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Press Release

March 13, 2008

New O'Reilly Radar Report--The Facebook Application Ecosystem: Why Some Thrive--and Most Don't

In May of 2007, [Facebook](#) launched its application platform, spurring a flurry of development. More than 10,000 applications were created in the first few months for varying reasons: fun, education, to steer traffic to other sites, and, overwhelmingly, to find a way to make money from Facebook's millions of users. In the latest O'Reilly Radar Report, [The Facebook Application Ecosystem: Why Some Thrive and Most Don't](#), author Shelly Farnham and the O'Reilly Radar team offer a deep analysis of what has worked, what hasn't, and the reasons why.

Among the questions examined in the report is "what do people use Facebook applications for?" To arrive at an answer, Farnham and team analyzed the primary user goals of 261 of the most-used applications. The top five categories were:

1. Enhanced communication (7.5 million daily active users, 26 percent of total daily activity over 26 applications). Applications in this category let users enrich messages with media (SuperWall), telegraph emotions (SuperPoke!, Emote), and structure or script communications (My Questions).
2. Social comparison (3.4 million daily active users, 12 percent of total over 17 applications). These applications allow users to discover how they're similar or different from others (Likeness), what their rank is on various social dimensions (Hot or Not), or who shares their tastes (Movies).
3. Play social games (3.2 million daily active, 11 percent of total over 38 applications). Games that require social connectedness or social interactions (Zombies, Pirates, Fight Club).
4. Social selection (3.0 million daily active, 10 percent of total over 10 applications). Applications that let users select or filter for most important friends (Top Friends), or to sort contacts into categories (Social Circles).
5. Profile enhancement (2.9 million daily active, 10 percent of total over 38 applications). Help users put their best face forward, allowing them to customize their profile images (Sketch Me), use widgets that proclaim their values (Books iRead, BibleVerses), and feature groups with which they identify (Total Sports Fan, which allows users to place team logos on their profiles).

Going beyond the question of which applications people use, [The Facebook Application Ecosystem](#) clearly defines the factors that have had the most meaningful impact on application adoption. The report examines the ingredients that must be present for an application to achieve critical mass, and investigates why--even when all of these ingredients are present--some applications fail. It also covers the following questions:



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- Which application features lead to success?
- What kinds of applications are appropriate for a social networking platform?
- How can you generate revenue in Facebook?
- Are there untapped opportunities for innovation in Facebook?
- Beyond the fluff: can Facebook be a true application platform?

For a review copy or more information please email kathrynb@oreilly.com. Please include your delivery address and contact information.

Shelly D. Farnham is the co-founder and social architect at Waggle Labs, which develops innovative social applications. Shelly received her Ph.D in social psychology at the University of Washington and performed research and advanced prototyping for seven years at Microsoft Research, focusing on social networking, mobile social coordinate, and personal analytics. In 2005 she left to consult with startups and teach the social web at the University of Washington before co-founding Waggle labs in 2007.

Additional Resources:

For more information about the book, including table of contents, index, author bios, and cover graphic, see: <http://radar.oreilly.com/research/facebook-app-eco-report.html>



The Facebook Application Ecosystem: Why Some Thrive--and Most Don't
An O'Reilly Radar Report
by Shelly D. Farnham, Ph.D
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