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Facebook is fundamental shift in communication

By Larry Richman

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On March 25, Mark Zuckerberg, the CEO of Facebook, and Utah Sen. Orrin Hatch talked about technology at a forum at BYU. Hatch fielded questions posed by BYU students earlier on the BYU Facebook page. Zuckerberg talked about founding Facebook, his advice for budding entrepreneurs and his vision for the future of technology and social media.

Today, Facebook has around 600 million monthly active users. More than half of the Internet users in the U.S. use Facebook. Within two years, nearly half of the overall U.S. population will be on Facebook.

Zuckerberg talked about how he took an idea in his dorm room at Harvard and developed it into a company worth perhaps \$50 billion. (Facebook, by the way, has only about 2,000 employees.)

Zuckerberg had a double major in computer science and psychology. He felt psychology was important because, in the end, all of the technology problems we deal with are really human problems. We use technology to provide tools to solve human problems.

Zuckerberg wasn't trying to build a company. He just wanted the product to exist at Harvard. Within a few weeks, two-thirds of Harvard's students were using it. Then came requests from surrounding schools. "Then it kind of got out of control from there."

Zuckerberg and his college friends often talked about how different the world could be if people were able to connect better. People can't physically connect with more than their close circles of friends. But with technology, you can stay in touch with more people. Tools like the Internet and Facebook give people a voice. Peace.facebook.com maps out friends who are connecting between countries. Technology can help people better understand each other. By enabling people from diverse backgrounds to easily connect and share ideas, we can create more understanding and cooperation between countries, leading to more peace.

At one point, when Facebook had about 100 million users, Zuckerberg took a month off and traveled around the world to reflect on what he was doing and what Facebook could become.

"We think that our company understands the technology and social issues fairly well, but we want to enable entrepreneurs across the world," he said. "There is a huge opportunity for disruption in any area that you're passionate about. And we want to enable independent entrepreneurs to do those things. I think then we can build a much stronger ecosystem of apps."

More than 1 million people are building apps on Facebook. They want entrepreneurs around the world to use tools provided by Facebook and by others to create services around music, gaming, education, health and other topics. Zuckerberg said there are whole new industries that could be created like this.

"One thing that gets blown out of proportion in our culture is the focus on the single person or the couple of people that are running something," he said. "The success of Facebook is all about the team that we built. I think that's true of any successful company."

Zuckerberg encouraged people to have passion about what they do. "Really love and believe in what you're doing. I think that's the most important thing. If you start to build something ... it's hard, and you encounter a lot of challenges. If you don't completely love and believe in what you're doing, it actually becomes the rational thing to stop doing it. Most people have something that they're super passionate about, and I'd encourage you guys to find that thing."

Offering advice for people who want to work for Facebook, he said, "We look for people who are passionate about something. In a way, it almost doesn't matter what you're passionate about. What we really look for when we're interviewing people is what they've shown an initiative to do on their own."

He encouraged students not to just attend classes but to begin building things and participating in community and philanthropic endeavors. "People don't get put into roles; they create opportunities for themselves."

Early on, Facebook was criticized for not being more protective of its users' private information. Initially, Facebook left its privacy settings open by default. But it has since made great progress in providing multiple levels of privacy options. Zuckerberg also emphasized that Facebook does not sell or provide information to advertisers. Advertisers can target specific demographics, but he said no information is sold or goes to others.

"We're really focused on safety, especially children's safety," he said. "We take a lot of extra precautions. We really try to create a safe environment."

Zuckerberg and Hatch both said that the best thing government can do is to stay out of the way of developers. Zuckerberg believes there is so much innovation on the Internet now because there isn't a lot of regulation.

The phenomenal growth of Facebook may be driven by the fact that it is not just a face book. It represents a fundamental shift in the way people communicate:

It's a platform — similar to a mobile phone. It's a social way to network and interact with people. It's a combination of email, chat, instant message, photo gallery, video sharing, gaming, blogging, journaling and life history, all rolled into one. It's a collaboration tool with 1.5 million pieces of content (links, news stories, blog posts, notes, photos) shared on Facebook every day. It's a way to invite people to events and document what happened. It's a way for people to express themselves and launch initiatives. People can run a business on Facebook or run an information campaign. It's a platform where people can develop and expand their capabilities every day.

Larry Richmond is a social media expert, online marketing professional and author of www.LDSMediaTalk.com. He is the director of product awareness at The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saint and former director of Internet coordination and product manager of LDS.org.

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