

IN4MATX 153: CSCW

Class 6:
Platform Capabilities

Professor Daniel Epstein
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Announcements

- A1 due tonight! 11:59pm
 - Voting on each other's memes/posts will start soon, this weekend or early next week
- A2 is posted, due May 8th (3 weeks)

Today's goals

By the end of today, you should be able to...

- Describe common design strategies used in social technologies for communication and signaling, as well as differentiating factors
- Articulate how these strategies then influence who uses platforms, and how people use them

Today's big takeaway

- Social platforms include a whole bunch of design choices
- Each design choice sends a signal to people about whether or not they belong on your platform, what sort of content they should share, how often they should check it, and much more
- Even when you think you're not making a choice about how to design your platform, you're defaulting to something, which in itself is a choice

Discuss: what features do you expect a social app to include?

What's a feature that every social app should include?

Nobody has responded yet.

Hang tight! Responses are coming in.

Core components of social media

The “Profile” Element

- Allows individuals to display information about themselves in a personalized space
- People design/curate to influence how others might perceive them

The image displays two examples of social media profiles. The left profile is for "Madam Lisa" (25), who is described as living in Paris, 27 kilometers away, and is looking for a long-term partner. The right profile is for "Barack Obama", which features a photo of him smiling. The Obama profile includes a sidebar with various links and text snippets.

Madam Lisa 25

Lives in Paris
27 kilometers away

Looking for:
Long-term partner

About me

Meet me in The Louvre, I'll teach you how to perfect your smize.
A low-key girl who enjoys a cosy evening in by the fire. Looking for someone to do late night gallery trips with and read together in comfortable silence.

Barack Obama

"Join the Official Barack Obama Myspace Profile"
Male
45 years old
CHICAGO, Illinois
United States
Last Login: 6/20/2007

View My: [Pics](#) | [Videos](#)

[Send Message](#) [Forward to Friend](#)
[Add to Friends](#) [Add to Favorites](#)
[Instant Message](#) [Block User](#)
[Add to Group](#) [Rank User](#)

MySpace URL:
<http://www.myspace.com/barackobama>

General

is in your extended network

Barack Obama's Latest Blog Entry [Subscribe to this Blog]
Txt "GO" to OBAMA (62262) (view more)
Dinner with Barack Video (view more)
Getting Politically Active & Walking for Change (view more)
Barack TV Launches Spanish Captioning (view more)
Responding to President Bush Keeping Troops in Iraq (view more)
[View All Blog Entries]

Barack Obama's Blurbs

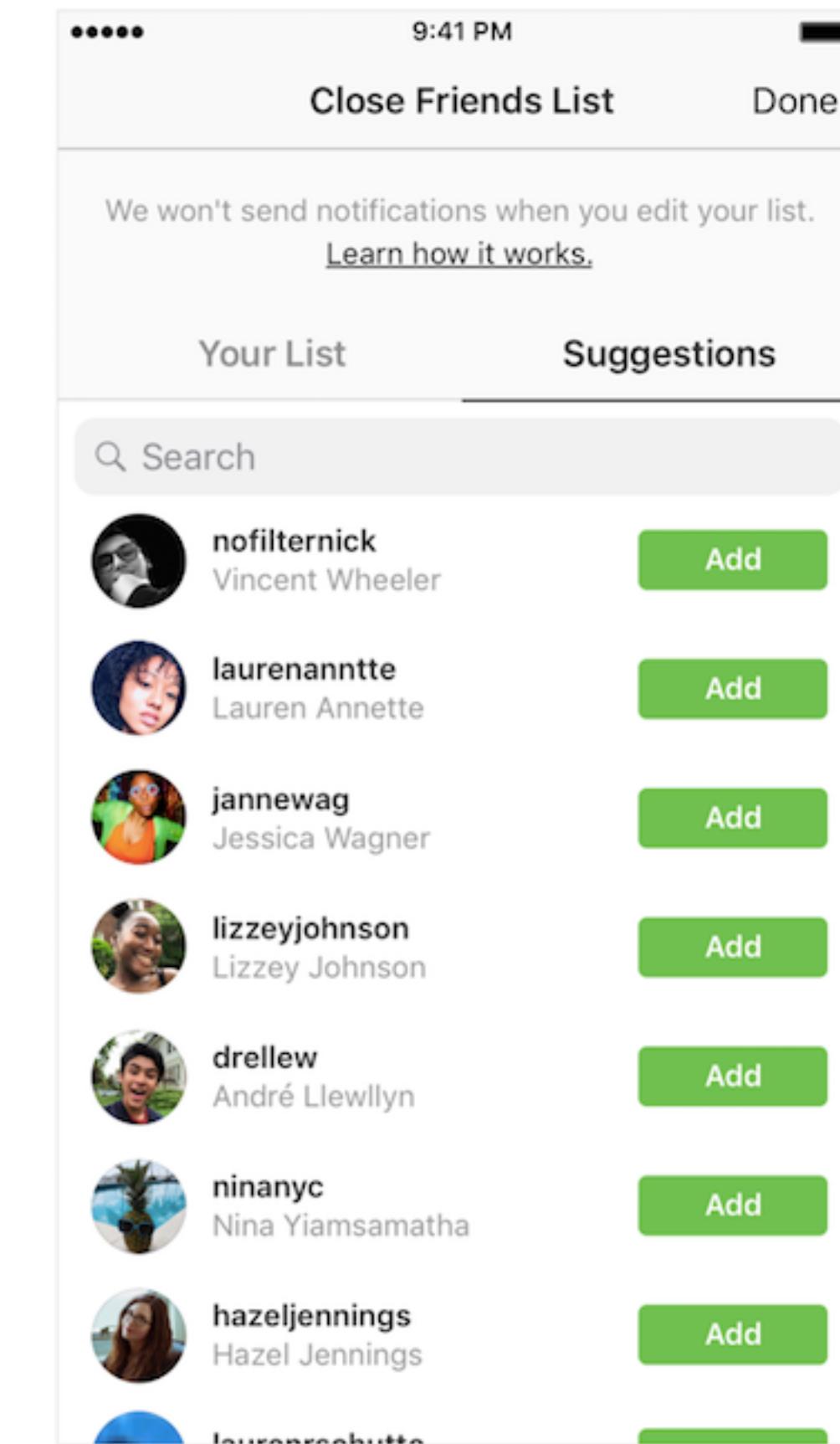
About me:
I was fortunate to be able to grow up seeing America from varied viewpoints. My childhood was spent in Hawaii and Indonesia. After college I worked as a community organizer on the South side of Chicago focusing on improving living conditions in poor neighborhoods.

I came to understand that to truly solve the problems facing our communities, it would take a change in our laws and our politics. I ran and served for seven years in

Core components of social media

The “Network” Element

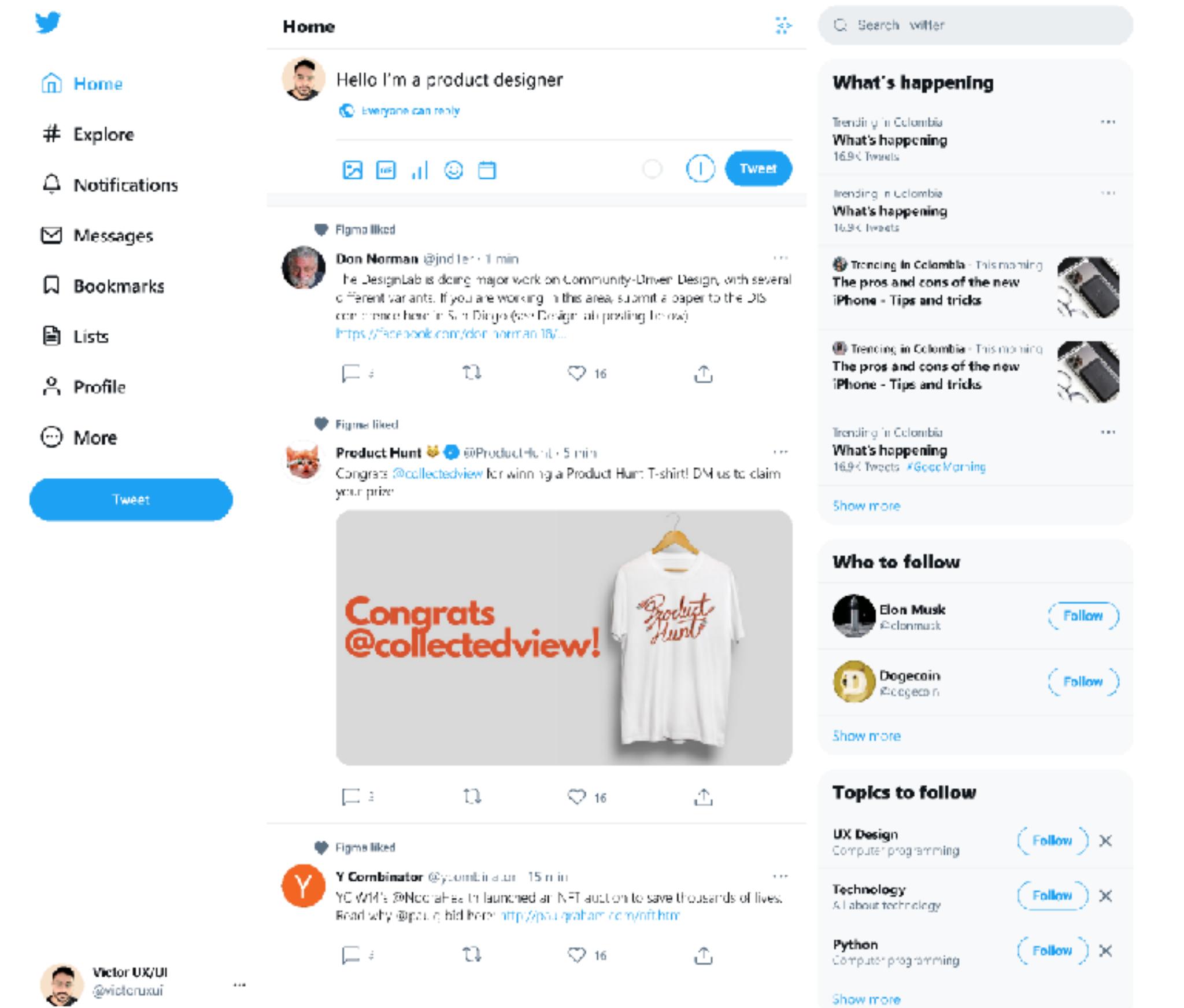
- Allows individuals to engage with the other people/accounts that they wish to connect to
 - Some sort of association (following, friending, etc.) enables people to view the content of others



Core components of social media

The “Stream” Element

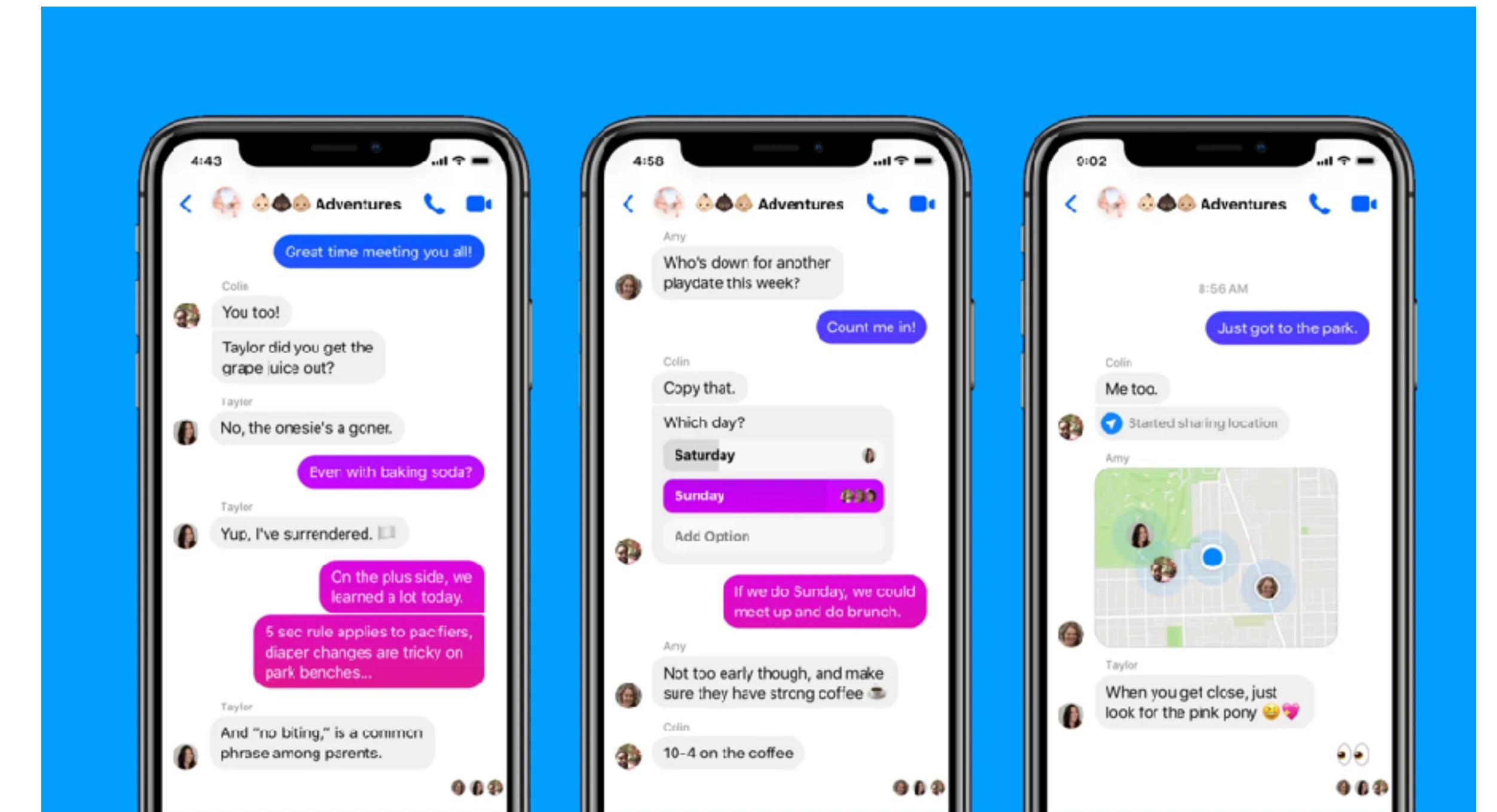
- Some sort of aggregated display for recent news from other accounts
- Typically the “main page” of a social networking site



