

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of Reverend Father Rector, Professor Salim DACCACHE who honored me today to represent him in your Symposium, as he is outside the country. He wishes you a pleasant stay at USJ, and a good success for this meeting.

We must recognize today that social networks play an important role in everyday life. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, are everywhere. These social networks have launched a truly international phenomenon. Everybody is there, being young or old, everyone has connected one day on Facebook. Yet, this is an interesting way to make friends, keep in touch, to express and share emotions. It also has a hidden side which can be negative. Almost all young people use at least one social network every day. They became the main way of communication.

An advantage of social networks is that they are a free and easy way of communication. However, they remain a very useful tool for businesses, academic institutions and others, assisting direct contact with their clients, people and students. Social networks have become part of the corporate communication of the universities, they allow them greater interaction with their various and heterogeneous target, formed of students, general service staff, teachers, alumni, assistants, friends, etc...

It proves important to emphasize that social networks have always been present in the social life of the human being. They only needed a way to grow. This means is the Internet and New Information Technologies.

Thus, the power of these social networks is greatly increased thanks to Internet media. This is, a phenomenon that no one could predict, there are still few years ago. Technology put within reach of all, a tool with a very strong social potential, which is the social network, **Facebook**.

However, we are only at the beginning of the use of online social networks. Therefore, the issues are many and, already, new opportunities arise.

First, social networks are wonderful online reputation management tools that offer high visibility on the Net. This visibility and reputation allow this, under control in most cases, relationships and relevant qualities. So that acquired notoriety, offers support, motivation while providing confidence for future projects or meetings. The outlook for social networks are social as well as technological.

So we are assisting therefore a metaphor in the field of communication considering archaic social networks everywhere in our lives:

Phone, computer, GPS...

The convergence of all social networks in one place is a goal to achieve on a longer term. Despite the general enthusiasm around these social networks, critics of these tools are becoming more numerous:

- Actual contacts decreasing to the disadvantage of online relationships,
- Pollution of its virtual environment
- Impacts on real life sometimes very serious.

However, if social networks are properly used, they can be very effective. It depends obviously on individuals themselves, because, more than features or services, it is the users who improve the quality of a social network. And for institutions, professional use allows better Return on Investment.

We keep to witness the explosion of social networks. Facing exponential increase in the number of members and the new information landscape induced by these networks, many people wished them develop a presence for professional purposes: Companies; universities; schools; libraries; associations; TV channels ; Newspapers etc.

One watchword: meet customers and users.

The most frequently invoked argument is that being absent from social networks allow others to talk about you, in positive terms as negative, without being able to react. In fact, because of their ability to give rise to conversations, web and social networks have become a central element of the relationship of its users. Indeed, social networks are multiple for both users and stakeholders. On the user side, social networks bring together people from all sectors. Therefore, it is possible to find almost any person regardless of its location or position within the society.

By displaying information on people, social networks offer the opportunity to get in touch with all these people. Also, they allow for managing digital identity and reputation online. And, more the institution manages to emphasize and become visible on the web, less the reputation of problems occur because the visible information will be chosen.

And St. Joseph's University in all of this?

Saint Joseph University in Beirut is present on the social networks: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube and LinkedIn, all managed by the Department of Publications and Communications. These networks and the *www.usj.edu.lb* website, form the main channels to our digital communication.

The communication service, is in preparation process to ensure on social networks, publishing information about student life, news of the university, activities of its faculties and also information on cultural and social events, sports and science. Students, staff and Saint Joseph University's teacher,

researchers, involved in social networks to discuss topics related to the institution, such as training opportunities, results of research and student life.

The general public also communicates with the university through these networks often, asking for information on the admission and recruitment, to share an opinion or request special assistance.

Students contribute daily to the image and reputation of USJ, in both the private and professional spheres. When they speak about the university, they ensure respect for certain rules. They know that social platforms are true public spaces, visible and searchable by all. Everyone can spread their ideas by republishing content written or audio, instantly. They are perfectly aware that personal or business conversations can be distributed anywhere without their agreement.

This is a direct involvement of the institution on what is published. The information that are posted are indexed by search engines. Although these networks are places of freedom of expression, it must however remain cautious. The university encourages the expression of these students with knowledge of the subjects. It is a form of accountability.

Only spokespersons appointed by the Saint Joseph University in Beirut can speak formally at the institutional name. These words are taken from usually posted on the official accounts of USJ, easily spotted by the institution's logo and the hashtag #USJLiban and administered by communications professionals. We must remember that the positive reputation of USJ contributes to better employability of its students.

USJ respects when it appears on the social media, the major legal provisions:

- The rights of privacy
- The right of literary and artistic property
- The rights of intellectual property
- Industrial property rights

USJ, is in the process of introducing the use of networks in teaching to facilitate communication of students with their teachers, with the aim of ensuring access to courses and facilitate the sharing of educational content.

This activity is facilitated and maintained so as to provide the answers with students, staff, teachers need to embark confidently on social media by taking all necessary precautions. The goal is to protect USJ users from dangers and obstacles that may arise during their Internet experience.

Finally, what are the benefits which leads to social media to the University?

Divided by function for readability, we have chosen to present concrete examples of the benefits provided by these social networks.

In terms of human resources, social networks provide:

- An improvement in the overall performance of the university
- A management optimization: the right people for the right position, thanks to social networks people are interconnected. This is to identify talent for a specific goal easier.

- Increased efficiency: social networks improve motivation and involvement of actors.
- Rapid problem identification.

In terms of marketing, this active presence on the social net has convenient results for the image of USJ:

- Better targeting of students and prospects
- Greater loyalty. All University actors involved in the life of USJ, have a stronger relationship to it. More community sensing
- A good tool to know the real needs of society and our community and anticipate these demands.
- More interactivity: for expression and debate
- Openness to new partners
- Image USJ younger, dynamic and close to its community
- Build bridges between ancient of USJ and USJ
- Be the source of information for all types of media

Generally University services also have much to gain from the use of social networks:

- Increase the number of students
- Rapid Anticipation problems
- Listening and analysis of comments to understand the possible problems
- The faster response to contain these problems.

Again, on behalf of the Reverend Father Rector I wish you a good stay at USJ and a fruitful and successful conference.

Thank you for your attention