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Social media time management tools and tips

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Abstract

At the beginning of the 21st century, we are now for a couple of years in the social media era, where we are confronting with a lot of applications and tools, easy to use, friendlier, free to use, easy to (re)build. No matter on which kind of activities we intend to spend time, there are plenty of similar applications with similar functionalities. Accordingly, the decision which of them to use is sometimes very difficult to take and, not less importantly, time-consuming.

More than that, people in the 21st century live in a technology and media-suffused environment, marked by various characteristics, including: access to an abundance of information, rapid changes in technology tools and services. In order to be effective in the 21st century, there are plenty of almost unknown applications for the large mass of Internet users that can be useful for different types of activities and/or purposes. Accordingly, through this paper, we intend to offer some insightful help for social media users in order to be able to organize their information, activities and work, to become more productive and to avoid wasting their time. More than that, in this paper, we intend to present both positive aspects of different technologies which could be used for specific purposes or activities, without ignoring, however, some lesser-known facets and recommended, yet equally important, but they must be aware to take them into account.

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1. Introduction

Over the last two decades, information and communication technologies have dramatically changed our current society, no matter if we are speaking about the way we communicate and interact each other, work or participate in entertainment activities. In a Web-based environment, at any time and any place, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, we can spend our time online for different purposes and activities.

Due to the decreasing cost of buying computers (mobile phones or other type of devices) and associated equipments, as well as due to increasing the capabilities and functionalities of the hardware and associated Internet technologies, we are now almost two billion Internet users¹. Thus, this number represents only 28,7% of the total population worldwide and taking into consideration the regions where the percent is still low, but still looking to grow, in the next years the continuous ascendant trend of global Internet users could be anticipated.

Thanks to the Web 2.0 technologies, applications and tools, which are characterized as easy to use, friendlier, most of them free to use and easy to (re)build (due to the open source code) and among them there are the most

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known wikis, blogs, social networks etc, day by day we are becoming more technological literate and more confident about our skills in using such kind of technologies and applications. Consequently, day by day more and more people become more addicted to Web 2.0 technologies and applications and the time spent online is in an ascendant curve, no matter the age. Thus, for example, if in 1999 the average number of hours spent on a weekly basis by American Internet users was seven hours, ten years later their time spend online has increased to thirteen hoursⁱⁱ.

Therefore, no matter which kind of applications they are using, the Internet users worldwide are more numerous and moreover, they spend more time online and they are capable to create digital content more easily. All of that leads to an increasing content available worldwide, which means also more time spent and also increased skills in order to find and access more easily the proper content.

2. Social media, user generated content and the information overload context

As it is generally agreed, the Internet and especially the second generation of Internet provide numerous communication spaces in which people meet and can interact with each other. Moreover, the second generation of Internet based applications (i.e. Web 2.0), can directly engage consumers in the creative process by both producing and distributing information through collaborative writing, content sharing, social networking, social bookmarking, and syndication (Malita, 2010).

When we look through the web literature, in one way or another, all of those mentioned issues are related to social media. Even most of the well-known Web 2.0 gurus (like Stowe Boyd, Robert Scoble, Jay Rosen, Jeremiah Owyang, JD Lasica, Brian Solis and many more) have spent their last years defining and redefining Social Media. So, it is hard to find a definition of social media, accepted through the scientific and academic research areas. Even if there are plenty of definitions (it is the same for the Web 2.0 definition), none is widely accepted. I particularly like Ron Jones' social media definitionⁱⁱⁱ: "*Social media essentially is a category of online media where people are talking, participating, sharing, networking, and bookmarking online*", but I sometimes refer to the Wikipedia definition^{iv}, which is by far much more comprehensive: "*Social media describes the online technologies and practices that people use to share opinions, insights, experiences, and perspectives. Social media can take many different forms, including text, images, audio, and video. These sites typically use technologies such as blogs, message boards, podcasts, wikis, and vlogs to allow users to interact. A few prominent examples of social media applications are Wikipedia (reference), MySpace (social networking), Gather.com (social networking), YouTube (video sharing), Second Life (virtual reality), Digg (news sharing), Flickr (photo sharing) and Miniclip (game sharing)*".

Anyhow, no matter which definition we like more, all of them have things in common: they are referring to social media as the tools that facilitate the socialization of content. On the other hand, social media is considered an evolving phenomenon, a shift in how people discover, read, and share news and information and content. It is a fusion of sociology and technology, transforming monologue (one to many) into dialogue (many to many) (Solis, 2007). Thus, most social media services encourage collaboration, interaction and communication through discussion, feedback, voting, comments, and sharing of information from all interested parties.

Moreover, in Bradley's view (Bradley, 2010), six core principles underlie the value of social-media, and, in combination, serve as the defining characteristics that set social media apart from other forms of communication and collaboration:

- *Participation*: social media is strongly dependent on mass collaboration through user participation. Users are welcomed to develop their ideas by using technologies which are friendlier and easier to use than ever before. For example, they are attracting users to come back to continue the conversation already started by using comments, votes, links etc.
- *Collective*: there are plenty of social media sites where people collect information in order to reshape the content and to spread it to the world, by sharing. Moreover, users could sometimes use the facilities offered by the interoperability between the applications for accessing information which is already stored online, on other social media sites.
- *Transparency*: most of the content created is spread to the world by sharing, commenting, voting etc. Even though there is the possibility to have/store private online content, only a transparent flow of information and stored content will conduct to a collaborative participation of users, because without transparency, there is no

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