

Technology in Organizing 101: the Internet and Social Media

A Training from Picture the Homeless

Social networking sites are internet-based spaces for people to come together into “virtual communities” around shared interests, background, etc. Most of the time, people use social networking to keep in touch and share—photos from your birthday, news about your child's graduation, gossip about mutual acquaintances, etc. But social networking is also very important for GETTING THE WORD OUT. Musicians use MySpace to share their music with people for free. Photographers use Flickr to show people their work. Celebrities use Twitter to tell people what they're thinking.

Thanks to social networking technology, we're no longer at the mercy of the mainstream media. When we want to tell our side of the story, we don't have to beg the New York Times to cover it—and then feel bad because they don't. We can tell our stories, ourselves, and put it out into the world for everyone to see.

- **Blog.** Short for “weblog,” it's a journal on the web, that anyone in the world can see. People use blogs to review movies, share their personal thoughts, comment on the news, and hundreds of other reasons.
- **Facebook.** A social networking website with more than 500 million active users in July 2010, which is about one person for every fourteen in the world. Users can add people as friends and send them messages, and update their personal profiles to notify friends about themselves. Additionally, users can join networks organized by workplace, school, or college. Other social networking sites include MySpace.com, Friendster.com, and LinkedIn.com.
- **Twitter.** A social networking and microblogging service which enables its users to send and read other users' messages called tweets—text-based posts of up to 140 characters. Users may subscribe to other author tweets. Users can send and receive tweets via the Twitter website, text messages, and in other ways. Twitter currently has more than 100 million users worldwide.
- **YouTube.** A video-sharing website on which users can upload, share, and view videos. YouTube uses Adobe Flash Video technology to display a wide variety of user-generated video content, including movie clips, TV clips, and music videos, as well as amateur content such as video blogging and short original videos. Anyone can watch the videos, and you can register for free to upload an unlimited number of videos. Videos that are considered to contain potentially offensive content are available only to registered users 18 and older. In November 2006, YouTube, LLC was bought by Google Inc. for \$1.65 billion, and now operates as a subsidiary of Google.
- **Flickr.** An image hosting and video hosting website, web services suite, and online community. In addition to being a popular website for users to share and embed personal photographs, the service is widely used by bloggers to host images that they embed in blogs and social media. It claims to host more than 4 billion images.

GROUP EXERCISE: Everyone name one way in which we can use one of these social networking sites in support of our organizing work.

CERTIFICATION HOMEWORK: Create one piece of media for distribution through a social networking channel. **GO-ROUND:** What are some examples of things people could do?