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*A Full Service Public Relations, Public Affairs
and Crisis Communications Agency*

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TO: Interested Parties

FR: The team at FCP

RE: Facebook – Using the KISS principle for effective Facebooking – Keep it Smart & Strategic (and Simple)

Summary / In a Nutshell

Facebook, the king of social networking sites, can be an ideal platform for advocacy organizations to share information with and receive feedback from supporters. Facebook's success is embodied in its front-end simplicity. After years of redesign and reconfiguration, Facebook has developed one of the most successful platforms for sharing photos, hosting discussions, and even advertising and promoting events and campaigns. But even more, as a social networking site, Facebook offers organizations a multitude of features aimed at helping to build a constituency.

Two of the most successful (and popular) of these are “Fan Pages” and Groups.” Both offer users a multitude of ways to disseminate their messages and issues to like-minded people, but from a tactical point of view, there are key differences that should be pointed out. Below is an in-depth examination and comparison of the “pros and cons” of Facebook Fan Pages and Groups, as well as some of the key highlights that we believe will make the most strategic sense for assisting non-profits and advocacy organizations in developing social-networking as a critical component of any successful communications strategy.

Fan Page or Groups?

We suggest that advocacy organizations start by creating, maintaining and improving a **Facebook fan page**. If your target audience is comprised of relatively new or unsophisticated Facebook users, Fan pages are easier to navigate than groups and keep Facebook users regularly updated and involved.

Keep in mind fan page capabilities for gaining new supporters are limited (unless you purchase ad space from Facebook). Facebook users choose to become Fans of pages that they think will increase their social capital. A supporter of your organization might not choose to advertise it on Facebook, and another user might become a Fan to show off their political leanings but never get involved beyond that.

How to use fan pages most effectively

- **Keep it simple AND strategic**

- Be careful about the name you choose for your page, since it cannot be changed
 - A short title is best: “John’s Lemonade Stand” works better than “John’s Lemonade Stand—Refreshing Taste at Low Prices, All Year Round!”
- Include all relevant information about your organization—brief description, contact information, etc.—but for longer descriptions and bios, refer users to your Web site
- Your name – and everything on the page – should flow naturally from your organization’s goals and communications strategies. Remember, this is just one outlet of many you will be using.

- **Add relevant applications**

One of the features that have made Facebook a monumental success is its vast library of applications. Strictly speaking, applications are built-in software tools that enable users to better perform and integrate the multitude of tasks available on the Facebook platform. Below is a list of some of the most useful and effective software applications available through Facebook, and an overview of what they can do for you.

- [Causes](#)
 - Allows users to create a “Cause” and invite friends to join the Cause and donate money
 - Even if users do not donate money through Facebook (most won’t), Causes offer another way to raise awareness of campaigns
 - Groups should create Causes for specific campaigns and movements as opposed to a general Cause for an issue, which may not be as successful in gaining momentum
- [Lexicon](#)
 - Allows users to search a key word or phrase and see graphs and data on its prevalence on Facebook walls and the demographics of its users
 - Useful for groups to gain understanding of which Facebook users are discussing specific issues and how to target them directly
- [SlideShare](#)
 - Allows users to upload presentations to share with Facebook fans
 - Useful for sharing research or presentations from events
- **Only send out IMPORTANT Notes**
 - Your fans are notified every time your fan page writes a Note. Therefore, use these judiciously so fans don’t choose to opt out from receiving your notifications
 - Only use Notes to publicize events or campaigns that users can participate in
 - When you do publish a note, don’t just copy and paste a press release—instead, write a one-paragraph summary of the release and then provide a link to see the rest
 - For interesting articles or resources, use the Links application instead (see the Health Care for America Now fan page for an example of this)
- **Use the “status” to open up discussion or ask for input**
 - When you update your status, it shows up on each of your fan’s home pages and prompts them to either “Like” your status or “Comment” on it

