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Check Facebook, there are 833,145,160 people on the social networking site. In the United States alone that number is nearly 156 million.

**Will Scott** • Mar. 09, 2012



We're all on Facebook.

Professional and personal acquaintances are much more likely to friend you on Facebook than to “Like”, “Follow”, “Link” – or whatever the parlance of any other network. If you and your business aren't on Facebook, you're among the minority.

For the sake of background, let's look at the numbers. According to the website Check

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Facebook, right? Do you ever see any ads that are professionally relevant?

### **Step 1: Put your business on Facebook**

When you begin to create your page ([www.facebook.com/pages/create.php](http://www.facebook.com/pages/create.php)), select Local Business, allowing you to set an address for a local citation. After setting a profile picture and filling out your page's "About" section with relevant information, you can set the URL for your business page.

This simple process gives you a blank page for your business. After a brief tour, Facebook invites you to share your hard work. But wait! Without any content, the barren page is hardly "likeable."

A little work can go a long way to making your profile complete and worth connecting with. First, set a cover photo; this new capability came with the new Timeline feature ([www.searchinfluence.com/2012/02/facebook-timeline-for-pages](http://www.searchinfluence.com/2012/02/facebook-timeline-for-pages)) and allows you to create a striking appearance for your page. Keep in mind the guidelines for cover photos: limited text, no promotional copy, and design- rather than content-focused. Stand out from your competitors and put up a great photo of your staff, your building, or whatever immediately represents your practice.

### **Step 2: Add value by curating content for your target market**

For the first-time visitor to your Facebook page, the ability to immediately set yourself apart from your competitors is crucial. The first step is creating an engaging layout using the cover photo. But once that's done, two tactics can help provide value for your visitors.

The first is to use the "Milestone" to humanize your company. A business or practice with a long history can highlight famous clients, great work from decades past, or awards and recognition for longstanding achievement. For example, Coca-Cola's

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thought leader not just among your peers, but among potential clients. Providing Do-It-Yourself advice can also put your firm on the radar of those who may not follow those issues, and sharing breaking industry news keeps your competitors looking at your company's taillights.

### **Step 3: Become involved in your online community**

But posting links isn't enough. Just as Google has PageRank, which is a generalized ranking for your page in search results, Facebook has EdgeRank. This algorithm, simplified to Sumuwd (i.e. the sum of user affinity with your page, inherent "weight" of the type of post, and a decay based on time), puts the focus on user engagement with your posts. With more engagement, your posts will last longer and show in more people's Facebook News Feeds.

Commenting back on client or customer posts on your timeline, posting sharable content that is reactive to what's happening on your page, and providing a mouthpiece for your least vocal audience allows you to be seen by the most people possible. Encourage your current clients to "Like" your page, and then ENGAGE THEM! Nothing is worse than writing to a brick wall, so give back to the community that drives your page and the algorithm will thank you for your clients.

### **Step 4: Get some attention**

To garner this engagement, you have to go where your customers are. The first step is to add existing pages to your page's favorites, such as Mint.com, QuickBooks or other brands your clients may be familiar with), and are a great place to not only find information to share, but also interact with potential customers by commenting on posts as your Page or as yourself, directing traffic to your Page. But it doesn't stop there: finding Q&A sites, forums, and review sites can give you a wealth of opportunity for creating a true connection with potential clients and their friends.

Be sure to include links to your Facebook page and invite your users to continue the

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bring attention to your practice. Looking to expand your team? Try advertising to them on a platform that most users spend over 20 minutes a day on. In this economy, there are plenty of experienced professionals within your Facebook reach who are looking for a job. Broadening the reach of your firm is easy when you ensure that the people seeing your ads and posts are highly engaged with the niche your company serves.

### **Step 5: Convert that attention into leads (and clients)**

Finally, you have eyes on your page and fingers on keyboards – put them to good use! By using “custom tabs” ([www.searchinfluence.com/2011/07/lunch-learn-facebook-tabs-iframe](http://www.searchinfluence.com/2011/07/lunch-learn-facebook-tabs-iframe)), which haven't changed much from previous Facebook page layouts except by giving you more space to work with, lets you take those fingers and direct them to a lead-generation form or another way to actively build your business. While engagement on posts is key to a successful Facebook marketing strategy for Accountants or any other business, the goal is to turn those engagers into paying clients. Using custom tabs, the savvy business owner can drive qualified clients to his or her door, expanding the value of Facebook beyond Influence and towards a viable marketing platform.

Following these five steps, a tax and accounting professional can socially build upon their business, giving clients a new outlet, expand reach both for client acquisition and industry thought leadership, and creating a social home for the practice.

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*Will Scott is Founder and President of Search Influence ([www.SearchInfluence.com](http://www.SearchInfluence.com)), and has been helping small businesses get online since 1994, before most people even knew there was an Internet. Since then, he has been focused on making information more accessible online. In the classroom teaching technology to professionals or in the boardroom presenting*

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