

## **Online Networking: Is it Social Networking or Social Engineering**

Social Networking helps particularly young people, not only in socializing but also in raising global awareness about many concerns and occurrences happening. One could not estimate five years ago that such consciousness would be brought to us with a tinge of exciting taste to forums and blogs that were already available.

It is helping both individuals and organization succeed, with the amount of resources available to help them; they can try new ideas at seemingly reduced risks. Governments and humanitarian organizations can bridge the divide created over the number of years increasing trade and tourism. I personally have recollected my memory by meeting old friends, colleagues and acquaintances with the help social networks.

So far so good, however as the saying goes there is no such thing as a free lunch, and with social networks it is more of a freemium lunch, that is you end up paying premium for something you try out free. Organizations have been misusing data of their employees; they even match credentials of the curriculum vitae to the social network accounts like LinkedIn.

Sexting is one of the core issues that rose a few months back in UK when teenagers sent there photos and videos over cell phones after being propelled by sexual offenders over social network sites. There are other ethical issues say for example Google and Second Life have yet not decided who owns the data, Is it the highest bidder? This is one question users have to ponder and read the user agreements before availing the free services as there may be legal issues to this along with ethical issues.

We really need to think whether the services we are using are worthy of the intangible cost we pay and risk every time we are on social networks, some cases may even result in tangible cost and risks. Some users like that of Facebook, Bebo and MySpace in order to expand their social circle or win the psycho-social race of competing with their peers of having the most number of connections on a social network, do their best of keeping it that way by making most of their information in the form of photos, videos and portfolio available, however they do not realize the security vulnerabilities they are prone to by exposing information to potential social engineers. Some of this vulnerable information can even be a security question in monetary departments and associations like banks and online accounts.

Most information found on the WWW seems to be true to a novice user of the internet, this may give rise to conflicting arguments and misunderstandings due to discussions on social networks. Most youngsters are also being addicted to the use of and being on social network sites.

"Social media should improve your life, not become your life!"

- Patrick Driessen

Government Agencies have been speculated by some critics to eavesdrop on many social networking sites, some might say Government agencies do not need to eavesdrop on social networks as they can always sniff packets of the ISPs, however I feel social networks are being aggregators to our information and if not dealt with extreme care things might come to haunt us in the future. One instance of it was

proved in reply to a question asked by a student to President Obama as what one should do to become a President. The response to which was that one should be very careful in these times with Facebook and YouTube around as one should be really careful as to what information one makes available.

Governments should help educate users about their internet activities as it is a matter that should not be ignored. Social networks are not an emerging industry but something that is a part of our lives – the internet users.

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