Brian Cassidy

Social Networks History and Use in Web Development

What is a Social Network?

A social network is defined as an online service or site which enables its users to create and maintain interpersonal relationships (Merriam-Webster). Social networks have become deeply ingrained into our society and culture and are used by the vast majority of the world. According to the University of Maine, globally there are 4.8 billion social media users which is roughly 60% of the world's population (University of Maine). These statistics can be quite shocking considering the inception of the first social network was only 28 years ago.

The First Social Network

The first social network platform, Six Degrees, was created in 1997 and it enabled its users to create a personal profile, connect with friends, and index a contact list of those connections. These basic functions are now the backbone of most social networks today, some of the most comparable being Facebook, Linkedin, and Instagram. Ever since Six Degrees inception in 1997 the functions of social networks and social media sites have evolved exponentially. From the basic functionality of connecting and cataloging friends, to today's capabilities of live-streaming, reposting, liking/favoriting, sharing with friends, and much much more.

The Titans of the Industry

In our current social network/social media landscape there are 5 major platforms that come to mind that dominate their respective spaces, Youtube, Facebook, Instagram, Tik Tok, and WhatsApp. Each of these platforms have some crossover when it comes to features they offer, but are also titans in their own regard.

Social Networks Use in Web Development

Considering the vast popularity of social media platforms and the traffic they receive comes a great opportunity for marketing, brand engagement, and customer feedback. The various data and analytics provided by the platform can help a developer tailor their approach. Leveraging the user experience data provided, you can further refine your website to be better suited for the user's experience (Smith). The data collection capabilities along with the ability to receive instant feedback from one's users is an invaluable tool for a developer.

Another way social media platforms are leveraged in web development is through their ability to create brand engagement with one's target audience. With the proper marketing team social media accounts can be strong tools to connect a brand to its audience. Plenty of brands use social media to give a personality to their brand and add a touch of humor to further engage users. Many brands leverage social media to give more personality to their brands and increase engagement with their audience (Social Media & Web Development: How to Combine the Two.). This increase in interaction can also benefit your SEO (search engine optimization) by boosting your site's search engine ranking promoting your content to more people (Fourrage).

The added benefits that can come when you integrate social media into your web development process are undeniable, it can greatly increase brand awareness, brand engagement, SEO, and valuable customer feedback and data. Anyone who is considering making a website or brand should heavily consider leveraging social networks.

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