Core components of social media

The “Message” Element

- Some method for two or more people/accounts to communicate without broadcasting more publicly
- Some debate about whether messaging belongs in the definition of social media, but it definitely supports the social connections

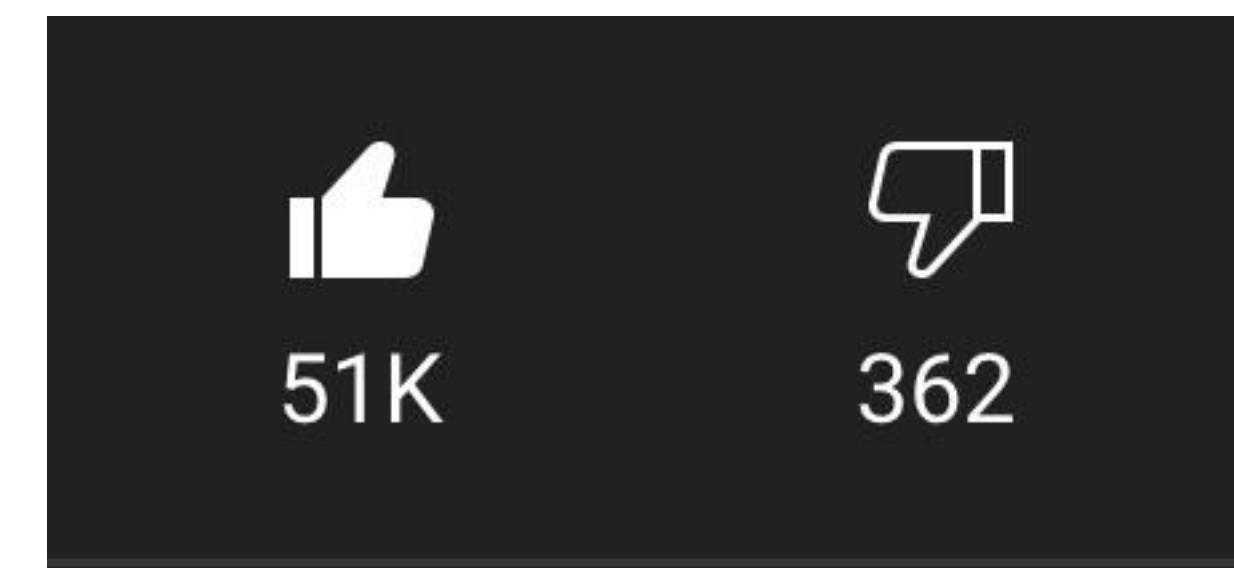


What's missing from this definition?

Other components of social media

1-click feedback

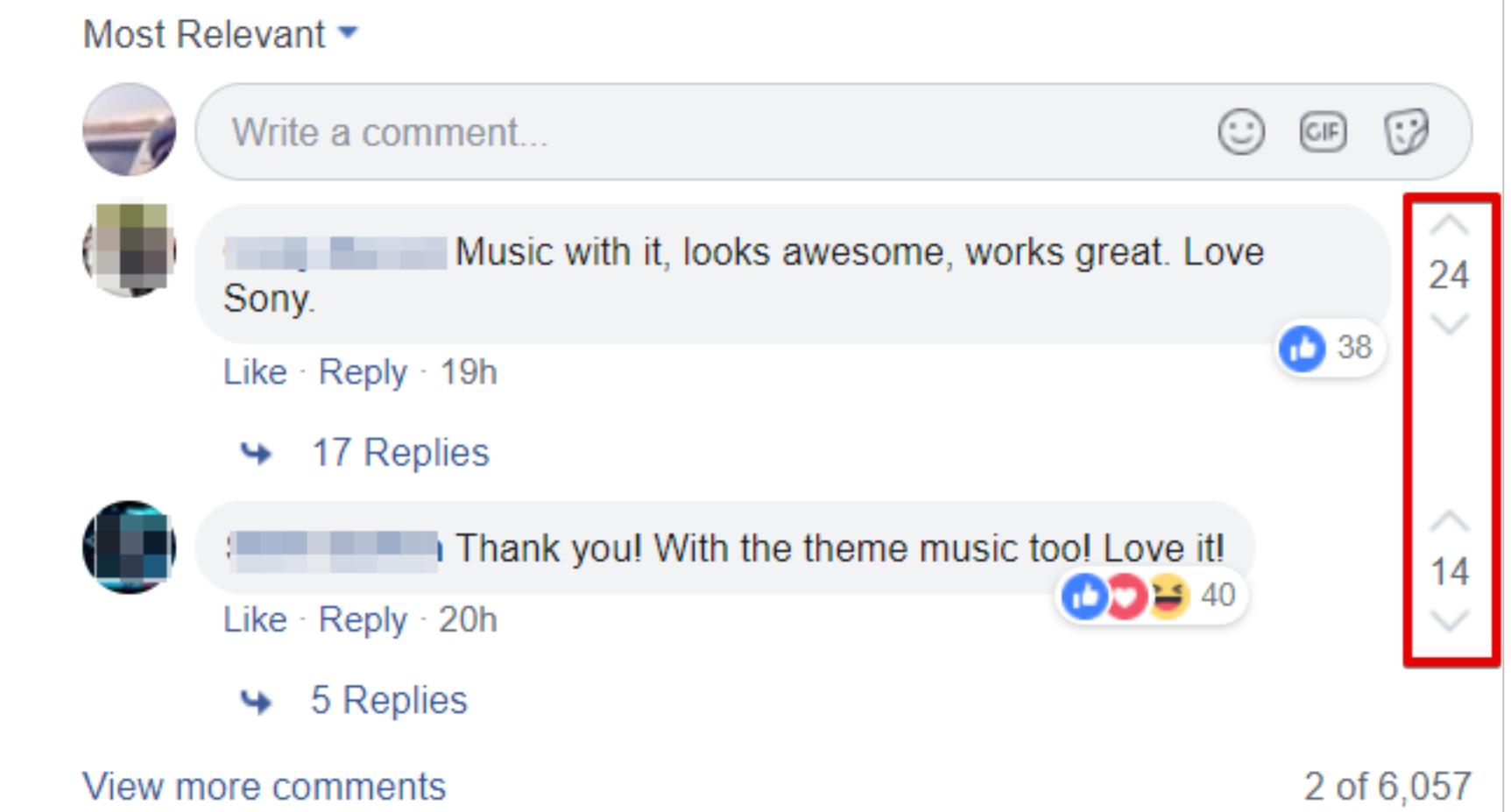
- Likes, dislikes, reactions
- Light signal of awareness or social support



Other components of social media

Comments

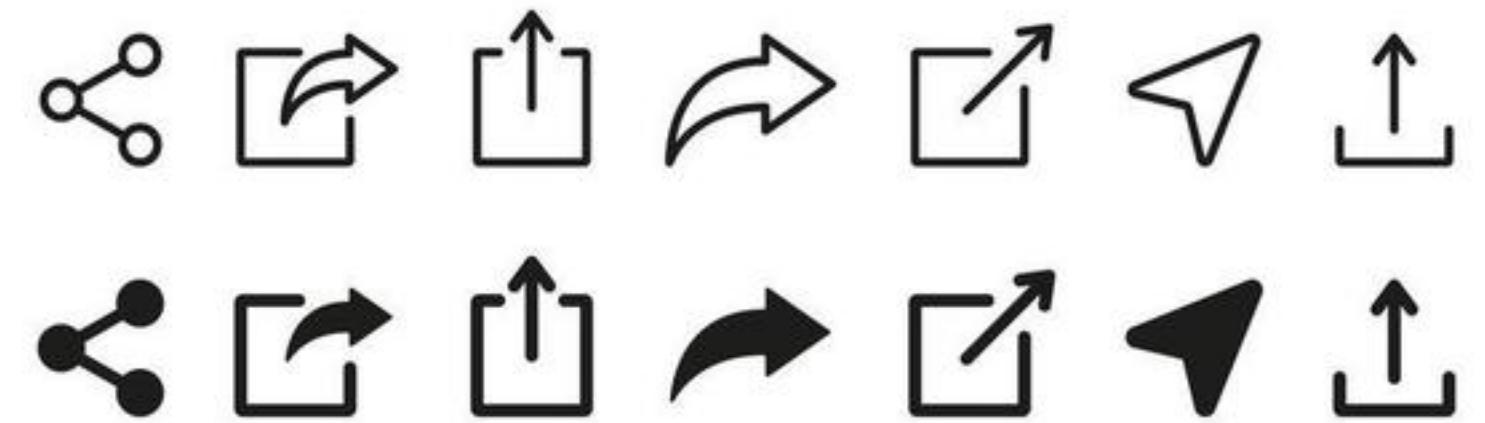
- Some way of responding to content in the stream
- A range of ways of implementing
 - Could be threaded, could show up in the stream as new posts



Other components of social media

Sharing

- Some way of sharing content further
- In early days of Twitter, it was very manual
 - People would add “RT” to the front of their Tweets to indicate a retweet



Retweet Limited Rollout

By [Biz Stone](#)

Friday, 6 November 2009 X f in g

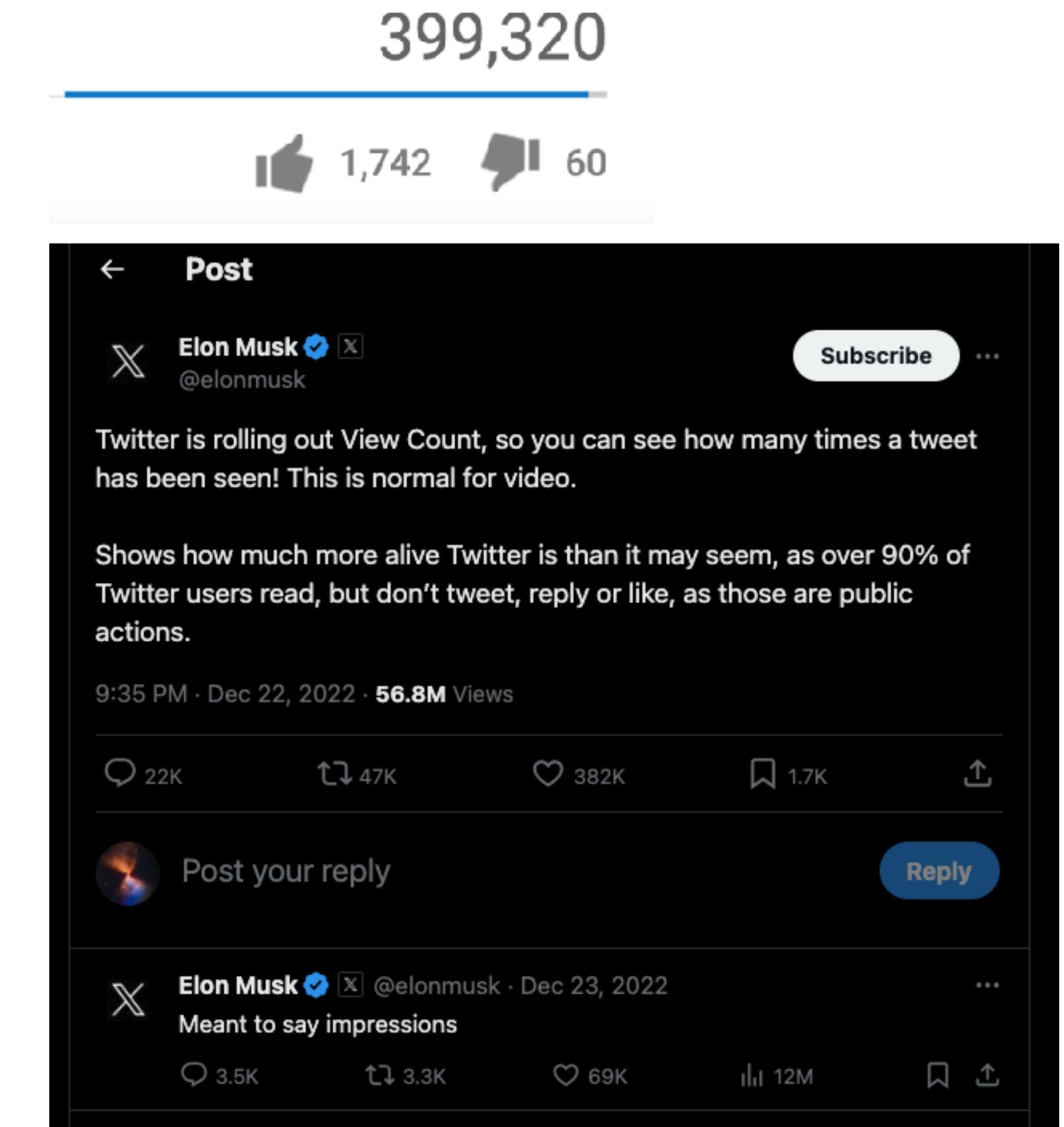
We've just activated a feature called retweet on a very small percentage of accounts in order to see how it works in the wild. Retweet is a button that makes forwarding a particularly interesting tweet to all your followers very easy. In turn, we hope interesting, newsworthy, or even just plain funny information will spread quickly through the network making its way efficiently to the people who want or need to know.

