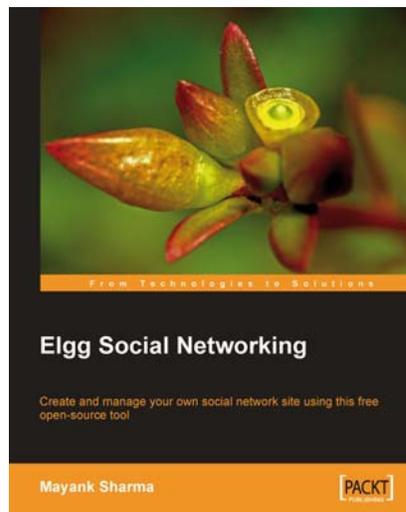




# Elgg Social Networking

Mayank Sharma



## Chapter No. 3 "Users, Profiles, and Connections"

## In this package, you will find:

A Biography of the author of the book

A preview chapter from the book, Chapter NO.3 "Users, Profiles, and Connections"

A synopsis of the book's content

Information on where to buy this book

## About the Author

**Author name** followed by his details. This information needs to be provided by the Development Editor.

Mayank Sharma is a contributing editor at SourceForge, Inc's Linux.com. He also writes a monthly column for Packt Publishing. Mayank has contributed several technical articles to the IBM developerWorks where he hosts a Linux Security blog. When not writing, he teaches courses on Open Source topics at the Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi, as guest lecturer.

---

Thanks to my mom Shashi and dad Rakesh for laying down tough standards, and younger brother Shashank who beat me at book-writing to become my mentor.

Gratitude to David Barnes for guiding me from start to finish, to Rashmi Phadnis for her edits, to Patricia Weir for managing and scheduling the book, and to the Elgg developers and community for such a wonderful project.

---

**For More Information:** [www.packtpub.com/elgg-social-networking/book](http://www.packtpub.com/elgg-social-networking/book)

# Elgg Social Networking

Elgg is an open-source social web application licensed under GPL version 2, and runs on the LAMP (Linux, Apache, MySQL, and PHP) or WAMP (Windows, Apache, MySQL, PHP) platform. It offers a networking platform, combining elements of blogging, e-portfolios, news feed aggregation, file sharing, and social networking. Elgg has its own plug-in architecture, and can use plug-ins to provide a calendar and a wiki. It supports a number of open standards including RSS, LDAP for authentication, FOAF, and XML-RPC for integration with most third-party blogging clients. It can be integrated with MediaWiki, Moodle, Drupal, and WebCT.

Elgg provides each user with a personal weblog, file repository (with podcasting capabilities), an online profile, and an RSS reader. Additionally, all of a user's content can be tagged with keywords—so they can connect with other users with similar interests and create their own personal learning network. However, where Elgg differs from a regular weblog or a commercial social network (such as MySpace) is the degree of control each user is given over who can access their content. Each profile item, blog post, or uploaded file can be assigned its own access restrictions—from fully public to readable only by a particular group or individual.

Using Elgg is the easiest way to create your own fully customized, hosted social network for your business, organization, or group of friends. Elgg communities can include blogs, discussion groups, media galleries, friends' lists, and much more. Because it's open source, and has many plug-ins, Elgg can be extended in unlimited ways. Elgg lets you host your own Facebook-style social network and retain complete control over how it works. This book shows you all you need to know to create safe, fun social networks.

While anybody can use Elgg to create their social network, it is especially useful in education as it has many features making it suitable for e-learning, including groups, communities, and blogs that can be used for online classes where students can communicate in a new way with each other and with students around the world—in a managed, protected environment, creating what its authors term a "personal learning landscape".

**For More Information:** [www.packtpub.com/elgg-social-networking/book](http://www.packtpub.com/elgg-social-networking/book)

## What This Book Covers

*Chapter 1* covers the basics of social networking, runs over some popular social networks and goes through some of the features that are essential to online social networking. It introduces Elgg, and highlights some of the benefits of deploying one's own social network.

*In Chapter 2* we use publicly accessible Elgg-installations like [Ubuntero.org](http://Ubuntero.org), the upcoming network of Ubuntu users, developers, and fans and the [Elgg.org](http://Elgg.org) website itself as examples, to see the screens and options first-hand. After reading through the chapter, you should have a fairly good idea of what your very own Elgg-based social network will be able to do.

*Chapter 3* deals with the users. We discuss several ways of inviting users to join the network, some of which can be used by ordinary users, while others are only for administrators. You'll learn to connect with other users on the network. We also run through Elgg's built-in mechanisms for attracting visitors to join the network. In between, we cover various account settings that a user can alter. After reading this chapter, you should have no trouble adding, managing or connecting to members in your Elgg network.

