

## Social Networks: A Man's World

Social media has received an astounding amount of scrutiny over the past couple of years. Not only is it covered almost every day in the media trade press, but it's also in the popular press on a regular basis. While the media trade is focused on epic successes and failures of social media campaigns and key players, the popular press likes to cover how people are getting themselves into trouble with social media or solving crimes like modern day Hardy Boys.

With every new story, the pervasiveness of social media -- and the need to utilize this medium to interact with consumers -- grows. Taking a quick glance through the available research and reports on the topic would lead one to believe that social media is all about reaching females. There's no doubt that females are a popular target but in all the bandwagon jumping, the media has overlooked how men are using social media.

Just as women have taken social networking and made it their own, so have men. Most interesting is how men have adapted to social media and how it reflects deeper cultural and relationship insights, which will have an influence in the development of social media campaigns.


Based upon our current Digital Consumer Portrait data, we see that 66% of women are social networkers compared to 56% of men. Since women are typically slower to adopt new technology, the excitement and focus on their usage is understandable. However, it's very important not to lose sight of the fact that **over half of the men in the US participate in a social network**. And they behave differently than women.

### Stranger in our Midst

Imagine if someone reached out to you and said, "Hey, we both like the Hardy Boys, we should be friends" (go with the thought that you actually dig on the boy detectives). Would you shrug and agree, or back away slowly and block this person from ever contacting you again?

Take a moment...

If you said, "What the heck?" and became friends with this person, odds are you are a man. Demonstrating behavior that shouldn't come as any surprise to anthropologists, men are more likely to have people in their social networking circle that they have never met in person. They are also more likely to accept all friend requests, regardless of how well they know a person. Perhaps this is because men view social networks as public spaces rather than private areas.



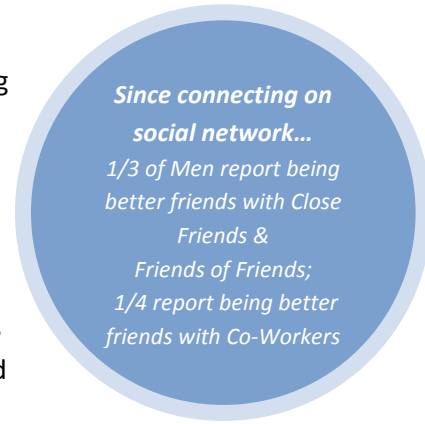
*71% of men have people they have never met in person in their social network*

Why? Joe, 36, Senior Systems Architect, says, "I can only speak for myself - there are social circles within which I participate that are based on a mutual interest rather than deep interpersonal bond. So, what binds me to the BMX community is a shared love of the sport and lifestyle, a shared experience of the historical context, and a drive to ride with like-minded people. That drive for the 'team' aspect necessarily implies that I will have to network with loose associations."

On a deeper level, this behavior highlights two cultural aspects that we see more in men. First, the team mentality: they may not know everyone well but they are on a team and that forms a bond. Second, for many men the perceived risk of sharing personal information with unfamiliar people is small.

### Reach Out and Touch Someone

When it comes to the people that men do know, social networking has had an interesting impact on those relationships. Men are more likely than women to report becoming better friends with close friends, friends of friends and co-workers since adding them to their social network. Furthermore, they are more likely than women to report that texting, phone calls, emails, and frequency of hanging out have increased with these people. Social networks have given men a new way to foster relationships, both online and offline.

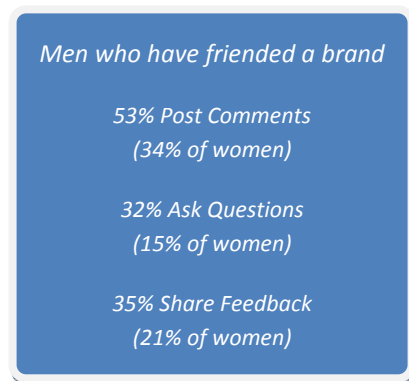


It also gives them a way to connect with their exes, as a third of men say they've used social networks to connect with an ex.

Dan, 42, Sales Executive, says, "I am able to stay in touch with friends that I haven't heard from or seen in (for some of them) 30+ years. I also know what is going on with relatives who I never would see outside a party once a year. When I do see them I have things to talk to them about and I understand them better."

