

POSTAL NEWS

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1. You've Got to Have (150) Friends

By ROBIN DUNBAR

Published: December 25, 2010

MORE than anything since the invention of the postal service, Facebook has revolutionized how we relate to one another. But the revolution hasn't come in quite the way that the people behind it and other social networking sites assume.

These sites may have allowed us to amass thousands of "friends," but they have not yet devised a way to cut through the clunky, old-fashioned nature of relationships themselves. Our circle of actual friends remains stubbornly small, limited not by technology but by human nature. What Facebook has done, though, is provide us a way to maintain those circles in a fractured, dynamic world.

Social networking and other digital media have long promised to open up wonderful new vistas, all from the comfort of our own homes. The limitations of face-to-face interaction that have, until now, bound us to our small individual worlds — the handful of people we meet in our everyday lives — would be overcome.

The critical component in social networking is the removal of time as a constraint. In the real world, according to research by myself and others, we devote 40 percent of our limited social time each week to the five most important people we know, who represent just 3 percent of our social world and a trivially small proportion of all the people alive today. Since the time invested in a relationship determines its quality, having more than five best friends is impossible when we interact face to face, one person at a time.

Instant messaging and social networking claim to solve that problem by allowing us to talk to as many people as we like, all at the same time. Like the proverbial lighthouse blinking on the horizon, our messages fan out into the dark night to every passing ship within reach of an Internet connection. We can broadcast, literally, to the world.

I use the word "broadcast" because, despite Facebook's promise, that is the fundamental flaw in the logic of the social-networking revolution. The developers at

Facebook overlooked one of the crucial components in the complicated business of how we create relationships: our minds.

Put simply, our minds are not designed to allow us to have more than a very limited number of people in our social world. The emotional and psychological investments that a close relationship requires are considerable, and the emotional capital we have available is limited.

Indeed, no matter what Facebook allows us to do, I have found that most of us can maintain only around 150 meaningful relationships, online and off — what has become known as Dunbar's number. Yes, you can “friend” 500, 1,000, even 5,000 people with your Facebook page, but all save the core 150 are mere voyeurs looking into your daily life — a fact incorporated into the new social networking site Path, which limits the number of friends you can have to 50.

What's more, contrary to all the hype and hope, the people in our electronic social worlds are, for most of us, the same people in our offline social worlds. In fact, the average number of friends on Facebook is 120 to 130, just short enough of Dunbar's number to allow room for grandparents and babies, people too old or too young to have acquired the digital habit.

This isn't to say that Facebook and its imitators aren't performing an important, even revolutionary, task — namely, to keep us in touch with our existing friends.

Until relatively recently, almost everyone on earth lived in small, rural, densely interconnected communities, where our 150 friends all knew one another, and everyone's 150 friends list was everyone else's.

But the social and economic mobility of the past century has worn away at that interconnectedness. As we move around the country and across continents, we collect disparate pockets of friends, so that our list of 150 consists of a half-dozen subsets of people who barely know of one another's existence, let alone interact.

Our ancestors knew the same people their entire lives; as we move around, though, we can lose touch with even our closest friends. Emotional closeness declines by around 15 percent a year in the absence of face-to-face contact, so that in five years someone can go from being an intimate acquaintance to the most distant outer layer of your 150 friends.

Facebook and other social networking sites allow us to keep up with friendships that would otherwise rapidly wither away. And they do something else that's probably more important, if much less obvious: they allow us to reintegrate our networks so that, rather than having several disconnected subsets of friends, we can rebuild, albeit virtually, the kind of old rural communities where everyone knew everyone else. Welcome to the electronic village.

Robin Dunbar is a professor of evolutionary anthropology at Oxford and the author of “How Many Friends Does One Person Need? Dunbar's Number and Other Evolutionary Quirks.”

A version of this op-ed appeared in print on December 26, 2010, on page WK15 of the New York edition.

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2. Ganart Technologies and Eurogiro sign agreement

Posted on: Saturday, 25 December 2010, 00:01 CST

Ganart Technologies and Eurogiro sign a technology partnership agreement to develop a postal solution that delivers financial services to “the last mile”.

