

Chapter 1

Understanding Why You Need a Pinterest Presence

In This Chapter

- ▶ Knowing the business benefits of Pinterest
 - ▶ Setting goals for your Pinterest marketing
 - ▶ Discovering your business's Pinterest personality
 - ▶ Understanding copyright and other legal issues
-

Pinterest is a virtual pinboard. Although it is functionally a social bookmarking site much like Digg (<http://digg.com>) and StumbleUpon (www.stumbleupon.com), the experience is much more aesthetic and visual than other sites of this genre. It is, in essence, a virtual version of a pinboard you might hang over your desk.

In this chapter, I cover the benefits that Pinterest can offer your business and urge you to set goals for your Pinterest marketing efforts. I also talk about how you can discover your business's "personality" on Pinterest, and give you some important copyright caveats.

Knowing the Business Benefits of Pinterest

When you share an image on Pinterest, each bookmark is called a *pin*. When you share someone else's pin on Pinterest, it's called a *repin*. You group pins together by topic onto various *boards* or *pinboards* in your profile. Each board mimics a real-life pinboard (see Figure 1-1). You can pin images by directly uploading them, or by pinning images you find online.

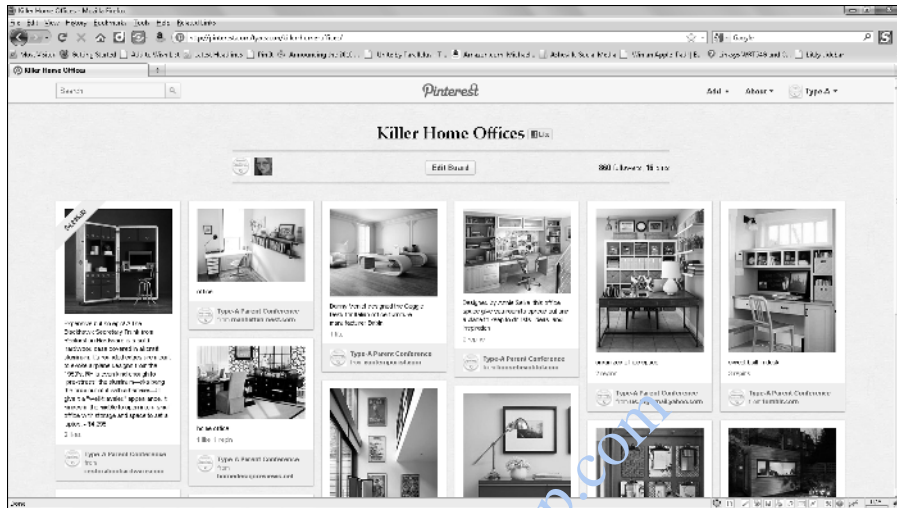


Figure 1-1:
A sample
pinboard, or
board, on
Pinterest.

Pinterest is still new enough that it isn't mainstream (yet), so your business doesn't *have* to be on Pinterest like customers might expect to find you on Twitter or Facebook. With Pinterest so quickly catching up with those top two social networking sites, however, those days may be here sooner than you think.

Beyond that, Pinterest is proving wildly effective at building interest and driving referring traffic to business and brand sites. In fact, Pinterest is driving more traffic referrals than Twitter, Google+, LinkedIn, and YouTube, according to statistics in February 2012 from Shareaholic (www.shareaholic.com), an online link sharing tool that handles millions of social referrals monthly.

Here are some of the benefits for businesses using Pinterest:

- ✔ **Shares of your own content and images can drive traffic to your site.** When an image is pinned from a website or blog, the image automatically links to the original site where it was pinned.
- ✔ **Being active on Pinterest provides businesses a chance to tell their story visually, which can be a very engaging method.**
- ✔ **Pinterest is a wonderful platform to showcase your brand's soul and personality.** Yes, you can share your products and content, but Pinterest also provides a great chance to show off other interests, to show your fans and potential customers what interests you share, and to allow your brand's personal side to shine.

