

FEBRUARY 28, 2006

Social Networking

# Niche Networking by the Numbers

Cyberspace is full of community sites to help you plan a trip, get a job, or make a friend. Here's a rundown

By Alex Halperin

You want to kick off an online social life -- but don't want space on MySpace? Fret not. There are scads of alternative social networking sites aimed at plugging you into a community of like-minded Web surfers.

There's also financial motivation for creating online communities if they can replicate the success of sites such as MySpace, whose parent was snapped up for \$580 million by News Corp., or teen site Tagged.com and online directory Facebook.com, both of which snared multimillion dollar backing by investors.

Whatever their intent, there are hundreds of niche networking sites. And the number appears to be rising rapidly. Here's just a sampling -- from names that are probably familiar to you, like professional networking site LinkedIn, to networks that are just getting off the ground, such as myYearbook.com, which could erode MySpace's lead among snarky social teens and young adults.



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# AirG

[www.airg.com](http://www.airg.com)

**Numbers:** More than 7 million registered across several social networks

**Typical user:** Web surfer who wants to stay connected while on the go

**The skinny:** AirG provides a variety of cell phone-based social networks to customers of different wireless service providers. In January, the company launched "The Lounges" on Sprint Nextel phones. The system lets users post profiles and photos and share wireless messages through a Java-based interface. Themes include Latino, sports, and friends.

**Raking it in:** User subscription fees vary depending on the network



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# PureVolume

www.purevolume.com

**Numbers:** 228,000 registered artist profiles; some 300,000 listener profiles

**Typical user:** Musicians who find general-interest networks too cluttered to spread the word about their bands

**The skinny:** Bands and musicians flock to online networks to introduce themselves to the world. PureVolume aims to keep its focus on musicians and their music. It lets bands upload songs and perhaps reach a more discerning or influential audience than through a more general interest site.

**Raking it in:** Online ads and sales of premium services, such as more space for songs. Brett Weitunsky, a partner at parent company Unborn Media, says PureVolume would like to expand by letting bands hawk their "merch" from the site and by arranging partnerships with booking agents.

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# LinkedIn

www.linkedin.com

**Numbers:** About 5 million

**Typical user:** Job seekers who want to use personal connections to get their résumés in the right hands; employers intent on a targeted candidate search

**The skinny:** Funded by Sequoia Capital and Greylock Partners, LinkedIn is out to prove the old saw that it's not who you are, but who you know. Employers can tap their acquaintances to find qualified job candidates, while seekers can expand their networks by "linking" to networks of people they know.

**Raking it in:** Some advertising; companies pay to post jobs and for other premium services. Founded in 2003, the company expects to be profitable in March.

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My Contacts: **Colleagues**

## Find past or present colleagues

*Get connected and never lose touch again!*

This page shows you which of your current and past colleagues are already using LinkedIn.

Invite these people to become connections to make sure your network is complete.

Worked elsewhere? [Add positions to your profile](#)

#### CURRENT POSITION(S)

**LinkedIn** Colleagues

Last checked:  
2/10/2006

[Find New](#)

[View all](#)

#### PAST POSITION(S)

**Microsoft** Colleagues

50 of your Microsoft colleagues are already LinkedIn.

[View all Microsoft colleagues](#)

**Boston Consulting Group** Colleagues

50 of your Boston Consulting Group colleagues are already LinkedIn.

[View all Boston Consulting Group colleagues](#)

Social Networking

# MyYearBook

www.MyYearBook.com

**Numbers:** More than 400,000

**Typical user:** Teens bored with MySpace

**The skinny:** MyYearbook's lively interface includes elements of Facebook's school theme and MySpace-esque irreverence in a yearbook theme. Superlatives and autographs abound. Started in 2005 by New Jersey brother-and-sister duo David and Catherine Cook (with funding assistance from their entrepreneurial older brother, Geoff), MyYearBook offers a T-shirt or thong underwear to members who coax five friends to join. The approach may be working. The number of unique visitors to MyYearBook leapt 44% in December from November.

**Raking it in:** No current sources of revenue. Geoff Cook says the site has been approached by advertisers and it's exploring other opportunities.

