

Creating Fun Facebook Fan Pages That Work: *Best Practices for Small-to-Medium-Sized Businesses*

Kathy Klotz-Guest MA, MBA, MLA

Marketing Strategist, Storyteller and Innovator

Founder, Stand Out Strategy and Powerfully Funny

Why Use it for Business?

Facebook currently has over 350 million users (as of year-end 2009 according to Techcrunchies.com) and is the fastest growing social networking site today. According to Clara Shih, author of *The Facebook Era*, there are approximately 800,000 small business owners (Feb 2010) now leveraging Facebook for business. That number is rapidly growing.

Facebook allows users to set up personal pages and fan pages for their business. As of now, you must first have a personal page before you can set up a fan page for your business.

Fan pages are high-impact, relatively low-cost (it's free to set-up but takes time to nurture) ways for businesses to reach and interact with their "fans" – customers, friends, vendors, etc.

Facebook is about *connecting* with people and building relationships through trust, discussion, engagement and interactions. It's not about selling. Social media is about conversation and trust takes time to build. Still, if done consistently over time, Facebook is a great way to reach current and future fans of your business. Moreover, your content is indexed by most search engines including Google, allowing you to be found within and outside of Facebook. And, unlike your personal Facebook account, you are able to have an unlimited number of business page "fans." Being actively engaged with your "fans" can increase your online visibility.

There are lots of things you can do with your fan page and this document is about sharing those evolving best practices.

Before You Set Up Your Page

Before you set up that fan page, you must first have a personal page. You should also do your homework and that includes the following:

1. **Fan a few small business pages first.** Take the time and research what's out there and see what works. See what you like and why you like it. Here are some great examples of fan pages for different reasons:
 - ✓ For great video use, check out the Pringles page.
 - ✓ For great user participation, check out Coke. Sure it's a big brand, but it knows how to engage and keep the conversation going. This page also uses photos and photo albums incredibly well.

- ✓ Check out businesses that are of similar size to yours. A smaller brand that I like is Jones Soda – it’s a great example of applications-usage, engagement and fun.

There are so many applications that make Facebook a rich and engaging way to connect. Over time, you will want to use some of these. Think through the user experience *before* you crazy with applications. What do you want your users to be able to do at your fan page? For example, today there are applications that enable fans to take polls, participate in contests, post their own content, and interact with each other.

2. **Start small and plan.** Have a goal and know what you want to accomplish. Once you have your objective, you can figure out what tools will get you there. It’s easy to waste lots of time with little to show for it; so evaluate your goals first. Are you trying to:

- ✓ Build fans quickly
- ✓ Build brand awareness
- ✓ Experiment a bit
- ✓ Provide customer support
- ✓ Conduct market research (which can include all the above)

You also need to plan how and when you will flesh out your fan page. You should consider the following:

- ✓ What types of content will you post?
- ✓ How often will you post – you must be consistent and fairly frequent
- ✓ How will you communicate – what “story” will you tell?

Be realistic about how you will measure success. Sure, everyone wants to generate leads, but this likely won’t happen quickly because you first need to establish credibility and trust. If you are serious about customer service as your primary goal, however, then creating a Facebook presence makes sense and can yield great results.

Understand your audience and their demographics. Quantcast offers a breakdown of Facebook users. Visit <http://www.quantcast.com/facebook.com> to get more information.

Setting Up Your Page

1. **Figure out what settings you need.** You can have a wall, for example, just like you do with your personal account. What about video and photo albums? This is why figuring out what you want fans to do at your page is critical to planning.
2. **Consider your privacy settings for all your groups.** Consider, for example, how much of your personal life (and your very colorful friends' lives) from your personal page do you want your business fans to see? You might want different settings on your business page than you have on your personal page.
3. Visit <http://www.facebook.com/advertising/?pages> to set-up your page. Facebook offers mini-tutorials on the mechanics of setting up your page.
4. **Get your own business address** such as www.facebook.com/Starbucks, for example.
5. **Be sure to connect back to your other marketing efforts.** Facebook pages can link to your company's Web site and blog, or to e-commerce sites. Make sure you connect your fan page to your other efforts to ensure that all your hard work to promote your page pays off.