- ✔ **It provides search engine optimization (SEO) benefits.** Although Pinterest has recently reduced some of the benefits by including no-follow coding on many links in pins, which means Google ignores the link, boards and pins do perform well in search results.
- ✔ **Pinterest is a site for discovery, which means you can be discovered.** Although people often use sites like search engines to look for something very specific, the fun of Pinterest is in finding what you never even knew you were looking for. That may sound nonsensical, but it means that your business, service, or product can be discovered, even by those who weren't planning to look for or buy it before they visited Pinterest. There is much to be said for capturing people's attention as it wanders.
- ✔ **It encourages businesses to create good, pin-worthy content.** One of the most overlooked benefits of Pinterest is that it is driving sites to create better content — not just better images but also better articles, tutorials, and blog posts.

Amazingly, Pinterest went from a largely unknown site rarely used by business to a booming success in just six months' time. Pinterest is the subject of dozens of news articles and blog posts daily.



To stay updated on the latest news and buzz on Pinterest, consider creating a Google Alert. To do so, visit <http://google.com/alerts> and use Pinterest as a keyword to track. You can set how often you receive Alerts, and whether you get Alerts from all sources or just certain types (see Figure 1-2).

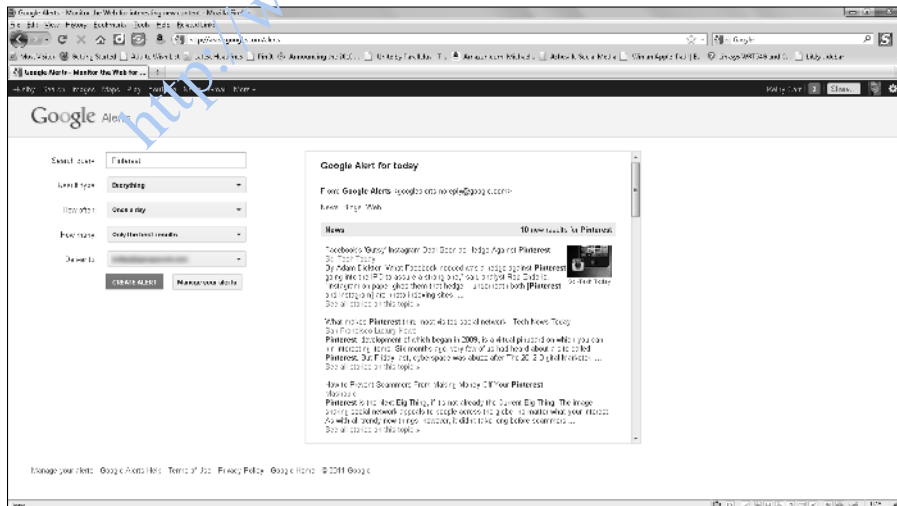


Figure 1-2: Setting up a Google Alert for the term “Pinterest.”

Understanding Pinterest Demographics

The typical Pinterest user is female. (Google Ad Planner's Pinterest profile claims 74 percent of users are female, although Experian data shows that just 60 percent of members are female.) Regardless of which statistic is correct, anyone active on Pinterest notices that women dominate.

The average income for users is in the \$25,000-\$49,999 range, and the most common age is between 35 and 44 years, according to Google Ad Planner data. One out of four Pinterest visitors has a college degree of some sort.

Geographically, Pinterest is used heavily in the middle of the U.S. In fact, according to Experian data, Pinterest recently beat out Facebook and Twitter in usage in Alabama, Oklahoma, Kansas, Utah, and Missouri.

The demographics describe a typical Pinterest user, but I want to remind you that Pinterest has a wide variety of members. It has a reputation as a site for crafty women from the Midwest, but that is just one segment. There are men on Pinterest (it's true, and they are a growing group), and there are popular pins related to a wide variety of topics, from social media statistics via infographics to *Star Wars* figurines.

