

Make Facebook work hard for your business

It's been around a while now and even sparked an Academy Award-winning movie about its founder. But are you making the most of Facebook? Ken Burgin shows you how.



SOCIAL MEDIA is here to stay and online interaction is fast becoming the primary business marketing commitment. Facebook is one dynamic way of reaching your target market and it is no longer a matter of if, but how you use it to connect with customers and promote your business. More than 50 per cent of the nine million Australian users check in every day — this is an enterprise too big to ignore.

But Facebook for business promotion is not 'set and forget'. While it can generate an outstanding following by a loyal growing audience it needs to be carefully set up for best results and given very regular attention. Here are some of the key issues to watch for.

Update your personal Privacy Settings: For many people, privacy concerns prevent them using Facebook as an effective marketing tool. They worry that 'joining' Facebook will mean their private life and personal information is revealed to everyone. Once you understand a little more about how Facebook works, you will see this doesn't have to be the case.

You establish a personal Facebook Profile when you 'join' Facebook. Quite separate are Facebook pages — they're the tool for business promotion (and can't be created until you have a "profile").

If you set up your personal privacy settings correctly, you can keep your private life totally separate from the Facebook business pages you set up and administer. You can also stop anyone knowing anything more than your business name — no photos, no private conversations, no contact details or unwanted 'friend requests'. It's

totally private.

Do you need a Facebook Page or a Group? Pages are for businesses to share information, and promote events and products — they're ideal for a restaurant, bar, hotel or club. Facebook Groups are for people sharing a common interest, for example a basketball club or fans of a band. There are far more options to personalise and promote a page — it should be your first preference.

Who administers the page? This can (and should) be a shared team responsibility, so you're not caught out by someone leaving suddenly, or on bad terms. Password access and records are as important as the 'Key Register'. If you set up a page, you don't have to be visible as the administrator.

You do want your Facebook pages to be active forums humming with comments and enthusiasm however. Someone needs to check the page every day, responding to requests and adding a short update or photo. Every comment posted by a fan needs a friendly 'thank you'. Chit-chat is good, but official silence is not. A quick update takes no longer than writing a text message — you have staff who would love to do this.

Configure your Page settings to allow more participation. This will mean you are going to have to check your Page more regularly for rogue comments, but that is a small price to pay for increased participation, engagement AND potential business growth.

Add 'Like' buttons on every web page: to add a Like button, login as an Administrator to your Facebook Page and go to 'Edit Page' — under the marketing tab you'll find a wide range of options. Identify the code for a 'widget' that you can then embed on web pages. When people click on this, a link is posted back to their personal profile — great for friends to be able to see what attracts approval. This would work well on your menu page, event updates and photo gallery — the integration between Facebook and your website can be very close. One the Profitable Hospitality website I'm finding this to be a very effective tactic.

Automate some of the Facebook postings: when you set up a blog or online

photo diary, you can have the content automatically fed to your Facebook Page every time there's an update. This usually includes the photo, so it looks lively. But don't feed your Twitter updates onto Facebook, as it can overwhelm your Page with unimportant information.

Should you 'Friend' your Staff? How personal do you want to be with someone half your age? Maybe it's okay for you, but how do they say No if you request to 'friend them'? It's definitely an item for discussion. There may be connections here with your staff dating policy.

Coach staff about privacy and what is appropriate: concepts of privacy, discretion and sharing are very different these days. If staff are friending each other on Facebook and MySpace, it doesn't take long before crazy photos have a wider audience. **Your business needs a social media policy:** It's essential that staff have guidance on what is acceptable and

not acceptable to say on Facebook, and also other Review Sites, especially as it relates to the business for which they work. Make it short, simple and very clear — a new section of your staff manual perhaps.

Watch for developments: Facebook keeps changing — new features such as Facebook deals, places, questions and applications create many opportunities for closer engagement with your fans. Profitable Hospitality members are regularly updated in the online marketing department, there are free webinars exploring Facebook and social media, and there are regular tips on our own Facebook page — go to Facebook.com/ProfitableHospitality.

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For more information visit profitablehospitality.com or call 1800 001 353.



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