

# **Online Networking Platforms** 2020-08-14 **(excludes videoconferencing)**

## **Types of services**

Multi-purpose networking suites

- G-Suite
- iCloud
- MS 365
- Open Office
- Zoho
- Adobe CC (for media production)

File-sharing platforms

- G-Drive
- Drop Box
- Box
- NextCloud
- HighTail

Document-production collaboration platforms

- Google apps
- Open Office
- Zoho
- Moving into this space
  - HighTail
  - FormStack
  - MailChimp
  - Adobe (Acrobat)

## Business models

- In all cases, users need to set up accounts in order to edit content.
- What each company gets in return for each user's registration information (and sometimes fee) varies by business model.
  
- **Nonprofit / Open Access**
  - Business model
    - Developed by a community of believers with some paid staff, goal is to make information freely available to all humanity.
  - Examples
    - Open Office
    - (Also Wikipedia, Creative Commons, etc. . . )
  - Advantages
    - Values of this model are resonant with Quaker business practice
  - Disadvantages
    - Business lacks resources, hence functionality and ongoing improvements in user experience and security enhancements are limited
  
- **Quid Pro Quo / Fee for Service**
  - Business model
    - Charge subscribers on a monthly or yearly basis; fees offered in "packages" that increase in price as collections of features and storage capacity increase; typically include a "teaser" package which is quite limited and is free; sometimes, the user has the option to sign up for free for a limited time only, with the understanding that their account will roll over into a paid category unless they cancel it first.
  - Examples
    - Zoho
    - Mailchimp
    - FormStack
    - HighTail
    - Drop Box
    - Box

- Advantages
  - Platforms tend to be well-resourced, rich in functionality, well maintained; including ongoing improvements in user experience and security enhancements
- Disadvantages
  - Idiosyncratic user interfaces present some learning-curves to novice users
- **Advertising-Based**
  - Business model
    - Continuously grow and refine segmenting of the platform's audience and sell advertisers access to likely customers; in some cases, offer ad-free account to corporate clients, although individuals who access that account may still be included in the platform's overall audience for advertisers
  - Examples
    - Google (and G-Suite for corporate customers)
    - (also Facebook, Twitter, YouTube . . . )
  - Advantages
    - Platforms tend to be well-resourced, rich in functionality, well maintained; including ongoing improvements in user experience and security enhancements
    - Platforms have become ubiquitous; many people have already gone through the user learning curves
  - Disadvantages
    - Lack of transparency as to what exactly users are really signing up for
    - Model has been characterized as "surveillance capitalism" (built on the core functionality of "search"), which has the goal of tracking the behavior of as many people as possible so as to maximize opportunities to monetize the data collected