THE SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDE

Articles and information targeted to help YOU understand and utilize social media tactics and tools

WHAT’S IN IT FOR ME?

Now I know what you’re probably thinking. My business has been doing just fine without using the internet or any of those FaceSpace or Tweeter or whatever you call those things all the young kids are using these days. Why take the the time and make the effort to learn something you don’t think you need? Well the answer to that is maybe you haven’t realized it yet, but social media is the wave of the future. You can either continue with traditional methods, or you can embrace the internet and the possibilites it provides for your business. How do you benefit specifically you ask? Let me give you some examples:

1. Maybe you’re not using Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn, but that doesn’t mean your customer base isn’t. These days many consumers use social media not only to find businesses, but to compare providers and list business postings of their own. This results in a twofold benefit if you also are looking for potential employees or partners
2. Social media allows you to start things like blogs, where company members have the opportunity to alert consumers to new developments within the company, as well as sharing all of the wonderful things the company is capable of.
3. It allows you to connect with world wide web users in real-time, meaning instantaneously. You are able to connect with people on a more personal level, making you not just another company, but an ally or friend in the consumer’s eyes.
4. Consumers are able to comment, make suggestions and connect with other consumers, spreading the word more effectively and efficiently with a much broader base than simply word of mouth.
5. It’s Free!!!! Why wouldn’t you take advantage of such a massive marketing opportunity that costs you literally nothing?

This guide is built to explain social media, to give suggestions about how best to utilize it’s capabilities, and to show you just how easy and effective social media really is.

SOCIAL MEDIA OVERVIEW

So I guess the next reasonable questions would be, what exactly is social media? The general definition of social media would be media, internet and mobile tools used to share information, convey interests and stimulate thought and commentary. Traditional media on the other hand uses media that existed before the Internet. Some examples of such would include print, television, broadcast, radio, newspapers books and magazines. Traditional media of course is an essential part of any marketing strategy, but it has been shown that the combination of tradtional and social media leads to the greatest success overall. Let me explain:

# In order to stay on top of the ever-changing working world, it can only benefit you to know the most recent changes in media tactics. The article, “Social Network Imperative; Twitter, Facebook are becoming essential skill sets,” by Alyse Knorr of Cix Newspapers, emphasized the importance of knowing how to utilize social media. The article explained how if you don’t use social media, which has become so commonplace in this generation, that it is considered a hindrance to your ability to contribute to a company if you do not know how to use social networking tools.

# It can also be a much more competitive process to get a job in marketing, advertising or public relations without these skill sets. This is because social marketing is extremely cost-effective. It was predicted in this article that the use of social media would only become more and more influential and important to all job fields as time goes on.

# Even though the economy is in shambles, people are still motivated in better times to spend money so applying public relations strategies now is key to influencing people in the future. In the article “How to get the Word Out; Public relations –Small Business Solutions” by Maria Nguyen she reviewed how public relations must be concise, clever and conservative all at once. With the correct strategies implemented, all small businesses can benefit from public relations. Goals must be clear, such as finding and receiving sales or winning new customers. The key to this success is a mixture of traditional media and new media.

So how do you create a social media strategy, and what social media providers will be the most effective for you? While there are many available, Facebook and Twitter are the most well-known. The following is a compliation of key articles written and posted on the premiere leading social media news website, Mashable.com



Twitter: a service for friends, family, and co–workers to communicate and stay connected through the exchange of quick, frequent answers to one simple question: What are you doing?”

Some Facts if you’re new to Twitter:

-Twitter: email, instant messenger, Skype, email, blogs: combined!

-Primary Difference: Posts ( tweets) limited to 140 characters or less.

-Updates, view other Tweet Followers ( friends)

-Mostly talk about everyday experiences, list videos, photos, music

**HOW TO FIND PEOPLE ON TWITTER**

**http://mashable.com/2009/07/02/twitter-people/**

**1. [Twitter People Search](http://twitter.com/invitations/find_on_twitter" \t "_blank)** – Twitter’s built in people search isn’t the greatest way to find people on Twitter, but it’s probably where you should start. Twitter searches the “real names” people enter in their bio fields, but because there isn’t much accompanying bio information and because Twitter doesn’t have any sort of requirement to use your actual name, that can make it a bit difficult to find people, especially those with common names. It also makes it hard to verify that the people you find are actually who you’re looking for. Still, it’s a good place to begin your search.