You may remember that [we shared the mechanics of this feature](#) with developers a while back so they could think about how to work it into Twitter apps. Now we're ready to start trying it on Twitter. The plan is to see how it goes first with this small release. If it needs more work, then we'll know right away. If things look good, we'll proceed with releasing the feature in stages eventually arriving at 100%.

Other components of social media

View counts

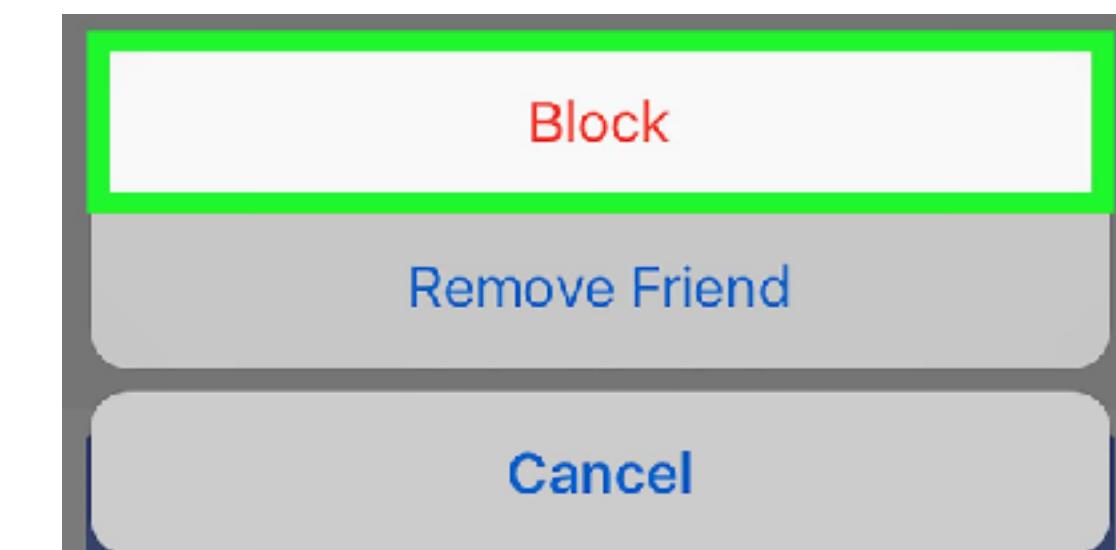
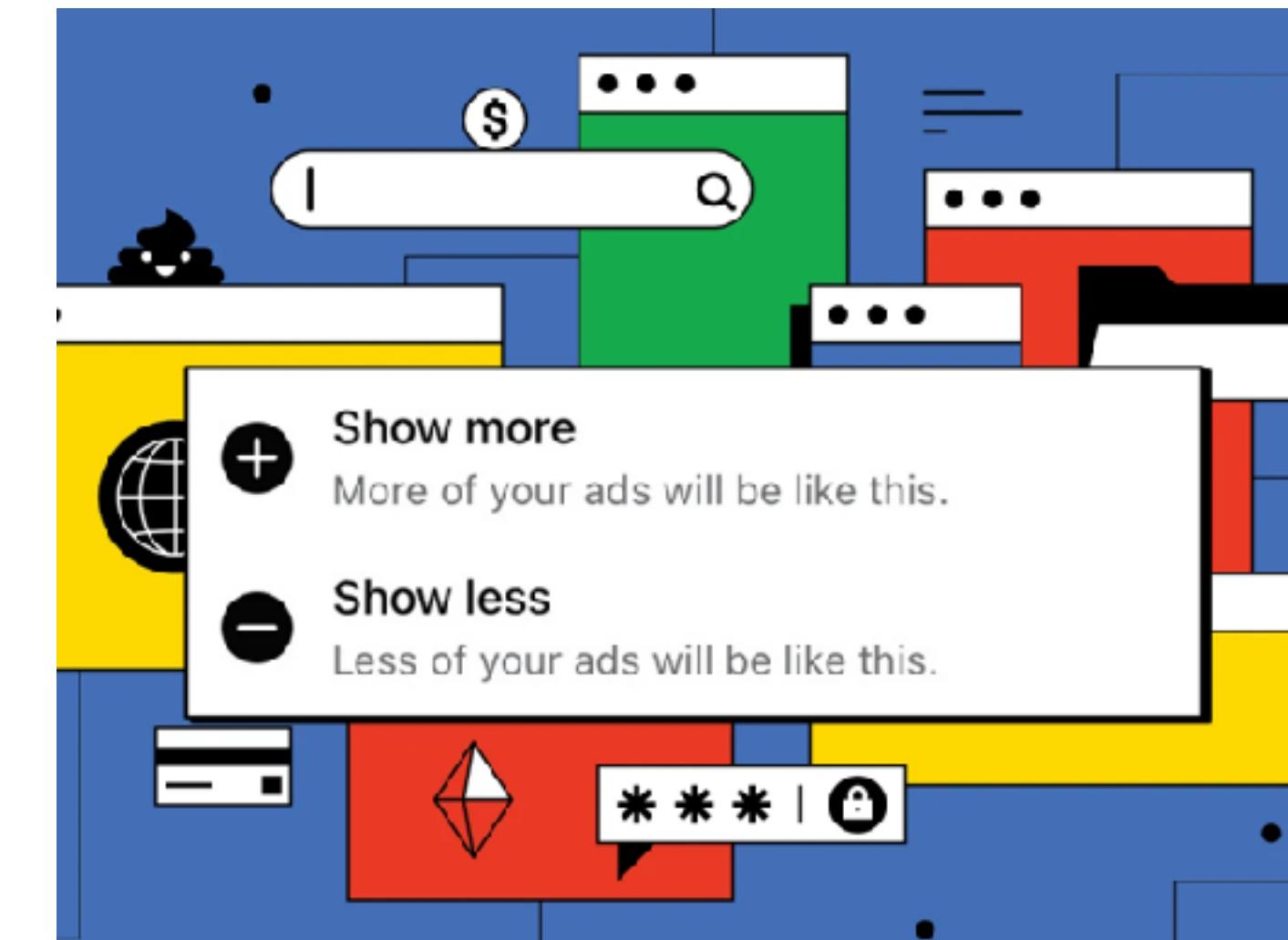
- How many people saw a piece of content, even if they don't respond to it
- What are the benefits to making this number visible? Drawbacks?



Other components of social media

Blocking and ignoring

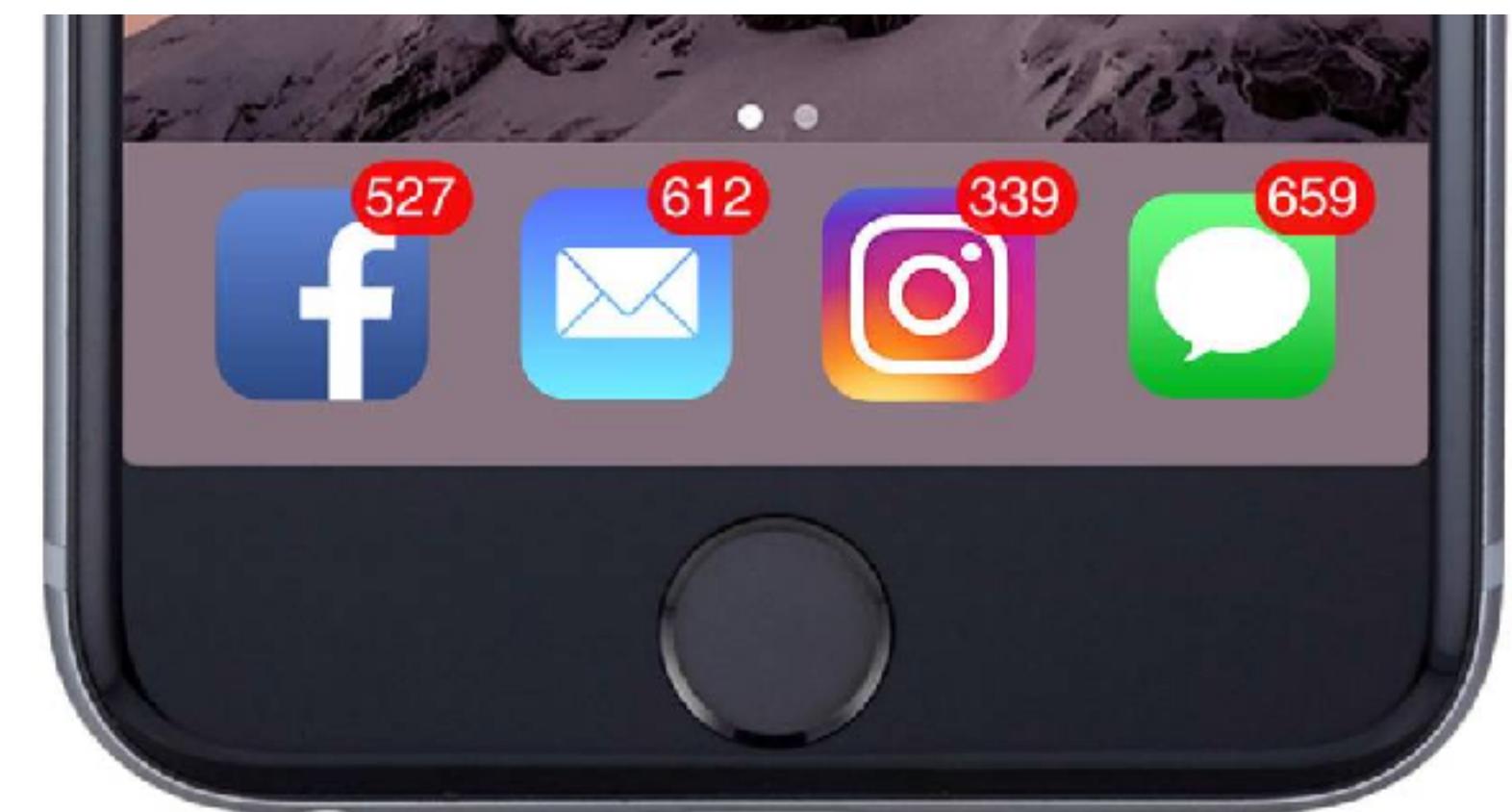
- Inevitably, there's some people or kinds of content that you will not want to see
- Platforms enable blocking, unfollowing, or “show less”
- Particularly in algorithmic feeds, it's a way to send a signal to the algorithm



