

You should “Like” this marketing opportunity

-- By Diana Clark

When someone says you should be on Facebook, do you roll your eyes? Do you think what a time-sucker it is? Or that you'll get friend requests from high school classmates you haven't seen for decades for good reason? Or that you'll be subjected to a flood of cute puppy photos and political diatribes?

If this is your attitude about the social networking site, you're not alone, and you're not wrong. Having a personal Facebook profile can bring on all these aggravations and more. However, there's another side to Facebook – a business page – that is well worth investigating for your company whether you personally want to be on the social networking site or not.

You should consider maintaining a Facebook business page for several reasons.

In today's tech environment, having a presence online – beyond simply a company website – has become important. People make assumptions, often subconscious, about your company based on a Google search. The businesses that deliver a number of search results, including a Facebook page, seem more professional, better established, and more up-to-date than businesses that don't.

For example, if you're recruiting and want to attract top-quality candidates, you can be sure they'll check to see if you have a Facebook page and look over its content before they submit an application. It's a safe bet that many of your vendors, suppliers, competitors, and industry partners will do the same.

What's more, a Facebook business page can help you stay connected with your employees. You can communicate key messages via your page that will help build company loyalty and pride. While you may not publish an employee newsletter, you can use your business page to accomplish similar results.

In short, you can use a Facebook business page to create credibility; build an up-to-the-minute, professional image; solidify employee loyalty; and extend your company's reach. And, here's the kicker: You can achieve all of these benefits *without paying Facebook any money*.

If you've read this far, you might be wondering what you can possibly post on your page. If you open your mind to the idea that things that'll make good Facebook posts are happening all the time, you'll soon find fresh content easy to generate. Here are a few examples.

Company events – Are you hosting a safety seminar? Celebrating a milestone anniversary? Holding an open house at your new offices? Having a holiday party?

Awards won – Here’s a chance to blow your own horn if your company has been named ASA Specialty Contractor, Affiliate, Rookie, or General Contractor of the Year or has won any similar awards from other associations.

Projects awarded – Here’s your opportunity to post progress photos, completions, and grand openings. You can even post short videos of your work being put in place.

Community activities – Do you participate in the ASA’s food or toy drives or any other such event? Let people know your company supports the communities in which you work.

Attendance at industry, community, and civic events – Potential clients are favorably impressed by businesses whose employees are active outside their jobs.

Participation in professional association committees – Those same clients are even more favorably impressed when your people serve their industry by sitting on boards and committees or sponsoring association events. (Did someone in your company read ASA President Frank Robledo’s message in this issue of “Just Briefly” and sign up for a committee? If so, post it!)

New website content – Let’s say you just featured a new project on your company’s website, or added the latest issue of your company newsletter, or posted a new job opening. You can put a website link in a post on your Facebook page and thus drive traffic to your website.

Congratulations to your industry partners – If you’re proud to be working with XYZ General Contractor, use your Facebook page as a means to share that contractor’s good news. This kind of goodwill is gold.

Job openings – Post that you have job openings and set up a link to your website page that outlines the application process. What a great recruitment tool – particularly if you’re recruiting younger people who rely on social networking.

Holiday messages – Christmas, Hanukkah, Easter, Passover, St. Patrick’s Day, Valentine’s Day, Secretary’s Day, Women in Construction Day, Halloween, May Day ... we have so many serious and goofy holidays, and all of them can become a quick Facebook post.

Historical snapshots – Do you have some old company photos? Facebook has a tradition called Throwback Thursday. On this day of the week, you can join the fun by scanning and posting old photos. Doing this helps create the image of a long-lived, stable – and therefore well-run – company.

Link to publicity – If your company is featured in any news media, post a link to that magazine, newsletter, TV program, or newspaper on your Facebook page. (Example: Take a look at Kelar Pacific’s recent post on its [Facebook page](#), where you’ll see a link to this issue of “Just Briefly,” where its article appears.)

So, let’s say you’ve decided to set up a Facebook page for your business, and you’re confident you can come up with content to keep it going. That’s the first step, but once that’s done, you’ll need to practice a few basic good social networking habits to ensure your page delivers the positive results you want. What follows are my top 10 tips to get you started on the right foot.

1. Notify employees, vendors, suppliers, clients, industry partners, and individuals with whom you network that you’ve set up a new Facebook page and invite them to visit and “Like” it.
2. Print the Facebook logo or your page address on business cards and letterhead. Add it to your company’s email signature block. Link it on your company website. The more cross-marketing you can do, the better.
3. Designate a person to maintain the page. The importance of doing this can’t be overstated. For your page to project the professional image you desire, it needs to be regularly and carefully monitored and maintained. New content needs to be developed; messages need to be answered promptly; undesirable content put on your page by others needs to be hidden; and personal thank-you notes need to be sent to anyone who gives you a good review on the page. Without a designated administrator, your page will go downhill quickly. (Note: You should have a second page administrator who doesn’t necessarily work on the page but who is authorized by Facebook to step in should the primary person leave your company for any reason.)
4. Aim to post new content two or three times per week. People interested in following your page will soon lose interest if they don’t see frequent fresh content. Plus, your company’s image will be damaged. Think about it: When you look at a company website that has a page featuring new projects and the most recent one is from two years ago, what impression do you get? I’m going to guess, not good.
5. Keep posts short. Most Facebook users these days are checking their newsfeeds on a small mobile device during short breaks. They don’t want to read or digest more than a few words. Somewhere between 35 and 100 words is about right. (If you want to share more in-depth information, you can always introduce it in your Facebook post and then link it to your company website so that people who are really interested can dive all the way in.)
6. Use high-quality photography. You know the old saying: One picture is worth 1,000 words. Never was this more true than in the age of Facebook. People are

a bit like magpies; the shiny, pretty image catches their attention. As a rule of thumb, I recommend that you never post an image with a minimum dpi (dots per inch) lower than 600 on at least one dimension ... and 900 or more is even better. (For example, if you check a photo's properties and its size is 600 x 245 dpi, that's okay, because at least one dimension is a minimum of 600.) By the way, most smartphones take photos with more-than-sufficient dpi.

7. Respond promptly. If someone sends a message to your business page, they will be left with a negative impression if they don't receive a reply within a few hours. Treat your Facebook messages the same way you would treat a voicemail or email and respond as soon as possible.

8. Remove or "hide" negative or controversial content immediately. If someone puts a post or a comment on your page that is inappropriate in any way, you need to hide it from view immediately. Enough said.

9. Make certain your page content is professional. We've talked about the importance of posting high-quality photos, but high-quality writing is equally important. Your business' image will suffer if your posts contain misspelled words, bad grammar, or incorrect punctuation. Your designated Facebook administrator needs to be someone with a strong understanding of this.

10. Check out what your competitors are doing on their pages. You can use the Facebook search tool to type in the names of other companies. If they have a business page, it'll turn up in the search, and you can visit it to see what they're posting. Doing this will give you a good sense of what you're up against ... and it just may inspire some ideas for posts you can use. (I am not suggesting that you plagiarize; I am just pointing out that you might see another business' post and think, "Oh, we had a similar situation in our company, and we can probably make a post out of it.")

Are you ready to jump in and take advantage of one of the greatest marketing tools of our time?

Diana Clark began providing a broad range of marketing consulting services to the construction industry in 1980. She is now semi-retired and specializes in administering Facebook pages for small businesses. She says she "Likes" this new phase of her career. You can reach her at dianawclark@cox.net.