**2. [Tweepz](http://www.tweepz.com" \t "_blank)** – Because the biographical information Twitter collects is minimal, no Twitter people search engine can improve on Twitter’s *that* much. Third-party site Tweepz does an admirable job, though. Tweepz lets you limit searches to specific parts of Twitter’s user information (like name, bio, and location), filter results by follower/following numbers, location, and other extracted terms, and greatly improves on the layout of the search results.

**3. [TweepSearch](http://tweepsearch.com" \t "_blank)** – TweepSearch lets you search by Twitter name or location, or search a specific username to get a list of all friends and followers. However, if the “indexing” number listed on their main page is accurate, they’re crawling about 600,000 less Twitter user profiles than Tweepz.

**4. [TwitDir](http://twitdir.com" \t "_blank)** – TwitDir is another search engine, but if the crawling stats are accurate, it’s well behind the curve, searching about 3 million fewer users than Tweepz. Still, it’s not a bad people search engine, and has some helpful “top” lists if you’re concerned with who the most popular or prolific people on Twitter are (then again, they’re also not that up-to-date — the site doesn’t seem to know who @aplusk is, for example).

**5. [Twellow](http://www.twellow.com" \t "_blank) [([Twellow](http://www.blippr.com/apps/347325-Twellow))](http://www.blippr.com/apps/347325-Twellow" \t "_blank)** – Your best bet for finding like-minded Twitter users might be to use a directory, and Twellow is certainly one of the most complete. Nearly 6 million Twitter user profiles are indexed in Twellow and placed into a huge number of categories. You can search the entire lot of profiles, or confine searches to a single category. Twellow also operates a local directory called the “Twellowhood.”

**6. [WeFollow](http://wefollow.com" \t "_blank) [([WeFollow](http://www.blippr.com/apps/337338-WeFollow))](http://www.blippr.com/apps/337338-WeFollow" \t "_blank)** – Created by Digg [([Digg](http://www.blippr.com/apps/336668-Digg))](http://www.blippr.com/apps/336668-Digg" \t "_blank) founder Kevin Rose, [WeFollow](http://mashable.com/2009/03/15/wefollow/) is a Twitter user directory that organizes people by hashtags. WeFollow is user-generated and anyone can add themselves by tweeting @wefollow with three #hashtags that describe them.

**7. [Just Tweet It](http://justtweetit.com" \t "_blank)** – Just Tweet It is another user created Twitter directory. It’s not quite as well organized or easy-to-use as Twellow or WeFollow, but it is certainly large enough that you should give it a browse when trying to locate people in your interest areas to follow

**8. [Twubble](http://www.crazybob.org/twubble" \t "_blank)** – Twubble recommends people to follow by spidering the people you’re already following and recommending users that they’re following. The idea is that the people you’re following are interesting to you, so if more than one of them are also following another person, that person might also be interesting. Of course, that means that Twubble can’t be your first stop when finding people to follow — you already need to be following some people for the service to work.

**9. [Twitterel](http://twitterel.com" \t "_blank)** – Twitterel attempts to find people you might be interested in following by doing keyword searches of tweets. The service can update you by email, direct message, or @reply when it finds new people it thinks you might be interested in following. It’s kind of like Google Alerts for Twitter follow recommendations.

**10. [Who Should i Follow?](http://whoshouldifollow.com" \t "_blank)** – Enter you Twitter username into Who Should i Follow? and the service finds users who are similar to those you’re already following. The site doesn’t disclose information about how it works, but in my experience it is pretty accurate at finding users whose tweets are similar in content to your followers. The results can be filtered by how popular the people are, and how close they are to a specific location.

**5 Habits of Successful Executives on Twitter**

**http://mashable.com/2009/06/12/twitter-executives/**

Those who know how to use Twitter well consistently demonstrate five truths about how a CEO –- or any leader — should speak when they step into the Twitter spotlight. Emulating how they do it can help other executives get a huge return on their investment when using Twitter and avoid doing any damage to their brand.