Other components of social media

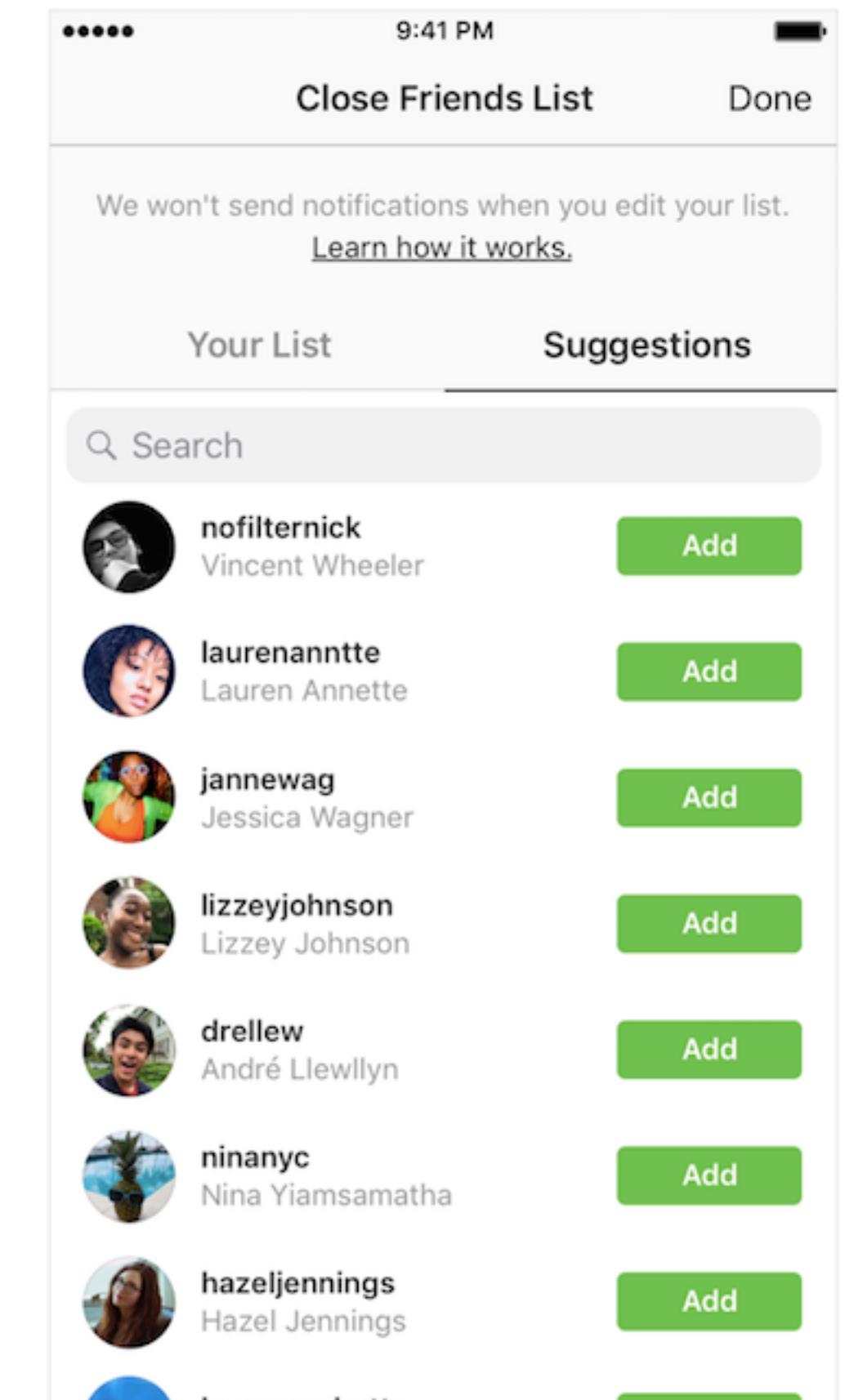
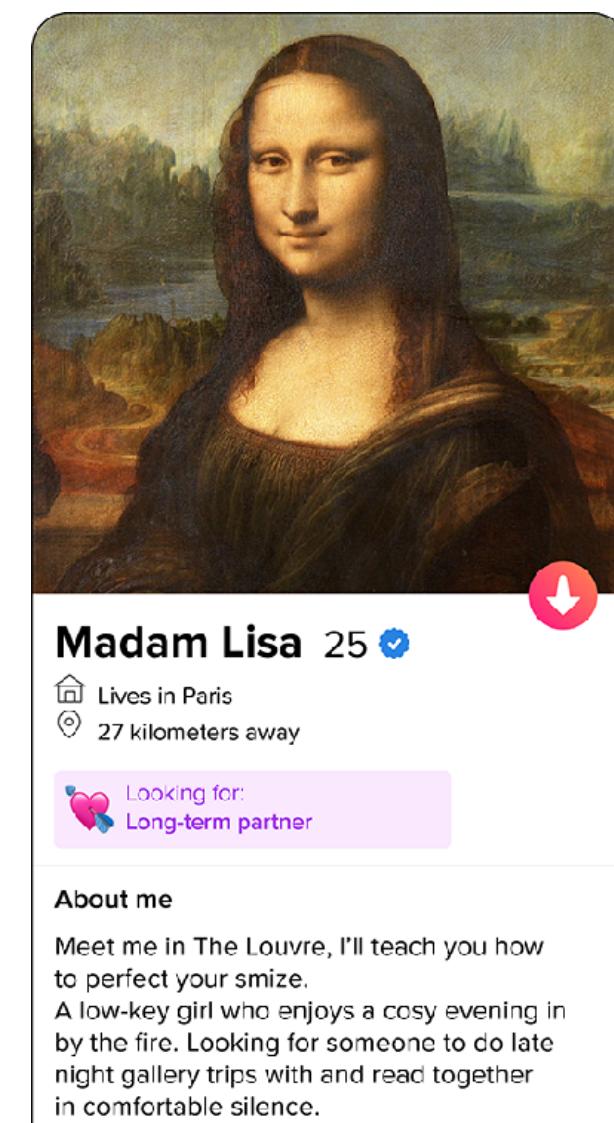
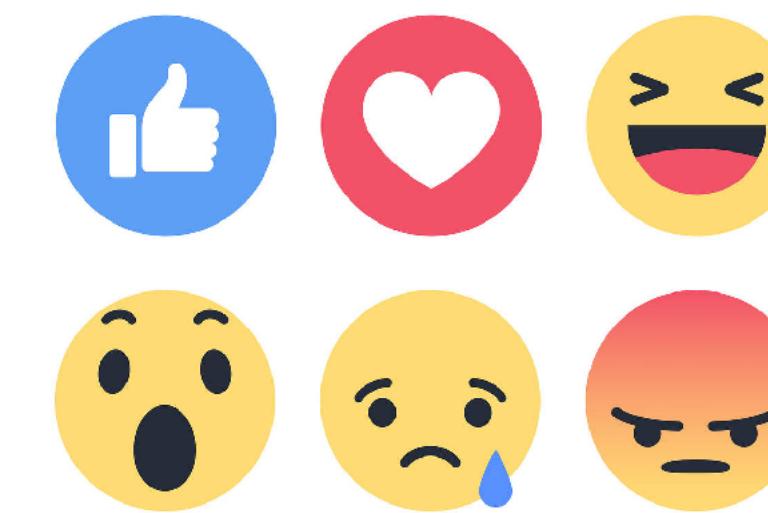
Notifications

- “Pull” mechanism: I have to open the app to see the social content
- “Push” mechanism: I get a phone notification about social content
- Usually configurable
 - Sometimes app-level, e.g. any time you get an email
 - Sometimes more specific, e.g. any time Taylor Swift posts to Twitter



Components

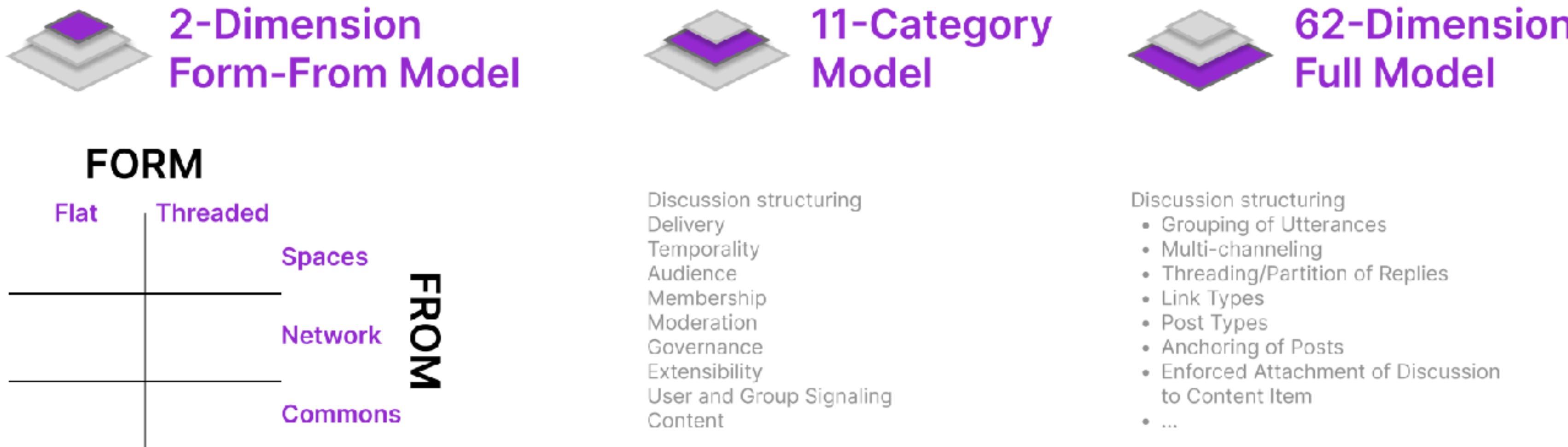
- But, a platform isn't required to have any or all of these components
- Many social platforms exist without profiles, or 1-click responses
 - A profile wouldn't make sense in an anonymous platform like 4chan
 - Facebook has 6ish reactions, Slack has the entire emoji book (and custom emoji!), other platforms have just 1 “like” button



**There are a lot of ways of
differentiating social sites.**

And, each design choice is signaling something about how, when, and with whom, people should communicate on that platform.

Form-From



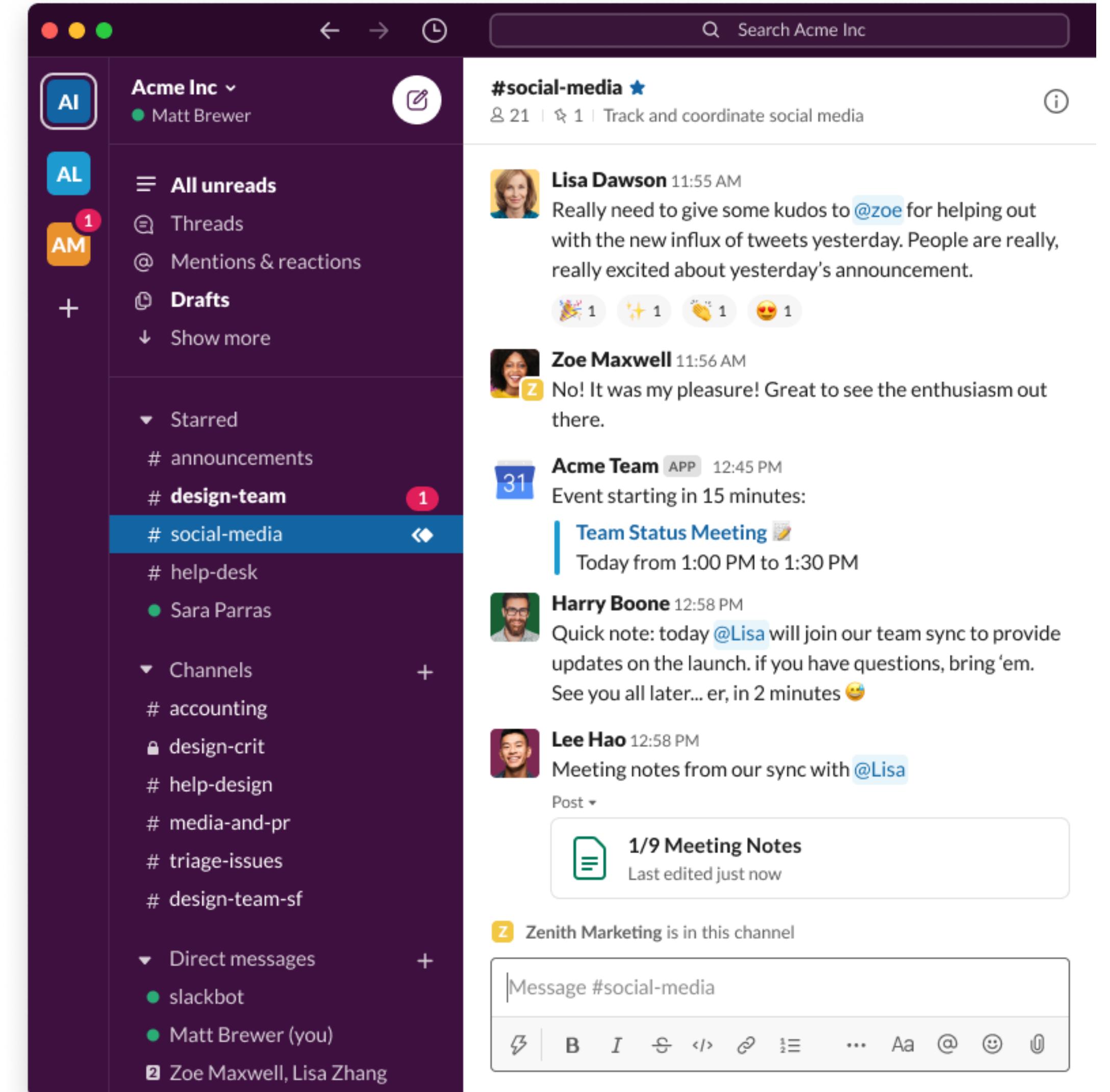
Form

- The shape that the content takes
- Flat: posting without explicit links to other posts
- Threaded: posting with explicit links to other posts (replies)

Form

Flat

- Posts don't reference other posts
- In some platforms, you can still link to other posts, but that's not the main form of communication
- Reflects a “chatroom”



Form

Threaded

- Posts are highly referential. You're regularly continuing a prior conversation
- But, that conversation will presumably end at some point, and you'll start a new one

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="star"/>	<input type="triangle-right"/>	Paul Tron	Jeff Out Today - Jeff has a doc...	8:29 AM
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="star"/>	<input type="triangle-right"/>	Reed Stephens	IT Software Updates - We're go...	8:23 AM
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="star"/>	<input type="triangle-right"/>	Nena Moran	Parking Restrictions - Good mor...	8:15 AM
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="star"/>	<input type="triangle-right"/>	Lucas, Erika, Me 3	Conference Week - Thanks for le...	8:15 AM
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="star"/>	<input type="triangle-right"/>	Erika, Me 2	IT Library Projector Cables - M...	8:10 AM
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="star"/>	<input type="triangle-right"/>	Educator's Weekly	Newsletters Modern Nonfiction...	2:00 AM

The screenshot shows a Reddit thread on the subreddit r/brexit. The first post, which is highlighted with a red box, asks: "can anyone enlighten me of that the UK leaving means and or benefits? (in avg joe terms please)". It has 6 upvotes and was posted 2 years ago. A reply from a user named "disingenuous" is also highlighted with a red box, stating: "The UK doesn't have to help support failed countries or follow laws forced on them by other countries any more. They get more freedom and the ability to choose what they want to do globally more readily now.". This reply has 3 points and was posted 2 years ago. Below these, several other comments are visible, some of which are also highlighted with red boxes, indicating they are part of the same thread. The interface includes standard Reddit controls like upvote, downvote, and report buttons.

Thread root

First level Comment

Third level Comment

Discuss: What sorts of conversations work well in “flat” structure? What works well in “threaded” structure?

Form: Flat versus Threaded

- Flat
 - Passive consumption
 - Places where the full context matters
 - Smaller spaces?
- Threaded
 - Richer conversation
 - Tangents, follow-ups, etc.