Content Considerations

1. **Give thought to your brand voice.** It's more than OK to have a personality – you are conversing and engaging your fan base. Decide what your tone will be. The most important thing is that you are authentic, open, transparent, honest and engaging. Authentic doesn't mean sloppy; it means friendly and casual. You should have FUN here. It's social media for Pete's sake. Be social!
2. **Tell A Story.** Ultimately, your fan page should tell the story of who your company is, what you stand for and how you help customers. That meta-narrative is comprised of real stories. Take the time to be personal and tell those stories on your fan page – the honest, real and even tough ones. Ask your fans to tell their stories of what your brand means to them. One-way brand discussions are a no-no; your fan base will determine through their interactions what parts of your brand are relevant to them. You want that.

3. **Dare to Go “Off-Brand.”** Your fan page is not a mini website. It’s about how your brand is relevant to your users (point 2 above). It’s not really about you. It’s OK to converse without sounding like the PR department. Still, you are representing the company and casual doesn’t mean inappropriate.
4. **Don’t sell.** If you start “selling” and spamming your fan base, you will see a mass exodus. That’s not to suggest you can’t ask for feedback and ideas on what products or services people need. Cleencups LLC, for example, has a fan page set up to operate as an online focus group. Your fans care about you and will be honest. Social media is about building relationships and trust and that takes time. This is NOT an online classifieds section. So don’t “hard” sell, or people will shout get OUTTA MY FACEBOOK and you’ll have figured out how to turn you audience into anti-social media proponents very quickly!
5. **It’s supposed to be Fun.** Social media is all about connecting with your customer and should be FUN. Weinberger et al, authors of *Cluetrain Manifesto*, had it right. Time for corporate communications to lighten up a bit. This is not the place for PR spin and jargon. Don’t do it. Shmaltz Brewing Company is a great example of fun and levity.
6. **Off the Wall: Where will users be able to connect?** Some strategists suggest that allowing your most engaging users to come to a private area other than your public wall is a good idea. However, consider that part of the attraction for new users is what current enthusiast fans are saying. If you separate those comment streams, you risk losing part of the engagement which is the authentic and transparent conversation. Some experts also recommend that new users land in a more controlled environment other than the public wall. I disagree; again, separating user streams looks like a company trying to control the message – and that is exactly what social media isn’t about! You want people seeing what your rabid fans are saying and doing.
7. **Engage consistently and with enough frequency.** Engage with your base often by posting new content and asking for their reactions. Make it a place where compelling conversation happen among a strong community of fans that share similar experiences. Allow them to tell their own stories. Let them post content. A great way to do this is with contests, or asking for feedback. Jones Soda does a fantastic job with this. Where there is a lack of engagement, there is trouble. Make sure you engage with users with interesting content and allow and encourage them to engage with each other. Other great ways to engage include:

- ✓ Giveaways
- ✓ Contests
- ✓ Promotions for customers (Sears offered \$10 coupons for fans)
- ✓ Surveys and polls
- ✓ Video

Make sure you monitor your page stats to see what percent of users are engaging – what percent answered the survey or responded to a poll, for example. This is an important barometer for measuring participation and for understanding what you may need to change along the way. It's an evolutionary process.

- 8. Be creative with your photos.** Big companies have brand legacies to consider, including their corporate logos. So they tend to be conservative and have their logos as their main fan page photo. Smaller companies don't have to do this per se. Have some fun with your photos. Your logo doesn't have to be your main photo. The main thing to consider is the following: are we a fun brand? If yes, then ask how can we show that on our page? Take some creative latitude here. No need to be boring. More than just the main photo at the top of the fan page, use fun photos throughout the site. Create albums and allow users to create their own. Coca-Cola does a great job with this.
- 9. Listen to and Respond to Comments.** Treat all comments seriously. But, be aware that once you open for business, you may get the good, bad and ugly. Have a plan for how you will deal with/handle the serious and legitimate criticisms that may come. Repost users' comments. Don't separate fan comments from everything else. Make sure you respond to comments quickly and honestly. Be part of the conversation and don't edit what you don't like. That's the reality of social media.
- 10. Video.** If you are just starting out, you might stick to the basics. When you get the hang of it, you can branch out into video and other applications. For starters, if video is new to you, concentrate on nailing down your core personality. The rest can come later. One of my favorite applications allows people to record and post their own videos to a fan page so they can be part of the action!
- 11. Post interesting and relevant news and other discussion-worthy content.** You can use RSS feeds to do this as well.

