

12% recorded in 2005. Even seniors are making a stomp on these sites with 35% usage compared to 2%. Regardless of age, gender, socioeconomic status, racial background, and location, records show that there is an overall increase of people utilizing online sites to interact and exchange information with each other. As a result of the increased globalizing trend of social media sites, a myriad of polarized discussions have surfaced on the issue. On one hand, proponents corroborate the idea that these online sites create more readily accessible information and a more global connection amongst our population. On the other hand, opponents complain that social media creates more conflict regarding the diffusion of false information and facade of weakened productivity.

In their article for the *Harvard Business Review*, “Conquering Digital Distraction,” Larry Rosen, a psychologist, and Alexandra Samuel, a technologist, denounce the usage of online networking sites in regards to its effects on the population. Rosen and Samuel criticizes society’s relationship with social networks asserting that “[w]e waste time, attention, and energy on relatively unimportant information and interactions, staying busy but producing little of value... The result is reduced productivity and engagement, both in the office and at home.” In other words, Rosen and Samuel view social media simply as a distraction that portrays an impediment to productivity inside and outside of the workplace. They argue that social media combined with internet information overload makes it hard for employees to meet expectations and perform well at work, “costing the economy \$977 billion annually.”

In my view, however, social media is a factor of our society that is so deeply rooted that it cannot be separated. Online networkings sites provide us more access to all the news updates, even those not reported by television. From the communicational perspective, it unites everyone across the globe, enabling us to strengthen and encourage our relationships, making people live

improved and happier lives. Individuals are not the only ones that can take advantage of these sites. Social media can also help from a business and organizational standpoint making global and local business interactions and transactions easier. Social media sites will only aid in societal development and growth--

networking sites, society faces a severe decline in our face-to-face interaction which could be detrimental to our social skills, as many other contenders have added. After viewing a study showing that social media is being a more preferred method of communication conducted by Paul Booth, a professor at DePaul University, Keller insists that “our interactions on social media tend to be weak ties--that is, we don’t feel as personally connected to the people at the other end of our communication as we do when we’re face-to-face.” She also includes one of Booth’s supporting statements: ““So while we’re communicating more, we may not necessarily be building relationships as strongly[.]”” In other words, Keller and Booth are trying to convey that we are always online sending instant messages, creating meaningless relationships, instead of meeting with each other in person to deepen existing ones. Although I agree with Keller and Booth up to a point, I cannot accept their overriding assumption that social media acts as a replacement for face-to-face human interaction. Relationships made online are certainly not “weak” either. As a matter of fact, social networking are actually proven to facilitate face-to-face interaction. According to a study by ExactTarget, an email marketing firm,”[46% of Twitter

They reside in various places ranging from Texas, Maine, and even South Korea! I've met some of them in person as well and we frequently keep in contact. Furthermore, according to a research study conducted on teenagers in June of 2012 by Common Sense Media, "[m]ore than one in four teen[agers] say that using their social networking site makes them feel less shy and more outgoing; one in five says it makes them feel more confident... and more sympathetic to others." Not only does social media seek to improve teenagers' social lives, it also helps adults maximize their quality of life and avoid health issues and addiction, by informing and encouraging people to join social support groups. The essence of the article expresses that using social media creates an improved social and emotional state.

On the contrary, contenders of online networking point out that a major setback to the usage of these sites would result in a distraction, encouraging counterproductivity. Though I concede that at times, social media can draw my attention away from other tasks, I would disagree with the statement that it is hindering our overall productivity. Recent studies have challenged the work of critics who have long assumed that online networking sites were a detriment to society's ability to remain constructive. In fact, "[f]or nearly half (46%) of information workers, using social tools has increased their productivity, while less than one in ten (9%) say these tools have reduced their efficiency, according to a new poll of 9,908 employees across 32 countries conducted by Ipsos Public Affairs on behalf of Microsoft." By focusing on the minor detail that online networking sites can be distracting from time to time, opponents like Rosen and Samuel overlook all of the other aspects and benefits that these sites provide. Readdressing their article, Rosen and Samuel are convinced that we are simply throwing away our time by partaking in useless online interactions. A piece of data in Brad Friedman's article, President of a social media marketing firm, supports Rosen and Samuel's

those people, 191 were able to engage with the foundation at some level. We were amazed at how far our efforts could reach in a short period of time.

As discussed, the widely growing base for social media sites has elicited many dichotomized speculations. On the one hand, some Americans believe that social media is a hindrance to societal development in that it seems to reduce productivity levels, disperse dishonest news to the public, and kill our social skills with decreased human to human interaction. On the other hand, others acknowledge these sites to promote an increased cohesion of globalized information, uniting people from different parts of the world. I admit and endorse that Instagram, Snapchat, and Twitter can be distracting and may contain false information, however I am not fully convinced that these factors prevent our society from being productive altogether. Our population as a whole must recognize and acknowledge that social media represents a tree that is deeply rooted into our everyday lives, and therefore is most likely not going to be eliminated soon. Instead of trying to uproot this tree, we should nourish it and help it blossom so that its benefits can be utilized to

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