### Active Participants

A little over a third of men report having friended a brand or product, whereas 46% of women have engaged in this behavior. Even though fewer men are friending brands, what they do once a connection has been made is vastly different.



Men are more likely to post comments, share feedback, and ask questions; in other words, they are more likely to be actively participating with the brand. Moreover, a greater number of men expect the brands/products they are interacting with to actively post and respond to comments.

### Sharing is Caring

Using a rating scale ranging from "I Share Everything That Happens to Me" to "I Share Very Little", we asked all social networkers to rate themselves on how social they consider themselves to be. At first the data did not surprise us. We hypothesized that the data would reveal a segment of social networkers who were "Heavy Sharers" -- and we did. However, we didn't expect to see that men were 1.5 times

more likely than women to be “Heavy Sharers”. This same finding held true when we asked about their professional life, with two times more men than women saying they are Heavy Sharers professionally.

Being a heavy sharer has its unique price. Men were more likely than women to say that they had posted something they regretted on a social network.

Michael, 24, Video Editor, “I think the benefit of sharing information on a social network is basically a quick easy way of letting people know you're still alive and what you're doing! Of course you could call all your friends and family and let them know how your trip was and mail them all copies of your pictures but with applications like Facebook, MySpace, etc., you can quickly give a verbal and visual update of your whereabouts to a majority of the people.”

### Implications for Brands

Successful social media campaigns geared toward men need to incorporate what we have learned about how they use this continually evolving channel.

Our key take-aways include:

#### 1. Men like to interact

- If they like your brand/product enough to friend or follow you, they expect you to listen and maintain a dialogue with them.
  - A great example of this interaction is Nine Inch Nails’ Trent Reznor’s campaign to raise funds to help Eric De La Cruz receive a heart transplant. After initially offering only high-end donation options (backstage passes and such), his followers prompted him to offer a \$10 donation amount for people who wanted to help but couldn’t afford the more costly gift. The effort raised almost a \$1 million dollars in about two weeks and brought a community of fans together.
- Help men connect with their passions
  - Everyone has the things that they love – be it BMX, gaming, or soccer. The point isn’t to develop and lure people to a network you develop from scratch, but to make yourself relevant within the networks that already exist.
    - Sponsored by – allow people to have your brand sponsor an event. Offer images/branding they can place on an event page, coupons to print and give out, and post event photo tags.
    - Available experts – whether a special occurrence or always on, make experts or special individuals readily available and set them loose.

#### 2. Men want to connect with their friends

- Provide a gentle nudge to call/text a friend
  - Can be triggered by date, by posting of friend (based on a set of keywords, e.g., “Superbowl” or “ugg”), or other events
- Give men a reason to connect
  - The status that comes with being the first to know about something is addicting; exclusive access that can be shared

3. Add flavor to the sharing
  - Elements like 'brought to you by', 'sponsored by', etc. – buttons to post against pictures and videos

### Final Thoughts

Grandiose proclamations of the power of social media have been made to death. Rather than come up with a different way to say the same things as everyone else, I'll leave you with this: pay attention, don't over think, blend rather than force, enable. And remember, behind every great social media campaign, are women -- and men.

If you have any questions or would like more information, please contact Joy Liuzzo at [jliuzzo@insightexpress.com](mailto:jliuzzo@insightexpress.com).

### About the Research and InsightExpress

The research comes from InsightExpress' Digital Consumer Portrait, collected quarterly in 2009. Between 1,200-1,500 respondents complete the survey each quarter and the results are weighted to reflect the online population.

InsightExpress is a leading provider of high-quality, digital marketing research and plays a preeminent role in the measurement of advertising effectiveness across online, mobile and other media. Through its patented technologies, proprietary solutions, world-class expertise and time-tested research principles, InsightExpress transforms the way advertisers, agencies, publishers and researchers optimize their marketing activities. InsightExpress is headquartered in Stamford, CT, with offices in San Francisco, New York, and Los Angeles. For more information, visit [www.insightexpress.com](http://www.insightexpress.com) or call 203-406-3233.