

Using Facebook As A Business-Building Tool

BY HEATHER LUTZE

Most people know Facebook as a great way to stay in touch with friends and family, and to reconnect with long-lost childhood classmates. But there's another side to Facebook — one that can help your business grow.

According to Facebook's own compilation of statistics (found in their Press Room), more than 1.5-million local businesses have active pages on Facebook, and more than 20 million people become fans of pages each day. For CEOs and business owners, this means Facebook is definitely a way to spread your company's message, build community and loyalty among customers, and ultimately increase your company's bottom line.

If you've only used Facebook for personal reasons, making the jump to a business application can seem challenging. The following suggestions will help you create a business Facebook presence that generates results.

Distinguish Your Facebook Person and Persona

Ask yourself these two important questions: "Who am I as a person outside of my business?" (This is your person.) "Who am I as a business owner on Facebook?" (This is

your persona.) Can you combine the two identities? Absolutely not! If you already have a personal Facebook page that you use to keep up with your friends and family, then keep it personal. Don't mix your business contacts into that page.

Rather, build a new Facebook profile as the CEO and Founder of Company XYZ. This is your business persona page. You could even name it John W. Smith, CEO and Founder of Acme Corporation. On this page you'd put your corporate bio and other information that pertains to your role in the company — the persona of you as a CEO. Then you can build a Fan Page off of that personal profile that talks specifically about the business.

Mixing your personal and business pages is discrediting and unprofessional. And yes, it's perfectly fine to have two profiles on Facebook. You'd simply have to use your middle initial or some other distinguishing information to differentiate the two accounts.



© ifeelstock | Dreamstime.com

Think of the keywords you want to be found under and work those keywords into your tagline or title.

Name Your Accounts Wisely

While your individual posts on Facebook are not ranked in Google searches (at least not yet), your profile is ranked. Simply go to your settings tab in Facebook and elect to make your profile public. How you name your business persona page and fan page is critical for ranking purposes. While you'd certainly use your name for your individual business account and use your company name for your fan page, you'll want to tag some keywords onto each name. For example, if you as the CEO wanted

to be known as a leader in Internet marketing, you might name your business profile John W. Smith, Internet Marketing Strategist. Similarly, you could name your fan page in such a way that there's no question what your company does, as in "Acme Corporation, Widget Supplier and Manufacturer."

Think of the keywords you want to be found under and work those keywords into your tagline or title. This strategy gets your profile open to the world and helps you go beyond just building a Facebook community of friends and fans.

Now you're opening up your company to a larger community outside of Facebook.

Post Appropriate Content

Once your pages are set up, encourage your current clients or customers to join your fan page. Anything that happens with the business, such as any trade shows the company is attending, new products or services you're offering, any new company developments you want people to know about, or anything related to the company as a whole, would appear on the fan

page. People read those posts and monitor what your company is doing or offering and they then invite others to become fans.

As for your business persona page — the page focused on you as the CEO and Founder — here you'd post information about conferences you're attending, your thoughts on the industry or company, and business things related to you personally. For example, maybe you won an award or got an article published. Talk about these types of things on your business persona page.

Additionally, on your business persona page, you'd only put out and accept friend requests from people who directly relate to your business. If one of your personal friends finds the page and offers a friend request, direct that individual to your personal page.


Realize that while you can control whom you befriend, you have no control over who becomes a fan of your company's fan page. People become fans because they are interested in your topic.

Also, it's okay to have blatant ads, coupons, and specials for your company on your fan page.

In fact, fan pages were designed as a way to give businesses a way to blatantly promote their company without getting people upset. However, don't put ads, coupons, or specials on your business persona page. If you do, people will quickly start un-friending you.

Finally, remember to feed your Twitter posts, blog posts, and YouTube videos directly to your fan page so you can extend your brand. You can do all this dynamically by using a tool such as Ping.fm or SocialOomph.com.

Build Community — and Profits

With more than 400 million active users on Facebook, this is one place you definitely want your company to be seen. The key is for clients, prospects, and the Facebook community at large to see your business in the most positive light possible. By keeping your business and personal information separate, building your pages professionally, and posting relevant content your audience will want to read, you can create powerful relationships on Facebook that positively impact your company's bottom line. 



Heather Lutze has spent the last 10 years as CEO of The Findability

Group, formerly Lutze Consulting, a Search Engine Marketing firm that works with companies to attain maximum Internet exposure. A nationally recognized speaker, she is the author of *The FindAbility Formula: The Easy, Non-Technical Approach to Search Engine Marketing* (Wiley and Sons). She is a lead speaker for Pay Per Click Summit, and previously spent two years speaking for Yahoo! Search Marketing. For more information, visit www.FindabilityGroup.com.