

Too Young for Facebook

Why the social network's plan to sign up preteens is a very bad idea

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How young is too young for Facebook?

Are you ready for your second- or third-grader to sign up for Facebook? The company floated that idea this week that it is considering allowing kids under the age of 13 to use the site with parental supervision (...). Facebook made the potential plan sound as benevolent as possible, saying it is (...) adding controls that would allow parents to decide whom their kids can friend and what apps they can use.

Don't be reassured. Facebook is interested in kids (...) because that's good for the company's market share, now and in the future. Concerns have been growing over Facebook's ability to sustain the 88% revenue growth it achieved last year via advertising, especially in the wake of its troubled initial public offering." This is a company under pressure that seeks to increase its profits.

There's even more cause for concern about younger kids in the Pew Research Center poll: more than 30 percent of 12-to-13-year-old girls said they saw kids being mostly unkind to each other on social network sites. The survey followed up with this interesting question: "Have you had a bad experience online that made you nervous about going to school the next day?" More than one in four 12- and 13-year-old girls said yes, a higher rate again than any other group. In other words, young kids, especially girls, are more vulnerable online than older kids are.

Monitoring kids online is hard enough as it is, we don't need Facebook to make it harder.

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