



Succeed with Social Media

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Social Media: Facebook®

If your business isn't on Facebook yet, you're missing out on a hugely valuable tool, partially because there are so many people on Facebook— more than 1 billion active users in early 2014. Business Facebook pages have become so prominent that today you're apt to see companies advertise their Facebook page rather than their website on a TV commercial, and business Facebook pages consistently appear in the early results of search engine inquiries for a business name.

Ready to get started on Facebook? As with any social media venture, you shouldn't jump in without a plan. This article offers tips and strategies to make the most of Facebook's functionality and potential for your business.

Identify your objectives

At this point you have likely identified overall goals for your social media initiative; each social media tool may be conducive to different objectives. Think about specific goals for Facebook. Do you want to drive people to your website? Are you trying to connect with your client base? Are you trying to influence your brand's reputation? How you develop your page and execute your strategy should relate back to specific goals.

Create your page

Create your business Facebook page here: www.facebook.com/pages/create.php. This is different from a personal profile or a group. Pages will appear in Facebook search results, and users can also display pages they like in their 'Like & Dislikes' section on their personal profile. When users 'like' your page, then your status updates will display on their home page, called a 'news feed', along with their other Facebook friends.

When setting up your page, consider these suggestions:

- Use a professional title that reflects your business name—you can't change it later.
- After you have 25 fans, you can create a username and personalised URL to easily direct people to your page.
- Be sure to customise your page. Add an image, details about your business, business history, contact information, etc.
 - Select and crop your main image carefully, so that it displays well as your thumbnail image throughout the site.

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There were more than one billion active users on Facebook in the beginning of 2014.

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- Also choose a cover photo. Be creative with this space, but be sure to follow Facebook guidelines, found here: [www.facebook.com/help?faq= 276329115767498](http://www.facebook.com/help?faq=276329115767498).
- You also have the ability to further customise your page, integrate with your website and more—find more details here: <http://developers.facebook.com/docs/>.

Tips and techniques

- Facebook allows you to import an email list and invite those contacts to become a fan of your page.
- Give exclusive deals to your Facebook fans, to bring extra value to your Facebook relationship.
- Engage with Facebook fans; don't just spit out information. Post interesting updates and questions, and give them a reason to communicate with your brand.
 - In your page settings, you have the option to let fans post directly on your 'wall'—this can be a great strategy, as fans can get more engaged, but it takes more hands-on moderation. It is important that you tend to it regularly. Respond to questions or comments so people know that someone is actively participating on behalf of the business.
 - When others post on your wall or respond to you, comment on their posts to build relationships and encourage their interaction.
 - Post photos or videos of your products, services, employees and/or business—and encourage fans to do the same!
 - Ask engaging questions to get people talking, even if they're not directly related to your business. For example, if you're a mechanic, try asking about people's favourite road trip or the lowest price they remember paying for petrol.
 - An easy way to encourage response is simply to ask fans to 'like' a statement if they agree with it. If you choose an interesting statement that people connect with, you're more likely to get 'likes'.
 - Ask for business or product reviews from your fans, and display them. If you get a negative review, it offers an opportunity to reach out to the customer and try to remedy the problem or repair the relationship.
- Promote relevant events you are hosting or attending, such as conferences, volunteer events, or other community or industry functions. This can show how active your business is in the community or industry.
- You have the ability to post milestones on your page, even ones that happened in the past. Use this feature to highlight big business events or news.
- To highlight a post on your page, click the star icon on the post (this will expand the post to widescreen).
- If your audience includes specific segments, you can create groups to target your messages. For instance, if you sell multiple products, you could create groups of customers for each one, and target messages specific to each audience. This is particularly strategic because Facebook users are overwhelmed with images, status updates and distractions—so anything not highly relevant will be ignored.

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Give exclusive deals to your Facebook fans, to bring extra value to your relationship.

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- Post subscription information for your newsletters on your page, and occasionally post teaser content to encourage your fans to subscribe.
- If you want to display a post at the top of your timeline, you can 'pin' it there for seven days. Click on the pencil icon and select 'Pin to Top'.
- Use Facebook to integrate with other social media channels. For instance, if a client asks a question on Twitter™, you can repeat it (with the answer) on Facebook to reach more people. If it makes sense, you could also create a detailed response in a blog post and link to the blog on both Twitter and Facebook.
- People will inevitably reach out to you with issues, questions or concerns. Always respond, even if it just means referring them to the right person. Or, contact the person in your business who will have the information, and then let the customer know the resolution.

Common mishaps

- Don't post too often. Yes, it's good to have exposure to your audience, but over-posting is a top reason people will 'unlike' you. Along the same lines, don't sync your account with Twitter. Posting multiple times each day to Twitter is expected, but your Facebook fans will just get annoyed if they see all your linked tweets.
- Don't use a third-party tool to schedule Facebook updates—Facebook penalises you with how your updates are displayed (users will only see the most recent one of all the updates posted from the outside platform).
- Be sure to vary your content so readers don't get bored with the same thing.
- Never delete fans' wall posts! More likely than not, they'll notice and call you out, drawing more negative attention. Instead, talk to unhappy fans to resolve their issues or at least make your best attempt.
- As with other social media platforms, avoid selling too much. More of your posts should be questions, relevant information and news, and other content.

Facebook advertising

Another beneficial way to use Facebook is to post ads. Facebook ads appear throughout the site, and you have several options when creating your advert, including your target audience and your call to action (what the advert will link to).

Details about Facebook ads can be found here:

www.facebook.com/help/?page=195623423828629&ref=bc. These tips can help get you started using Facebook ads.

- Be sure to choose the right target audience. This may take some market research and/or some trial and error to determine the ideal audience.
- Test your advert! For instance, try different targets (E.g. one gender rather than both) to see which performs best, and then use that going forward. Try testing different variables to create the best advert for your money.
- Decide what action you want the viewer to take: become a fan of your page, sign up for a newsletter or visit your site. Your advert can link to your page or external website, or can include a 'like' button for fans to like your page without leaving the page they're on.
- Make sure your advert stands out. You're competing not only with other ads, but also with photos and messages from the user's Facebook friends. Speak to your target audience and be direct to make sure you get noticed.

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Anything not highly relevant to a user will be ignored.

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