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How to set up a Facebook presence for your organisation

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Five steps to creating a Facebook fan page and helping it thrive.

1 Set up your fan page

Register for a Facebook account

Create a page in an account unique to that page and add yourself as an admin. It's good practice to invite several other admins either via FB or e-mail so the organization doesn't lose access to the page if the only admin leaves!

Create the page

The process itself is pretty straightforward so you shouldn't have any problems going through it. You will be given the option to choose between an official page and a community page. Opt for the official page. Community pages are great for smaller scale interaction around a cause whereas official pages are ideal for organizations as you can interact with your supporters without having them connected to a personal account. Also with a fan page you're not forced to stick to Facebook's 5,000 friend cap, you can have as many fans as you can attract.

Click on "Brand, product or organization" and choose "Nonprofit" from the scroll down menu. Add a name to your page (the name of your organization) and click to certify that you are the official representative of the organization. Make sure you enter the name correctly as this cannot be changed once it's created.

Customise your page

Once your page is set up it is pretty straightforward to personalise it. Add your logo and make sure it is consistent with what your supporters see on your website. Fill in the Info section with a few important dates in your organisation's history and don't forget to include its mission and main aims. Keep the information short and sweet. Use the other tabs on top of the page to add Photos, Discussions, Notes etc.

Once you master these basics you can also get creative with FBML by setting up customized tabs for your newsletter, donations or latest campaign. (Maybe this can be covered in another How-to?:)

Recruit your supporters

2 Ask your friends to “like” the page (and encourage all the admins to do so with theirs) by clicking on “Suggest to Friends” in the left sidebar beneath your image. You can also use your website, newsletter, blog and e-mail updates to promote your page and create a core base of supporters. If your updates are engaging you will soon see that your supporters will do most of the recruiting for you.

3 Start interacting

Write engaging content

When you start to write in the “write something” box you have the option to add links, photos, videos. Use them as often as you can to make your updates more diverse. Introduce open-ended questions every now and then to increase your chances of interacting with your fans.

The key is to stay engaged and post quality content that is likely to incite and thus generate comments or be shared. Comments are of greater value than “likes” because they demand more investment from your supporters.

Build a community

Ask your supporters to post on your wall, too. You can’t be interesting unless you’re interested as well, which means listening to them and talking **to** and **with** them, rather than **at** them. Dumping a link to a campaign or event will rarely have any effect. You might have an audience for a little while but you won’t build a community.

Try to respond to user comments and wall posts in a timely fashion. You can never say “thank you” often enough for a supportive comment or gesture.

What's your style?

Decide on a tone and style and stick to it regardless of the admin who happens to be posting the updates. Being open, authentic, inviting, warm, and friendly will help you establish the right connection with your supporters. Don’t try to control the conversations, and don’t delete the odd negative comment. Look at it as an opportunity to start a dialogue and attract new supporters.

How often to post?

You should commit to posting one or two updates every day. Work out when your supporters are most often on FB by posting at different hours of the day. Gradually you’ll be able to identify those “traffic windows”.

4 Measure your success

Use Facebook Insights to measure how well you’re doing and what you can still do to improve. Insights will give you information on the number, gender, age group, geographical distribution of your fans as well as the number of total interactions, post feedback, active users etc.

5 And finally....

As you attract more and more supporters to your page always keep in mind that

there are two more steps to success with Facebook – getting those supporters to stay and getting them to DO something for you – recommend you to a friend or sponsor, volunteer for your organization, be your online activist or donor.

What is most important, though, is that they need to genuinely like your organisation which is why building that relationship takes time. It's all too easy for your supporters to "hide" your posts if they feel you're being too pushy with your message or your ask so make them care first.

Further information

- <http://www.facebook.com/nonprofits>