**1. They are their brand’s conscience**

For most consumers, an ideal CEO is someone who uses their power to make sure a brand keeps its promises. As a business leader on Twitter, that should be your platform. What people sense in an effective company executive on Twitter is not the echo of marketing, but the principles by which they lead the company behind it, and their passion for the job. Skip the brand rhetoric. Your brand will thank you for it.

**2. They don’t sell – They share**

Twitter isn’t advertising, it’s a conversation. Great executive tweeters don’t try to sell to their followers, they try to engage them in a personal way. They share things about their company’s corporate culture, their leadership values, the great people around them. They help followers with problems. They make business competition personal, and sometimes even funny. Each tweet should be a window into the life of the company behind the marketing, which will make the marketing stronger as a result.

**3. They are real human beings**

On Twitter, what you talk about is who you are. Every Twitter user’s update history paints a true portrait of their character and what matters to them. So, the best executive tweeters are real people and sound like real people — always. They know the responsibility to keep their brand honest is a duty they owe their customers, but they also know that baseball practice, Saturday errands and that great burger they had at their favorite local eatery last night are the things that make them human. In moderation, share some of those things, too. People will be able to relate to you on a personal level and as a result, they will like and trust you more.

**4. They write well**

Nobody will say so out loud, but believe me: Bad grammar and punctuation, or hasty abbreviations to get the character count down to 140, are just a little too humanizing. Great leaders are characteristically great communicators, and it’s no different on Twitter. Sure, informality is fine, charming even, but confident prose is one way people recognize leadership in this forum. Nobody wants to do business with a sixteen-year-old CEO, and the best executive tweeters don’t write like one.

**5. They commit**

The best executive tweeters are people who have decided to join the party. They tweet a few times a day, and do so at least a few days a week. They build a community and become familiar with their followers. They establish relationships, running jokes, and a personality that defines them. Corporate leaders on Twitter that don’t tweet often can seem distant, or worse, when they do. We don’t feel like they’ve joined the party. We just feel like they walked into the room to make an announcement, and then left. I won’t go so far as to say that you shouldn’t be a Twitter user if you’re not prepared to commit. But almost.

Joining the Twitter community as a leader makes your voice inseparable from your company’s reputation and its brand. What effective CEO tweeters understand, though, is that this doesn’t mean you are that brand. People will follow you, initially at least, because they’re curious to understand who your company is in a deeper way than traditional media allow. But they’ll stay with you only if they like, respect and trust what they discover. Which, as any leader will tell you, is what leadership is all about.

**Finding executives on Twitter**

Though it is actually a marketing vehicle for Microsoft, [ExecTweets](http://www.exectweets.com/) is a great resource for finding executives on Twitter. The site categorizes executives who use Twitter and lets users vote on their favorite tweets from those corporate leaders. The [WeFollow](http://wefollow.com/) [([WeFollow](http://www.blippr.com/apps/337338-WeFollow))](http://www.blippr.com/apps/337338-WeFollow) directory is another good resource, just search for tags like “CEO” and “executive” to locate executive tweeters.

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**What is a Page on Facebook?**

[**http://mashable.com/2009/05/27/facebook-page-vs-groups**](http://mashable.com/2009/05/27/facebook-page-vs-groups)

“Facebook created Pages when we noticed that people were trying to connect with brands and famous artists in ways that didn’t quite work on Facebook…Not only can you connect with your favorite artists and businesses, but now you also can show your friends what you care about and recommend by adding Pages to your personal profile.”

So, when you become a fan of a brand, a band, a movie, or a person, that information is posted on your wall, and your friends might see it too. You can see which Pages your friends are fans of via the “Info” tab on their profile.

To create a fan page, one simply has to go to [facebook.com/pages/create.php](http://www.facebook.com/pages/create.php) and create a new page.

Of course, a single fan doesn’t make a fan page very valuable.

**Value of Fan Pages**

Facebook Pages can be thought of in much the same way as normal profiles on the site – brand or celebrity Pages have the ability to have friends, they can add pictures, and they have walls that fans can post on. Pages communicate by “updates” which show on the update tab or a person’s wall if they’re a fan and have allowed the page to show updates. Pages can have applications as well.