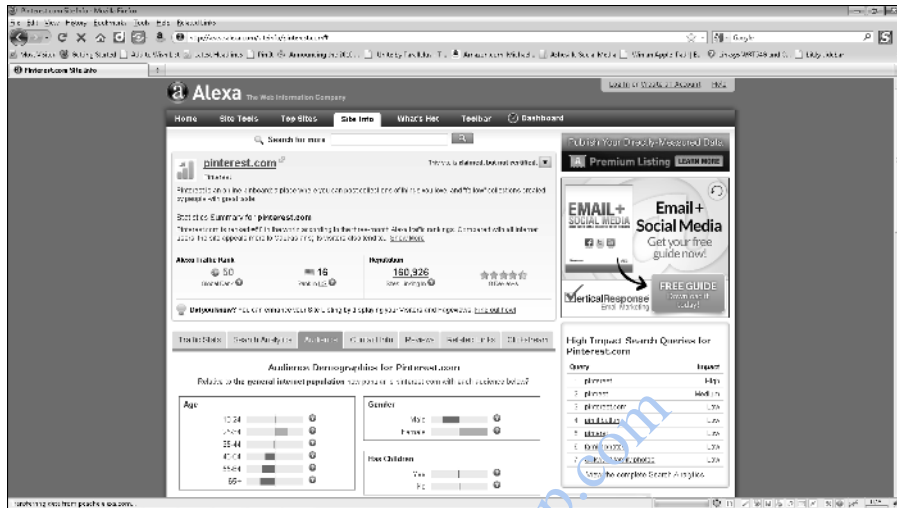
It can be tempting to say that your business isn't about crafts or design, so why bother with Pinterest? My business has nothing to do with crafts or design, but I still find Pinterest to be highly valuable.

It is important to be aware of the demographic data on Pinterest, but don't let the data dictate your every move or scare you away from using Pinterest entirely. For example, the site is popular with women, yes. Deciding to appeal only to women, however, could be a mistake. Of the 100 million-plus visits to Pinterest in February, for example, about 25 million would have been men if the numbers reported are correct. That is a big chunk of people to ignore.



Demographics data can change frequently, especially with a site booming as rapidly as Pinterest is. You can find up-to-date numbers and estimates by keeping tabs on a few metrics-related blogs such as the Nielsen Wire at <http://blog.nielsen.com/nielsenwire> and Experian's Hitwise blog at <http://weblogs.hitwise.com>. You can also find demographic data by searching for Pinterest.com at www.compete.com, www.quantcast.com, www.alexa.com (see Figure 1-3) or www.google.com/adplanner. Be aware that in some cases, the data is an estimate and may not reflect reality.

Figure 1-3:
Alexa's
audience
and demo-
graphics
data esti-
mates for
Pinterest.



Setting Goals and a Mission for Your Pinterest Profile

Yes, Pinterest is there and it is all the rage right now, but those reasons alone are not adequate to justify joining. Instead, you should come up with at least a basic strategy. Even a simple note with a bulleted list of goals can be helpful in everything from determining your approach to measuring results later.

Some sample goals include

- ✔ **Boosting traffic.** You can set a specific goal of getting a certain number of monthly referrals from Pinterest, or set a goal to increase the percentage of referrals from Pinterest each month. In Chapter 11, I cover details about tracking these statistics.
- ✔ **Increasing sales.** You can use tools such as Google Analytics to track sales and revenue that directly are sourced from Pinterest referrals. In Chapter 11, I cover instructions on tracking conversions in Google Analytics.
- ✔ **Increasing brand awareness.** Your goal with Pinterest could be to make more people aware of your business in general, or to increase awareness of details about your business, your products or your services.