12. Leverage applications, silly! Besides video, there are so many great free applications to embed in your page such as surveys and polls, for example. These applications facilitate content sharing and engagement, so use them. Visit the applications directory:
<http://www.facebook.com/apps/directory.php>

To date there are tens of thousands of applications and most of them can be directly integrated into a fan page quickly and easily. Some applications can also be customized.

13. Events. Facebook allows you to schedule virtual and in-person events such as podcasts, text chats, parties, fan get-togethers, etc. This is another great way to encourage a community to participate around a similar event and to get to know each other.

14. Customize Your Tabs. Facebook allows you to customize your tabs and create your own applications. Take advantage of this opportunity to build tabs relevant to your audience. This is especially important if you do ad campaigns to different audiences. You want each target audience to land on a page customized for them. Once you get a better handle on the needs and wants of your fans, experiment with different looks.

Frequency of Interaction and Managing Your Page

1. **There is no end-run to raking in customers here.** That's where lots of people get frustrated. They erroneously think – build it and they will come. Why would they if they don't KNOW you? Best practices point to a minimum of 3-4 posts per week; ideally no more than two per day. But consider the following:
 - ✓ If you are just getting started , experts suggest interacting multiple times per day
 - ✓ If you don't have time, hire an admin or intern to make sure the page is updated with enough frequency to be fresh
 - ✓ Make it compelling so that your fans are adding to the content and discussion as well – that keeps everything fresh and ensures you don't have to do it all

Promoting Your Fan Page

1. **Promote your page in an integrated way.** For example, promote your fan page in your email signature, on your website, and in your collateral. Make cross-promotion a part of everything you do in the normal course of marketing.
2. **Ask friends and family to join.** You need to gain momentum and friends and family can help you do that. Ask them to spread the word among their networks as well.
3. **Ask your fans to engage on the page.** If you're promoting your fan page and it is more deserted than a bar after 2AM close, would-be fans won't come back. Make sure your fan page is a lively, fun, engaging place for fans to interact.
4. **You can use Facebook ads.** Facebook allows you to promote your fan page with ads based on either pay-per-click or cost per thousand impressions (viewings) models.
5. **Go Mobile!** Activate your phone for Facebook mobile and enable users to receive updates via SMS (text messaging). Give them that mobile choice. There is also an iPhone application to make sure your fans can get your updates on their iPhones.
6. **We don't need no stinkin' badges, or do we?** Have your fans create fan badges showing their support for your page. Fans can create their badge and promote your page at the same time. Encourage them to have fun with it as well. To create badges, visit <http://www.facebook.com/facebook-widgets/fanbadges.php>.

Understand that your fan page will evolve over time as you learn more and see how your fans interact. Play, experiment and have fun. If you're not having fun, your fans won't either.

Do you have best practices tips for creating great fan pages? Let's hear 'em! Send your stories to Kathy@powerfullyfunny.com.

About

Kathy Klotz-Guest, MA, MBA, MLA, is a marketing strategist and storyteller with over 18 years' experience. Today she helps companies innovate great products and develop authentic "stand out" stories that connect with customers. By leading successful product development, marketing strategy, and communications efforts, Kathy helps companies increase revenues while decreasing marketing costs. With 20 years' experience in improvisation, she speaks and writes extensively on the fun-creativity-innovation connection. She has an MLA from Stanford University and an MBA from UC Berkeley. Kathy is also a founding fellow and CFO for the Society for the New Communications Research (snrc.org) new media think tank. Reach her at Kathy@powerfullyfunny.com or 408.578.8040.