

## Social networking

There has been a dramatic increase in the popularity of social networking sites. Can they benefit small businesses?

1 Have you visited any of the following websites? Compare your answer with a partner.

[www.MySpace](http://www.MySpace) [www.Facebook](http://www.Facebook) [www.Orkut](http://www.Orkut) [www.Bepo](http://www.Bepo) [www.YouTube](http://www.YouTube) [www.LinkedIn](http://www.LinkedIn)

2 Scan the transcript of a business programme and underline any of the websites from exercise 1.

**Good evening. Tonight, on the business programme, we are looking at the phenomenon of 'social networking'. Can it help businesses? Mark, can you tell us just what 'social networking' is?**

• Good evening Jenny. Well, social networking sites, such as Facebook and Bepo, allow users to create a personal profile. LinkedIn, for instance, allows old colleagues, acquaintances and business clients to access your contact information. Most social networks are completely free. The Orkut has thousands of members worldwide. Did you know that MySpace is now the sixth most popular English-language website in the world?

**Really? So how do sites like Facebook make money?**

• Well, the site generates revenue from advertising.

**Aha. Do you think social networking can help businesses?**

• Definitely. Take the music world. As you know, it was fans of the *Arctic Monkeys* who helped promote them. They used MySpace to spread the word; the band did not go through the traditional route of first

finding a recording contract. That's the power of social networking.

**OK. How else could these sites help businesses?**

• Well, these sites can help people find a job. Most people actually find jobs through personal connections.

**But it's not without problems, right. Some people say that there are now cases of identity theft? Janet.**

◊Yes, you can post up too much personal information. And how do we know that the information is true? Plus, a lot of people break copyright – using other people's photographs and video clips without permission. Just look at YouTube.

**Janet, are you against the idea of social networking?**

◊Well, I just think it's for young people. In business, the most effective networking is face to face. These sites just encourage workers to waste time. Nothing works better at promoting a company than ... solid marketing.

• I disagree. Businesses operate globally, and social networks make it easier to keep in touch with contacts around the world. This can be beneficial for entrepreneurs and small businesses looking to expand their contact base, share ideas ... even clients.

3 Read the whole transcript. How can social networking sites help businesses? What problems are there?

4 Match the words to create collocations from the transcript.

VERB	NOUN
(a) generate	copyright
(b) break	a company
(c) promote	information
(d) access	revenue

NOUN	NOUN
(e) identity	clips
(f) music	information
(g) contact	world
(h) video	theft

ADJECTIVE	NOUN
(i) small	route
(j) solid	profile
(k) personal	businesses
(l) traditional	marketing

5 Circle the number which best represents your reaction to the statements. Compare your answers with a partner.

(Key: 1 = strongly agree, 2 = agree, 3 = not sure, 4 = disagree, 5 = strongly disagree)

(a) 'Social networking sites are a waste of time.'	1	2	3	4	5
(b) 'In business, the most effective way to network is face-to-face, not online.'	1	2	3	4	5
(c) 'There are several ways in which social networking could benefit my business / company.'	1	2	3	4	5