

The Facebook Effect Summary

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1-Sentence-Summary: *is the only official account of the history of the world's largest social network, explaining why it's so successful and how it's changed both the world and us.*

Read in: 4 minutes

Favorite quote from the author:

David Kirkpatrick was fascinated by Facebook early on. He started writing regular articles about the company in Fortune ten years ago. Two years later, he even got Mark Zuckerberg to officially cooperate on a book about Facebook's story. The result is a New York Times bestseller.

For many of us, Facebook has become the default mechanism for sharing something we want to say, messaging friends, solidifying new connections and even a useful resource for irregular life events, like finding flats (I would know, Facebook groups are one of the main sources for my current apartment hunt in Munich).

But how did that even happen? Why did Facebook become so successful and others, like MySpace, were left in the dust? David Kirkpatrick knows.

Here are 3 lessons from the history of Facebook to help you understand social media:

1. Part of Facebook's success comes from being in the right place at the right time.
2. If you're politically active, Facebook is the best place to make yourself heard.
3. We all have to change our perspective on privacy in today's world.

Are you ready to witness the full power of the Facebook effect? Here we go!

Lesson 1: Facebook came to the exact right place at the exact right time.

The difference between a million-dollar company and a billion-dollar company is often as little as a few months time or a few thousand miles of distance.

Friendster and MySpace weren't bad, they were just too early to reach critical mass (or too slow to innovate). Other sites like Eons targeted the wrong people (a social media site for over 50 year olds in 2006 – really?).

In the case of Facebook, timing, location, everything came together.

First, broadband internet access was just starting to spread in 2004, when Facebook was launched. This was crucial, because photo upload would later become a core function of Facebook, so people needed faster uploading and downloading speeds. Not only that, the sheer number of internet users was also sharply on the rise, more than doubling in the first 6 years the company was around – from less than one billion to over two!

Second, in restricting Facebook to college campuses, Mark Zuckerberg picked the perfect spot for his network to spread. Many Ivy League schools tried to put their campus communities online at the time and college students are among the most socially active groups of people as is, so they more than welcomed this new way of connecting.

Also, being at Harvard he had access to some of the world's brightest minds, who would help him build the team the company needed to become that big in the first place.

Lesson 2: If you're into politics, then Facebook is a great place to hang out at and make yourself heard.

You can easily tell that Facebook is really politics-content-driven by opening your newsfeed any time between August and November every four years (like this year) – all you'll see are posts about presidential candidates (and with Trump it's particularly bad this year).

The reason Facebook can be used so well by political activists is that it's like an organized rally or protest – **except that it's cheaper, safer and faster.**

In 2008 people in South Africa formed a Facebook group against brutal drug raids and mistreatment of citizens therein, garnering 3,000 members in just two days. The group organized a protest march and a petition, but also constantly shared updates, photos and videos of ongoing raids, which got a lot of people to file complaints. This resulted in an investigation into the matter by the country.

And looking back at Hillary vs. Trump, it's been clear ever since Obama won "" in 2008 by outshining John McCain on Youtube, Facebook, Twitter and pretty much everywhere else online, that even the most powerful people in the world are now voted for (or against) online.

Lesson 3: Our views on privacy are changing thanks to Facebook, and they have to.

Let's say you're suddenly in charge of hiring an intern. After a few days, you have a stack of resumés on your desk. What's the first thing you do (after looking at the picture, if there is one, of course)?

"Hey, let's check this guy's Facebook, see if he has some drunk pics!"

Before social media you could be the most serious carpenter, the most discreet hairdresser, or the most reputable banker in town and still live a crazy punk rock band, magic trick birthday performer, hard rock biker life in your spare time.

But now you can't. Facebook's changed all that. **You only have one real name, one true identity, and Facebook forces you to show all of it.**

Sure, you could try to keep things off the platform, or hide some of them, but when there's not enough information, people always assume the worst, so it'll hurt your reputation either way.

Zuckerberg's big bet on this is that **we will change what is considered normal to be public**. The more people publicly speak about depression, crazy hobbies and taboo topics, the more we'll perceive those discussions as normal. We want all the upside of being ever-connected. To get it, we'll have to embrace the transparency that comes with it too.

I think learning about the history of Facebook has long gone past just being interested in startups. It's crucial for anyone to understand who's on the platform – and that's almost everyone. is a good account of it and the implications it has for society (and a nice counter-balance to the movie The Social Network, which has often been criticized for being too harsh, but good nonetheless).

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What else can you learn from the blinks?

- What the WELL is (one of the earliest online communities)
- A chronology of Facebook's staggering early growth
- Which core features helped Facebook stay ahead of the curve

- Why Mark Zuckerberg's ability to build offline networks too was of crucial importance
- How Facebook has turned the globe into one big village
- The way Facebook has changed both journalism and advertising

Who would I recommend The Facebook Effect summary to?

The 20 year old college sophomore, who's tinkering with apps in his spare time, the 34 year old junior high teacher, who's looking for a way to teach her children about the web, and anyone who's shared something political on Facebook before.