the company did not have sufficient servers to support the traffic, causing severe page load delays. The company began to receive thousands of customer service complaints, and soon members (and would-be members) were fleeing to other sites that had learned from Friendster's mistakes. One of those sites was MySpace.

Also founded in 2003 (by Brad Greenspan, Chris DeWolfe, and Tom Anderson of community website conglomerate eUniverse), MySpace mimicked some of the more popular features of Friendster, but also leveraged the 20 million subscribers and e-mail users of eUniverse to jumpstart its membership. Unlike Friendster, MySpace made all members' profiles viewable by any user, which reduced the computational burden of figuring out who was able to look at which profile. MySpace also made user profiles very customizable, and offered spaces for blogs, places to display photos, and the ability to play music. MySpace was acquired in July of 2005 by media conglomerate New Corporation for $580 million, and from 2005 to 2008 was the most popular social networking site in the world. A three-year advertising deal with Google for $900 million was a cash windfall, but it also lead to heavy amounts of advertising on the site, which annoyed many users.

Meanwhile, in 2004, college students Mark Zuckerberg, Eduardo Saverin, Dustin Moskovitz, and Chris Hughes had launched Facebook, initially as a service available only to Harvard University students, but later as a service for the general public in 2006. A growing awareness of social networking (and the large News Corp. acquisition of MySpace) made it relatively easy to find investors for the company, and Facebook quickly raised nearly $50 million in venture capital. This enabled the company to avoid advertising sales in its early years, helping the site to retain a cleaner looking design. Facebook also had a reputation for better security than MySpace, and had a platform that allowed outside developers to create features for the site. While MySpace was being run by corporate managers who attempted to develop all of its applications in-house, Facebook was letting the marketplace determine what it would become, leading to a huge proliferation of social games, product reviews, and self-created groups. Facebook also made it easy for users to restrict who could see their information, which (according to Zuckerberg) made them more likely to share more personal information on the site. Whereas MySpace had been the social networking site of choice for teenagers, Facebook began to dominate the 18–30 year old crowd, rapidly becoming the number one site in the world for exchanging photos and information. Corporations began setting up their own Facebook pages, and the site began to be an important vehicle for developing brands. In 2007, Facebook began offering advertising sales, which it could closely target to users based on demographics, geographical location, and other preferences. In the spring of 2008, Facebook overtook MySpace in terms of overall number of users. From that point on, MySpace suffered a rapid decline in users. By 2010, MySpace had all but conceded defeat and announced that it would focus on the niche of "social entertainment." After losing a reported $350 million in 2010, it laid off half its staff in early 2011.[e] Facebook, on the other hand, continued to grow at a staggering pace, accumulating 901 million users by 2012[f], and more than 1.4 billion active users by mid-2015.

Twitter was launched in 2006 in Jack Dorsey with a somewhat different angle—it was a "microblogging" site where users were restricted to posting short messages (known as "tweets") of up to 140 characters. Users could then subscribe to view