Email Still Tops Facebook For Keeping In Touch

Contributed by eMarketer
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Only 18- to 24-year-olds use the social networking site more than email for passing items on

Content-sharing has become a staple of internet usage for most online adults.

Research from Chadwick Martin Bailey found that three-quarters of web users are likely to share content with friends and family, and nearly half do so at least once a week.Â

But while much social networking content is built around such shared items, most people still prefer to use email to pass along items of interest.

Overall, 86% of survey respondents said they used email to share content, while just 49% said they used Facebook. Broken down by age, the preference for email is more pronounced as users get older.

And only the youngest group polled, those ages 18 to 24, reverses the trend, with 76% sharing via Facebook, compared with 70% via email.

Earlier research from StrongMail and ShareThis also found email was still on top for content-sharing. Other studies have shown that, when limited to sharing on social sites, Facebook is No. 1.

Asked what gets them to share content online, web users polled by Chadwick Martin Bailey revealed selfish motivations. Rather than focusing on sharing content they thought the recipients would find helpful or relevant (58%), most respondents cared more about what they thought was interesting or amusing (72%).

Asked to select the single biggest reason they shared content, the greatest percentage of respondents (45%) again said it was because they enjoyed it. Men and women reported similar reasons for sharing, but motivations varied by age.

The oldest respondents cared more about the value of content to recipients: 67% of those ages 55 and older said they shared items because they would be useful to recipients, compared with just 45% of 18- to 24-year-olds.

This difference in sharing motivation could have a relationship to the method of sharing. Email is a more targeted form of sending content; while content-sharers may shoot off mass emails to large distribution lists, most email shares are likely sent to a person or small group selected based on the specific content being shared.

Sharing via social networks like Facebook, by contrast, typically involves feeding items to an entire friends list.

The youngest users, who care the least about whether the recipients of their content actually want to see it, are also most likely to disseminate the information to the widest group.

And the seniors and older boomers who find the recipients' needs more important dramatically favor email for sharing, suggesting they are sending relevant items to only those who will want them.

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