- ✓ **Identifying passionate brand evangelists.** It can be powerful to identify even a handful of brand enthusiasts, and Pinterest can be a great platform for doing so. I cover more details about how to identify and engage with your business' enthusiasts in Chapter 10.
- ✓ **Increasing engagement with customers and potential customers.** As a business, it can be easy to seem distant and lacking in connection for customers and clients. Pinterest, however, is a nice platform for showing off your brand's fun or quirky side, and to interact with your customers to get a sense for what they like.
- ✓ **Boosting buzz about your business.** You can use Pinterest to self-promote within reason. Beyond that, by making your own site, products and content easy to pin (and optimizing it so images will look good and be pin-worthy), you will encourage others to spread the word. I cover tips on being easy to pin (and encouraging it) in Chapter 9.



Before you delve in, check out what some other brands are doing on Pinterest currently. Hundreds of businesses are already using Pinterest. On my site, you can find a list of more than 150 brands at <http://typeaparent.com/150-brands-on-pinterest.html>. Although many businesses don't use Pinterest effectively, browsing the brands currently on Pinterest for ideas of what to do and what not to do can be helpful.

Determining How to Best Represent Your Brand on Pinterest

Pinterest isn't just another place to shove products, services, and content down people's throats. It is the place to breathe life into your brand, to give it a distinct personality.

At first, it can seem uncomfortable to give your business a personality, so to speak. I felt awkward when I switched from using my personal account on Pinterest (where I just shared whatever I fancied) to my business account for Type-A Parent Conference.

As I got into the groove of sharing as a business rather than an individual, however, I found that I ended up having more fun with the business Pinterest account than the personal one. Yes, I am serious. Why? Because my business was truly developing its own passion, personality, and soul.

On Pinterest, it can be helpful to brainstorm random topics and ideas that you believe represent your business. These interest points for your brand can help you determine what boards to create, what content to pin and repin, and even what content to create on your own site or blog in the hopes of getting pinned and representing your business.

Here are a few questions to ask yourself as you feel around for your Pinterest business personality:

- **What topics are people such as my customers or readers passionate about?** Of those topics, which have a nice tie-in to my business? For this area, don't feel all topics must directly relate to your business. Sometimes, it is just a shared passion, such as science or reading. As an example, for my business site, I created a board of cool and creative business cards (see Figure 1-4). No, I don't sell business cards, but almost anyone attending my conference will buy them before they attend. This doesn't technically promote my business, but it is of high interest to my customers and, well, it is just a fun board that gets a lot of engagement.
- **What can you share about your business to humanize the business, that is unknown, unexpected, or behind the scenes?** With the ability to upload images directly to Pinterest, think of ways you can share what happens at your office, on the assembly line, with your employees, or in your travels. Is there a way to give people a view behind the curtain? The Weather Channel, for example, has a TWC Personalities board (<http://pinterest.com/weatherchannel/twc-personalities>) with fun images sent in from fans of meteorologists, as well as their own pictures of their personalities in the studio and out in the field (see Figure 1-5).

Figure 1-4: A business card board as a creative way to engage on my business Pinterest profile.