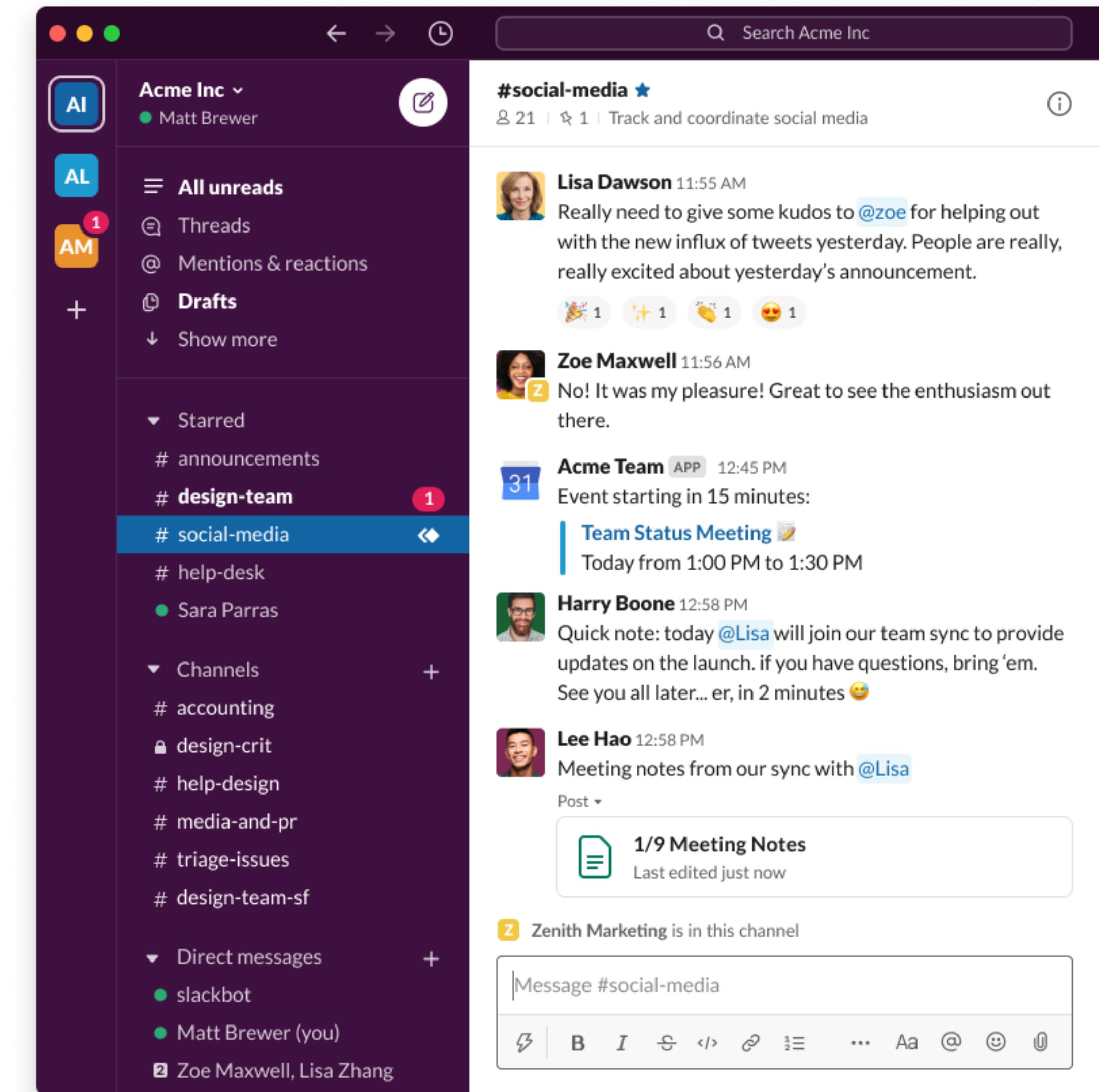
From

- From where the user receives content
- Spaces: a distinct space with a unique location
- Network: accounts that have connected
- Commons: on the entire platform

From Spaces

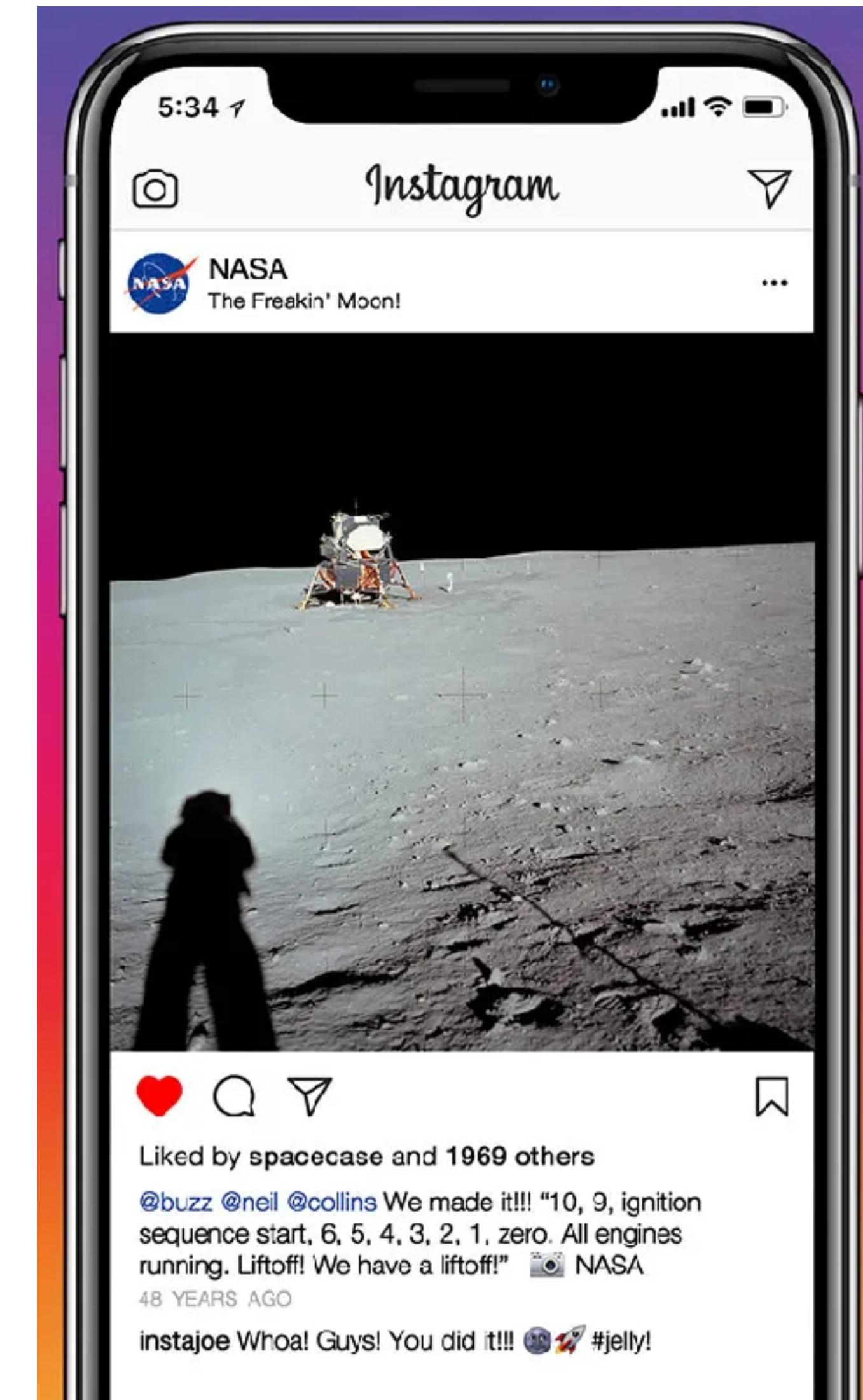
- There's some sort of channel(s) for organizing content
- But that channel can also be a distinct thread (like email), or a single post (like Reddit)

<input type="checkbox"/>	★	▷	Paul Tron	Jeff Out Today - Jeff has a doc...	8:29 AM
<input type="checkbox"/>	★	▷	Reed Stephens	IT Software Updates - We're go...	8:23 AM
<input type="checkbox"/>	★	▷	Nena Moran	Parking Restrictions - Good mor...	8:15 AM
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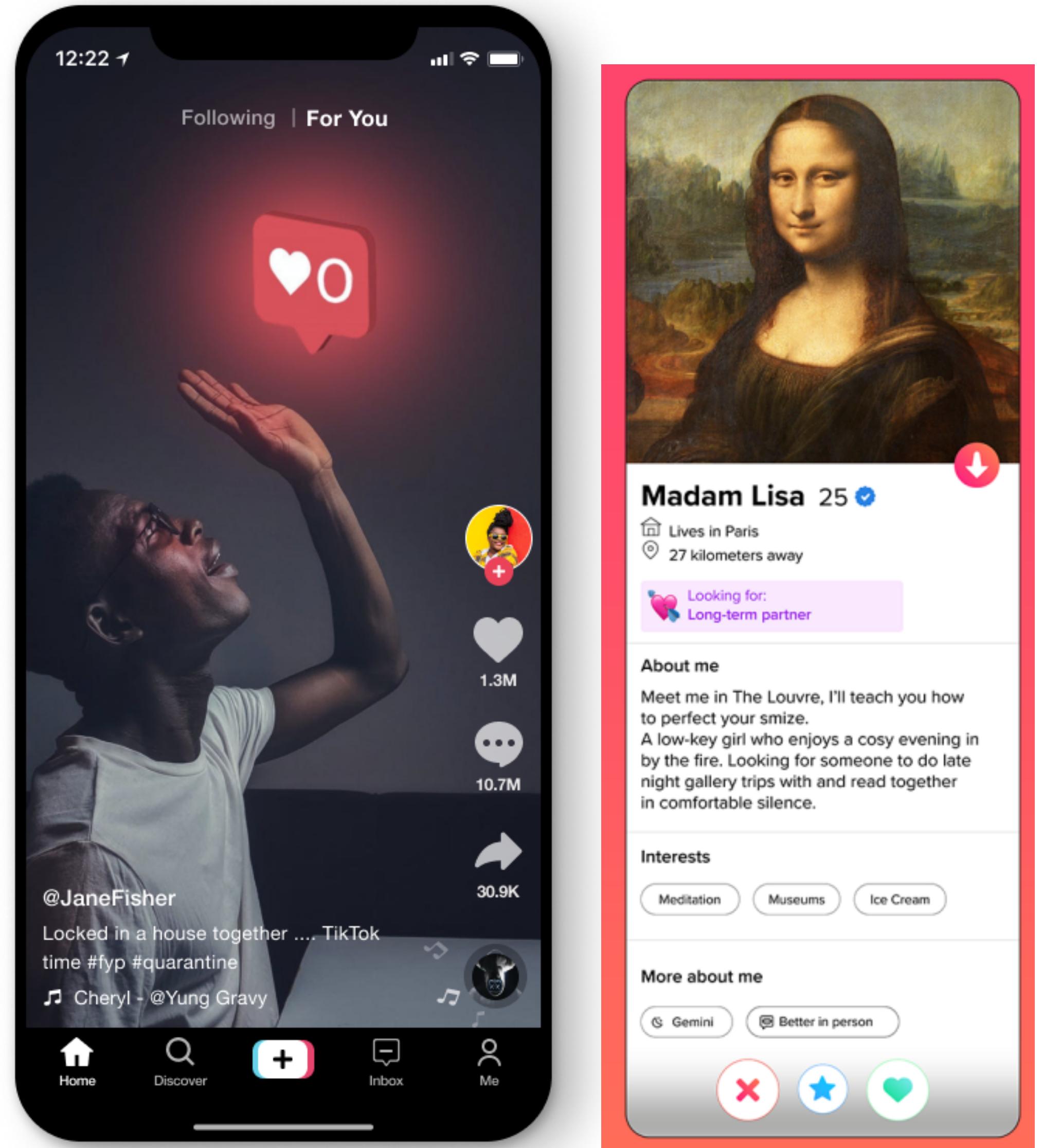
From Network

- The content that you're seeing are from other users that you've connected to on the network



From Commons

- Content is coming from all users on the platform
- Or, not people who you've specifically connected to



Discuss: What sorts of conversations work well in “spaces”, “network”, and “commons” structure?

Form: Flat versus Threaded

- Spaces
 - “Work” content
 - “Organized” content: conversations on specific topics
- Network
 - Weak tie check-ins
- Commons
 - Influencer, or one-to-many communication
 - Designs to get you out of your bubble

