

Is there any more lame a comment than "You just don't get it". Its a simple, dismissive phrase that says more about the person saying it than the person/organization its directed to. Its a way of saying "You dont agree with me, but i dont have anything of consequence to say. "You just don't get it" stops any discussion where i might be asked to say something worthwhile dead in its tracks..

I have a simple question. Who does get it ?

The guys who started Myspace obviously got it. They were able to build a social network and actually make money from the operation of the company. It started off as a network built around music and evolved where its users took it. The same with Facebook. It started with a simple premise and its users drove its growth. In both cases, although its difficult to sell advertising on the sites, there aren't any legal reasons why they can't.

There are hundreds of social networks of all shapes and sizes, but how many are sustainable ? Friendster was a great idea. They got it, but they weren't able to sustain it. The many others out there, particularly those that don't host video have a shot because its not expensive to host webpages. If you can build some momentum, then you can sustain a user base as long as they stay interested in each other.

Youtube on the other hand doesn't get it. Why ? Because its not a sustainable model. If it was owned by any company with less than a billion dollars in the bank, they wouldn't be able to keep it alive. Google is loses money hand over foot because of the bandwidth bills. They can afford it. Few others could. Beyond the bandwidth bills, there is the legal liability. Again, few companies can set aside hundreds of millions of dollars "just in case".

Youtube is also not a social network. In a social network, the members provide all the content. That's what makes it a social network, right ? A social network doesn't have to go out and license content. They don't have to give away hundreds of millions of dollars worth of stock and cash to gain content. They encourage and trust their members to evolve the network.

Entities that have to go out and license content are called Traditional Media Outlets. TV stations license content. TV Networks license content. They both complement that content with webpages that allow user discussion and interaction. The interaction doesnt make the a social network. They are still traditional media outlets.

They pay the highest licensing fees for the content they feel is the best. For content that production companies can't license anywhere else, traditional media outlets can get that content in exchange for a percentage of advertising sold. The rest of the content out there is available in exchange for eyeballs that the production company hopes creates revenue from other sources.

Youtube is what it is. A very, very popular, traditional media outlet that provides its content on the net. It is video on the demand that is absolutely no different than the video on demand that comcast or any other cable company or telco offers, except that its user uploaded, limited to 10 minutes and the quality is awful. It fills a need as a place to find anything. It has done a phenomenal job of using user created content and user uploaded stolen content to create a huge, huge audience. Unfortunately for Google, it remains to be seen if that is worth anything. One thing for certain. Its not a social network.

Is there an opportunity for social network that focuses on being a video outlet ? No question about it. The issue is that this outlet won't be able to hide behind the DMCA. A video based social network, in order to be sustainable, has to reliably be able to generate revenues from the uploaded video. It has to be able to market the brilliance of its members and the product of their work to advertisers and sponsors. It has to be able to market its members video online and offline. You can't hide behind the DMCA and know exactly what your members are offering on your site. Revver is trying to get it right. But its not easy. [Ning](#) is creating great tools so that niche social networks can be built that can be sustainable with multiple revenue options. Im sure there are others I dont know about. It will be exciting to see "who gets it in this space"

Video, music and personal pages are not the only beneficiaries of social networking.

I love the combination of social networks and the political process. I just signed up as a delegate on [Unity08.org](#) . I think the community opportunity integrated with politics has a chance to catch on. I don't think it will be easy, but with a little luck can have a huge impact on the political process. I'm a believer that we need to get beyond the 2 party system. Hopefully this is a first step.