

Social Media: An Overview of Popular Platforms



Facebook is the most popular, and widely used social networking website, which allows registered users to create profiles, [pages](#) and [groups](#), upload photos and video, send messages and keep in touch with friends, family, colleagues, supporters, and customers.



Google+ is the second largest social networking site, which has many similar features as Facebook including personal profiles for posting status updates, photos and videos, as well as "[Circles](#)" and "[Communities](#)" for sharing information with different groups of people (like Facebook Groups). It also has some unique features like "[Hangouts](#)" for video chatting with one person or several people.

What is Social Media?

Social Media refers to "forms of electronic communication (such as websites for social networking and microblogging) through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content (such as videos)"

– Merriam-Webster Dictionary



Twitter is an online social networking service and [microblogging](#) service that enables its users to send and read text-based messages of up to 140 characters, known as "tweets" to a list of [followers](#). It has become widely used for commercial and political purposes to keep customers, voters, supporters and fans up-to-date, and to encourage feedback.



LinkedIn is a social networking website for people in professional occupations and is mainly used for professional networking. Network members are called "connections".



Blogs – are websites, similar to an online journal that includes chronological entries made by individuals. The word blog was derived from the combination of the word web and log. Blogs typically focus on a specific subject (Economy, entertainment news, etc.) and provide users with forums (or a comment area) to talk about each posting. Blogs can be used to post articles and links to useful resources for people interested in a specific topic, publish news announcements and press releases, document trips, conferences, holidays etc., or as a personal online e-journal. Some of the most popular blogging sites are [LiveJournal](#), [WordPress](#), [Tumblr](#), and [Blogger](#).



Pinterest is a pinboard-style photo-sharing website that allows users to create and manage theme-based image collections such as events, interests, and hobbies. Users can browse other pinboards for images, "re-pin" images to their own pinboards, or "like" photos.



YouTube is the largest video sharing site, which lets anyone upload short videos for private or public viewing. Individuals and organizations can set up their own '[channels](#)' on YouTube to organize their videos. YouTube videos can also be embedded in any website page, including other social media sites, like blogs and Facebook.



Flickr is an image hosting and video hosting website. In addition to being a popular website for users to share and embed personal photographs, and effectively an online community, the service is widely used by photo researchers and by bloggers to host images that they embed in blogs and social media.



Instagram is an online photo-sharing, video-sharing and social networking service that enables its users to take pictures and videos with their cell phone cameras, apply digital filters to them, and share them on a variety of social networking services (e.g. Facebook, Twitter).

Social Media Resources & Training

There are many useful resources you can access online to learn more about specific social media platforms, particularly for non-profits and the greater community service sector. These resources are available for free or at a low cost.

Case Foundation Social Media Tutorials – The Case Foundation and its talented staff live and breathe social media, and their website is a wealth of resources. These tutorials include the basics, effective blogging, and using Twitter, Facebook and YouTube:

<http://casefoundation.org/topic/social-media>

Mashable – “The top source for news in social and digital media, technology and web culture”. There is a lot to learn about social media from this site alone:

<http://mashable.com/social-media/>

Twitter Jump Start: A Guide for Small Nonprofits – by John Haydon: <http://johnhaydon.com/wp-content/uploads/2008/11/twitter-jump-start-free-download-version-4.pdf>

TechSoup – has many free pre-recorded webinars on the different aspects of social media, which you can watch online: <http://www.techsoup.org/search/products/social%20media/>

They also have useful “How-To” article, such as *a Few Good Blogging Tools*:

<http://www.techsoup.org/support/articles-and-how-tos/few-good-blogging-tools>

Charity Village has numerous article on social media and communiactions:

<https://charityvillage.com/Default.aspx?tabid=531>

Pinterest has a community board (available publically) for nonprofit innovators to share resources on topics like fundraising, social media, blogging, email communications, marketing and volunteer management: <http://pinterest.com/womenoncall/nonprofit-social-media-resources/>

Social Media for Social Good: A How-To Webinar Series for Nonprofits – many webinar available on-demand, however they cost \$25 per webinar:

<http://vimeo.com/ondemand/nonprofitorgs>

Lynda.com – a website where you can learn computer software, business, and creative skills through a library of close to 2,000 video courses – courses include Microsoft training, social media (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn), Adobe, and much more. Membership is required at a cost: <http://www.lynda.com/>

Other Useful Online Communication Technologies:

Drop Box - a free service that lets you bring your photos, docs, and videos anywhere and share them easily: <https://www.dropbox.com/tour>