

The Power of the Automated News Feed

How Plaxo, Friendfeed and even Facebook utilize 3rd party programs such as Picasa, YouTube and Flickr to keep you up-to-date in this even more fast-paced Information Age

If you're like many of us out there, you've been using **Plaxo** for a few years now. It's been a great tool, primarily used by the business community, in keeping one's **Outlook** up-to-date when your friends and other contacts change jobs, move or even get a new cell phone number. Change jobs and all you had to do was update your Plaxo information in order to get that job update out there to hundreds of your Outlook contacts simultaneously, and vice versa... one of your Outlook contacts moves to a new city, and voila, your Outlook information is automatically updated.

Over the past year, however, Plaxo has expanded its offerings to include a new addition, **Plaxo Pulse**, found at <http://pulse.plaxo.com>. What's unique about Plaxo Pulse is that it has started out as a relatively new player in the world of business social networking and has done two things - leveraged its extensive database of Outlook users and offered them something they didn't have access to before... a summary of their friends and business contacts lives pulled from once disparate sources such as **Twitter**, **YouTube** and **Flickr**. Plaxo successfully looked at what made Facebook so wildly popular, which was their incredibly efficient and cutting edge **News Feed**, and created a more universal version based upon a person's social life as found all throughout the Internet.

Now if you're not familiar with the **Facebook News Feed**, I'll try to summarize it for you here... it's a tight, efficient compilation of all of your Facebook Friend's activities on the site. When someone uploads some new photos, you see a summary of those photos in your News Feed. When one of your friends becomes friends with someone else, you see a summary of this new relationship as well, and more often than not, you know that other person being befriended as well. Read a great story online you want to share with your friends? You can quickly use the **Facebook Post** feature to share that story, with thumbnail image and summary, with all of your friends in their News Feed.

It turns out many of those same features are found on the Internet in a wide variety of popular websites being used by millions of Internet users today. Facebook has great video uploading now, but YouTube had it first and has many more videos to be shared. Facebook's Post feature is great, but when it comes to finding some of the best content out there on the Internet, **Digg.com** has taken a distinct lead in providing tools and features for bringing this content to light. When it comes to photos, both **Picasa** and **Flickr** have taken a real lead in this department, allowing their users to share thousands of photos with their friends and family online.

Thus, we have Plaxo Pulse, a compilation of a person's various pieces of content found online, from videos to photos to blog postings to their daily Twitter updates, updated very similar to the Facebook News Feed, but starting with the vast and well connected Plaxo database of relationships you've set up over the years for your Outlook updates. In today's fast-

paced world, being able to quickly stay current on what's happening in the lives of those important to you is becoming more and more relevant, both for those with less time on their hands, and for those who want to free up more time to appreciate other aspects of their lives without feeling left behind when they can't devote a few hours per week for those social phone calls we used to do more often in the 90s.

Of course, where Plaxo has taken the lead, others have followed. Another site coming on strong in this space is **FriendFeed.com**. It is very similar to Plaxo Pulse, but has yet to grow in the numbers needed to hit critical mass and make it a "must go to" site in someone's daily life.

In the **GLBT** space, our company created **PinkBananaWorld.com** last year. PinkBananaWorld.com is a site that incorporates both the News Feed compilation discussed above with the power of content aggregation from the variety of GLBT news, blog, podcast and video sources syndicating their content using RSS feeds. In a nutshell, it's designed as a one-stop location for all up-to-date GLBT content as well as a single source for keeping current on one's GLBT friends and family via their photos, blogs, videos and more... content pulled from the sites they use most online including YouTube, Picasa and Flickr.

Ironically, Facebook has seen the power of this universal news feed and has created a similar system, allowing its users to import their updates from YouTube, Picasa, Flickr, Delicious, Digg, Yelp and more. As social networking continues to grow in importance, both from a personal level and a professional level, this sharing of content between sites will become more relevant as sites seek to stay current with where their user base is going and provide them the tools to keep them loyal and coming back. A year ago, it was all about **MySpace**... two years ago, it was all about **Friendster**. Where it will be next year is hard to say, but one thing is clear. The importance of the current niche players including Picasa, Flickr, Delicious and Digg is only going to grow as more and more users become accustomed to these new online tools and find that the technology used to tie them all together becomes more and more advanced and ubiquitous, making the Internet the new operating system of the future.

Plaxo Pulse has created another new feature which adds to the power of their universal news feed... the **Plaxo Group**. Being a member of a group, one can receive updates from other group members as well on specific topics ranging from online marketing to financial news updates. These updates are designed to appear in the same Plaxo News Feed as the contact updates from YouTube and Flickr, ensuring they are seen in the best way possible.

A new group has been created specifically for the **GLBT Business Community**, found at <http://gltb.plaxogroups.com>. This group, launched in July 2008 and growing exponentially, allows others in the GLBT business community to share various blog, news, video and more related to the gay & lesbian marketplace. Be sure to stop on by and check it out.

