Interacting with Online Communities

An online community is made up of a group of people who use the internet to communicate over a shared interest.

There are a variety of tools that these online communities use to communicate with each other.
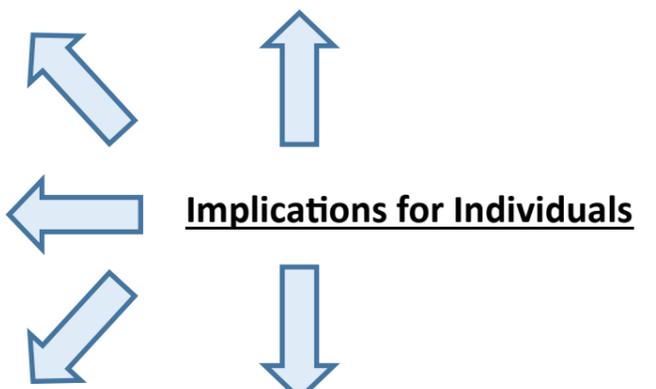
Social Media	Social Media websites, such as Facebook, allow you to visit (or Like) pages dedicated to topics of interest.	**Instant Messaging**	Instant Messaging allows you to have a text-based, real-time conversation between two people, or a small group.
Blogs, Microblogs & Vlogs	Blogs & Microblogs are websites where you can write posts about news and opinion on a topic of interest. Vlogs are similar but are done in video form, rather than written posts.	**Podcasts**	Podcasts are audio or video files that are shared over the internet to share information on a particular topic.
Wikis	Wikis are a website where the content is created by a community of users who share a common interest.	**Forums**	Forums are websites where users can post messages which can then be responded to by other forum users to take part in a discussion.
Chatrooms	Chatrooms are websites that allow for online communities to communicate via short text messages on a shared topic of interest.		

Implications for Individuals

User experience

A good user experience is required to keep users on your site. They expect it to be easy to use to perform actions, it should have good performance, available to them to use and accessible to any individual disabilities.

Advertising

It is free to use for individuals, but advertising must be accepted in its place based on profile information. This can lead to impulse purchases. You also need to pay for an internet connection.

Use

People use online communities that meet their personal reasons for accessing it. This might be to access the latest news or keep in touch with friends. They also may have individual needs for accessibility for disabled people or for certain devices or connections. Without that, they will look at other online

Personal information could be misused

Personal information or photos could be used for identity fraud or cyberbullying for example. Employees may see posts and this could affect employment.
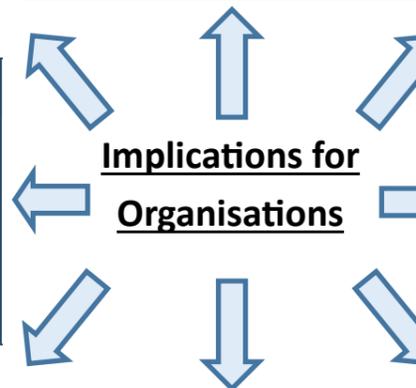
User profiles can be hacked

User profiles can be hacked and personal data stolen and misused. Not all sites implement the best security procedures and this might lead to bank fraud, identity fraud, cyber bullying etc.

Implications for Organisations

User Experience

Sites used should be easy to use, quick to load, available anywhere and accessible to employees and customers with disabilities.

Customer Needs

Online communities must respond to customer needs effectively and timely.

Cost

Organisations may need to hire and train staff and might want to pay to boost awareness of their online community.

Implementation

It will take time to implement an online community and will require extensive testing.

Systems

Data may need to be transferred and systems may need to be able to communicate with each other. This may cause downtime.

Productivity

Productivity can be improved by aiding communication but can lead to employees being distracted from their jobs.

Working Practices

New guidelines will be needed to ensure the correct use of online communities by employees.

Security

Businesses should protect themselves from having their accounts hacked and misused.

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User Experience	Customer Needs	Cost

Use

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