Blackberries and Apple iPhones to provide quick and easy access to features of their communities.

Internet 1.0 was characterized by websites where organizations and people wanted to have a web presence to provide content to their stakeholders. Online communities are part of what is referred to as Web 2.0, where content is delivered to the web by those that create

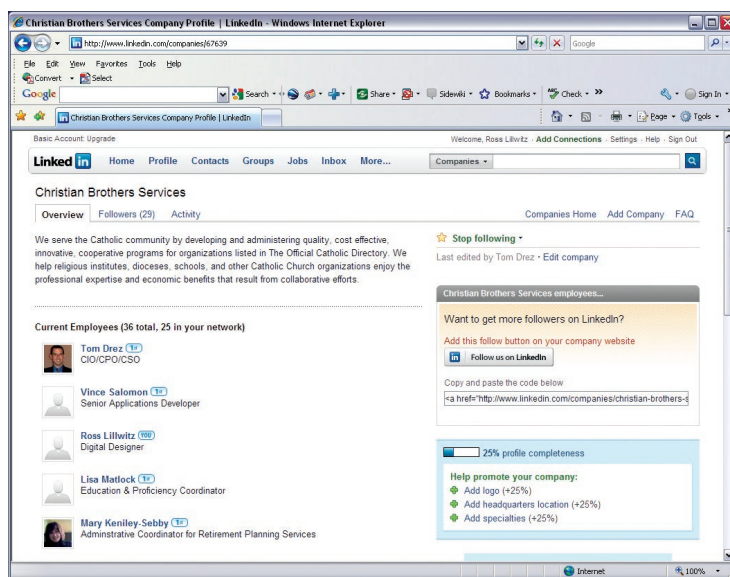
it essentially as fast as it can be created. Real-time or near real-time communication offers benefits to those that like to create and consume a wide variety of content.

From an organizational standpoint, every new communication medium must be evaluated in the context of the organization's stakeholders. Organizations want to communicate with their stakeholders using the stakeholders own preferences. It must be noted that as time marches on, stakeholders change. When a group of people retire, they are replaced with another group of people whose preferences may be different than their predecessors.

Where paper correspondence was once the norm, e-mail is now the norm. Every organization should think about their stakeholder of the future. Young adults now coming out of college are the consumers and employees of the future. At twenty-one years old, they have certain preferences which help shape their demands and expectations that will ultimately influence future employers and companies with which they choose to do business. Organizations that cannot meet these new demands and expectations will be replaced with organizations that can.

Christian Brothers Services has created an organizational presence on both LinkedIn and Facebook. Use the search feature within each community to find us. Connect to our LinkedIn page and become a "fan" of our Facebook page. Please leave your comments and tell us how we might use one or both of these communities to meet your needs. ☀

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