

## “My Space”

Modern day reliance on computers and Internet use make social networking relatively easy. Just a few clicks of a mouse and any computer user can navigate themselves to MySpace.com—a popular method of meeting friends.

Way back in 2003, two twenty-something guys working in dot.com businesses decided to create a website dedicated to assisting people in social networking. Chris De Wolfe and Tom Anderson founded MySpace.com, headquartered in Los Angeles with their parent company now located in New York, after its purchase from Rupert Murdoch’s News Corp. for a mere \$580 million last July.

MySpace.com provides a centralized virtual location for people to meet friends, promote their music and acting abilities, in addition to market products seeking recognition. Initial users were musicians and music fans, sprouting the evolution of MySpace Music. This side-link of MySpace.com keeps this business alive and thriving.

A Newsweek article published on April 3, 2006 states, “...Anderson and De Wolfe understood first that people, especially younger people who grew up with a mouse in hand, would get more out of it if they could express themselves by putting all their information where friends could see it.” Thus, a basic setup for networking establishes itself in three simple steps.

1. Join MySpace and create a profile. Profiles contain two major blurbs: “About Me” and “Who I’d Like to Meet”. General interests and personal details, including marital status and physical appearance get posted along with pictures and music for the public’s eye. A list of “Top 8 Friends” accompanies personal profiles, in addition to a comment section.
2. Invite friends to join MySpace and search MySpace for friends who are part of self-created initial “Friend Space”.
3. All of the people in personal friends’ Friend Space become part of one’s network. There are now connections to additional people than there were 15 minutes ago.

More than 65 million people belong to MySpace. The majority of its users are 16-25 years old. Adults got involved with Rupert Murdoch’s acquisition of the company. The youngest members are 14 years old, although some younger users lie about their age because being on MySpace is the cool thing to do. Fourteen and fifteen year olds automatically receive private profiles, while those sixteen years and older lack the option to restrict profiles. However, all data can be restricted to people other than “friends”.

A problem with MySpace involves the significant lack of restrictions, especially given the fact that 25% of the users are minors with adults looking at their “stuff”. In a recent report posted on CNN.com on Monday June 12, 2006, a sixteen year old “tricked” her parents into getting her a passport so she could visit a man in the Middle East who she met on MySpace.com. Unfortunately, creepy people exist in our world, and sites such as

MySpace.com allow these sketchy individuals access to personal information that can potentially lead to dangerous situations.

The people at MySpace deal with this situation and inaccuracies of age by assigning one-third of their 175-person workforce to police profiles. Eliminated from all profiles are hate speech and nudity. Otherwise, pretty much anything can exist on a personal profile.

The largest numbers of new sign-ups occur on Mondays, perhaps after learning of other people using the site and discussions regarding its popularity. Despite the uneasiness many parents experience when learning of their children's existence on MySpace, hundreds of thousands sign up daily.