

Tell your story online with Facebook, Twitter



John Deans

Three and a half years ago I first wrote about MySpace.com and the virtual hunting ground it had become for predators. I can still remember the shock on my client's face when she saw the revealing pictures that one of her friend's daughters had posted on her MySpace.com profile.

Not much has changed over the years and unfortunately numerous kids have been killed by deviants gathering personal information about their potential young victims from MySpace.com. With over 73 million users now, MySpace.com is very established with the youth so we just have to deal with it as best we can.

The new player in the social networking game is called Facebook.com and it is basically a grown up version of MySpace.com with a bit more civility and purpose. I jumped into Facebook when I heard numerous friends, talk show hosts and even politicians setting up their profiles and communicating through Facebook.com.

Dan Patrick is a state senator, a talk show host and owner of KSEV-700AM. After hearing him talk about how he updates his Facebook page with all the senatorial information about progress

on bills he is working on in the Texas Senate, I had to give Facebook some serious consideration.

Like MySpace, Facebook is free and it allows you to set up your online profile with both a public and private space to deposit information about you. The higher detail you put in your profile and the more open your settings

are, the better chance you will have of some old friends, classmates, and acquaintances find you and request to be your friend at Facebook.com.

I spent about 20 minutes inputting my profile information on Facebook including my political and religious views (Right-wing Christian activist — run, you lefties!), education background, work history, along with a complete list of favorites and past times. That same weekend I was notified about half a dozen people that worked at my old company Parantet who wanted to join me as a friend on Facebook.

That next week, I started looking up old high school friends I had not seen for over 28 years. Over the past month they are coming out of the wood work and my friends list is growing daily now. It has been really neat linking back up with people I thought I would

never have the opportunity to hear from again.

Facebook makes the world a much smaller place. Some of those old friends and former co-workers are in other states and even other countries now, but with Facebook they are just a mouse click away.

Many of my old high school friends are quite surprised that I have gone from a surfer rocker racing around Houston to a County Computer Consultant living on a ranch outside of Brenham.

The automated lookup engine built into Facebook is amazing. With just the initial information I put into my Profile, Facebook found numerous friends of mine. After linking up with them I was asked if I know their friends which put me in touch with even more people I haven't seen in decades.

I usually check after work and see what everyone has been up to during the day. You can tell who has a lot of time on their hands by the number of entries the make a day. Now that some long lost friends have been found, odds are I will personally email or even call them up and invite them up to our place for a reunion meal.

A word of caution though, remember my article a couple of weeks ago on "What Not To Do When Looking For A Job" and be very careful what you

post on Facebook.com. Remember, that some prospective or even current employer may see your posted activities.

Another new and smaller scale social networking tool is Twitter. At Twitter.com you set up a free account with a name to post short messages about what you are doing. In just 140 characters or less you can Instant Message short phrases like I did last week "Deans going to the Tax Day Tea Party Protest at the Alamo!!" to my followers.

I grabbed the name "deansconsulting," which matches my company name and Web site for marketing purposes. Companies can start their own corporate marketing campaigns at Twitter.com for free.

Some of the Twitter people I follow are Glenn Beck (FoxNews.com), Dan Patrick (state senator) and Karl Rove (genius behind former President George W. Bush). Twitter was started only three years ago and now has over 12 million users with 40 percent in the United States and the rest spread throughout the world.

Twitter also has a good lookup tool to find other Twitter users, but I had much better luck on Facebook finding old friends. I plan to run both of them till I see which one serves me better.

I have a much larger audience with Facebook and I am able to distribute

my columns and videos better on that digital medium. There is even a way to link up your Twitter account to mirror your Facebook postings.

The iPhone has apps for both Facebook and Twitter that I have downloaded and installed. When I get stuck and become board I'll whip out my iPhone, fire up the Facebook app and see what people are up to.

From that protest at the Alamo last week with over 20,000 other raging conservatives and patriots I was able to take a snapshot and post it on my Facebook page while at the rally. Now that is digital democracy!

Whether you choose to use Facebook, Twitter or any other social networking site always remember that they all store and can distribute your personal information for profit down the road. This of course means more sales calls, junk email, and maybe an old flame coming back to haunt you.

Bottom line: Facebook.com is great for fishing up those long lost buddies and Twitter.com a way to tell all your online friends and family what you're up to today.

Next week's column: Sexting.
John Deans of DeansConsulting.com is a Brenham area computer networking consultant who can be reached at 289-2233 or John@DeansConsulting.com for questions and comments.