**Pages vs. Groups: How to know which to use**

There are a number of factors you need to consider when choosing which is right for your project, a Page or a group.

**Personal vs. Corporate:**

Due to their security features, and size limitations (only groups under 5,000 members can send email blasts), Facebook Groups are set up for more personal interaction. Groups are also directly connected to the people who administer them, meaning that activities that go on there could reflect on you personally. Pages, on the other hand, don’t list the names of administrators, and are thought of as a person, almost like a corporate entity is considered a ‘person’ under the law.

Facebook considers groups to be an extension of your personal actions. When you post something as a group administrator, it appears to be coming from you and is attached to your personal profile. Alternately, Pages can create content that comes from the Page itself, so that content doesn’t have to be linked to you personally.

*Update:* Also one key difference is that Pages are indexed by external search engines such as Google ([Google](http://www.blippr.com/apps/336661-Google)just like a public profile while Groups are not.

**Email vs. Updates:**

As long as a group is under 5,000 members, group admins can send messages to the group members that will appear in their inboxes. Page admins can send updates to fans through the Page, and these updates will appear in the “Updates” section of fans’ inboxes. There is no limit on how many fans you may send an update to, or how many total fans a Page can have.

**User Control:**

Groups offer far more control over who gets to participate. Permissions settings make it possible for group admins to restrict access to a group, so that new members have to be approved. Access to a Page, however, can only be restricted by certain ages and locations. Again, this makes groups more like a private club.

**Applications**

Pages can host applications, so a Page can essentially be more personalized and show more content. Groups can’t do this.

**Moderation**

Neither Groups nor Pages have great moderation features. They can both be a little granular as to how things get posted, who can post, and what kind of media can be posted, but that’s about it.

If someone posts spam on your Group or your Page, you have to remove it manually, and you can also remove specific members.

## HOW TO: Survive the New, New Facebook

## http://mashable.com/2009/03/27/facebook-homepage-tips/

### Custom Friend Lists

-This problem probably only applies to those of us that add hundreds of friends, but let’s face it, if you’re reading this article, that’s probably you!.

-You can create new lists from the “Create” link at the bottom of your list of friend groups on the left side of the Facebook homepage.

edit friend list

-One thing you can do – which isn’t immediately obvious, is make any of these groups your default, so it’s what comes up every time you open Facebook. To do that, just drag the list you want as default to the top of the list of groups on the left of your homepage.

-If you don’t do this, Facebook will just default to “News Feed,” which shows updates from everyone you’re friends with.

### Tweaking These Lists

With the newest rollout, Facebook has also made it easy to tweak these lists at any time. To do so, just click the little icon next to the Group name, select the list you’d like to add someone to, and then start typing in their name. Facebook auto-detects who you might be trying to add. You can do all of this without leaving the page.

### Hiding Application Notifications

One common complaint with the new Facebook was the influx of information from third-party apps like Flickr and YouTube.With the homepage improvements, you can now hide not only people from your feed, but specific application alerts as well.http://mashable.com/wp-content/themes/v6/_base/img/blank.png

### Other Improvements

Facebook has also moved “Requests” back to the top right of your homepage. This creates more real estate for friend updates above the fold, which is pretty nice once you’ve tweaked the other settings.

facebook requests

### Still Missing

What’s still missing are updates featuring photos that friends have been tagged in (though some of these show up in “Highlights” on the right), as well as the promised “live updating” that will restore the functionality people miss from the former Live Feed feature. These are both in the works and expected to launch in the next few weeks.

**5 Elements of a Successful Facebook Fan Page**

**http://mashable.com/2009/03/30/successful-facebook-fan-page/**

For many companies a Facebook fan page is an integral part of their social media campaign. But, what elements help fan pages build up large followings and what can brands do to emulate the success of others? Here is a list of specific elements that have helped create fan pages with large, engaged, followings.

* **1. Networking with other platforms**

Building a large following requires a network of other platforms, working in conjunction to drive visitors to your fan page. One brand that does that well is Victoria’s Secret with their PINK line.