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The screenshot shows the MyYearBook website interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with links like Home, Profile, Friends, Locker, Classes, Groups, Blogs, Calendar, Parties, Settings, Search, and Messages. A banner for 'Bully Thom!' is visible. Below the navigation is a 'Profile' section for 'Dave's Yearbook' with a popularity of 404719 members. The profile includes a photo of a young man, his age (17), last login time, and a list of 'Dave's Favorites' including bands like Kottonmouth Kings and Sublime.

Dave's Profile			
Basic	Personal	Contact	Professional
Name:	Dave C		
Gender:	Male		
Location:	SOUTH PLAINFIELD, NEW JERSEY, UNITED STATES, 08558		
Date of Birth:	22nd Jun 1988		
Relationship Status:	Single		
Looking For:	Friendship, Random Play, Business, Whatever I can get		
Interested In:	Women		
Political Views:	Who Cares		
<b>Dave's Favorites:</b>			
Favorite Music:	Kottonmouth Kings, Sublime, Zebrahead, Foo Fighters, Jurassic 5, John Butler Trio, The Offspring, DMB, Sum 41, Disturbed, NDN, Steriogram, Black Eyed Peas, 311, Flogging Molly, Gorillaz		

Social Networking

# Stickam

[www.stickam.com](http://www.stickam.com)

**Numbers:** About 20,000

**Typical user:** People looking to add a little video to their online lives

**The skinny:** Launched in February, 2006 (though available in a testing version earlier), Stickam lets subscribers use javascript or HTML code to add video to online sites or a social network profile. It can also be used for video conferencing or to accompany eBay auctions.

**Raking it in:** Stickam relies on its creator, Advanced Video Communications, a video-conferencing outfit. The company may sell advertising and offer a premium service that would let users deploy video simultaneously to various sites.



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# TripConnect

www.tripconnect.com

**Numbers:** Around 5,000

**Typical user:** Travelers looking for the inside scoop on vacation destinations

**The skinny:** This tiny friends- and family-funded social network aims to create a community of adventurers who are willing to rate and discuss the places they've visited or plan to visit. Some analysts are skeptical that advertising will take off on sites dominated by user-generated content. TripConnect hopes to be an exception.

**Raking it in:** Advertising

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**Berlin** Average Rating: ★★★★★

**Ratings:**  
 Nightlife: 4.3  
 Outdoor Activities: 3.6  
 Rest & Relaxation: 2.0  
 Restaurants: 3.3  
 Shopping: 4.0  
 Sightseeing: 5.0

[Review](#) [Add to Places Been](#) Total Reviews: 3

**Reviews by TripConnect Members**

Rating: ★★★★★  
 ... particularly a beautiful city, but full of history...[more](#)

Rating: ★★★★★  
 ... every day, this city becomes more exciting, vibrant and lively with arts, culture, new and new construction. It's a youthful pla...[more](#)

Rating: ★★★★★  
 ... from Canada  
 ... teenage daughter and I went to Berlin with very little lead-up time and were totally with our experience. The atmosphere, arc...[more](#)

**Berlin** Rating: ★★★★★  
 By: [\[User Name\]](#)  
 Review: Jackhammers have replaced jackboots and the Iron Curtain has fallen to the Velvet Rope.

TripConnect destination page – Composite score at top Reviews by a friend shown first, then review by a friend of a friend, then reviews by other users.



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# aSmallWorld

www.asmallworld.net

**Numbers:** About 130,000

**Typical user:** Jet-setters who surf the Net

**The skinny:** Founded by Erik Wachtmeister in 2004, aSmallWorld is an invitation-only digital Rolodex that lets members share travel tips and engage in online discussions on topics of interest. It has a global marketplace for conducting business away from eBay's huddled masses.

The site is not for everyone. To join, you have to be invited by a "trusted" member, i.e., one who's got permission to sponsor newbies. "If you have no friends who are members yet," the site explains, "you simply need to be patient."

And once you're there, you'd better play by a set of rules that discourages social climbing -- lest you be banished to a parallel community called aBigWorld, which lacks some of the features and exclusivity of aSmallWorld.

**Raking it in:** Advertising. aSmallWorld has hosted a gathering for members at the ritzy French resort St. Tropez, and acting president Nirav Tolia says the site plans to branch into additional ways that will enable members to meet offline. Future gatherings might also generate revenue for aSmallWorld.

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