**Our social media paradigm has evolved
over time**

Paradigm evolution

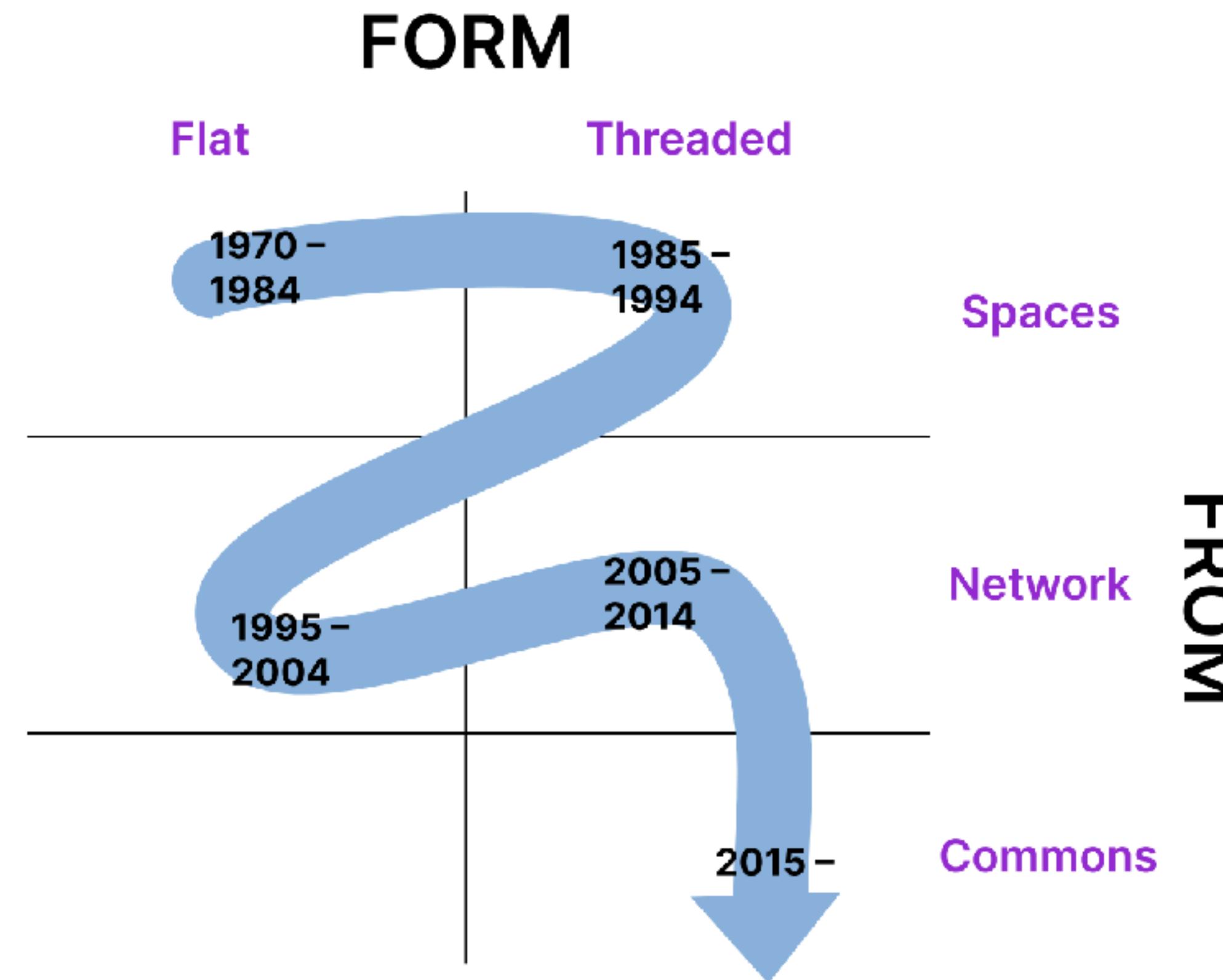


Fig. 5. Social media systems followed a pattern over time of moving from flat spaces (e.g., Talkomatic), to threaded spaces (e.g., Usenet), to flat networks (e.g., the original Facebook), to threaded networks (e.g., Reddit), to threaded commons (e.g., TikTok). This path does not describe every system—it describes an overall pattern.

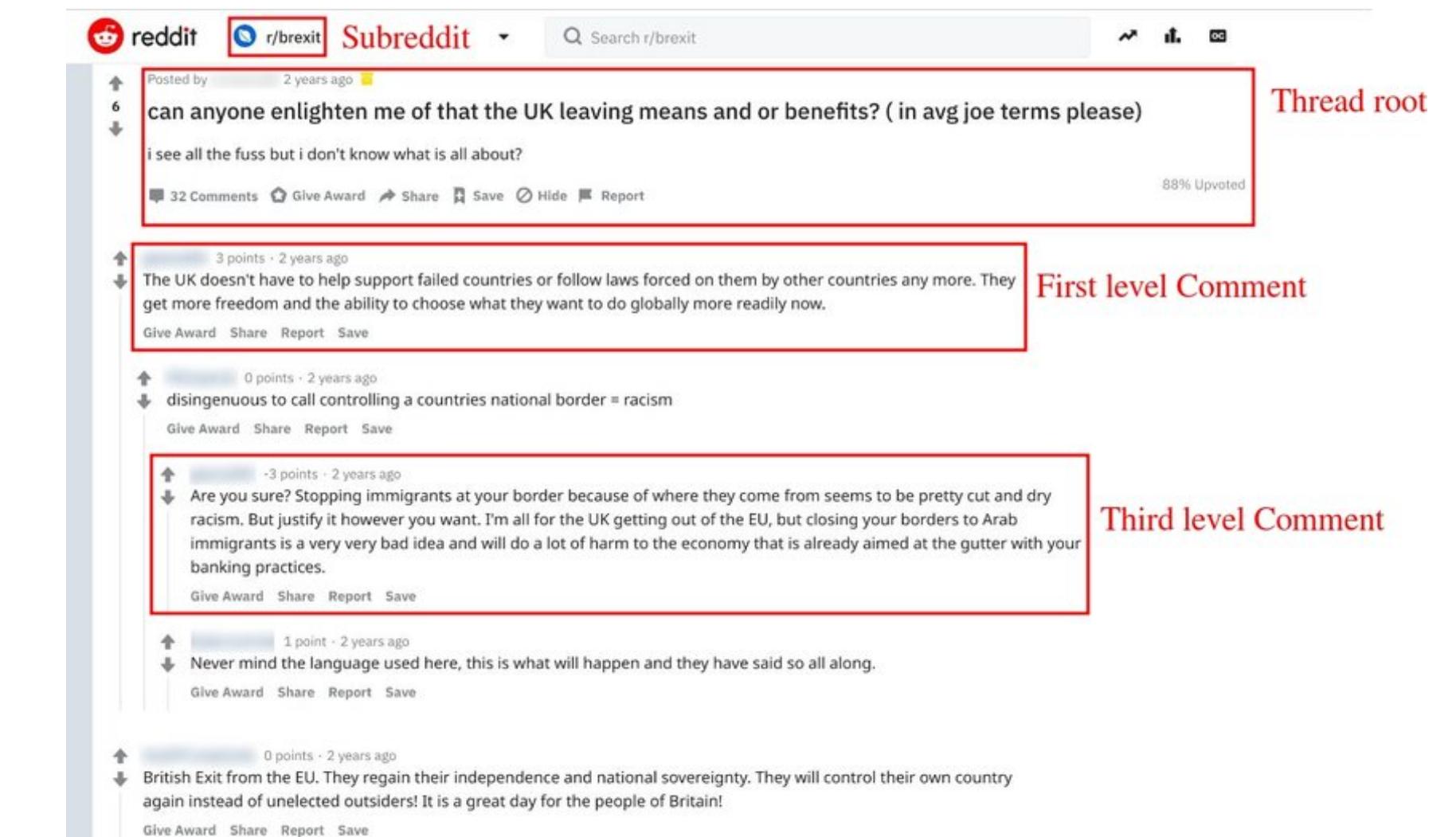
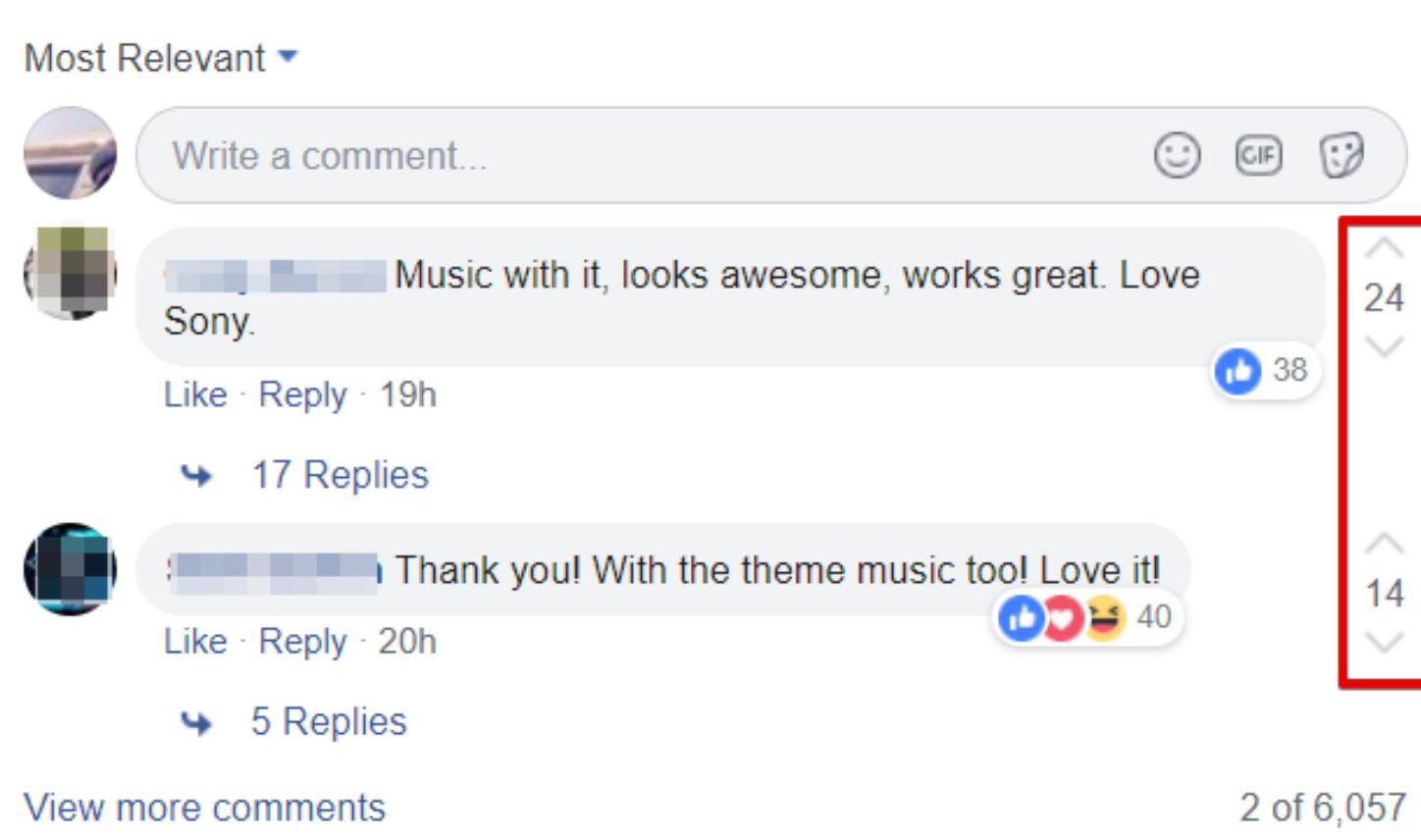
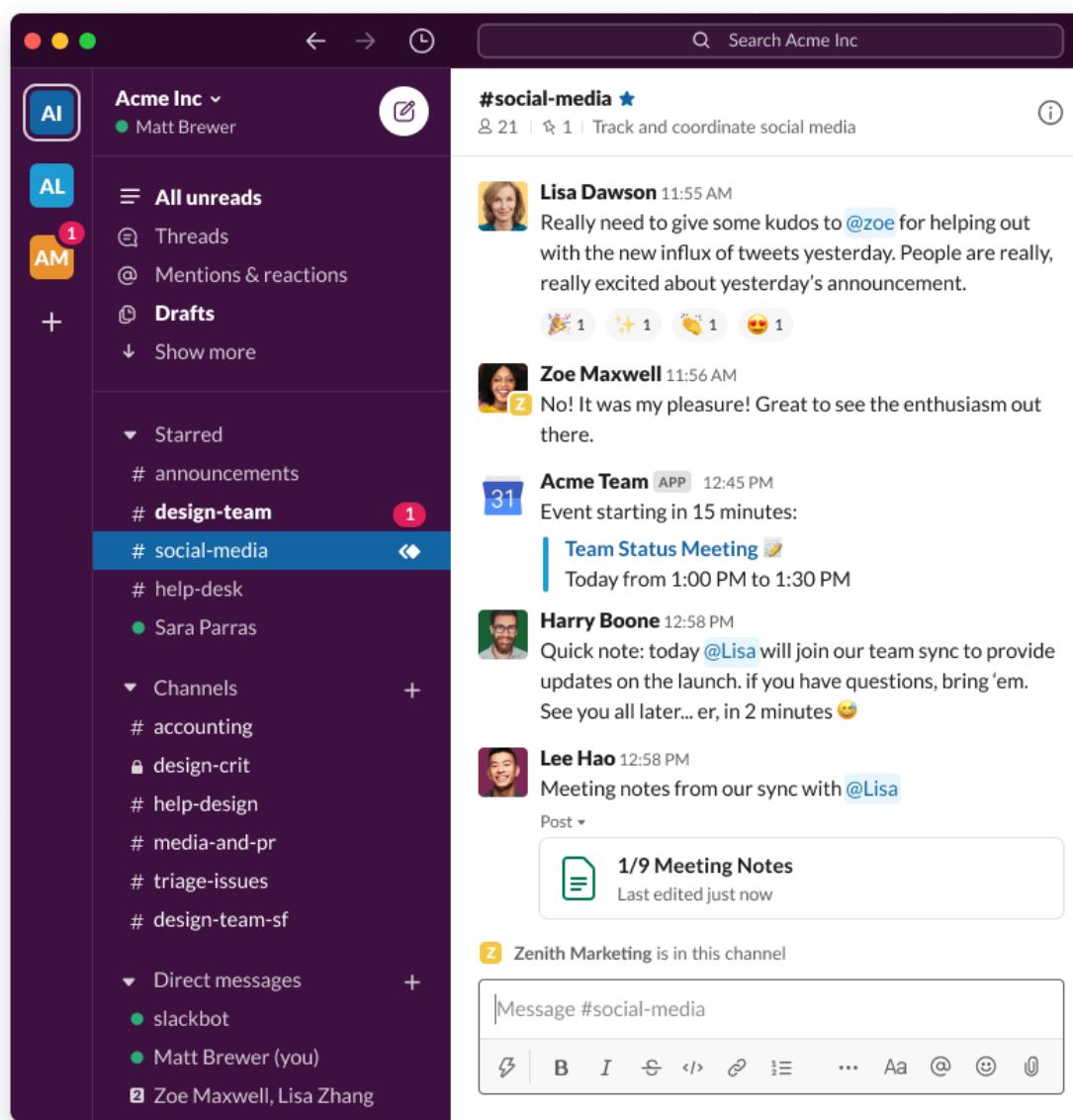
**Even within these two dimensions,
there are a lot of choices for how to
implement them.**