*Chapter 4* covers one of the most exciting features—blogs. It will help you deal with abusive and off-topic content. You will learn to share video files, PDFs, images, and podcasts.

*Chapter 5* Social networking is all about communities. This chapter will teach you to create communities, manage them, and manage the content in communities.

*Chapter 6* You don't want your site to look like any other. It should have a unique style of its own. What better way to make this happen than using theming engines? This chapter will teach you all about themes. By the time you are through with this chapter, you will be able to create a unique theme for your site.

*Chapter 7* covers some of the important Elgg plug-ins that'll give you better control in administering your site.

*Appendix A* deals with installing Elgg in the popular LAMP web application environment of Linux, Apache, MySQL, and PHP. Since Apache, MySQL, and PHP can also run under a Windows operating system, you can also set up Elgg to serve your purpose in a "WAMP" environment, and this appendix covers this too.

*Appendix B* is a list of case studies that will help you relate to popular real-world networking sites that use Elgg.

**For More Information:** [www.packtpub.com/elgg-social-networking/book](http://www.packtpub.com/elgg-social-networking/book)

# 3

## Users, Profiles, and Connections

Ever been to a night club on a Monday morning? There's you, there are the chairs, and the potential to host a party on the weekend. If you've been through Appendix A, your Elgg installation looks pretty much like an empty night club. There are lots of buttons, lots of potential, but no member except you.

But unlike a night club, you don't have to wait for the weekend to host your friends on Elgg. Invite them as soon as you're done setting up the software.

Elgg is designed to make it easier for you to invite people. If you've ever setup a blog or rolled your own website, how long did it take before you could invite your friends over? You had to put up all sorts of content to indulge them, and also fiddle around decorating the portal so that it doesn't look dull.

That's where a social network is different from a regular website. The websites follow a two-way, one-to-many style of interaction, where the owner of the website, or blog, talks to all his visitors who respond with their comments, either on the website, or via e-mail.

On the other hand, social networking software follows a many-to-many style of interaction. Members interact with each other, and create their own content, which is then shared with all. This is then discussed and commented on by everyone.

The owner of the site is like the perfect host. They mingle, discuss with everyone, but don't stamp their authority, unless you're naughty. They're like every other member, except for the fact that they own the place. Sounds familiar?

So, you don't have to worry about content before inviting your friends. Your friends bring their own content. And thanks to Elgg's customization features, which I briefly touched upon in Chapter 2, members can customize their respective areas on the network as they please. Groovy!

**For More Information:** [www.packtpub.com/elgg-social-networking/book](http://www.packtpub.com/elgg-social-networking/book)

## Connecting to Friends and Users

I hope you're convinced how important friends are to a social network. Initially, you'll have to manually invite your friends over to join. I say initially, because membership on a social network is viral. Once your friends are registered members of your network, they can also bring in their own friends.

This means that soon your friends would have invited their own friends as well. Chances are that you might not know these friends of your friends. So, Elgg not only allows you to invite friends from outside, but also connect with users already on the network.

Let's understand these situations in real-life terms. You invite your friends over to a party with you at your new Star Trek theme club. That's what you'll do with Elgg, initially. So your friends like the place and next time around they bring in more friends from work. These friends of friends from work, talk about your place with their friends and so on, until you're hosting a bunch of people in the club that you haven't ever met in your life. You overhear some people discussing Geordi La Forge, your favorite character from the show. You invite them over for drinks. That's connecting with users already on the network.

So let's head on over to Elgg and invite some friends!

## Inviting Friends to Join

There are two ways of inviting users to join your network. Either send them an email with a link to join the website, or let Elgg handle sending them emails.

If you send them emails, you can include a direct link to the registration page. This link is also on the front page of your network, which every visitor will see. It asks visitors to register an account if they like what's on the network. The procedure for registering using this mechanism has already been covered in Chapter 2.

## Let Elgg Handle Registration

This is the most popular method of inviting users to join the network. It's accessible not only to you, but also to your friends once they've registered with the network. To allow Elgg to send emails on your behalf, you'll have to be logged into Elgg. This is covered as part of installation in Appendix A.

Once you login, click on the **Your Network** button on the top navigation bar. This will take you to a page, which links to tools that'll help you connect with others. The last link in this bar (**Invite a Friend**) does exactly what it says.

### Invite a Friend

Communities | Owned Communities | Friends | Friend of | Friendship requests | FOAF | Access controls | Invite a friend

If you have a friend or colleague you would like to join the system, perhaps because you would like to share protected resources or reflections with them, you can enter their details below. They will then receive a special invitation email containing a code that allows them to create a new account; once they do so, a mutual friend connection will be created between their account and yours.

