

# The other side of the coin: social networking's positive impacts

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Social networking is undeniably becoming a huge part of everyday lives. Whether it is on computers, tablets, smart phones or other Internet enabled devices, there is always someone online. Now that we are aware that these social media sites are being used so frequently, the question is: Is this time spent online actually contributing anything to society? The answer is yes. Whether you are simply tweeting an interesting story to a friend or writing a drawn out blog post on your opinion of a current event, you are helping the facilitation of information.

In the case of the Virginia Tech shooting, after the gun shots had stopped, some of the students accessed Facebook to inform others about the event. This was right after Facebook went from being only available to college students to available to the public in late September of 2006, so the information was able to spread farther and faster. They used this social networking site to communicate to each other what happened and who had died from the tragic situation. Even national news websites initially ignored the event and the county emergency site crashed, but Facebook stayed up and running.

In June of 2009, the citizens of Iran took to Twitter to protest an unfair election. Through their phones and computers they were able to organize protests and inform the rest of the world as to what was going on. Even though professional journalists still looked to official statements and comments from experts on which to base their reports, the general public was able to get accurate information from people on the front lines. These events changed the outlook of those initially against social networking. It

showed that not only television and newspapers, but social networking can also affect political participation.

These websites are not only for posting pictures of cats or telling your friends the great movie you saw last night. They are an important catalyst for social and political change. In this day and age a majority of people are involved in social networking one way or another. While social networking can simply be used for talking to friends and family, it has the potential to be used for a higher purpose. It can be used to raise awareness on important news stories, like revolutions or, more recently, school shootings.

This can not only influence others to get involved but influence decisions made in government about these topics, like the issue of gun control. Thanks to sites like Twitter, the population can bring issues into the public light and change the course of history.