A few examples

- Threading depth
- Types of content
- Archiving and ephemerality
- Size and technical limits
- User identification
- Anonymity

Threading depth

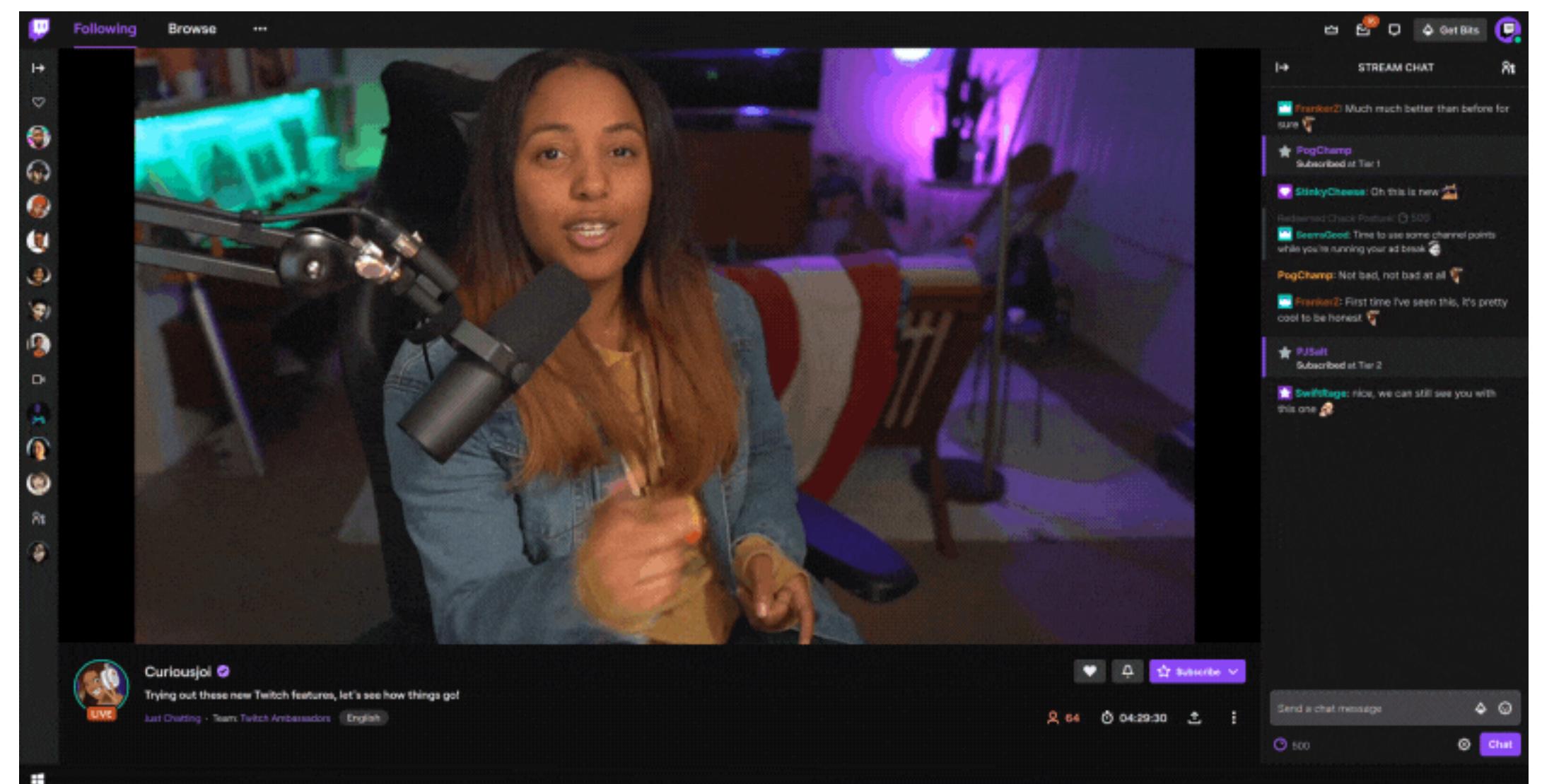
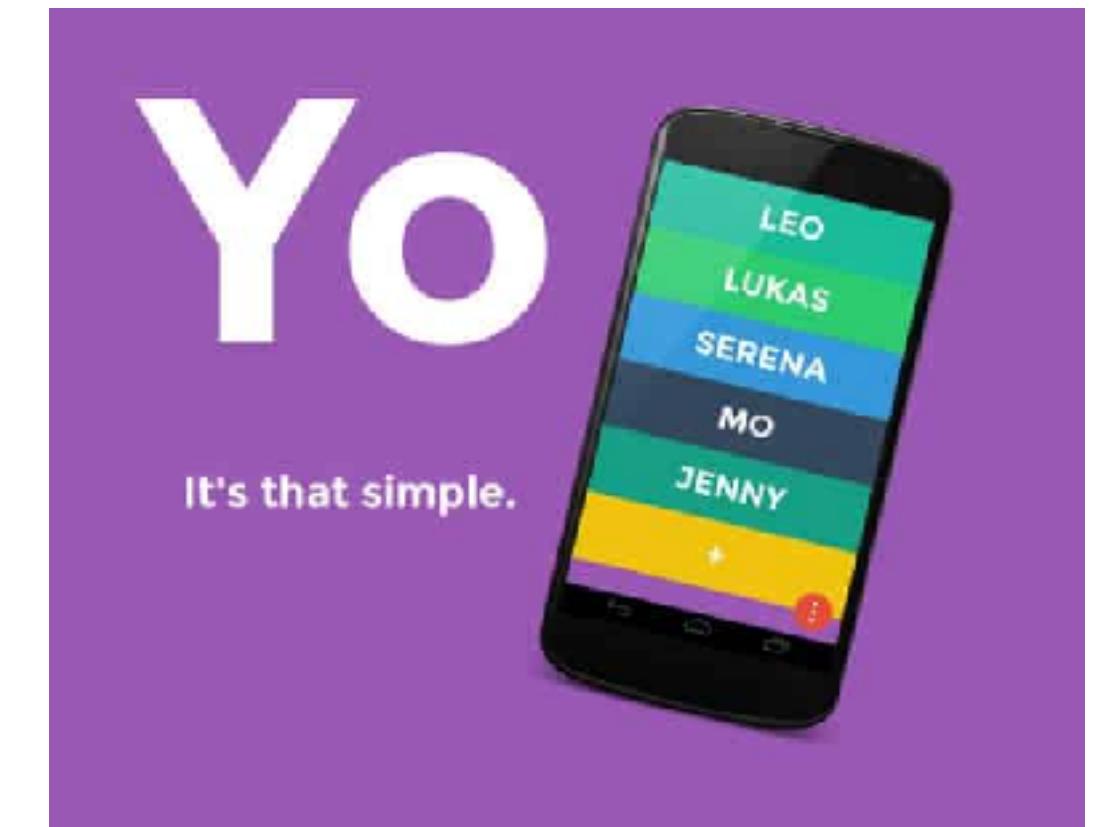
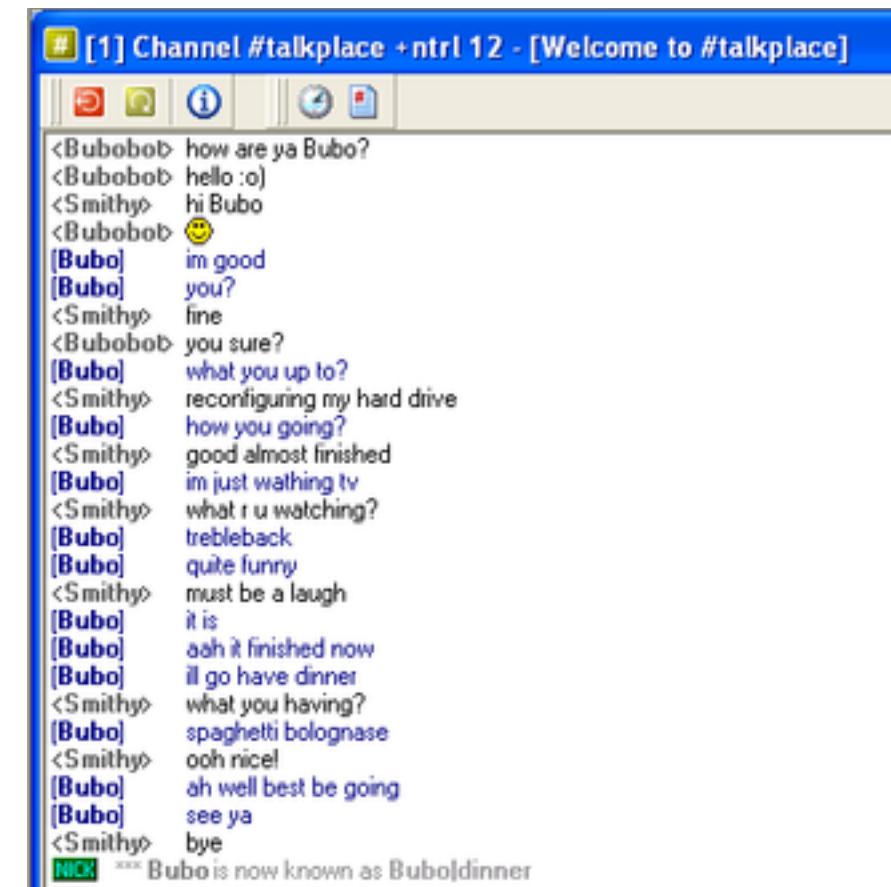
- Slack only allows for one level of replies
- Facebook allows for 2 levels
- Email, Reddit, and Twitter allow for infinitely many



Discuss: What social practices does infinite reply depth make easier? What social practice does it make harder?

Content type

- There are all sorts of different ways for people to express themselves
- We've moved from largely text to audio, video, images, emoji, and other richer media
- Some platforms center a certain kind of medium, while others are aim to be expansive
 - Twitch is largely video, but you can post to Reddit with lots of different media



Archiving and Ephemerality

- What happens to discussions after they're done?
 - Enforced ephemeral: content is deleted by default
 - Enforced archived: content is always saved by default. But, users could delete later



Archiving and Ephemerality

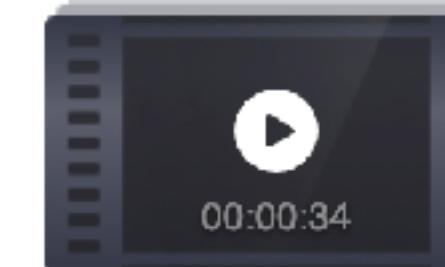
- What happens to discussions after they're done?
 - Default archived: saved by default, but could be switched to ephemeral
 - Default ephemeral: ephemeral by default, but can be switched to archiving

My Recordings > Test Recording

Test Recording 

Apr 17, 2020 01:06 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada) ID: 941-102-5518

0 total views • 0 total downloads [Recording Analytics](#)

 Recording 1
2 files 416 KB

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February 12th, 2023

 New Year's Eve!  Happy New Year! Be happy for all of you!

February 13th, 2023

 Happy New Year! That picture of the three of you is so precious.

October 27th, 2023

 Does anyone know if we can print in color using the department printer on the 5th floor?

 [Profile](#) Last seen 3 months ago

Size and Technical limits

- How many people are allowed to participate?
 - Pairs (Chatroulette)
 - Small/medium groups (iMessage, Zoom)
 - Large groups (WhatsApp)
 - Theoretically infinite (Social media)



[zoom Support](#)

Product Support ▾ Support by Topic ▾ More Support ▾

By default, these are the meeting participant limit per account type:

- **Basic (free or free with credit card):** 100 participants
- **Pro:** 100 participants
- **Business:** 300 participants
- **Enterprise:** 500 participants

