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Project 4

Lego Case Study

Social networking refers to the act of building and maintaining relationships through online platforms that connect individuals, often focusing on personal or professional interactions. Social media, on the other hand, encompasses a broader range of online platforms where users create, share, and consume content, including text, images, and videos. While both involve online communication, social networking is more relationship-centric, emphasizing connections between people, such as on LinkedIn or Facebook. Social media, however, prioritizes content creation and engagement, as seen on platforms like Instagram or TikTok.

Social networking platforms often include features of social media, such as posting updates, but their primary goal is providing connections between users. On the opposite side of that coin, social media platforms may facilitate networking but are primarily designed for content sharing and audience engagement. The key difference lies in their focus. Social networking is about interpersonal relationships, while social media is about content and community interaction. Despite these distinctions, the terms are often used interchangeably, as many platforms blend both elements, allowing users to network while consuming or creating content. Understanding these nuances helps in selecting the right platform for specific goals, whether for personal connections or content-driven outreach.

The Lego Mindstorms line, once a hub for robotics enthusiasts, was discontinued in 2022 and replaced by SPIKE, an educational platform targeting students and teachers. The Lego SPIKE website serves as an informational gateway, directing users to the SPIKE App where social networking features reside. These features enhance collaboration, though they're more structured than traditional social platforms.

The app lets users save and share projects locally within the "Projects" section after connecting a SPIKE Prime hub. While Lego's privacy policy clarifies there's no public upload or direct networking due to safety priorities, students can showcase builds in classroom settings, mimicking the group interaction one would get in that environment. Interactive building instructions are accessible in the app. Select a lesson plan, and 3D guides appear alongside coding tools, encouraging teamwork on projects.

Unlike Mindstorms' once-vibrant community features, SPIKE's website focuses on app access rather than hosting social tools itself. Lego's shift reflects a privacy-conscious, education-first approach, with the app driving collaboration in controlled environments. To explore, install the app, pair a hub, and dive into its project and lesson areas.

Lego's SPIKE Prime set, which replaced the discontinued Mindstorms line, comes with detailed instructions for building basic robots. However, new owners aiming to create and program complex robots can tap into social networking elements through the SPIKE App. While the app itself doesn't offer direct messaging or public galleries due to Lego's privacy focus, it provides tools to inspire advanced projects.

After downloading the app and connecting a SPIKE Prime hub, users can explore the "Projects" section. Here, they save their own builds and code, which can be shared within a classroom or small group setting. This peer exchange sparks ideas for more intricate designs, encouraging owners to iterate beyond the basics. The app also includes interactive 3D building instructions within lesson plans, accessible by selecting a unit like "Getting Started." These guides, paired with coding tutorials, help users grasp complex mechanics and programming concepts collaboratively, especially in educational environments.

Beyond the app, Lego's SPIKE website links to a community of educators and enthusiasts. New owners can draw inspiration from shared experiences online, like project showcases or coding tips, building confidence to tackle sophisticated robots step by step.

Lego's SPIKE community, connected to the SPIKE Prime educational platform, brings substantial value to the brand through active participation. Educators and students share custom lesson plans and projects using the SPIKE App and Lego Education Community, expanding the range of practical STEAM resources beyond Lego's standard materials. Members display original robot designs and coding solutions, often saved in the app's "Projects" section or shared externally, sparking creativity and raising the platform's innovative appeal. Immediate feedback is offered through forums and app reviews, aiding Lego in enhancing tools like the SPIKE app based on direct user insights.

SPIKE users, particularly teachers, work together in classrooms or online to craft activities aligned with standards such as Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) or Computer Science Teachers Association (CSTA), strengthening the platform's educational impact and attractiveness to schools. Finally, enthusiasts broaden Lego's audience by creating tutorials, videos, and competition preparation content for events like FIRST Lego League, attracting new users and keeping the community vibrant. These efforts turn SPIKE into a lively, user-supported ecosystem, reinforcing Lego's standing as a leader in interactive STEAM education while ensuring the platform evolves with the changing demands of its community.

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