


COMPETING SOCIAL NETWORKS

Our current internet phenomenon that has taken the world by storm is the social networking site. A person's online comfort level and years-of-use are evident by the site they use: Microsoft and Yahoo's "Messenger" programs were once the predominant "chat" playgrounds – and in many countries still are. However, Mr. Zuckerberg and his cyberspace buddies have engendered a new following via "Twitter" and "Facebook," and now, the gang at Google have added "Google+" into the mix. But what is the big deal and why choose one over the other? In a nutshell, here's what you get:

| |  INFO www.info.it |  |  |  |
|---|---|--|--|---|
|  Relationship | Followers & Followings People who follow me and people I follow | Friends People with whom I'm in a one-to-one relationship | People People who follow contents I share with groups of them | |
|  Sharing with specific groups of people | No | Lists Lists allow sharing contents with groups of friends | Circles Circles allow to set contents visible to groups of contacts | |
|  Sharing tenet | My contents appear in the stream/news feed of people who follow me | My contents appear in the stream/news feed of my friends | My contents appear in the stream/news feed of those people who put me in their circles (or in the incoming group) | |
|  Shared contents visibility | Open profile Everyone sees contents I share Private profile Only those people who follow me can see the contents I share | Contents can be shared with: Everyone, All my friends and their friends, All my friends, Lists of friends, Selected friends | Contents can be set visible to: Everyone, People in my circles and people in circles of those who are in mine ones, All my circles, Selected circles, Selected contacts | |
|  Social graph |  1) A and C follow B, B only follows A 2) B only follows A |  1) A and B are friends 2) C and B are friends |  1) A sees contents that B shares with those in circle 1 2) C sees contents that B shares with those in circle 2 3) B sees contents that A shares with those in circle 3 | |
|  Contents I publish... | ...will be visible to my followers! | ...will be visible to my friends! | ...will be set visible to recipients only if I'm in their circles! | |
|  I will see... | ...what the people I follow are publishing! | ...what my friends are publishing! | ...what those people who put me in a circle are publishing for that circle! | |

Social networks have become more and more popular because they tend to draw people into a virtual world, keep them there for as long as possible, and draw other people in with them. So the more time a user spends on Facebook, the more money it makes. Today's social networking standards have in many ways been set by Facebook which continues to define and innovate itself. Yet Facebook did copy some core concepts from Twitter in its effort to expand its boundaries. Now Google+ has appeared and in some ways some say is a Facebook clone....only a true user can be a good judge of that.

Google+ does have some advantages over Facebook: better privacy and grouping (Circles); no irritating applications – yet; has combined Facebook and Twitter's main features; is simple, (a la Chrome vs. Firefox vs. Explorer browsers); and its (Hangout) video chat outshines Facebook's version.

But of course there are the negatives: boring design – for the moment; a lack of some features offered on Facebook; entering this marketplace about 6 years late; dubiousness of “exclusivity” i.e. by invitation only – for now; and the fact that it has not been branded as a social network vehicle....but in Google hands, this could change rapidly. Tech watchers already know that the Google strategy is to build a user base, earn trust, add applications, and make money. Although Facebook and Twitter are major leaders in this field, Google is huge and has a better overall network. What they need to do is capture the sense of lifestyle that their competitors have achieved. Until that happens, Google+ is just new and cool.