

Ello – what’s it all about?

By Lilach Bullock



I’ll be honest: I was rather excited to try out Ello, the latest social networking site. The fact that it was invitation only made it seem even more appealing! I had to get my hands on an invite... Thank you to **Ian Cleary** who sent me one.

Wanting an invitation to the unknown and latest most talked about craze online is going to go one of two ways. It’s either going to be super exciting and live up to expectations or be a massive let down. Well you can probably guess which one it was.

Sorry but what is all the fuss about? Beautiful? It looks like an old typewriter setting; I’d hardly call it beautiful. Simple? I think dull and bare would be more appropriate!

But some context first: it is in Beta, so there are bound to be teething issues. A major gremlin that they should have sorted out before inviting people en masse, is their search functionality. It simply doesn’t work.

Consequently, Ello feels like I’m at a party and I don’t know anyone (and there is no one there – am I talking to myself?!) It’s an odd feeling. It’s rare to join or sign up to a social networking site and not see lots of familiar faces that you can happily click on to friend. I couldn’t find any of my friends, even though I knew many were on it.

Some good things are evident though. Their marketing (which isn’t great, to be honest) proclaims that it is simple and clean...well, I think

that’s a huge understatement. In their attempt to be the opposite of Facebook they have stripped out a lot of the clutter...especially ads...but they’ve gone too far.

The fact that Ello has no ads could in theory be considered a good thing but as I mentioned above I felt a little alone and wouldn’t mind seeing *something* in my home or newsfeed.

On a positive note it was fairly easy to set up and customise my profile. Their friends vs. noise feature is a clever way to filter your “news feed”. It’s a great idea: you can choose who you are less interested in seeing by marking people as noise (i.e. if you don’t want to see them as much). Even better, your categories are private so no one will be offended if you’ve put them in the noise bucket!

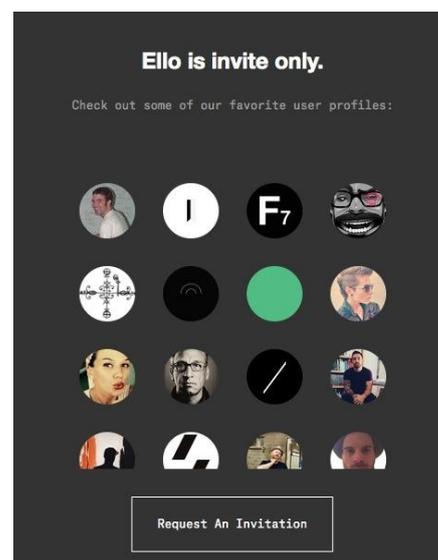
Posting updates is similar to Facebook: you can tag/mention people with the @symbol. You can also post photos and animated GIFs (which you can’t with Facebook) but currently no videos. I’m sure this will come though; it has to come.

Despite the simplicity, posting updates was a little buggy and didn’t always work. Aggravating to say the least – isn’t this the main point of a social network?!

But let’s remember that Ello is still in Beta and many of their features aren’t currently working yet so I therefore experienced a few glitches, and it’s apparent that there are still many bugs. I’ve also seen complaints about its downtime, although Ello could argue that this was due to the huge demand (31,000 new users are joining an

hour!!), which can’t be a bad thing. It’s clear that there is a demand for an ad free social network. Hats off to Ello for creating a desire for people to want to join a new social networking site in their masses – which is no mean feat. However, I can’t help but wonder if creating this craving to join has in turn caused a negative effect. After all, it’s all very well joining a social networking site but if no one is engaging or connecting or actively using it then what is the point? The huge risk for Ello since launching with such a fanfare is that people go there, try it out, are underwhelmed and decide not to go back.

Which also leads me to ask – where is the value for brands? How can businesses use it to connect and reach their ideal customers? But then isn’t that the point...they don’t want businesses cluttering newsfeeds and nor will they sell their users’ data to third parties; they want to go back to the core essence of a social network: to allow people to socialise with like-minded folks without ads or



businesses selling to their users at every turn. It's pretty anti-establishment, which a lot of people will love.

Perhaps it's too early to answer these questions. Personally I was a little disappointed with what I saw. That said, I'm looking forward to seeing how it develops and evolves but for now Facebook still gets my thumbs up, even if my home feed is filled with ads.

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About the Author

Highly regarded on the world speaker circuit, Lilach Bullock has graced Forbes and Number 10 Downing Street with her presence! She's hugely connected and is a highly influential serial entrepreneur – the embodiment of Digital Intelligence.

Listed in Forbes as one of the top 20 women social media power influencers and likewise as one of the top social media power influencers, Lilach is one of the most dynamic personalities in the social media market, she actively leverages ethical online marketing for her clients and for Comms Axis.

A business owner, social media consultant, internet mentor and genuine digital guru, Lilach is consulted by journalists and regularly quoted in newspapers, business publications and marketing magazines (including Forbes, The Telegraph, Wired, Prima Magazine, The Sunday Times, Social Media Today and BBC Radio 5 Live). What's more, her books have achieved No 1 on Amazon for Sales and Marketing and Small Business and Entrepreneurship.

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