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**MySpace**

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# 1. The Lowdown.

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MySpace is an international online community composed of personal home pages, which users create and then update as little or as often as they like. The result could be considered similar to a “live journal” for other members to view. MySpace was the first example of a ‘social networking’ site to make the headlines and go mainstream.

When signing up for the free service, members create their profile by entering details about themselves and voluntarily customizing their profile pages by selecting different appearances, adding photos, videos, music tracks, and by blogging.



MySpace members can connect with other users by looking up profiles and then inviting people to be “MySpace” friends, thus creating a mass online network.

MySpace has added additional features such as news feeds, instant messaging, and Myspace TV to add value for members and retain members as other networking sites, such as Facebook and Bebo have increased in popularity. By 2006 MySpace had escalated into a phenomenon especially in the teenage youth demographic. News Corporation bought the company, founded by Tom Anderson at eUniverse in early 2004, just two years later for \$327 million.

# 2. Why do I need to know about it?

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Daily computer use for social networking has tripled since 2000 to 1 hour and 22 minutes a day on average. MySpace confirmed the power of online media in comparison to traditional media and appealed overwhelmingly to youth. As Internet use among 12 to 17-year-old reaches 87%, their online world became as important as their real world, and in many cases more important.

## a) The numbers.

MySpace has grown internationally to currently around 300 million accounts worldwide, and is the 6th most popular web site in the U.S. About 270,000 new members sign up every day and 10 million businesses maintain a profile on the service.

## b) Advertising

In early 2008, MySpace launched the first social networking site advertising product which went over and above banner ads on shared pages. “SelfServe by MySpace” offers advertisers targeted display ads on profile pages which they can purchase, create and analyze the performance of ads throughout the MySpace network. The new tool enables users to select from a number of ad targeting factors such as geographic, demographic and, at the time of writing, 1,000 various user-interest categories. “HyperTargeting by MySpace” allows marketers to buy advertising targeted to specific interest-based segments of the MySpace audience. For example, MySpace might not only have a good idea if a user likes a particular movie but might also be able to get a list of the films they love.

### c) Music

Due to its ability to connect users with musicians, whether independent or corporate, Myspace is strongly associated with the music industry. MySpace has developed innovation and functionality on the site to further position itself as a competitor to online music sites, such as i-Tunes, and large music companies.

For MySpace members, it's easy to find out what's happening with favorite bands and solo artists. You can also play music by popular bands on your home page, legitimately and free of charge. For artists, profiles are slightly different from normal profiles in that artists are allowed to upload up to six MP3 songs. Unsigned musicians can use MySpace to post and sell music, which has proven popular among MySpace users.

Much has been written about bands launching and making it big on MySpace, e.g., the U.K.'s Arctic Monkeys. It's vital to understand that bands like the Arctic Monkeys were successful because their music sold well, not because they had a magic MySpace trick up their sleeves. There are hundreds of thousands of new bands on MySpace that have not been successful. Using MySpace effectively merely helps a band that was always going to do well, do better—especially within a key youth category.

### d) Tools to Marketing

Marketing on MySpace is done via friends groups, forums, blogs, bulletins, newsletters and classified ads. The success stories seem to have been more in the entertainment category than products, although Apple has had some success launching their ubiquitous iPod. A good entertainment example would be the MySpace page for the movie *Superman Returns*. The film studio customized the page with simple graphics and a trailer but also gave users a reason to come to the page—they could get free images for their wallpaper, 'buddy' icons, and forums. This marketing was very inexpensive and encouraged fan interaction.

Many 2008 presidential candidates have created MySpace profiles in an effort to attract the younger voters. Most profiles feature photos, blogs, videos, that encourage viewers to get actively involved.

## 3. The thing to remember is...

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Despite guidelines on subtlety, the advertising on Myspace has been widely criticized as extensive, disruptive, and annoying, and there is little evidence to date, of it's effectiveness .

For clients that place paid-for advertising on other users' pages, there is often no guarantee regarding it's placement which has led to some criticism of inappropriateness.

Further criticism has arisen concerning online stalking because online predators have led some youths into dangerous, real-life situations (MySpace users must be 14 years of age or above). Examples are few and far between but always leads to continuous scrutiny and negative press of the Myspace brand, which may be a concern to potential marketers.



