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MySpace.com Hires Official to Oversee Users' Safety

By [MARIA NEWMAN](#)

MySpace.com, the social networking Internet site popular with young people that has alarmed some parents and law enforcement officials concerned about sexual predators, announced yesterday that it was hiring a former federal prosecutor to be its first chief security officer.

The site, acquired last July by the [News Corporation](#), which also owns Fox Broadcasting and DirecTV satellite television, is used by young people to post personal pages that can include their photographs and other details about their lives and interests so they can interact with others on the site.

Because of concern by parents and school and law enforcement officials that the site sometimes unwittingly makes young people vulnerable to pornographers or predators, the company has hired Hemanshu Nigam, director of consumer security outreach and child-safe computing at the [Microsoft Corporation](#), to oversee safety, education and privacy programs and law enforcement affairs.

Mr. Nigam has also served as a federal prosecutor of Internet child exploitation cases, an adviser to a Congressional commission on online child safety and an adviser to the White House on cyberstalking.

"Hemu is a proven leader in online safety and security," said Chris DeWolfe, chief executive of MySpace. "We are fortunate to have him join MySpace, help us educate the public and protect our members' safety and privacy."

Mr. Nigam's appointment was reported yesterday in The Los Angeles Times.

The company also announced that it was starting an advertising campaign, in conjunction with the Advertising Council and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, to educate parents and young people about Internet safety. The Ad Council will team with the News Corporation to run public service announcements on MySpace and other Web sites and television channels of the News Corporation.

The commercials will caution young people to be more skeptical of strangers who approach them online.

The ad campaign was reported Monday in The Wall Street Journal.

MySpace is not the only site dedicated to social networking among the young — others include Xanga.com and Facebook.com — but it has attracted much attention from parents, school officials and law enforcers, possibly because of its popularity. It now has 65 million members, company officials said.

Last October the site had 32 million users, and company officials say it is now second only to [Yahoo](#) in

page views, a gauge of audience size.

Law enforcement officials in many states have been pressing MySpace to take measures to protect children who use the site.

[Richard Blumenthal](#), the Connecticut attorney general, who says he has been meeting with MySpace officials for months to ask them to undertake more stringent security measures, said yesterday that he was somewhat pleased with the company's actions.

"A public safety campaign is a welcome step toward protecting children from pornography and predators — and people looking for sex — but must be followed by more significant, specific measures that we have also urged MySpace to take," he said.

Among the proposals Mr. Blumenthal has discussed with MySpace are more stringent age verification measures and free software to let parents block the site from their home computers.

News reports suggesting that predators monitor chat rooms and Web sites like MySpace.com for potential victims has prompted a rise in warnings from school officials across the country to beware of such sites.

Last week, the police arrested Brian J. Doyle, a spokesman for the [Department of Homeland Security](#), and charged him with trying to seduce someone he thought was a teenage girl online.

The arrest was a result of more aggressive policing of sex crimes on the Internet as use among young people has grown, law enforcement officials said.

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