- Suggestions:
 - “We are looking for photos and videos from past events—if you have any, please share!”
 - “How will you be affected by budget cuts in California? Share your stories on our wall!”
 - “Which health care reform ideas matter to you most?”
- Update your status frequently (every other day) but not more than once a day
- **Treat Facebook users with respect**
 - Don’t overuse capital letters or exclamation points—it comes across as condescending
 - Never use shortcuts like “LOL”
 - Don’t spam fans’ home pages with links—only share things that are interesting AND have the potential to be interactive

Fan pages vs. group pages

Fan pages are better for maintaining long-term contact with fans, raising awareness of your organization and soliciting feedback and involvement.

Fan pages:

- **Functions:**
 - Looks like a personal profile page but represents a group or organization
- **Capabilities:**
 - Fan pages can register a free, easy-to-remember URL
 - Fan pages are visible to non-Facebook users—increases traffic from search engines
 - Fan page “wall” and discussion board lets users communicate with you and other fans
 - Administrator can post photos and fans can post “fan photos”
- **Strengths:**
 - Users will be more constantly reminded of your page’s presence
 - Updates appear on user’s home page
 - When a user becomes a fan of a page, it is posted on their friends’ home pages
 - User receives “notifications” about updates
 - Users don’t have to do any work to stay informed about your organization
 - Fan pages can add extra applications for further personalization
 - “Insights Tool” reports data on demographic breakdown of fans/engagement levels
 - Can use Facebook ads to promote your page to target audiences
- **Weaknesses:**
 - The “wall” tab will make it immediately obvious if the page is not regularly updated
 - Users can choose to opt out of receiving further notifications
 - Too many updates can cause users to remove you from their fan pages

Group pages:

- **Functions:**

- Gathering place for users to meet likeminded users and start discussions
- **Capabilities:**
 - Like fan page, has both a “wall” and discussion board
- **Strengths:**
 - Easy to invite all group members to an event
 - Easier to invite many friends at once to join groups (fan pages have limits on number of users you can invite to become fans at one time)
 - Facebook users rarely leave groups once they join them
 - Group administrators can send mass messages to all group members
- **Weaknesses:**
 - Group members are not notified of updates to the group
 - Members have to remember to check on the group in order to stay involved
 - The user that founded the group is openly identified, unlike on a fan page

Five Examples of Successful Non-Profit Fan Pages:

- [Non-Profit Organizations Fan Page](#)
- [The Humane Society of the United States](#)
- [350.org Fan Page](#)
- [Defenders of Wildlife Fan Page](#)
- [Earthjustice Fan Page](#)

The above pages represent a model for how small, midsize and large non-profit groups can effectively (and strategically) make use of Facebook Fan Pages to communicate with and reach supporters. Notice how they don’t bombard their Fans with every minute detail, but instead focus on disseminating useful, interesting and interactive updates that help engage, not annoy, their thousands of fans.

Links & Resources

- [Mashable: Five Killer Facebook Fan Pages](#)
- [Mashable: Five Elements to a Successful Facebook Fan Page](#)
- [Radical Trust: Best Practices for Facebook Fan Pages: User Types](#)
- [Social Media Today: The Best Kept Secret of Facebook Fan Pages](#)

Conclusion

Based on the information above, there are clear-cut advantages to utilizing Fan Pages over Groups. For starters, Facebook Fan Pages offer more quality methods of communicating with your Fans, for example the “Notes” tool. Likewise, non-profit and advocacy organizations who want the ability to communicate updates and alerts more directly with their supporters, will find Fan Pages more effective than Groups.

In closing, the key to making any Facebook strategy a communications success is to utilize the tool (or any other social networking platform) in a way that’s congruent to your organizations’ overall objectives and needs. As tempting as it may be to jump on the social-networking bandwagon, Facebook, like all other channels of communications, requires that blend of strategy and creativity to help make the most of its features and applications. Remembering to “Keep it Simple and Strategic” is the first step towards moving your organization