

Safe use of Social Networks and Social Media for University Business

The rise of social networks such as Facebook, My Space, and LinkedIn, as well as social media sites such as YouTube, Twitter, and Flickr, has provided Internet users an unprecedented set of tools to create, maintain, and rekindle social and professional relationships. While these social networks and media sites have many useful features, users should be aware of some their downsides, particularly as it relates to use on UNT computers. These guidelines are intended to address individual use.

As social networks and media sites are designed to make information available, it may be difficult to maintain personal privacy or to restrict information only to certain persons. Some sites may have the ability to harvest your e-mail contacts or personal information and use this information in a manner in which you may not approve.

Individuals should use caution, particularly when accessing these sites from university computers.

Below are general principles for individuals to follow when using social network and media sites to avoid the potential for problems.

1. Read the privacy and acceptable use policies and seek approval from the Office of General Counsel or the Business Services Center before joining or accepting terms of use or publishing information on a social network or social media site.
2. Avoid installing toolbars and plug-ins offered on social network or social media sites. These programs tend to slow down computers, cause technical problems and have a tendency to gather data about you that you may not wish to share.
3. Don't publish information that you wouldn't want your family, co-workers, supervisors, current and future employers, etc., to see.
4. Don't publish information about others that is personal, private or protected by law on a social network.
5. Remember that others can post information about you on these sites.
6. Social networks generate most of their revenue through advertising. Don't publish information about yourself that you don't want to be used for targeted marketing.
7. Choose your friends wisely. Avoid adding people as friends if you haven't met them in person or you don't have an established relationship with them through other channels. "Friends" on social networking sites usually have access to more of your information than the casual browser.
8. Social networks are as much about relationships as they are about sharing information. Think twice before becoming a "fan" of a controversial topic, group, or

person if you wouldn't want your family, co-workers, supervisors, current and future employers to know about your support of that issue or person.

9. Avoid misrepresenting yourself or your background.

10. Don't forget that this is relatively new technology. New technology tends to be buggy, and bugs have a tendency to lead to security and privacy breaches.

11. Remember that not everything you see or read on the Internet is true. Always be sure to check sources of information before relying on what's published on social networking and media sites.