



1673 W 8th Street Erie, PA 16505 | 814.454.6236 | PAPASVhW@eriefire.com

White Paper

Is it social media? Or is it social networking?

The differences between social media and social networking are just about as vast as night and day. There are some key differences and knowing what they are can help you gain a better understanding on how to leverage them for your brand and business.

1. By Any Definition

Social media is a way to transmit, or share information with a broad audience. Everyone has the opportunity to create and distribute. All you really need is an internet connection and you're off to the races.

On the other hand, social networking is an act of engagement. Groups of people with common interests, or like-minds, associate together on social networking sites and build relationships through community.

2. Communication Style

Social media is more akin to a communication channel. It's a format that delivers a message. Like television, radio or newspaper, social media isn't a location that you visit. Social media is simply a system that disseminates information 'to' others.

With social networking, communication is two-way. Depending on the topic, subject matter or atmosphere, people congregate to join others with similar experiences and backgrounds. Conversations are at the core of social networking and through them relationships are developed.

3. Return on Investment

It can be difficult to obtain precise numbers for determining the return on investment (ROI) from social media. How do you put a numeric value on the buzz and excitement of online conversations about your brand, product or service? This doesn't mean that ROI is null, it just means that the tactics used to measure are different. For instance, influence, or the depth of conversation and what the conversations are about, can be used to gauge ROI.

Social networking's ROI is a bit more obvious. If the overall traffic to your website is on the rise and you're diligently increasing your social networking base, you probably could attribute the rise in online visitors to your social efforts.

4. Timely Responses

Social media is hard work and it takes time. You can't automate individual conversations, and unless you're a well-known and established brand, building a following doesn't happen overnight. Social media is definitely a marathon and not a sprint.

Because social networking is direct communication between you and the people that you choose to connect with, your conversations are richer, more purposeful and more personal. Your network exponentially grows as you meet and get introduced to others.

5. Asking or Telling

A big no-no on with social media is skewing or manipulating comments, likes, diggs, stumbles or other data, for your own benefit (personal or business). Asking friends, family, co-workers or anyone else to cast a vote just to cast it, doesn't do anyone much good and it can quickly become a PR nightmare if word leaks out about dishonest practices.

With social networking, you can tell your peers about your new business or blog and discuss how to make it a success. The conversations that you create can convert many people into loyal fans, so it's worth investing the time.

Social media and social networking do have some overlap, but they really aren't the same thing. Knowing that they are two separate marketing concepts can make a difference in how you position your business going forward.

