

Be at the forefront with Virtual Volunteering

social networking

Social networking sites are becoming ever more popular. Through networking sites you can discover old friends, meet new ones and keep up with what everyone is doing. You can share your photos, music, videos and anything else you think people should know about you.

Social networking sites are all different, but work on a similar premise. You create a profile of yourself including any information you want people to be aware of. This may include a photo of yourself, your name, date of birth, where you live, what your interests are. You can add or as little information to your profile as you wish. You should also check the privacy conditions of the overall site to check who will be able to access which pieces of information on your profile.

Once you have a profile you are ready to start networking. Many people start by searching for friends they already know, if you want to be linked to that person by the site (become part of their network) you will have to send a request to them. The host site usually generates these requests for you, again each is different, but it is usually a simple process of selecting 'become friends with this person'.

Many networking sites also have groups dedicated to a particular hobby, interest or place. Using these groups you can make new friends and share your interests and knowledge with others.

It is currently estimated that 7 out of the 20 most visited sites in the world are social networking sites; below are a few of the most famous examples.

[MySpace](#) - MySpace is perhaps the most well-known networking site. Members have a profile which displays their information and can also set up a blog, upload pictures and music (provided they have the rights to the music) and join groups. MySpace is now synonymous with music as it was used to launch the careers of several high-profile musicians.

[Facebook](#) - originally for college students in America, Facebook is now open to anyone and is the fastest growing social networking site. As with most sites, Facebook members create a profile, upload pictures, join groups and discussions and 'poke' each other. Facebook has recently made headlines after agreeing to allow external searches of their [profiles](#). Facebook users can opt-out of this scheme if they wish.

[Bebo](#) - is the third most popular social networking site but currently only less than 2% of the market. The problem for smaller sites is obvious; the fewer people on your site, the more restricted the networking potential is and therefore the fewer people you'll attract.

[SixDegrees](#) - social networking site launched by actor Kevin Bacon based on the game 'six degrees of Kevin Bacon'. The idea is to encourage 'social networking with a social conscience' asking members to promote charities through their personal profiles and use the site to learn about other charities and fundraise for their own.

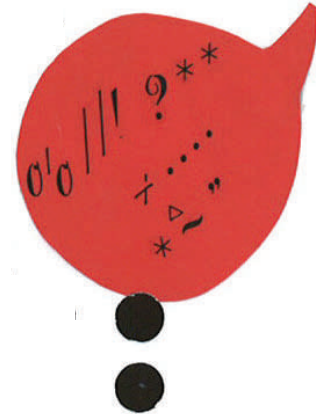


Virtual Volunteering ACTIVISM

social networking

Social Networking sites are useful for doing exactly that - networking.

One example is the website [SixDegrees](#) set up by Kevin Bacon to encourage social networking with a social conscience. Bacon is taking the idea of a small world (demonstrated by at his expense by the game Six Degrees of Kevin Bacon) and using it to encourage people to mobilise their personal networks to support charities and fundraise.



Social Networking sites such as [Facebook](#), [MySpace](#) and [Bebo](#) can also be useful for social networking. Try searching on groups or interests to find other people who have the same passions as you. Or set up a group to share information and knowledge, or even just show that there are lots of you out there who feel the same!

Social networking sites can also be used to publicise events and even invite your friends to them. The more friends you have, the more people you can get your message out to. We're not saying everyone will listen, but if one in 10 people take notice of your campaign, that's 100 people from your 1000 friends. Social networking sites also give you a head start by helping you look for the people who are interested in the same things as you.

You can also use networking sites to set up blogs and make photos and videos available. Although not conventional networking sites, websites like [Flickr](#), [YouTube](#) and [Last.fm](#) allow you to see what others are doing, seeing and listening to and to contact them about their activities.

Social networking sites are best used to set up a campaign and to publicise your activities; if you want to launch a podcast, vodcast, wiki or petition you'll probably need to find a separate host to do this with. However, networking sites are invaluable for getting your message out to a wider audience.