**Their name**

  
**Their email address**  
**An optional message**

When you click on this link, it'll explain to you some benefits of inviting friends over. The page has three fields:

- **Their name:** Enter the name of the friend you're sending the invitation to.
- **Their email address:** Very important. This is the address to where the invitation is sent.
- **An optional message:** Elgg sends an email composed using a template. If you want to add a personal message to Elgg's email, you can do so here.

In the email, which Elgg sends on behalf of the network's administrator, that means you, it displays the optional message (if you've sent one), along with a link to the registration page. The invitation is valid for seven days, after which the registration link in the email isn't valid.

When your friends click on the registration form, it asks them to enter their:

- **Name:** This is your friend's real name. When he arrives here by clicking the link in the email, this field already has the same name as the one in the email. Of course, your friend can choose to change it if he pleases.
- **Username:** The name your friend wants to use to log in to the network. Elgg automatically suggests one based on your friend's real name.
- **Password:** The last two fields ask your friend to enter (and then re-enter to confirm) a password. This is used along with the username to authenticate him on the system.

Once your friends enter all the details and click on join, Elgg creates an account for them, logs them in, and dispatches a message to them containing the log in details for reference.

## Build a Profile

The first thing a new user has to do on the network is to create his profile. If you haven't yet built up a profile yourself, now is a good time.

Your profile has several purposes, which we've already covered in Chapter 2. To recap, your profile is your digital self. By filling in a form, Elgg helps you define yourself in terms that'll help other members find and connect to you.

This is again where socializing using Elgg outcores socializing in real life. You can find people with similar tastes, likes, and dislikes, as soon as you enter the network.

So let's steam ahead and create a digital you.

## The Various Profile Options

Once you are logged into your Elgg network, select the **Your Profile** option from the top navigation-bar. In the page that opens, click the first link, **Edit this profile**.

This opens up a form, divided into five tabs—**Basic details**, **Location**, **Contact**, **Employment**, and **Education**. Each tab helps you fill in details regarding that particular area. You don't necessarily have to fill in each and every detail. And you definitely don't have to fill them all in one go.

Each tab has a **Save your profile** button at the end. When you press this button, Elgg updates your profile instantaneously. You can fill in as much detail as you want, and keep coming back to edit your profile and append new information.

This screen allows you to edit your profile. Blank fields will not show up on your profile screen in any view; you can change the access level for each piece of information in order to prevent it from falling into the wrong hands. For example, we strongly recommend you keep your address to yourself or a few trusted parties.

Basic details | Location | Contact | Employment | Education

Let's look at the various tabs:

- **Basic details:** Although filling information in any tab is optional, I'd advise you to fill in all details in this tab. This will make it easy, for you to find others, and for others to find you. The tab basically asks you to introduce yourself, list your interests, your likes, your dislikes, your goals in life, and your main skills.
- **Location:** This tab requests information that'll help members reach you physically. Fill in your street address, town, state, postal code, and country.
- **Contact:** Do you want members to contact you outside your Elgg network? This tab requests both physical as well as electronic means which members can use to get in touch with you. Physical details include your work, home, and mobile telephone number. Electronic details include your email address, your personal and official websites. Elgg can also list information to help users connect to you on instant messenger. It supports ICQ, MSN, AIM, Skype, and Jabber.
- **Employment:** List your occupation, the industry and company you work in, your job title and description. Elgg also lets you list your career goals and suggests you do so to "let colleagues and potential employers know what you'd like to get out of your career."
- **Education:** Here you can specify your level of education, and which high school, university or college you attended, and the degree you hold.

As you can clearly see, Elgg's profiling options are very diverse and detailed. Rather than serve the sole purpose of describing you to the visitors, the profile also helps you find new friends as well, as we'll see later in this chapter.

## What is FOAF?

While filling the profile, you must have noticed an **Upload a FOAF file** area down at the bottom of all tabs. FOAF or Friend of a Friend is a project (<http://www.foaf-project.org/>) to help create "machine-readable pages that describe people, the links between them and the things they create and do".



You can import some profile data by uploading a FOAF file here:

**Upload a FOAF file:**

The FOAF file includes lots of details about you, and if you have already created a FOAF profile, Elgg can use that to pick out information describing you from in there. You can modify the information once it's imported into Elgg, if you feel the need to do so.

The FOAF-a-Matic tool (<http://www.ldodds.com/foaf/foaf-a-matic.en.html>) is a simple Web-based program you can use to create a FOAF profile.

## A Face for Your Profile

Once you have created your digital self, why not give it a face as well. The default Elgg picture with a question mark doesn't look like you!

