

# Happy students. Healthy living.

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## Media Intelligence Social networking isn't what it used to be

While networking has been a useful activity since people first began interacting with each other, internet-based social networking is a direct result of the technological advancement of the late-20th and early-21st centuries. As computers became more common in the home and telecommunications technologies expanded, more and more users began taking advantage of new services that gave them access to the earliest digital domains and the communities that developed.

In 2020, social networks have become less about building social connections and more about generating a steady level of user engagement for advertisers who pay social media companies to help them create visibility. This engagement is used to provide advertising revenue that can fund the operations of a social network and it creates a direct stream of personal information. Every like, follow, post and share is monitored, stored, categorized and studied. As recent media reports have highlighted, this collection can happen without your knowledge and may have consequences.

Social media engagement is a big business; keeping you and your follower list online and active every day is a critical part of the business strategy. To keep you engaged, many companies can curate what you see and what you post to create an emotional response that keeps you returning to

their services. And that can have both short-term and long-term consequences for users, including increased anxiety, depression and FOMO (fear of missing out).

In order to separate yourself from the side-effects of social media and to reduce the likelihood that your personal information will be compromised, follow these five recommendations:

- 1.** Expect that everything you do online—either on a laptop, tablet or smartphone—is being monitored, recorded and shared. If you receive targeted advertising while visiting websites or in your email's inbox, you can see how your web activity is already being used to track your interests and presence online.
- 2.** Review and set stricter privacy settings for any web browsers or social media applications you use on a regular basis. Increasing these settings to higher levels can give you greater control over what is reported and shared as well as how long third-party data collectors and websites can have access to your information and activities.
- 3.** Think before you post. Once you post something online, you no longer have any control over where it seen, shared, stored or used. Your posts, responses, photos and videos may exist even after you delete them and can be shared by others in ways you may not be able to stop.
- 4.** Don't openly post sensitive or private information online—even in your direct messages. The more you post online about your life and activities, the easier it becomes for others to piece together who you are, where you live, where you like to spend your time and when you're away from home.
- 5.** Take a break from your social networks. Social media companies want you to stay online all of the time. By choosing one day each week to turn off your networks and focus on what makes you happy, you disengage from the pace and control social networks want to exert over you that may not always be to your benefit.

**For additional tips and resources,  
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