

The strength of weak ties

Sociology, Communication



Here I would like to emphasize a bit on Social Capital. Social capital according to me is the pool of ties that a person encompasses during his lifetime including strong and weak ties. Persons with higher social capital are bound to be better off with greater health and general well being. Social capital helps to leverage the people we communicate with for the benefit of our shared and individual interest. We can relate this with a famous punch line - " I scratch your back, you scratch mine. The basic hypothesis of Granovetter's work is that our acquaintances play a very important part in connecting different networks to one another. A personal example which I would like to share is that I have around 30 very closely knitted friends and family members and about 300 odd acquaintances. These acquaintances are comprised of my old classmates, co-workers and some friends through social networking groups. In the digital world these are friends connected through facebook, LinkedIn, orkut etc.

Personally speaking it makes sense that in some cases my family and my close knitted friends are best suited to provide me with quality options and choices. For the most part I believe this is true under certain circumstances during personal care when I am sick or when I need advice for some personal decisions in life. But when it comes to looking out for a job the theory comes true to life. I would be naturally tapping my network of acquaintances and assuming I have a good amount of social capital in my network, I would be more likely be presented with more opportunities than my family and close knitted friends.

Another example explaining the theory of weak ties is between the social networks existing in this globe. We can take an example of how LinkedIn is

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different from Facebook and why that difference matters. Weak ties are the social "degrees of separation" beyond the people we actually know.

Facebook primarily is about knowing who you know, connecting with people who are already in your social circle. In my experience it does little to help you develop weak ties and it does nothing to introduce you to people you do not know.

There is an interesting paradox that Facebook, perhaps, reinforces our stereotypes, because we are just getting content from our mostly like minded friends. LinkedIn by contrast, is about helping people expand their circles and improve their opportunities. LinkedIn has been slower to take off because it is a harder "get." Beyond being a resume building site, why do I need this? If I'm not looking for a job or to find sales leads, why bother? Once you look at it from a content perspective, however, the benefit becomes clearer.

Those "weak ties" provide you with "micro-nutrients" that your "strong ties" may not. Further investigation into the analogy of strong and weak bonds in physics is warranted, but the most immediate application in terms of content strategy is the serendipitous model of magazine content. If we consider content that a reader is looking for (through a Google search, for instance) to be strongly bonded, then the content they find along the way (in sidebars and various "asides" to use the HTML5 term) are weakly bonded.

Magazines have always created content environments where their readers discover new things—and some of those things are advertisements. This serendipity of discovery is key to the pleasure of magazine reading and the

financial success of the magazine business, but it has not translated all that well online. To end my observations I completely agree with this theory however I would like to bring an important aspect that a perfectly balanced strong and weaker ties help an individual to do the best and for the society at large. Thanks & Best Regards Pranav