To upload your picture, head over to **Your Profile** and select the **Change site picture** link. From this page, click **Browse** to find and select the picture on your computer. Put in an optional description, and then choose to make it your default icon. When you click the **Upload new icon** button, Elgg will upload the picture.

Once the upload completes, Elgg will display the picture. Click the **Save** button to replace Elgg's default icon with this picture.

### Mayank Sharma :: Manage user icons

[Edit this profile](#) | [Change site picture](#)

#### Site pictures

Site pictures are small pictures that act as a representative icon throughout the system.



Name:

Default:

Delete:

#### Mayank Sharma

No default:

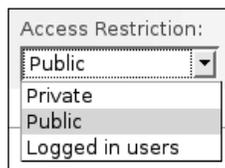
Elgg will automatically resize your picture to fit into its small area. You should use a close-up of yourself, otherwise the picture will lose clarity when resizing. If you don't like the picture when it appears on the website, or you want to replace it with a new one, simply tick the **Delete** check-box associated with the picture you don't like. When you click **Save**, Elgg will revert to the default question-mark guy.

## Access Control

You might be wondering what to do if you'd really like to share your physical address or home telephone number with each and every member on the network. Elgg has three pre-defined groups that help you share all information on the network, or keep them private.

The three groups are Private, Public, and Logged-in users. These can be associated with everything on the Elgg network, including profile items. By default, every profile item is visible only to users that are logged into the system. But it's very simple to change the access setting of a particular item.

Each and every profile item has a pull-down list with it. Use it to specify who gets to see a particular piece of information.



You can also make some information, like your personal or company website, public, which means it's accessible by everyone, including non-registered members browsing the website. This is like pasting your website address on a window facing the street. Everyone can look at it.

For sure, you wouldn't want to do that with your mobile phone number. In fact, you might not want to share that with anyone on the network. Elgg helps you mark such information as private and keep them safe from everyone.

But what about information that you don't want anyone to see, except certain friends?

## Define Your Own Control Lists

Elgg's default access controls are on the extreme sides. You can either share information with everyone on the network, or with no one.

To help create a middle ground, Elgg allows you to define your own access control groups. A custom access group is nothing but a list of your friends. So for example if you want to share your employment details with your colleagues from work, and not with your friends of friends you've just met, you can create a custom group called **colleagues** and only allow them to access your employment details.

For creating a custom group, head over to the **Your network** option. From here, click the **Access controls** button. On the page that opens, you'll be asked to enter the name of the group you want to create. Enter the name and click the **Create** button.

This will create the group and expand the page to list the groups you own. Under the name of the group, you'll notice two parallel columns. One lists all the friends you are connected with on the network, and the other lists friends in the group. To add your friends from work into the newly created **colleagues** group, simply select them from the friends list, by clicking on their name. To select multiple names, hold down the *Control* key (*Ctrl*), while selecting the names.

Once you are done selecting all the friends, click the **Add selected to group** button to add these friends to your custom group. If you, by mistake, added a friend that you don't want in this group, simply select him in the right-hand column, and click the **Remove selected from group** button.

Once you've added all your friends from work to this group, click the **Save this group** button. Elgg will refresh the page and let you know that the group was updated. This means your custom group now lists all your friends from work.

After you've created the group, return to the profile page. Here you'll notice that the access restriction pull-down menu now lists your custom group as well. In case you are wondering, Elgg allows you to create as many groups as you like. You can customize the list of your friends in the group any time or even delete the group entirely.

## Making Friends with Internal Members

By now, you should have gotten a hang of navigating around in Elgg. You've populated your profile, and invited friends to join your network. As the word spreads about your network, members will start trickling in. Soon, you'll have a sizable number of people, all interested in the topic your network caters to.

It's not out of this world to imagine that you'll not know each and every one of them. Sure they are on your network, but the very nature of socializing on the Internet is to attract as many users as possible. Connections can happen, later.

So now that you have a dozen, or a hundred, or even a thousand members on your network, a majority of whom you don't know, how about making new friends?

## Use Your Profile to Find Connections

When you log in, you are on the main welcome page. Here, you'll notice a link to view your profile. When you click on the link, you'll be taken to a page that lists all elements of your profile, along with the same two links to edit the profile, and change your site picture. Nothing fancy here, eh?

Wrong! Look closely.

