

Technology Corner

David M. Lederman

The New Society

Senator Orin Hatch to Mark Zuckerberg during his Senate Testimony: “How do you sustain a business model in which users don’t pay for your services?” Mark Zuckerberg to Senator Hatch: “Senator, we run ads.”

Soon after this exchange, Facebook rolled out 2 new apps called Workplace and Work Chat. Think of these apps as a Facebook writ small. Corporate level small. Business owners can create a Workplace for the company, or in my case, my law firm. Users are limited to those on the company’s domain.¹ Thus, I invited all my staff to our Workplace. Work Chat is essentially the chat app companion to Workplace, similar to Facebook Messenger. I like Workplace and Work Chat. It serves as an additional way to create organizational community. We are a team. We can post items of interest to everyone else in the office (or to specific individuals) and the whole team can be involved. These posts do not get sent out to the Facebook universe but are restricted to our company Workplace universe. It is a universe I can control and an environment my staff can feel comfortable to be involved in, knowing that it is restricted to only those in our Ledermanlaw.net universe.

So why is this, Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, and the scores of other social media platforms so successful? Why do websites want to be *go-to content providers*? The answer, quite simply, is community. I know you’ve seen this sight recently: Two or more teenagers or young adults sitting at a table staring at their phones in silence. Some have smiles, some are intently focused, but all appear disengaged from each other. They are most likely not anti-social. Most likely, quite the opposite is true. They are engaged with each



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other and their friends not seated with them through social media, text message, or gaming.

I have said before that “distance is dead.” As time continues, this truth becomes more and more self evident. As I type this column, my 19-year-old son is in the other room. He has his headphones on, and he is playing an online game with a friend of his, who is going to school on the East Coast. Community is no longer restricted to those you can see or touch. The development of information technologies through the internet has brought us multiple communities: the small closed Facebook groups, the larger Facebook community of friends, Workplace. These are the new methods in which people connect and stay connected. As an employer, I am constantly looking at and thinking of ways to get my team together. We do our multiple office BBQs, holiday dinners, etc. that other offices do, but these are limited and doing them frequently can be expensive. Workplace, at least for now, is free. For me, it is another way I can build the sense of community that a well functioning team needs to perform.

For Facebook and other social media companies, community is its fuel for growth and prosperity. Facebook has this nailed down. As people interact on Facebook, Facebook can see their user data, what they searched for, discussed, and use that to market to the individual. In the old days, we did not and could not know what marketing was effective. Now, with metrics (specific advertising data and statistics), we can identify what works or doesn’t work and devote our marketing resources to the areas that work. We can market specifically to the smaller groups of individuals

that are actively searching for our services: the divorce community. Those companies that created websites that provide information to the consumer that are area-specific are seeking to create online communities that will frequently go to their website to get information. The websites that create these communities can then charge a premium to advertisers that want to sell goods and services to the individual community.

Online communities are no longer on the fringe. They have become ubiquitous and will grow. If we want to grow, develop, thrive, we too need to engage in these new communities. Do not look at today's youth and bemoan the decline of society. They are its evolution.

Endnotes

- 1 Domain is the name used to identify an internet autonomous space. For example. My domain name is "Ledermanlaw.net". I own the domain name and everyone in my office has an email address that ends in "@ledermanlaw.net."

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