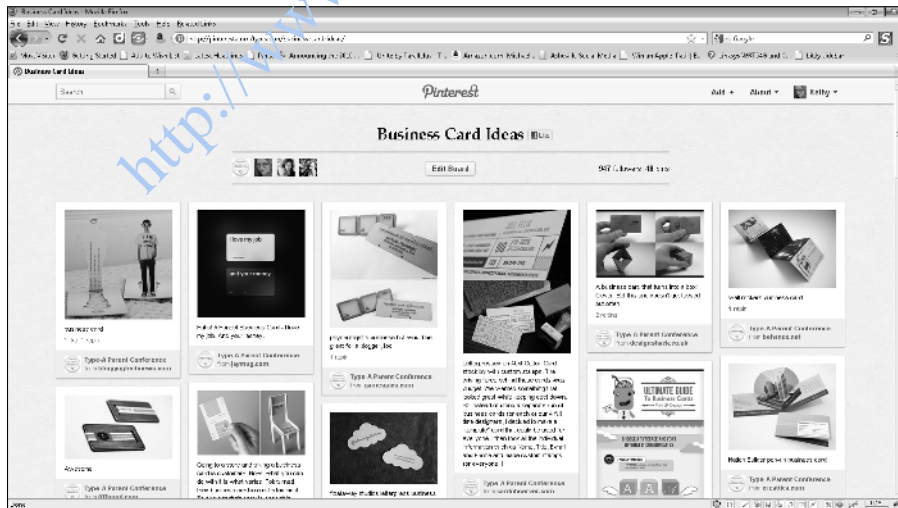
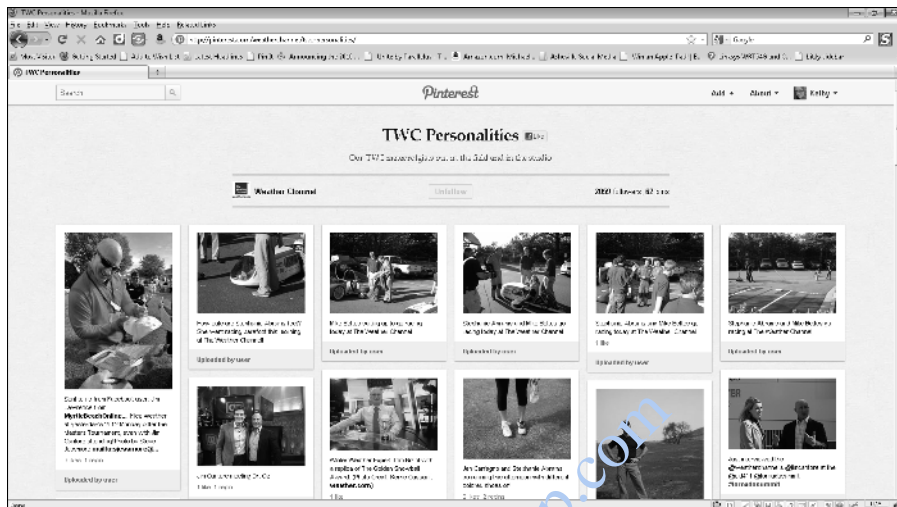


Figure 1-5:
The
Weather
Channel
shows off
the lighter
side of its
meteorologists
with its “TWC
Personalities”
board.



- ✔ **How can you share important information?** Although it is fun (and important) to be creative, you also want to remember to share important information and resources for your followers. It isn't as sexy as a wacky board, but be sure to have a board or boards for sharing latest news, basic instructions, tutorials and any other content, resources, or information that a customer, client, or reader would need.
- ✔ **How can you shine the spotlight on customers, partners, or readers?** A great way to engage and to draw attention to your business is to share cool images and content from your audience or customer base. Sony Electronics (<http://pinterest.com/sonyelectronics>), for example, has a board where they pin images shot with Sony cameras (see Figure 1-6).
- ✔ **How can you have fun?** Creativity is rewarded on Pinterest, so if you aren't having fun, you probably won't get as much engagement. Even if you have a pretty traditional business or a brand that has been around for decades (or centuries, even), you can find new and creative ways to share on Pinterest. Shoot, even stodgy ol' General Electric (<http://pinterest.com/generalelectric>) has a Badass Machines board. Little Debbie (<http://pinterest.com/thelittledebbie>), a classic American snack cake icon, has a board dedicated to Little Debbie Dessert Sushi (see Figure 1-7), which includes images as well as instructions on how to turn the low-priced snack cakes into upscale pretty desserts.

Figure 1-6:
Sony
Electronics
shares
photos
shot
with
their
cameras.