You'll notice that some or all of your items listed under interests, likes, dislikes, goals, and skills have mysteriously turned blue. No, they aren't dead. They've transformed themselves into hyperlinks. This means these items are now clickable.

|                                                                                                    |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Interests</b><br>Auto Racing, Computer Books, Computers, Formula 1, hardware                    |
| <b>Likes</b><br>Chocolate Fudge, Fedora, Mandriva, Ubuntu                                          |
| <b>Dislikes</b><br>Gremlins, Summers                                                               |
| <b>I would like to ...</b><br>do rock climbing, drive an indycar, go into space, Go to the moon, I |
| <b>Main Skills</b><br>quick learner, team player                                                   |

Click on any one of them, and you are flown to a page that lists members who have the same entry in their profile.

For example, if you list 'chocolate fudge' as one of the things you like, it'll be converted into a hyperlink as soon as someone else lists it too. Now when you click on the link, you land up on a page that lists everyone who has listed 'chocolate fudge' in their respective 'likes' category in their profile.

## Making Connections

Once Elgg finds other members who share the same tastes as you, it's very easy to find out more about them. Simply click on the person's icon or his name, and you'll be taken to his profile page. Here, you can browse items on his profile that he's made available for all logged in members to see.

Also, depending on what he's allowed you access to, you can, among other things, browse his blog, check out his friends, and his files.

After checking out the member, you can easily connect to him. In his right-side column, you'll notice a link that reads, **Click here to add this user as a friend**. When you do as it says, Elgg will confirm if you really want to add the user as a friend. Confirm your action, to list the user as your friend.



Once you're connected, the member will be listed under your friend's list.

By default, you'll still only share those details with this friend that all logged in users have access to. But if you want, you can choose to share some more information with the user, now that you are connected. The best way to do this is to create a custom group for new friends, where you share a little more information than is accessible to every logged in member.

Being connected also facilitates easier communication and sharing between the users as we'll see in later chapters, when we create specialized communities and share resources.

## Friendship Moderation

This act of connecting to other users also raises an issue. Suppose a person on your network, comes across your profile, browses your blog, your profile, and decides to connect to you as a friend. Wouldn't you want to reserve the right to "approve" his friendship? He has had a chance to browse through your profile, and you should have the right to do that as well.

This is where Friendship moderation comes into play. We've gone over this option in Appendix A. The choice you made there, while setting up Elgg, were applicable to the entire system.

Let's suppose you left the default choice of "No moderation", to let anyone add anyone as their friend. You did that because most people would like that option. But you don't like the idea very much.

To change your friendship moderation setting, click on the **Account settings** option in the top navigation bar. From the page that opens, scroll down to the **Friendship moderation** option (third from the top). It has a pull-down menu that offers these three options:

- **No Moderation:** anyone can list you as a friend
- **Moderation:** friendships must be approved by you
- **Private:** nobody can list you as a friend

Mayank Sharma has elected to moderate friendship requests. Your request has been added to their moderation queue.

The options are self-explanatory. Select the option that best suits you. If you decide to moderate your friend's requests, whenever a member tries to add you as a friend, Elgg will inform them that the user they're trying to connect with "**has elected to moderate friendship requests.**" Their requests will be added to your friendship moderation queue.

## Managing Friendship Requests

Once you've decided to moderate your friendship requests, as soon as someone decides to add you as their friend, Elgg dispatches a message to you. To view these messages or friendship requests, head over to **Your Network**. Here, you'll notice the **Friendship requests** link.

This page houses all your friendship requests, along with these pieces of information:

- The user's picture
- The user's name
- Their brief description
- Link to their full profile
- Link to their blog

That's exactly what you wanted right? An equal opportunity to browse through your new friend's profile and blog. Once you've gone through these, it's time to make a decision. You can either accept the request to connect with the user, or decline to do so. Just click on the appropriate option.

The following users would like to add you as a friend. They need your approval to do this (to change this setting, visit the 'account settings' page).

|                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                               |                                                          |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
|  | <p><b>Shashank Sharma</b></p> <p>Shashank Sharma writes on open source development in India. He lives in New Delhi.</p> <p><a href="#">Profile</a>   <a href="#">Blog</a></p> | <p><a href="#">Approve</a>   <a href="#">Decline</a></p> |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|

## What's Friend Of?

You might have noticed the **Friend Of?** option listed under the **Your Network** section. Unlike the **Friends** option, which lists your friends on the network, the **Friend Of** option lists those members on whose "Friends" list you are on. Most of the time, both of these will list the same members. This is because there is no friendship moderation. All friend requests are instantaneously approved, and you also feature on your friends list.

The similarities end, when a user has friendship moderation turned on. In this case, when you accept a user's request to become your friend, he shows up only under your **Friend Of** option. On the contrary, for the user that sent you the request, you are only listed under **Friends**.

