FREEDOMISM

Randomly generated opinions

A majority of the drama concerning Facebook, the world's most popular social networking service serving 400 million people, has been over user interface changes to the website. Time and time again, Facebook has randomly edited the appearance of its website without warning, often causing extreme lag and widespread glitches. And time and time again the Facebook community has bitched and moaned about it, starting protest groups and pages — ironically on Facebook itself. Even after numerous periods of widespread user dissatisfaction with Facebook's obsession with changing the appearance of everything randomly, they still continue to do it.

Facebook claims to listen to its users by letting them vote on tedious things such as terms of service modifications, ever since an earlier controversy over Facebook's unreported edit to the terms that critics labeled as an invasion of privacy. However, letting the community decide what goes into the terms of service is only half of the entire democratic platform Facebook loves to brag about. Letting users have control over the actual website, the features it provides, the way it runs and looks, is the other half. Whether or not Facebook will fall to another social networking site in the future as MySpace did is debatable, but Facebook is giving its critics plenty to talk about with its ridiculous site modifications. If Facebook really wants to hold full claim to a democratic site governance, it should let its users decide on changes to the site. Each time a change is made to the interface, Facebook's main page (http://www.facebook.com/facebook) and blog comments are flooded with complaints and angry demands to revert the changes. All of this raw anger remains unattended, and after the users give up a few months later Facebook makes yet another change, and the populous again rebels. Chances are this cycle will repeat itself every year, and Facebook's popularity could take a hit because of it. Even though the chances of many people leaving the site are shrinking as more and more people join, it still isn't good public relations and Facebook should really put more effort into the democratic initiative it has claimed to start.

If Facebook takes these suggestions and builds a site interface voting platform, we could see Facebook actually become user-friendly — not just the company's *concept* of user-friendly. The ideas of a handful of people working inside an office building should not and more than often do not represent the views of 400 million people scattered across the world. While the chances of Facebook contributing to some sort of demise by denying its users the right to control the site's appearance is admittedly slim, it's still good to keep the user base's happiness high and give them the rights they have so vehemently petitioned for. If not, more and more people will become dissatisfied with Facebook's erratic habit of modifying its user interface, and more and more people will turn against Facebook. It's never a good idea to alienate your users, even if you have hundreds of millions of people using your service.