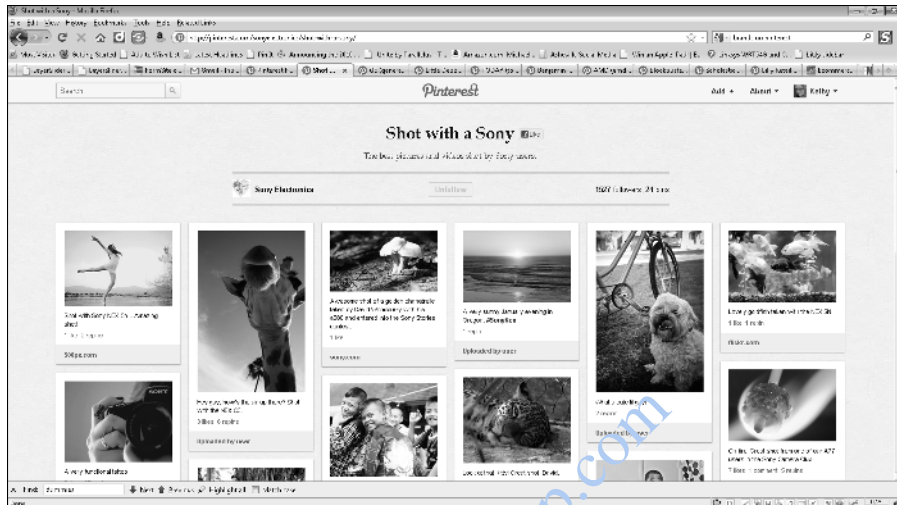
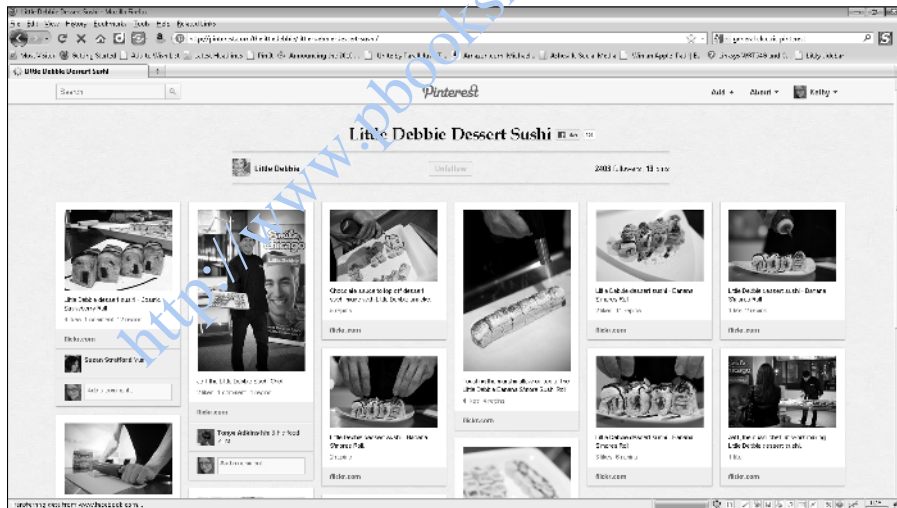


Figure 1-7:
Little
Debbie's
dessert
sushi board.



➤ **How can you share about your business in an interesting and unique way?** It is simple to just share images of the things you sell and hope people will buy. Honestly, anyone can do that. Besides the fact that oversharing self-promotional links is spammy (see more about this in Chapter 2), it isn't as effective at hooking your followers as a little dose of creativity is. Lilly Pulitzer (<http://pinterest.com/lillypulitzer>) features a board with images from various retail stores (see Figure 1-8), and Scholastic (<http://pinterest.com/scholastic>) has a board with old school books and pamphlets.

