

WHY YOU SHOULD HAVE A FACEBOOK PAGE AND HOW TO USE IT

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1. What can Facebook contribute to your committee, project or event?

Social media can be an effective and low cost way to reach and engage with your target audience. When planning an event or project, consider ways in which your promotions can be complemented by using social media, in particular Facebook.

The benefits of using Facebook include:

- Being able to invite a wide range of young people, or target specific friends
- Giving your audience easy access to important details, such as date, time, location, cost, etc
- The ability to send reminders and updates to keep your audience interested
- Allowing two way interaction, comments from your audience, tagging in photos, voting polls
- Posting online is often free or much cheaper than getting stuff printed and mailed out

The most effective way to promote is to go where your audience are. If you're targeting young people, they're on Facebook. If that's what they're using daily, you need to be using it too.

2. First things first: Create a Facebook page for your committee or organisation.

You can't use Facebook until you sign up for it, so if you haven't done that already GO DO IT NOW.

You might face resistance in trying to create a Facebook page.

It's worth noting that not all councils or organisations are allowed to have an official Facebook page. This usually comes from management or PR and is often due to lack of time or budget to maintain it, lack of knowledge around how it could be effectively managed (i.e. monitoring content), the lack of control around what users may do with content, and the threat of negative comments about your organisation or cyber-bullying other users.

As former Wyndham FReeZA member Keith Nallawalla wrote in an article for digital strategy consulting website socialmediaoverflow.com:

"If people are going to talk poorly about your company, they will do it regardless. By making a Facebook page for your company, any posts on there will be able to be addressed by you. If someone has a complaint about your company, you can reply to them asking for them to inbox you. You can resolve it privately. Chances are this person will change their mind and stop talking poorly of you on the internet. Another thing that can happen is that your other fans may notice this and defend you. This happens surprisingly often, when your fans stand up for you, the issue can resolve itself without you even having to step in. If anyone else happens to see the post, they will probably be impressed by the fan's loyalty.

It is also possible to delete comments / prevent users from posting on your wall if they are really going out of their way to harass your page."

The rest of that article is worth reading if you're having doubts or facing a lot of resistance from your organisation about creating a Facebook page. In most cases the benefits of having one outweigh what *might* happen.

The fact is, if your target audience are using Facebook to stay updated with news and events, then you should really be using it too.

Of course if for some reason you're still not allowed to create an official Facebook page for your organisation, make an unofficial FReeZA committee page or get a young person to make one on your behalf (they can also create events on your behalf). Lay some ground rules around keeping posts and comments respectful, such as having a disclaimer that "offensive comments will be deleted, bullying will not be tolerated" etc. You may need to moderate your Facebook comments from time to time.

For group pages you can add more than one person as an administrator. Once everyone is across the rules and guidelines, they can help maintain and moderate the page as well.

Once you've created your page...

..Fill in the important details about your committee or organisation including what you do (eg. band events, projects, skate comps, etc), who you target (eg. 12-25 year olds, all ages, etc), where you're located, and how people can contact you if they need. This is all fairly basic stuff and you should have this kind of online presence and information available anyway for when people are searching for you.

3. Build a community and keep them engaged.

The next step is to add friends to your Facebook page, or invite people to 'like' you. You can go through your own friends list and invite people to your FReeZA/committee/organisation page, and you can ask your administrators to do the same thing.

If you have event flyers, add your facebook address to them. At your event, put up signs inviting punters to find you and add you. Promoting future events will be much easier if your audience has liked or added you on Facebook, so encourage them to do so as much as possible.

Adding friends isn't the same as building community. People will lose interest pretty quickly if you fail to engage them, or spam them too much. You will have to use your judgement about what your audience wants and how often they want it. Try different things and gauge their reactions – Facebook allows two way communication, feedback, comments, and you can see your audience stats so use all of these things to your advantage.