## Other Account Settings

Apart from controlling friendship moderation, the account settings page also lets you make several changes to your accounts. You can:

- Change your full name
- Change your email address
- Change your password
- Make comments public: This controls who gets to comment on your resources. By default, it's restricted to logged in users only, but you can allow non-registered visitors to comment as well.
- Receive email notifications: Remember in Chapter 2, I briefly mentioned Elgg's email feature? You can choose to be alerted of any new messages in your Elgg email. If you do so, Elgg will send a small message to your regular email ID, mentioned above, saying that you have a new message on Elgg.
- Language selection: Choose from more than a dozen languages. The default is English.
- Visual text editing: Elgg has a built-in WYSIWYG (What You See Is What You Get) text editor that helps you compose your blog posts better. By default, it's turned on, but if you want, you can choose to turn it off.

## Attracting Visitors

So far, we've only connected with friends who we invited ourselves or users that our friends invited. As your social network becomes popular, random visitors browsing the Internet might start showing up at our network's virtual doorstep.

Elgg has special mechanisms to entice visitors into registering. By giving visitors a sneak-peak of the content on the network, Elgg ensures that only interested people join. Previewing the content on the network also helps filter out people who might have come to the site expecting something else. This helps maintain the integrity of the network and ensure that the discussions are to the point.

## Welcoming Guests

When visitors land up on your main page, they are greeted by Elgg's customized welcome message. It describes the network as per the settings covered in Appendix A. In addition to describing the network, Elgg also lists three links to help visitors make a decision regarding registration.

Please remember, Elgg only shares that information that is made accessible to the public. Private posts, posts made accessible to logged in members, or to custom groups, will not be listed on this page.

These details are on the page:

### Welcome Guest

This is My Elgg site, a learning landscape. Why not check out what people are saying right now?

Find others with similar interests and goals.

Here are some example users: Shashank Sharma

If you like what you see, why not register for an account?

- **What people are saying:** This is the first link and gives visitors a sneak peak on the blog posts made by registered users. Visitors get an idea of what the members like to discuss, and what are they passionate about.
- **Find others with similar interests and goals:** This link takes visitors to a page where all keywords that describe interests, likes, dislikes, and so on, marked by more than one member are listed. This helps visitors get an idea of the categories of topics discussed in the network.
- **Example users:** There's no better way to find out about the network, than to view profiles of its members. Elgg lists several members here that have some items on their profile that members of the public can access. By clicking on the sample user's name, the visitor can, not only access their profile, but also their blog, and posts. Of course, only those items that are publicly accessible.

### Some Tags

The following is a selection of keywords used within this site. Click one to see related users, weblog posts or objects.

Ubuntu, do rock climbing, Auto Racing,  
Computers, Summers, Fedora, Chocolate  
Fudge, hardware, team player, go into  
space



From the administration screen, select the **Add users** option. This opens a page which allows you to register up to 12 users in one go. Acting on behalf of the users, enter these details:

- Username
- Full name
- Email address

Once you're done filling up these details, click on the **Add users** button. Elgg will automatically generate a password for these users, and dispatch an email to them with the details. The email, sent on your behalf, informs the user that they've been added to your Elgg network. It also lists the username (which you specified) and the password (which Elgg auto generated).

The user can then follow the link in the email to log in to the network. Once inside, a user can change his settings, including username and password, as mentioned in the account settings section above.

## Change User Settings

As the administrator of the Elgg network, you can view all members connected to the site. On top of that, you can change several settings of any user.

To do so, from the administration panel, head over to the **Manage users** link. This page lists all users on the network, 50 per page. To change settings of a particular user, you can either look for him in the list or simply enter his username, if you are aware of it.

**Manage users**

[Main](#) | [Add users](#) | [Manage users](#) | [Manage flagged content](#) | [Spam control](#)

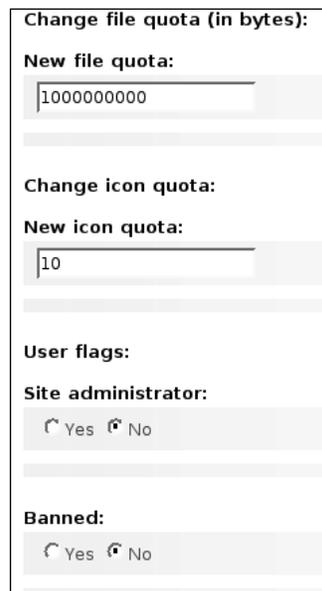
The following is a list of all the users in the system, 50 users at a time. You can click each one to edit their user details as if you were logged in as them, as well as set user flags (including 'ban user' and 'set user as administrator').