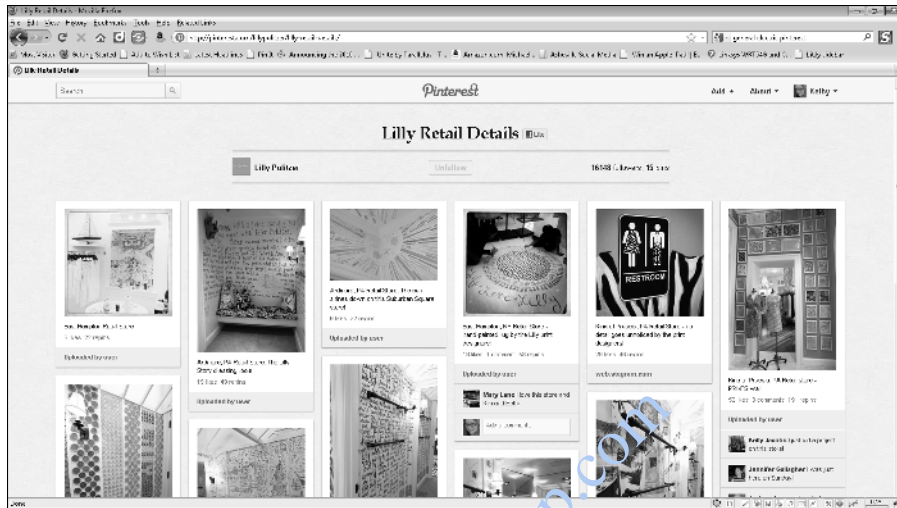


Figure 1-8:
Lilly
Pulitzer's
Lilly Retail
Details
board.

Understanding Copyright and Legal Issues

Before you even begin in Pinterest, you should be aware that the site has been troubled with copyright and other legal issues. Obviously, that hasn't stopped many companies from jumping rapidly on the Pinterest bandwagon. Still, as you progress, you may want to search Google for the latest news related to Pinterest and copyright. You also might consult a lawyer before you begin.

In Chapter 2, I share some etiquette tips. In many cases, following those tips not only allows you to be a polite community member but also helps you avoid legal pitfalls.

Pinterest in recent months has taken several steps to address some of the copyright concerns about the site. They have placed a 500-character limit on descriptions of images pinned, which now prevents members from reproducing entire posts with the image pinned. This tendency to post the entire text meant that no one needed to click through to the original source to get the copyrighted content. Pinterest has also completely revamped their Terms of Service, and now make it possible for webmasters to insert a snippet of code to prevent their images from being pinned. However, I don't recommend you do it if you are on Pinterest specifically to market your business.

Lastly, Pinterest overhauled both its Terms of Service and its Copyright policy pages in response to outcry about the original policies. You can view each by visiting Pinterest and mousing over the About link, and choosing either Terms of Service or Copyright from the menu.



There's a common misconception that content on the web is all in the public domain. On the contrary, any content that's published should be assumed to be protected by copyright. It's allowable as "fair use," which allows for brief excerpts of content to be quoted, to use in a pin description a quote or short excerpt from someone else's copyrighted content. You can't, however, copy the bulk (or even a large portion) of the content.



A great resource on copyright law is the U.S. Copyright Office's site at <http://copyright.gov/>, which includes the entire U.S. copyright law, tip sheets, downloadable brochures, and an FAQ page.

Although there's no exact rule on a number of words or a percentage of content that defines fair use, a great guideline is to ask yourself whether someone would have to click through your pin to the original content to find out all they need to know. If they wouldn't need to click through — meaning your pin captures the entire essence of the post or the article — you've included too much information in your pin description.

The core issue that will probably need resolution in the near future is Pinterest's usage of full-size images on the pin pages themselves. The rest of Pinterest functions essentially as any other social bookmarking site, where a thumbnail and a snippet of an article is posted and you must click through to read the full content. This happens on Facebook, Google+, Digg, StumbleUpon, and several other sites.

What Pinterest does differently is to have a full-size image page when you visit a specific pin page. This could be something they ultimately need to change (perhaps to cap it to a specific maximum thumbnail size).

Regardless, I expect the copyright conversation about Pinterest is not over.

<http://www.pbookshop.com>