a. What exactly is Social Media?

While the definition is still up for debate, I believe Social Media should be (roughly) defined as any application that allows registered users to interact and share (upload & download) information of a social nature, including text, voice, video, photo or other electronic formats. This is to say that there should be separate applications to manage and support business communications and data sharing, with thicker lines being drawn between the two formats.

Call it my OCD, but I’m just not sure how to classify LinkedIn!

b. What are some of the common features in social media applications?

By definition, Social Media must provide users a way in which to interact. One of the most common features is called “posting”. This is when (and how) users put information up for comments (approval or disapproval) by the other users. The companion feature to posting is a method of showing how one feels about the posted information. This is typically done with a small series of “emojis” to indicate whether the post made you feel happy, agreeable, surprised, sad or angry. Sometimes it is as simple as leaving a “like” or not. Another common feature is the use of visuals such as pictures or video. This improves communication over simple text and provides hours of mindless fun combing through the cornucopia of memes and pictures of cats doing silly, and often very cute, things.

c. List the privacy issues associated with social media applications.

The current state of Social Media is fraught with privacy and security hazards of every kind. We trust companies and clouds alike with our personal information, up to and including our banking information! All users have registered their email at minimum and, out of a perceived need for “convenience”, have furnished their remaining contact information as well. Have you ever thought about the necessity of the security questions? Each one of your answers can be used to more positively identify you. Your children, assuming you are so gifted, post details of their lives which exponentially raise the risk of kidnapping and can also be used to identify you, your home, your wealth or your political affiliation with ease.

In addition to the social and business formats mentioned above, I would add an “under 21” format with strict regulations on what can be posted as well as the metadata that can be gleaned. At least we could slow the degradation of our youth a bit. I mean, put some clothes on!