How to set up and run your Facebook page

Print

Used well, social media can be a huge success and be of significant benefit not only to the local representative and the community they represent, but importantly enhance local democracy, civic and community engagement.

- Cllr David Harrington

Facebook is the most popular social network in the world, with over 1.8 billion active users.

At its heart, Facebook is a simple enough tool: people use it to connect with friends through regularly posting updates about what's happening in their world, chatting online, organising social events, and more.

But besides being a tool for closed friendship networks to connect, businesses, nonprofits and public figures can set up official Facebook pages to publicly share updates and connect with their audiences.

It's this particular feature of Facebook that can prove very useful for councillors as a tool for engagement and relationship-building with their ward.

Read on to learn about:

- key features and benefits of Facebook pages
- how to set up Facebook page
- top tips on promoting and managing your Facebook page

Key features and benefits of Facebook pages

Getting started on social media can be daunting but it is well worth the investment in time in getting to understand it. My advice is to start off by joining Facebook and creating a page for a public figure.

- Cllr Paul Deach

- maintain and manage regular communication and discussions with your ward
- become more accountable and visible to the communities you support, offering a greater range of options for people to reach out to you
- network, build new relationships and strengthen existing ones within your community.

Compared to a Twitter profile, a Facebook page is more of a self-contained space with multi-dimensional features, which makes it feel a bit more like a "mini website". At the heart of a Facebook page, just like a personal Facebook profile, is the timeline — a virtual notice board where you post updates, which your followers can respond to and engage with.

But Facebook pages can do a few other things too. For example, some wider features of Facebook pages include:

Calls-to-action (CTA) buttons: Page owners can promote particular objectives by including a CTA on the cover photo section of their page. Page admins are prompted with a selection of default CTA options such as "Sign Up," "Book Now," or "Contact Us". As a councillor, this could be an effective way to promote upcoming events or take bookings for virtual surgery events.

Event apps: This can be particularly useful for any councillors wishing to drive interest in an event they are hosting in the community. Admins can add the event app to their page by visiting the "Apps" tab under the "Settings" menu. From there, the admin should select the "Add App" CTA next to the event app option. Once added to the page, admins can create an event by filling out an event form, which includes details like event name, location, date, category, ticket URL and audience targeting options.

Pinned posts: Any posts that are particularly important to you or your ward, can be 'pinned' to the top of your timeline for up to seven days. A very useful feature if there are particular events or public announcements that you wish to promote as a priority over the course of a few days.

How to get started with a Facebook page

If you already have a Facebook user profile, the basics of setting up a Facebook page dedicated to your role as a councillor are quite easy:

Step 1: go to facebook.com/pages/create.

Step 2: click to choose a page category.

Step 3: select a more specific category from the dropdown menu and fill out the required information.

Step 4: click 'Get Started' and follow the on-screen instructions.

Step 5: post content, stick with it, and promote your profile — make sure you regularly mention that you can be found on Facebook and share your page link at meetings, events, and on your website, blog, and any wider online channels.

To get your page looking as good as it can, remember to take care of your:

Cover and profile photo: Be sure to use high-quality, professional looking images that reflect your personality and values.

About section: Make sure you complete all the relevant fields, including full details on how to get in touch with you and an engaging summary of who you are, what you stand for, and how you can help.

Messages: Like Twitter, Facebook also has a private messaging feature. Think of this as an extension of email management — members of your ward may send messages to your inbox regarding important issues, so it's important to keep on top of incoming communication here and provide prompt responses.

Top tips on getting the most from your Facebook page

Regularly post your activities to your page and make sure you don't ignore any comments that appear from your residents. You would not ignore them if they came up to you at a public meeting and started talking to you. It's good to challenge or correct inaccurate information posted by members of the community, but always be polite and remember social Media is for life not just at election time.

- Cllr Paul Deach

Make a plan and schedule

Having a presence on social media is an ongoing commitment — you get out what you put in. If you're serious about building a thriving community via a Facebook page, it's important to regularly share a diverse mix of content — from updates on surgeries and events you're attending, to relevant news updates and positions on topical issues, to invitations for feedback and opinions from followers.

Visual content is particularly popular on Facebook and if you use Twitter, remember that you can elaborate on points a little more (no 140-character limits), though it's still worth trying to keep your communication succinct and snappy. Also, whereas many organisations tweet multiple times a day, Facebook pages typically share content a little less frequently — around once a day is normally a good level — so as to avoid spamming people's news feeds too much.

Facebook pages have their own scheduling feature, which can help you to stay on top of your planning and management. And there are also dedicated third-party tools out there such as Hootsuite and Buffer that can do similar. However, whilst these tools are handy for more static info and messages, remember to actually supplement them with real-time engagement and responses to followers — people will be able to tell if your Facebook page is solely 'the work of a robot'.

Be professional yet authentic

It's obviously important for you to strike the right tone of voice in your Facebook page content. Share relevant, appropriate and authoritative content that's going to put your public image in a good light and build your reputation as a trustworthy community figure.

However, at the same time, people expect public figures to be more 'real' and relatable in their style of communication online. Don't be scared of talking in a more conversational and informal tone of voice on Facebook, or even lightening the mood with a touch of humour, when the appropriate opportunities arise.

Set the rules and moderate appropriately

Hopefully, social media brings about more positives than negatives for both you and your followers. However, we all know that using channels such as Facebook also leaves us more vulnerable to being on the receiving end of negative or inappropriate contributions.

For this reason, it's important to firm up a social media moderation policy that outlines what is and isn't acceptable behaviour amongst followers and enforces those rules appropriately. Facebook has some good features built-in to help with this. Under your page "Settings" menu, you'll find "Page Moderation" and "Profanity Filter" options. The "Page Moderation" option enables admins to block specific words from appearing on their page, both from within page posts and comments in response to posts. And the "Profanity Filter" option enables admins to block offensive content.

For further guidance on managing inappropriate behaviour and comments, see our guide on cyberbullying.

Useful links and wider reading

- Visit the Facebook Help Center pages
- Guide to cyber bullying

Next steps

A guide to cyberbullying

A guide to internet security

How to build and manage your Twitter following

How to signpost residents to digital skills support

How to run a virtual surgery

How to create a page in Facebook

Create an event on Facebook

Using Chat or Messenger on Facebook

How to build and manage your Twitter following

Remote Digital Championing!

Guides covering some tips and techniques for providing remote support to learners, an increasingly important service in times of social isolation.

Find out more

Free how-to guides for your website

Why not add our award-winning and extensive range of digital skills guides to your website?

Find out more

Start a Digital Champion movement!

Could your workplace do with developing its digital skills? With funded membership opportunities currently available, now is the perfect time for organisations to join our Digital Champions Network.

Find out more

Subscribe to our newsletter

Join our mailing list to receive the latest news, offers and expert insights from our team.

First name

Last name

Email address

Submit