You can use your Facebook page to post photos, videos, stories, links to other sites, and updates that will interest your audience. Ask them questions, encourage comments and interaction, tag people, and give them access to special incentives that will make them value being your 'friend' (see the Incentives section!).

Reach out to other Facebook pages who may share a similar target audience or purpose, and make your presence known through posting a link, photo, or comment. This is a great tool for networking as well.

You may find from time to time that your audience uses Facebook like email. If a young person has a question, they may post it to your wall or inbox you. Consider this as another valuable method of communication and customer support.

4. Band events

Perhaps you're thinking of planning a band event in the near future. Facebook is a great way to ask your audience what bands they might want to see, whether it be through a voting poll or through asking for suggestions. You can also invite bands to contact you through Facebook to register their interest in playing future shows.

Once you've got an event planned and you know the date, venue, and details, you're ready to start promoting it to your target audience.

The first thing to do is create an 'event page' that includes all the necessary information that your potential audience will need to know - What bands are playing, where it is, the date, starting and finishing times, ticket price, where to get tickets, and any age or entry restrictions that might apply (such as for drug, alcohol and smoke free events, no pass outs). Make it as easy as possible for your audience to get the information that they need, so make sure you've included all the important bits.

Chances are most people will read your event page quickly, so make sure the information is clearly presented and can be read at a glance. They may also be reading it on their smart phones. Don't hide details in long paragraphs, use dot points if you have lots to say, and keep your info relatively simple.

If you've got an event flyer, post it! Interesting or colourful flyers are a great way to catch the eye of young people, and add some credibility to your event or project.

Invite as many people as you can through facebook, and ask them to share the event amongst their friends. Use incentives such as cheaper entry to those who help to promote and share your news.

Follow up your initial event post by providing updates and regular posts about the upcoming event. This will help keep it in people's minds. Your updates may include second announcements of bands, a comment about what will be at the event, a friendly reminder, etc.

The bands on your line up should also be promoting your upcoming event. Ask them to make a few posts or to include it in the event section on their band page.

If you take photos at an event, tell your punters they will be posted online and invite them to tag themselves. When they do, their friends will see the photos too and you will be expanding your reach. Posting event photos is also a great way to encourage people to use your Facebook site even after the event has passed. You may even find people asking you when you will be posting the photos! Do it in a timely manner or you will lose their interest.

5. Using it to promote other types of events or projects.

Whatever you're working on, if you're looking for an audience to get involved or attend, then you should be utilising Facebook to do so. This applies to equally to non band events such as skate comps, festivals, art shows, competitions, surveys, youth programs, workshops, open mic nights, information evenings, etc. Even if you don't create an event page, post about it to get the information out to your friends.

You can also use your Facebook page to drive traffic to your website where people can get more information, register, or buy tickets.

Facebook can also be effectively used as a project platform.

Consider the example of the Hobson's Bay FReeZA group, who were holding an art competition. Although they invited people to visit the gallery to vote on art pieces, they also utilised their online community by taking photos of the artworks, posting them online, and asking people to vote through the site. This online presence was more effective in engaging their audience, and they were able to target people who would not have otherwise been able to get involved.

6. Be creative in attracting your audience and creating incentives.

Why should people like your Facebook page or add you as a friend? What value will you offer them to make it worth their while?!

Don't be afraid to get creative and think outside the box when it comes to making incentives for your audience or fans to get involved. If you have an event coming up, you could offer discounted or free entry to people who share your event page with at least 100 of their friends (get them to take a screen shot as proof!). Or you may hold a competition for the most creative photo taken with your flyer.

Perhaps one lucky person from your Facebook page will win free entry or a voucher or something cool for 'liking' your event. Maybe the first 20 people to RSVP to your event will have their name added to the door list for cheaper or free entry, or a free food item at your event.

Your audience will appreciate staying updated with news as well (not spam), so make them feel important by announcing your news to them.

The point is to be creative and interesting, and listen to what your audience want. As word of mouth is one of the best tools for marketing, social media should be complementing your existing promotional efforts.