

# Toy or Tool? Snapchat

Now You See it... Now You Don't

By: *Nancy A. Shenker*

*October 7, 2013*

**What is it?** We are living in an era of short-form communication - Tweets, Vine Videos, and Memes. Now, entering (and exiting) a mobile device near you is Snapchat. It's an app that enables people to catch a quick glimpse (via one photo) of the sender's life. You take a photo...you send it...and it vanishes in one to ten seconds after the recipient opens it (giving it the affectionate name "the sexting app" because evidence of misbehavior literally vanishes). It was invented in 2011 and, as of May 2013, had [8 million adult users](#) in the United States and [350 million Snaps](#) are sent each day. This month Snapchat announced [Snapchat stories](#), which enables viewers to create a compilation of snaps (like a disappearing day in the life).

**What's the value?** Like other forms of visual social media, Snapchat proves the point that a picture is worth a thousand words. A provocative or intriguing fleeting image can evoke emotion and engage and delight the viewer, and perhaps even prompt him or her to buy something. Like many apps, its use started with [young people](#)...then spread to [big brands](#)...and is now being used by small businesses to "tell a story." Snappers can send a quick happy message to a customer, put a compelling thought or product or a "flash sale" on the viewer's device in an instant (like a mini-ad or story), or simply give shout-outs to coworkers. (Snapchats can be sent to multiple people at one time.)

**What's the downside?** The negative is quite obvious - the photo disappears. It cannot be forwarded. So, it had better be memorable! In order to send a Snapchat, you must have the recipient's phone number. (Is there such a thing as Snap SPAM yet?)

**The bottom line:** The company that devised Snapchat is now being valued at [close to \\$1 billion](#). So, it may be an app to watch. It may not be appropriate for every business, but if you have a great concept - and the bandwidth to handle another new social media experiment then Snap away!

*This article was originally published in the New York Enterprise Report.*