* Many companies lack this level of dedication, expecting their consumers on Facebook to find them automatically. However, that’s not usually the case.
* When is the last time you went looking for a brand’s Facebook fan page? More often than not, a consumer will stumble upon the page, either through a friend or from a hub, similar to Victoria’s Secret’s PINK page.
* Understandably, the fact that the demographic targeted by Victoria’s Secret PINK, aligns exactly with the demographic that is most active on Facebook, has helped grow the group as well.
* **Key Takeaway: Connecting multiple social platforms and a hub from the brand website, can help funnel consumers throughout the network.**
* **2. Creating a resource**

Some pages are used as connection hubs, but others offer information pertinent to their consumers. They use the information as added value to have consumers create a connection with the brand.

* Dell has done a great job with their social media resource for small businesses Understanding that small business owners buy computers, by offering them this resource, small business owners interested in social media keep Dell top of mind.
* Although, Dell can’t explicitly gauge the success of this program in ROI, it is a branding exercise. Also, since they offer deals and updates on new products on the page – the page does have a chance to convert small business owners into Dell consumers.
* **Key Takeaway: Offering a resource page allows a brand to target a new demographic, outside of those that already know and love the business.**
* **3. Creating contests that include participation**
* For brands that want fan pages to have added value (a reason for users to join the page, aside from brand loyalty), but don’t want to become a resource portal; offering contests and coupons specifically to Facebook users can entice consumers to join.
* [Sears offered fans a $10 coupon](http://www.facebook.com/sears) to use in stores, giving consumers a reason to join. Clicking on the coupon takes you to a page where Sears collects your information and sends you information about the coupon, deals, and offers. There’s no way to make sure the coupon is given to only Facebook fans, however like Sears, brands can require an email before receiving the coupon.
* **Key Takeaway: Offering something to consumers to join can help build a large community. Some examples of things to offer: Coupons, free shipping, weekly deals.**
* **4. Empowering pre-existing pages**
* Coca Cola, instead of taking over the page and making it their own, rewarded the fans by bringing them to Atlanta and giving them a tour of the Coke facility. The fan page remains theirs, but now they have the blessing and help of Coca Cola.
* By empowering the fans to keep their fan page, Coke ensures a passionate page owner.
* The Coca Cola marketing team was also smart enough to realize that letting others know what happened here would work in their favor. The fan page creators were told to make a [video of the history behind the fan page](http://www.facebook.com/coca-cola#/video/video.php?v=57458127013), and how Coke had reached out to them and rewarded them for this.
* The video shows future ‘brand enthusiasts’ that creating successful groups around Coca Cola can result in rewards and recognition.
* **Key Takeaway: Taking over unsanctioned Facebook fan pages isn’t always the best idea. Instead, rewarding dedication can inspire others to do the same.**
* **5. Targeting the proper demographic**
* Sometimes no matter what you do, your Facebook page won’t grow. This can simply be a side effect of Facebook’s demographic. There are just some brands that will not have a strong presence on Facebook.
* Understanding the demographic present can help you decide if Facebook is worth it for your business.
* From [Quantcast estimates](http://www.quantcast.com/facebook.com), we can tell that Facebook skews towards female youths. Interestingly, 53% of users have kids and a majority make over $60k a year salary. Obviously, over 50% are college kids. The demographics that make up Facebook are changing quickly, as more moms have begun to join and the college market has become saturated — so be sure to keep checking up on demographic changes over time. As Facebook changes, your campaigns may need to change with it for maximum effect.
* Armed with this knowledge, [Seventeen Magazine jumped on to the Facebook fan page bandwagon](http://www.facebook.com/pages/Seventeen-Magazine/8028997215?v=wall&viewas=8801325). Their brand targets the demographic most prominent on Facebook, meaning a fairly quick and organic growth.
* For companies whose brand does not target the optimal demographic, finding a specific line that does, works.
* Consider the brand mentioned earlier in this article, Victoria’s Secret. Instead of putting the entire brand on Facebook, they targeted the PINK line, a line for college students.
* **Key Takeaway: Some brands cannot expect huge followings on Facebook. Brands or product lines targeting the demographic most prominent on Facebook tend to see the quickest growth.**
* Creating a Facebook fan page is simple, but getting it to work well takes time, dedication, and some planning. Don’t expect to create a page and then have a huge following instantaneously. Build good content, make it easy to share, and let people know about it, and over-time the community will grow.
* *Do you have a successful fan page? What did you do to get the word out? What elements did you add to make it easier to pass along? How do you engage your consumers?*

## HOW TO: Use Facebook for Professional Networking

## http://mashable.com/2009/08/14/facebook-networking/

Boris Epstein is the CEO and Founder of [*BINC*](http://www.bincsearch.com/), a Professional Search Firm that specializes in the Software Marketplace. Boris shares his thoughts about the recruitment industry, job hunting and career advice at [*AskBinc.com*](http://askbinc.com/).

