

Chapter 17

Ten Business Etiquette Tips for Facebook

As Facebook grows so do the surprising number of faux pas committed by individuals and companies alike. The occasional slip of the tongue, the odd photo, and of course everyone's favorite: the embarrassing tag in a note or video.

You can and must protect your brand's reputation on Facebook, as well as maintain the utmost respect for the Facebook community. The downside is steep; you can lose your Page, your profile, or both. Once you are banned from Facebook, it's hard to get back in and by that time the audience that you worked so hard to build is gone. Therefore, it's a good idea to listen to the tips and warnings we outline in this chapter.

Don't Forget Birthday Greetings

With the power of Facebook, you can never forget a birthday of any of your friends. Then why not make it a point each day to see if fans of your Page are having a birthday? For sure, you should send them a birthday wish. You might even want to send them a virtual gift. And if that isn't enough, perhaps you want to offer them something unique that only you can provide for their birthday. For example, fans might be open to getting a happy birthday greeting from a local restaurant with an offer to come in that week for a free dessert or free drink.

The power of this platform is there — and surprisingly few Pages take advantage of this.

Don't Drink and Facebook

This should go without saying, but sometimes (at least) our ability to communicate is impaired by drinking. Drinking and e-mailing, twittering, and social networking just don't go together. You are better off not logging in. It only takes one bad or off color Wall post to get you reported in Facebook. Facebook members tend to be vigilant about things that they find offensive so just say no to drinking and Facebook.

Keep It Clean

Here is another no-no. Facebook does not allow users to send threatening, harassing, or sexually explicit messages to its members. Also, unsolicited messages are not tolerated. You should refrain from any of this behavior because the downside is your account could be warned, banned, and eventually disabled. What's worse, Facebook won't provide you with a description or copy of the content that was found to be offensive. Facebook does not provide any specifics on the limits that are enforced. Err on the side of caution if you think there is a question.

Avoid Overdoing It

You can over indulge in Facebook several ways, so you should watch out for these traps because they are very easy to fall into. First, don't randomly add people to your profile in the hopes of converting them to your Page. Befriending random people is considered poor form and may make you look like a stalker. Also, avoid over poking. Poking is an impersonal form of communication, so poking a friend can be fun but poking a stranger is poor form — so don't do it.

Dress Your Page Up with Applications

An endless sea of applications has been written for Facebook by independent developers. One or more of those could make a great fit for your business, so find an application or two (but no more) that you can use to make your Page more engaging. The nice thing is applications are easy to install and don't require any knowledge of how to build or modify them. Consider creating

individual tabs for each application because each tab has a unique URL. You can even send out an e-mail to your customer base asking people to engage with your new application (for example, a survey application).

Respect the Wall

Your Wall is one of the most important places on your Page. It is where your fans can leave you messages and start a discussion on a topic. All messages on your Wall are visible to everyone who is a fan of your business or anyone who visits your Page. Think of it as a place of public record, so avoid editing comments on your Wall you don't like and always sound professional and courteous to anyone posting. Thank them for posting and make it fun for them and others.

Be Careful When Talking to Strangers

Sometimes written communication can seem flat and impersonal so choose your words carefully and be sure to re-read your responses, especially if the situation is or was getting heated. Better yet, if you think it is getting too heated, feel free to take it offline. Nothing beats the old-fashioned form of communication — the telephone — to help you get your point across and de-escalate a situation.

Don't Be Afraid to Ignore a Fan

Many people feel compelled to respond to every message in their e-mail Inbox. Similarly in Facebook people feel the need to respond to every comment or posting. Sometimes fans can overuse the various communication features in Facebook. New fans can sometimes binge on the information you present. Some good guidelines are: always welcome new fans, respond to comments and posts on your Wall in 24 hours but try to know when to respond and when to let the conversation rest. If a fan is irate, that's another thing; ignoring them can often work against you.

Deal with Your Irate Fans

Irate fans pose one of the biggest challenges this new medium has to offer. You have several ways to deal with an irate fan:

- ✓ Honestly consider their point and try to find something (anything) to agree with. Finding and establishing common ground is a great way to get the conversation back on track.
- ✓ Correct factual inaccuracies in a very tactful and pleasant way. The fan may not have all the data, which could be causing him to be irate.
- ✓ If you don't know the solution to a particular situation, don't bluff your way out of it — be sure to state that, commit to finding out more, and give them a date that you'll get back to them.
- ✓ Don't forget you can always take your conversation offline.

Maintain Your Privacy

For some business owners, privacy is a very important point. If you are a local business owner — say, the owner of a local jewelry store — you might not want to have your home address listed in the information section of your profile. Also, be sure the settings on your profile are set to Private (which is the default) rather than Public, which makes your personal information — including your home address — available to Internet search engines. Finally, be careful what groups you join. If someone you know in business is viewing your profile and sees controversial political, sexual, or religious activist groups on your profile, you may never find out why they stopped coming to your store.