If you know the username of the user you would like to edit, you can also enter it below.

| Enter username |                                             | Edit user               |
|----------------|---------------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Username       | Full name                                   | Email address           |
| chico          | George Oswell [ <a href="#">Profile</a> ]   | who.me@ond.com          |
| clay           | Karthik R. [ <a href="#">Profile</a> ]      | who.me5@ond.com         |
| docko          | Docky Malcoa [ <a href="#">Profile</a> ]    | geeky_bodhi@yahoo.co.in |
| geekybodhi     | Mayank Sharma [ <a href="#">Profile</a> ]   | geekybodhi@gmail.com    |
| news           | News [ <a href="#">Profile</a> ]            | geekybodhi@gmail.com    |
| orion          | John Roberts [ <a href="#">Profile</a> ]    | who.me2@ond.com         |
| red            | Karan Minhas [ <a href="#">Profile</a> ]    | who.me4@ond.com         |
| shashanks      | Shashank Sharma [ <a href="#">Profile</a> ] | linuxlala@gmail.com     |
| tauras         | Kerry Ryan [ <a href="#">Profile</a> ]      | who.me3@ond.com         |
| testuser       | Test User [ <a href="#">Profile</a> ]       | geekybodhi@gmail.com    |

Once you do so, you are taken to that particular user's account settings page. But this one's a little different. Apart from their account settings, you can modify these settings:

- **Change file quota:** This field lets you specify, in bytes, the total size of files a user can upload onto the network.
- **Change icon quota:** This is the size of the icons the user can upload on to the network.
- **User flags:** Using this option, you can share your site administrator privileges with another user.
- **Banned:** Finally, if you think the user is contaminating the discussions on the network, or acting naughty, you can ban him from logging into the network.



The screenshot shows a form with the following sections:

- Change file quota (in bytes):**
  - New file quota:** A text input field containing the value "1000000000".
- Change icon quota:**
  - New icon quota:** A text input field containing the value "10".
- User flags:**
  - Site administrator:** Radio buttons for "Yes" and "No", with "No" selected.
- Banned:**
  - Radio buttons for "Yes" and "No", with "No" selected.

Once you've made all the choices, click on save to update the user's settings.

## Playing Boss

Till now, we've toured and implemented some of the Elgg settings related to users, profiles, and connections. They all look good in theory, especially when our network is small. But when you are managing an Elgg network with dozens of users, you'll have to think out of the box. Understanding how to use an option is only part of the solution. To harness its power, you have to know what an option is capable of.

---

The settings below might sound pervasive to some users. Some will also be flabbergasted because we discuss restricting users on our social network. It's important to understand that while creating content is the primary objective of a social network, we wouldn't want users to contaminate our system with off-topic or illegal discussions.

## Blocking Users

As you are running a social network, there will be a lot of people who'll misuse the moderation-free environment to abuse the system. If while installing, you had set up Elgg to allow anyone to register, there will be people who'll register with the sole purpose of distracting others.

In the chapter on content creation, we'll see how Elgg can help you keep the discussions on topic. Once you've spotted a user with a history of interfering in discussions and taking them off-topic or uploading blog posts and files that violate your policy, it's time to kick the miscreant from the network.

1. Log in to your Elgg account and click the **Administration** link.
2. From the administration panel, click the **Manage Users** link. This will bring up a list of users on the system.
3. Select the user who's abusing the system or enter his username in the space provided, and click on **Edit user** button. This will take you to a page from where you can edit that user's details.
4. Scroll down to the **User flags:** section. Under the **Banned:** option, toggle the **Yes** radio button to ban the user.
5. Click the **Save** button to save these settings.

Once a user is banned, he'll not be able to log in to the network. When the banned user returns to the network and tries to log in, he'll receive the **You have been banned from the system!** message.

## Can I Formally Warn Users?

Sometimes, it's not necessary that a user takes the discussion off-topic on purpose. Maybe he isn't really aware of the network's policy. As an admin, you should have the power to warn the user that he's taking the discussion off-topic, and he should mend his ways. Else, you'll have no option but to ban him.

Currently, Elgg lacks such a warning system. But you can still manually warn the user. Because as an admin, you have the user's email address, you can email him with links to the content that you have found to be inappropriate.

## Removing the Ban

If a user promises to mend his ways and stick to the network's guidelines, you can restore his account. When you ban a user, Elgg doesn't remove the user from the system. Neither is any of his content automatically deleted.

To enable a banned account:

1. Log into your Elgg account and click the **Administration** link.
2. From the administration panel, click the **Manage Users** link. This will bring up a list of users on the system.
3. Select the user whose account you want to re-instate or enter his username in the space provided, and click on **Edit user** button. This will take you to a page from where you can edit that user's details.
4. Scroll down to the **User flags:** section. Under the **Banned:** option, toggle the **No** radio button to ban the user.
5. Click the **Save** button to save these settings.