Use Group FaceTime on your iPhone or iPad

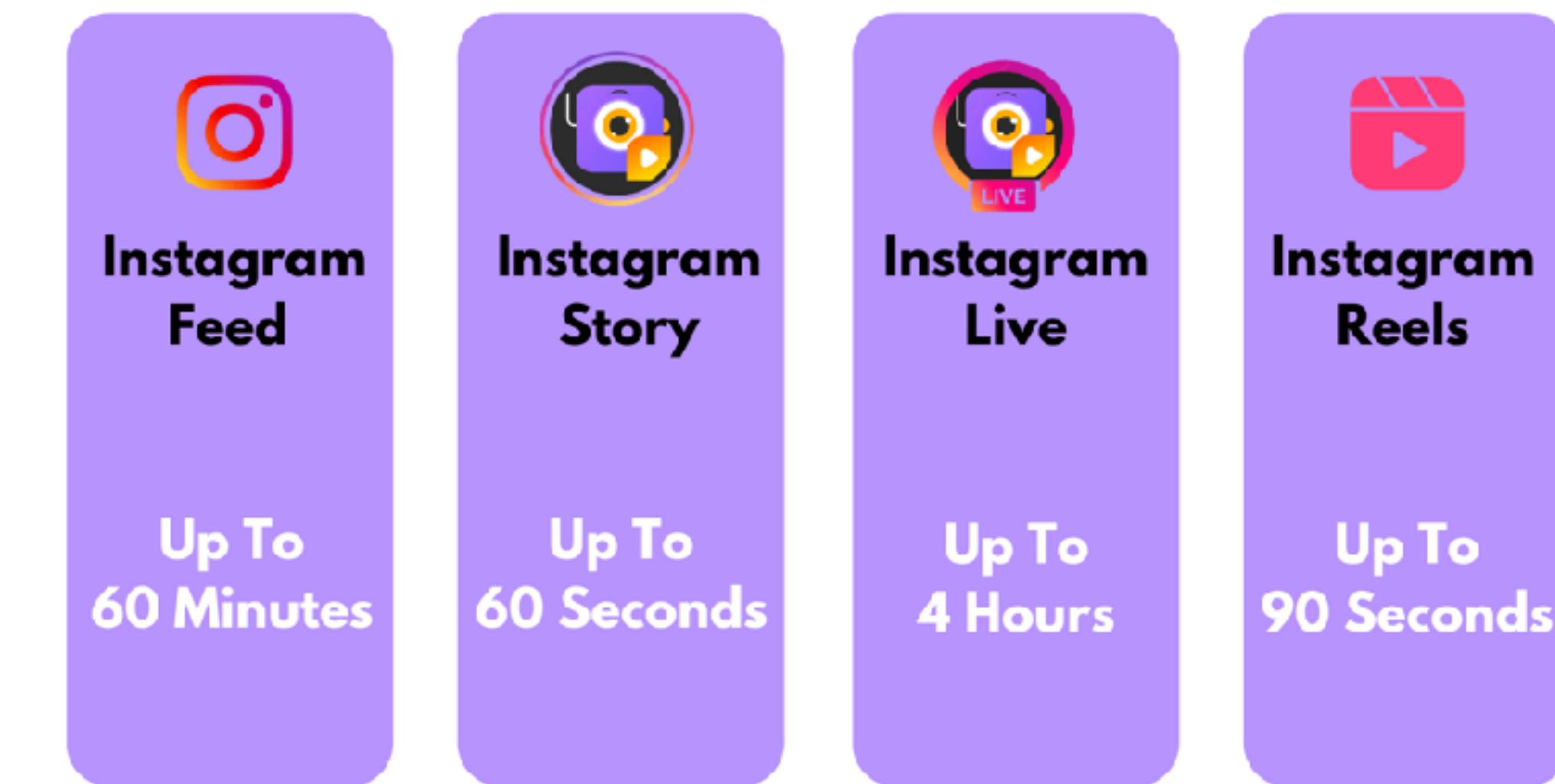
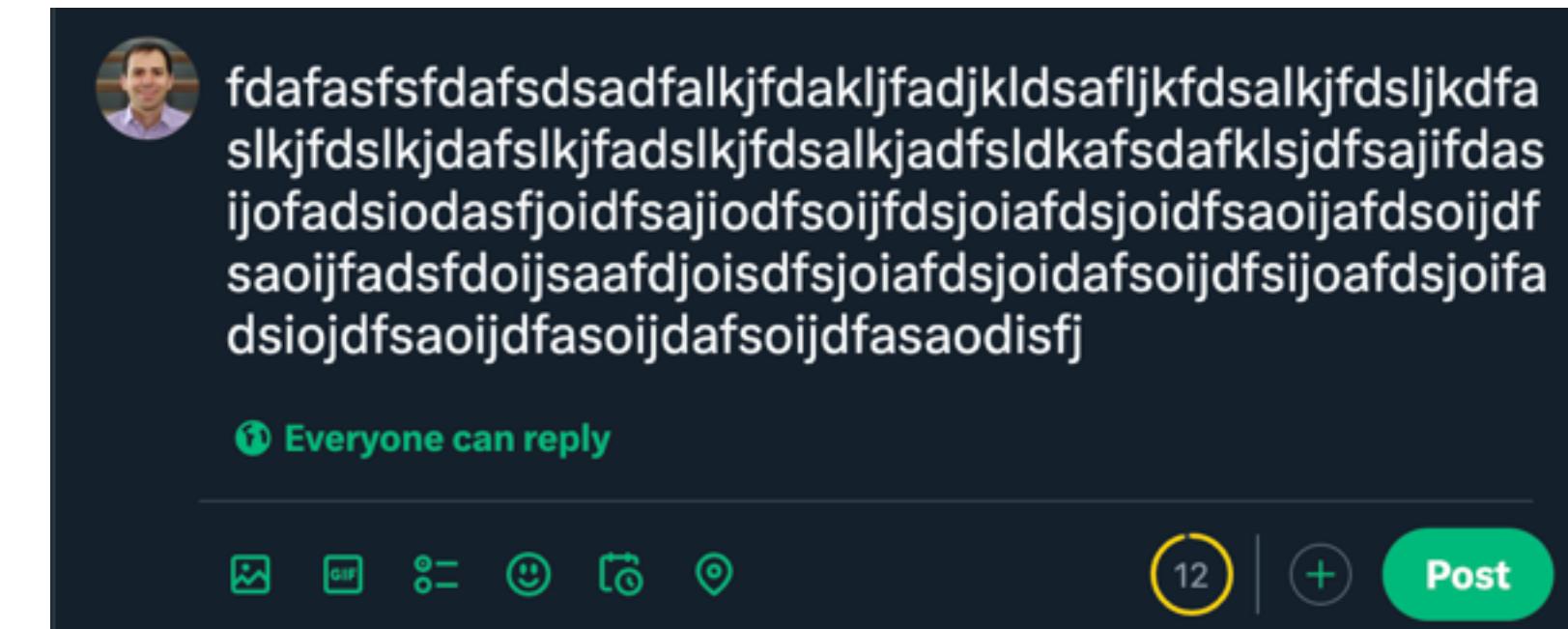
Group FaceTime makes it easy to chat with multiple people at the same time. You can start a Group FaceTime from the FaceTime app or from a group conversation in the Messages app—and you can add up to 32 people.

WhatsApp Updates: Group limit increased to 1024 members, new Community feature released

WhatsApp has released a new Community feature that will help users consolidate multiple groups under one umbrella. CEO Mark Zuckerberg posted on Facebook announcing the new features and revealed that the group limit has now been increased to 1024 members. This new update with the Community tab is being released globally and will be available to everyone over the course of the next few months.

Size and Technical limits

- Authoring creative constraints
 - Twitter: 140 characters, then 280
 - Instagram stories: 60 second videos
 - TikTok: up to 10 minutes (for some)



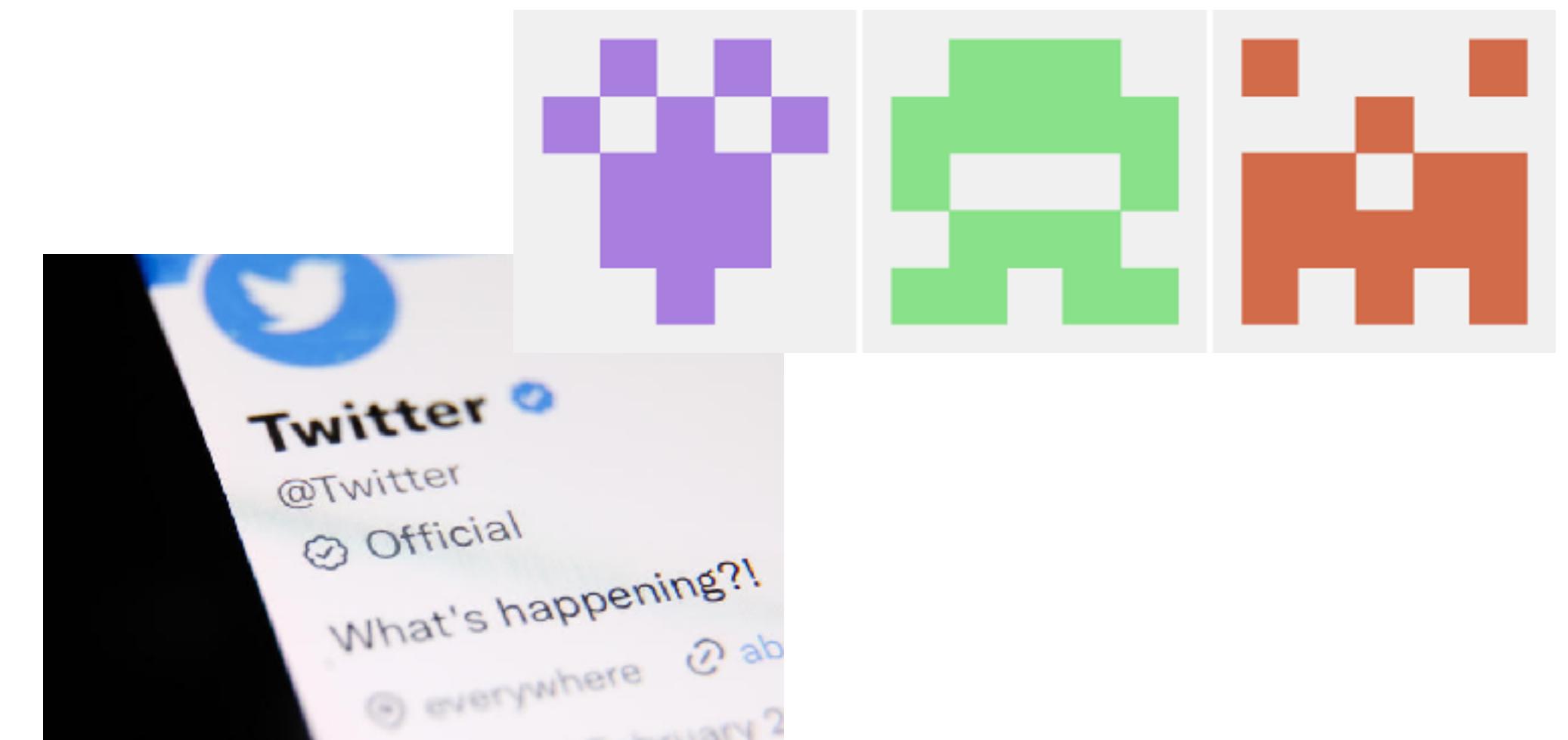
Size and Technical limits

- Twitter's 140 character limit was initially so that you could text the platform your Tweet content
 - But it had the benefit of encouraging brief messages
- Other features aren't so much a technical choice, but a signal to users
 - Stories could presumably be longer if Instagram wanted them to be



User identification and verification

- Some accounts require a “real name” or display name, others usernames
- Some include verifications, either system-moderated or paid
- Profile pictures also offer unique signifiers



Anonymity

- Anonymity can be enforced, where the system does not attach messages to any identifier
- Most commonly, users self-select an identifier
- Identity can be cloaked for some, but visible for others
- Some platforms do not allow for anonymity



A screenshot of a Stack Overflow thread. A user named 'how do we quantify extertise' asks a question. Another user, 'DH', replies with a detailed answer. A third user, 'It's self-reported...', also responds.

Question: how do we quantify extertise

DH: I have the same question. Most of the reviewers rated themselves as knowledgeable. I am curious, what does it mean by knowledgeable? Do having a publication at CHI makes one knowledgeable?

It's self-reported. I tend to write "expert" if I've published on the topic before, and down from there based on my familiarity.

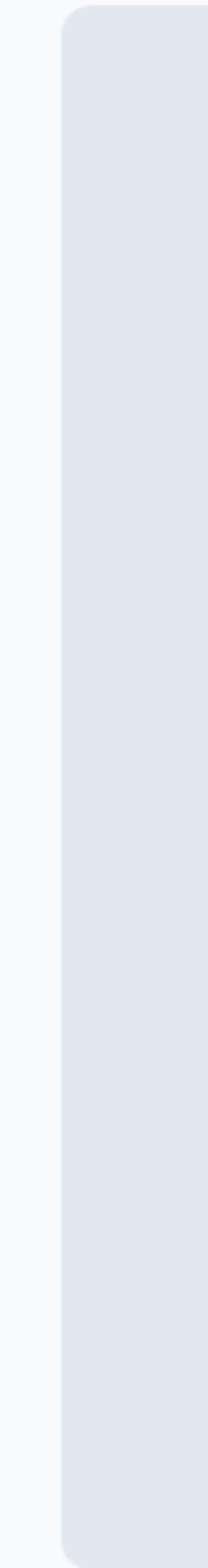
Nextdoor's [Member Agreement](#) requires that every neighbor use their full, real name when signing up on Nextdoor. By real name, we mean the first name that you use when introducing yourself to neighbors, friends, and colleagues and your legal last name.

	Allowed?
Using the name of your business or organization as your account name. Business and service information should be added to the About Me section of your personal profile or included on your business page.	✗
Including professional titles or educational degrees in your name. This information can be added to your profile .	✗
Adding emoji to your name.	✗

Discuss: Is it better to talk about news or politics in anonymous platforms, or “real name” platforms?

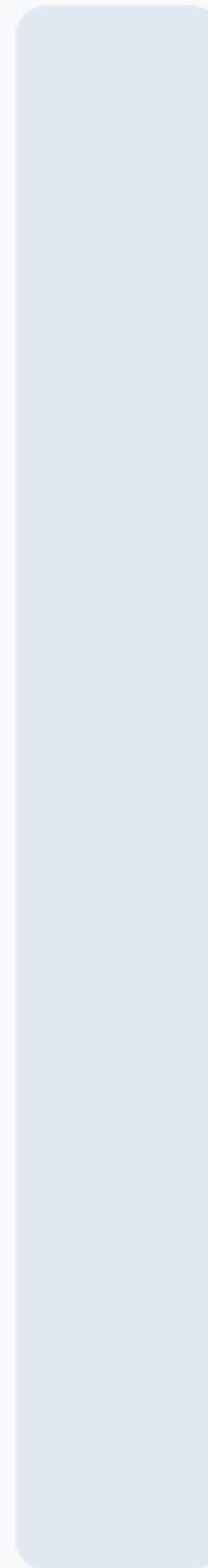
Is it better to talk about news in anonymous platforms, or real name platforms?

0%



Anonymous

0%



Real name

Today's goals

By the end of today, you should be able to...

- Describe common design strategies used in social technologies for communication and signaling, as well as differentiating factors
- Articulate how these strategies then influence how people use the platforms

IN4MATX 153: CSCW

Class 6:
Platform Capabilities

Professor Daniel Epstein
TA Dennis Wang
Reader Weijie Du