

## A Primer

# Social Media

Simply put, social media are new tools for engaging in two-way conversations with people we want to reach.

Some think social media is a passing fad, but others suggest it could be the biggest societal transformation since the Industrial Revolution.

Social media, according to Brian Solis (author of *The Essential Guide to Social Media*) are “driven by people in the communities where they communicate and congregate. They’re creating vibrant and rich cultures across online networks and using social tools to stay connected.”

Social media, he says, “removes the tendency to ‘market at’ people, and instead naturally shapes a more honest, meaningful and informative approach.”

## A tour of most common social media

### Blogs

A blog (contraction of Web log) is a publishing tool that allows anyone to broadcast any topic of interest throughout the world. Many people rely on blogs for specific information and commentary and enjoy participating in the conversation. There are 200 million blogs in the world; Gutenberg would have been stunned.

#### A successful blog

The popular instructional technology blog Electronic Papyrus was created by Jeff Hino, Mark Anderson-Wilk, and Chris LaBelle of Oregon State University Extension and Experiment Station Communications (EESC).

Statistics are in this video:  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sIFYPQjYhv8>.

**Social Media Advice:** Find out what your audience is saying by checking established blogs. Ask the people you want to reach about what social media they use.

Check out Chris LaBelle’s post about how the blog became popular: <http://blogs.oregonstate.edu/instructionaldesign/2009/09/08/blogging-lessons-learned-at-6-months-think-reach/>.

As Jeff Hino has commented, "you can lead them to social media, but can you make them drink?"

<http://blogs.oregonstate.edu/instructionaldesign/2009/08/25/you-can-lead-them-to-social-media-but-can-you-make-them-drink/>

## Microblogs (Twitter)

Twitter messages (tweets) are limited to 140 characters. Twitter is useful for as-it's-happening information, news updates and instant communication with friends and professional contacts. Check out the Mashable Social Media Guide for Twitter and other information: <http://mashable.com/2009/08/06/twitter-bots/>

A new study from Penn State University (September 2009) found that people use Twitter for more than just self expression. Twenty percent are tweeting for products and information: <http://live.psu.edu/story/41446>

### A successful Twitter site

Oregon State University pest expert Robin Rosetta sends daily tweets to alert fellow researchers and growers in the Pacific Northwest about plant pests. More details at [http://extension.oregonstate.edu/news/story.php?S\\_No=661&storyType=news](http://extension.oregonstate.edu/news/story.php?S_No=661&storyType=news)

### A thoughtful white paper about Twitter:

[http://www.kevinfenton.com/doc/Twitter white paper.pdf](http://www.kevinfenton.com/doc/Twitter%20white%20paper.pdf)

## Social Networking (Facebook)

Facebook connects people to friends and associates and is the second most popular Web site in the world. It has more than 250 million users, and 120 million of them log on to Facebook at least once a day. It is a great way to share information, photos and video. People 35 years and older are the fastest growing demographic.

**Top 500 sites on the Web:** <http://www.alexa.com/topsites>

The main Oregon State University Facebook page has more than 8,000 fans. Many departments and other units use Facebook pages to share information about their programs and events. The College of Agricultural Sciences has about 600 fans, representing students, donors, alumni and friends.

**Blog Advice:** Work together on a blog with others to make it more dynamic and less time consuming. When writing for a blog, remember: be yourself, post as often as you can and keep your posts compact. You'll enjoy communicating with other experts in your field from around the world.

**Twitter Advice:** Start small. Try tweets with a few people. Choose a title for your Twitter site with effective key words that will draw people to your subject.

**Facebook Advice:** To set the right tone, decide if you are going to use Facebook for personal or professional use, or both. Note that while you can reach the greatest number of people with Facebook, if you are conducting business through Facebook some people may choose not to participate. They may prefer a different tool, such as LinkedIn.

## Niche Networking (Ning)

Ning is a talk-and-share social media niche in which you can create social networks and communicate with members about specific interests.

**A template:** EESC has put together a Ning template for use by OSU Extension Service, Experiment Station and Agricultural Sciences faculty. Groups using the template include OSU Master Gardeners and the Master Gardener Metro group. Contact EESC for information on using the template.

## Professional Networking (LinkedIn)

Mainly used for professional networking, LinkedIn had more than 43 million registered users as of July 2009. It allows users to maintain a list with contact details of people they know and trust in business. LinkedIn also is used as a job search and recruitment tool.

## Video Sharing

Video sharing is the idea behind the popular YouTube, which has 100 million videos and is the world's fourth most popular Web site. One of five global Internet users visits YouTube daily.

OSU has its own YouTube Web page, which includes an OSU Extension YouTube channel: <http://www.youtube.com/oregonstateextension>. You can place your short videos on the Extension channel and use it to drive viewers to your Web site. You can also easily link your YouTube videos to your Drupal Web page.

Many other video-sharing sites are available, including Vimeo, Scivee and Academic Earth. For podcasts and syndicated or instructional videos, OSU also has a presence on iTunes University. Contact EESC to take advantage of the power of video in your OSU Extension communications.

For general information on video use and adoption by Internet users, see the EESC SlideShare presentation for Spring Training 2009: <http://www.slideshare.net/clabelleosu/flip-video-session>.

Check out the OSU social media directory at <http://oregonstate.edu/about/social-media-directory> for more details on how OSU uses Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and Flickr.

**Ning Advice:** Ning networks function like Facebook but are more focused virtual communities with specific topics. The communities can be invitation-only (private) or open to the general public.

**LinkedIn Advice:** Training in LinkedIn is available here: [http://learn.linkedin.com/training/?gclid=CO\\_xjKjalJ0CFSFRagodWzur\\_Q](http://learn.linkedin.com/training/?gclid=CO_xjKjalJ0CFSFRagodWzur_Q)

**Video Advice:** You can use short video clips to convey specific technical details or as teasers for more information from a publication, workshop or course. Easy-to-use video cameras such as Flip Video give you direct access to YouTube and other online services. If you follow simple Flip Video guidelines, you can produce effective short videos for your Web site and presentations.

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