Carrollton, TX (PRWEB) December 23, 2010

The Technology Partnership Agreement between Ganart Technologies and Eurogiro provides an end-to-end solution for postal organisations to deliver international payments and remittances as well as other financial services to the “last mile”. For posts and other financial service providers that seek to reach the unbanked and underserved population in rural areas, the combination of the two companies’ technologies will provide fast, inexpensive, compliant and secure transactions to host-connected and unconnected rural postal branches. “Trust, flexible technology and a menu of services tailored to the needs of this market are the elements that can change their world for the better, ” notes Webb Edwards, Co-Founder of Ganart Technologies.

For Eurogiro, the partnership complements its own charter to provide a secure, cost-efficient international payments and remittances system with Ganart’s “last mile” financial services technology solution to reach rural locations with a semi or fully self-service customer experience via a kiosk or other hardware device. “Ganart’s technology advantages are the perfect complement to the Eurogiro network and its community. It allows posts, as well as banks, the ability to provide financial services reach that aid in the financial inclusion agenda,” stated Tjeed Rienstra, CEO Eurogiro.

Art Holbrook, CEO Ganart Technologies explained, “It has been the vision of Ganart to provide financial services to the world’s underserved population. We consider the joining of Ganart’s and Eurogiro’s technologies as a major step in addressing our vision.” He added “With Eurogiro’s expansive postal network, we can collectively deliver a variety of financial services that have never before been offered, especially in non-urban areas that lack basic infrastructure systems. We are very much looking forward to working towards our common vision with Eurogiro.”

Integration effort and testing are planned for Q1 2011.

About Eurogiro A/S:

Eurogiro A/S, headquartered in Copenhagen, Denmark, is a global payments network and community connecting the postal and banking worlds. Founded in 1992, the company now connects over 60 postal organizations, post, savings and commercial banks, and other financial service providers in nearly 50 countries through a shared IT

platform and business standards. In 2007, Eurogiro opened a representative office in Singapore to provide regional support for its members and further expand in the Asia Pacific region. With the vast global reach of the Eurogiro network members in city and rural areas, Eurogiro offers one of the most extensive payment networks for international payments and remittances. <http://www.eurogiro.com>

About Ganart Technologies:

Ganart Technologies is a proprietary provider of reserved and compliant cloud processing of information and transactions. Ganart's me6464 is designed around serving the underserved with their proprietary cloud software system, which has the ability to push a vast array of value exchange services to those units in their unit network. This capability gives their customers consistency with their financial services systems from end to end (units to back-end). The Ganart solution reaches the entire financial pyramid, particularly the un-banked and under-banked. For more information visit <http://www.ganart.com>

For the original version on PRWeb visit:

<http://www.prweb.com/releases/prweb2010/12/prweb4918324.htm>

Source: prweb

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3. Postal dept starts Yellow Channel Scheme

TNN, Dec 24, 2010, 09.35pm IST

Tags: Yellow Channel Scheme postal performance General Ram Bharosa

KANPUR: In an initiative to make Kanpur a quality performance region, the postal department has started 'Yellow Channel Scheme', keeping in mind the heavy flow of mails on the occasion of Christmas and New Year.

Post Master General Ram Bharosa said: "The main objective of the Yellow Channel service is to ensure fast delivery of Christmas and New Year mails. For this, we have placed yellow coloured mail boxes in 10 post offices of the city which include General Post Office at Bara Chauraha, post office in Cantonment, Nawabganj, Udyog Nagar, Armapur, IIT, Harjinder Nagar, Kidwai Nagar, Udyog Nagar and Chakeri."

To help its clients, the postal department has set up a special stall at GPO where they can avail of all facilities, like purchasing envelopes, gift packs and stationery, through a single window.

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4. UniCredit to sell MedioCredito Centrale unit to Italy's postal service

BBR Staff Writer Published 21 December 2010

Italian bank UniCredit has signed an agreement to sell its MedioCredito Centrale (MCC) unit to Italy's postal service for \$179m, in the context of the project promoted by the Ministry of Economy and Finance to boost the impoverished south.

The government plans to use MedioCredito to create a Bank of the South to improve funding of small and mid-sized businesses in Italy's southern regions, where income is below the Italian average and unemployment is high.

The sale is expected to be completed by spring 2011, subject to certain conditions including authorizations to be received by postal service from relevant regulatory authorities.

UniCredit said it will benefit from MCC's result for the financial year 2010 as well as for 2011 up to the date of completion.

UniCredit was advised by UniCredit Corporate & Investment Banking.

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