Ask anybody why they use Facebook, and most people will respond with reasons like staying in touch with friends, or being able to share pictures. Rarely does one’s professional life ever get mentioned when describing the social network. When it comes to business networking, LinkedIn tends to take all the thunder, and Facebook is generally written off as a place just for fun. Yet, perhaps that’s a mistake.

Facebook, after all, has 250 million active users compared to about 44 million for LinkedIn, and even though the atmosphere is clearly not as focused on business, there are still a ton of opportunities for professional networking that business users would be remiss to pass up. Once you look beyond the obvious social features like sharing pictures and poking friends, there are plenty of ways to tap into the professional community on the world’s largest social network.

In this post we’ll talk about how to setup your Facebook for professional use, how to find others to network with, Facebook features that work for professional networking, and ways to maximize the value from those features.

## Setting up your Facebook for business networking

If you’re like most people, your personal and professional lives have already blended. You share your personal stories and pictures with your work colleagues, you discuss both work and your personal life on your blog and Twitter, and you’ve probably let go of the notion that professional and personal must be kept completely separate.

But even with that blurring of our work and social lives, most of us still want some separation, and I would recommend actually splitting the two on Facebook. Once split, you can continue to reap the social benefits of Facebook with your friends and family while simultaneously connecting with your professional colleagues.

Here’s how to split the two.

– Go to your friends list by clicking on the Friends tab -> All Friends at the top of your Facebook page.

– Click the “Create a New List” button and create one called Professional.

– You can now go through your entire friend list and add all of your professional contacts into this new and separate business list.

– Once you’re done, navigate to your profile privacy settings by clicking on the Settings link in the top right corner of your Facebook; then click on privacy; then click on profile.

On the profile privacy settings page you can begin slicing and dicing your Facebook world into personal and professional segments by restricting access to various parts of your profile using your newly created friend list. For example, if you don’t want your professional friends to see any of your pictures, click on “edit photo album privacy settings.” In the “who can see this” drop down, click on “customize” and then in the “except these people” field type in your newly formed professional friends list. Now only your personal friends will be able to see your pictures.

Though these settings can get fairly complicated because of their granularity, you can control your entire Facebook experience from this area of the site and decide what parts of your personal life you would like your professional friends to be able to see. Bear in mind that there are no best practices here. Meaning, if you don’t want your professional friends to see your wall comments, don’t let them. If you don’t want your professional friends to see your pictures, don’t let them. It’s your world and you can set it up exactly how you like.

## Using Facebook groups for networking

One way to professionally benefit from Facebook’s enormous user base and to grow your professional network is to participate in Facebook Groups. Facebook Groups is a feature that allows Facebook users to connect, discuss and network with each other within the context of a common interest or topic.

### Finding groups

There are groups on Facebook representing just about every topic under the sun. To find the right group for your professional aspiration, think of topics that will motivate you, allow you to connect with others of professional interest, and will allow you to gain insight into your industry/skill set – groups around these topics are the ones where you’ll find professionals you can network with.

Now that you have a direction in mind, enter your keyword into the search box on Facebook, and click on the “Groups” filter to the left of the results. You can also filter down the displayed groups by drilling into a number of sub categories, including business (a good bet for many professional groups), common interest, geography, Internet and technology, and organizations.

There are, of course, other ways to find Facebook Groups. Here are a few techniques that should give you plenty of groups to get started with.

– If you have friends whose professional advancements you respect, go to their profile page and click on their info tab. Towards the bottom of the page, you’ll see links to all of the groups to which they belong.

– On the main page of any Facebook Group, there are links to several other similar or related groups.