This should re-instate the user's status on the system, and they'll be able to log in with their original username and password.

## Limiting Users on the Site

As Elgg helps you create small specialized networks, unlike the bigger more generalized ones like MySpace, it makes sense to restrict the amount of resources a member can use. Because resources on a server are expensive, you wouldn't want members to upload all their music collection or tons of pictures.

## Changing Space Quota

Elgg lets you vary the space allotted to each member. The best policy would be to keep it to an absolute minimum and let members request from you additional space if they want to upload something that's very useful and relevant to all members.

There isn't any built-in mechanism in Elgg to let members request you to increase their space. They'll have to rely on email to inform you.

The way this works is pretty simple:

1. Log into your Elgg account and click the **Administration** link.
2. From the administration panel, click the **Manage Users** link. This will bring up a list of users on the system.

3. Select the user whose resource you want to limit or enter his username in the space provided and click on the **Edit user** button. This will take you to a page from where you can edit that user's details.
4. Scroll down to the **Change file quota** section. Enter the new file quota in the space provided, replacing the number in the box.
5. Click the **Save** button, to save these settings.

Note that the space is mentioned in bytes. The default figure of 1000000000 bytes is almost 954 MB! Use Google's search bar to convert a figure in MB or KB into bytes. 5 MB is 5242880 bytes.

## Sharing Admin Rights

As your Elgg network grows, it might not be feasible for you to manage it all by yourself. In any case, even if a network has only a few users, sharing administration privileges with a trusted user would make your task a little easier. Carefully choose the member you wish to share the administration duties with:

1. Log into your Elgg account and click the **Administration** link.
2. From the administration panel, click the **Manage Users** link. This will bring up a list of users on the system.
3. Select the user with whom you wish to share administrative powers or enter his username in the space provided and click on **Edit user** button. This will take you to a page from where you can edit that user's details.
4. Scroll down to the **User flags:** section. Under the **Site administrator:** option, toggle the **Yes** radio button to escalate the user's power to that of a Elgg administrator.
5. Click the **Save** button to save these settings.

## The Scope of an Elgg Administrator

An Elgg administrator has full control of the network. He shares the same privileges as the person who has set up the network.

While this is a good option in certain situations, it's overkill in others. For example, let's consider you are running Elgg to connect students in your school. You will have no issues sharing the administration duties with a colleague.

But it's possible every class or subject has a forum of their own, or maybe run a multi-member blog. Since managing these dozens of forums and blogs would be difficult for you, it's only natural for you to appoint the class monitor to look over the respective blog or forum. But would you really want to share the full administrative powers with this student?

Unfortunately, Elgg currently doesn't let the main administrator define the scope of the administrative powers for another user. There are only two types of users: normal users with no control over the Elgg network, or site administrators with complete control of the network.

But Elgg is still evolving. It's under heavy development and some of the features that it's not capable of currently, will probably be introduced in future versions of Elgg.

Some of the settings we've covered in this chapter are very powerful, and an improper setting can prevent users from entering the network. Please exercise caution while playing around with these settings, and if possible, first try them out on a test user.

## Summary

In this chapter, we've covered the most important aspect of a social network — the users. We've discussed several ways of inviting users to join the network. Some are more direct methods, which can be replicated by other users as well, while others can only be used by us, the administrators.

Getting the user to the site is only one aspect of socializing. The other important aspect is creating his online portfolio or profile. The profile quantifies the user in certain pre-determined criteria. In addition to describing him, we've seen how the profile also helps the user find people with similar tastes.

As the profile lists several vital and sensitive pieces of information, privacy concerns have been addressed in this chapter. We've seen the various built-in options that Elgg provides, as well as the mechanism to create our own custom groups.

Then, we've covered how one can connect with other users on the network. Again, privacy concerns have been addressed, followed by a discussion about moderating friendship requests. We also ran through Elgg's built-in mechanisms for attracting visitors to join the network, and various account settings that a user can alter.

After reading this chapter, you should have no trouble adding, managing or connecting to members in your Elgg network.

## Where to buy this book

You can buy Elgg Social Networking from the Packt Publishing website:  
<http://www.packtpub.com/elgg-social-networking/book>.

Free shipping to the US, UK, Europe and selected Asian countries. For more information, please read our [shipping policy](#).

Alternatively, you can buy the book from Amazon, BN.com, Computer Manuals and most internet book retailers.



[www.PacktPub.com](http://www.PacktPub.com)

For More Information: [www.packtpub.com/elgg-social-networking/book](http://www.packtpub.com/elgg-social-networking/book)