– Conduct an Internet search for “popular Facebook Groups” coupled with some of the keywords that interest you. You’ll often uncover blog posts, articles and people tweeting about a variety of groups, some of which may interest you.

Once you find a group that interests you, it’s a good idea to evaluate whether or not it will be a good fit before joining and pouring too much time into it.

### What to look for in a professional group

There are millions of groups on Facebook, so how many should you join and which ones? Joining too many might prove to be unmanageable, so it’s a good idea to only join the ones that you can actually see yourself participating in.

Below is a list of the features you’ll find in each Facebook Group and what to look for in each to determine whether a group is quality enough to be worth joining.

**Recent News** – This section contains news from group administrators that is either about the group itself or is about a topic that might interest the group. Is it up to date? Is it useful information or just self-promotion?

**Member Listings** – Lists all group members including their profile photos, location and link to their profile page. This is an easy access way to send a message to a specific group member OR to request them as a friend. You can also use this tool to evaluate the group before joining. Does the group attract people with similar backgrounds and interests to yours? Can you see yourself giving information to and appreciating information from these other members? Do they seem like people you would value interacting with?

**Discussion Board** – The group’s discussion board allows members to engage in a discussion about topics listed by other group members. Before joining, use the discussion board to measure group activity and member engagement. Are discussions recent? How many are there? Are they interesting and on-topic? You should contribute to an existing discussion or start your own, once you’ve joined.

**Wall Posting** – This section is usually for member introductions or job postings. This is a great way to introduce yourself and your interest in this group. How recent are the latest postings? If there is any spam, how quickly is it cleaned up?

Groups also often have photos, videos, links sections, and event listings. You should evaluate these areas for recency and quality of information, as well.

### Group participation

Once you’ve joined a group, it’s time to start participating. This is where the real fun begins and the true business value will happen. Below is an example workflow I would recommend following upon joining a group for professional purposes. It’s a great way to show your presence in the group and get some professional networking activity under your belt.

**Post an introduction** on the Group’s Wall stating your interest in the group. If you’re looking to network, say so. If you’re looking for a job, say so. If you can offer advice, say so. The key here is to make this a simple introduction so the group knows who you are – not an advertisement for yourself or services, which may come across as spam.

**Add links** to interesting events, pieces of news or blog posts. Anybody who reads them will know you posted them, which will add to your professional branding efforts.

**Go to the discussion board and comment** on a few topics; don’t be generic. Find a discussion where you could truly add value and help some fellow members with their questions or contribute to some discussions with your thoughts.

**Post a topic for discussion**. Ask a question or propose a thought-provoking topic of discussion and share your thoughts — the object is to engage your fellow group members. Check back on this discussion often so you can participate and remain an active part of it.

**Add friends**. Because Facebook was intended to be an online extension of your offline social graph, it is proper etiquette to know somebody before adding them as a friend. While being in the same group might satisfy that requirement for some people, I think it’s a good idea to have some sort of further engagement with a member before requesting them as a friend. Once you’ve engaged someone (such as in a discussion board topic), request them as a friend but include a personal note letting them know you appreciated the interaction. That way, they will have some context for the request and will be more likely to accept. Once you’re friends, make sure to add them to your professional friend list so that you are able to maintain that line between social and professional.

Now that you’ve gone through this workflow for each group you’ve joined, you can now consider yourself to be an active member. So what’s next? Networking! Come back to each group often to post new links and videos, engage in discussions or start your own. You should also invite other existing contacts to join the group as a way to help spread the word and keep the group active. Also remember to befriend those with whom you’ve been active and take your professional relationship to the next level.

Once you have the basics down, professional networking on Facebook is very similar to professional networking in real life. The same rules and etiquette apply. As you build your professional network on Facebook you’ll be able to use those contacts for job hunting, business development, and more.

## Conclusion

Although Facebook was built as a social network and most people treat it as such – there is a tremendous amount of professional value that can be gained there. Once you’re a member of a few groups and have completed the introductory workflow for each one, the professional value of Facebook should be evident and ready to be fully realized.

( For more information or to read more articles on these subjects, please visit mashable.com)

Now you must be asking, are Facebook and Twitter the only available resources for me to use for social media? Of course not! Here a few more noteworthy social media outlets:

Foursquare: