

SKILLS | RELATIONSHIP

What's Different When Using Social Media for Your Business?

Be sure to respect the differences between using social media for personal use, and social media for business, in order to build a thriving and profitable business.

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When you join a direct selling organization, there are a lot of things that you need to learn in order to be successful. Obviously, your upline and your company are the best source of information, as you learn the systems that have been proven to help you succeed.

And if you've used social media before, it can be very tempting to just log on and shout about your business to all your friends. After all, you're being told to tell everyone you know about your products and opportunity. Why not tap into a super-convenient source, and tell everyone at once?

But that is NOT the best use of your social networks, if you hope that they will help you with your business. It pays to invest some time in the skills that lead to successful business use of social media – which is different from personal use – in order to enjoy the maximum impact that social media can bring to your business.

So what's the difference between social media for personal use, and social media for business?

The most important thing to understand is that, when you choose to use social media to promote your business, it's no longer just about you.

Let's begin with social media for personal use. When people use social networks for their own personal use, they primarily connect with family and friends. Their profile is "pretty much" private. (We could get into a whole discussion about what's actually private in social media, but that's a discussion for another day. Suffice to say, the only people that really *care* about what you're posting are your family and friends.) And because of that, you can pretty much say and share anything that is generally accepted within your circle, because you all understand one another. You agree on a lot of things, and forgive each other when you don't, because you love each other.

Now let's take a look at how this is different from using social media for your business. When using your profiles for business, in addition to connecting with family and friends, you'll be using social media to continue relationships with your customers, as well as to find new prospects for your business. This means that you really need to consider your profile public, because information that you share may go a lot further than you anticipate.

Now does this mean you shouldn't share ANY personal information? No!

Personal information that we share helps people connect with us, and begins the relationship-building process.

But we do need to be careful about what we share, and draw a line between what we consider *personal*, and what is *private*. Personal information is what we choose to share that reveals more about ourselves, in order to build relationships. It's the information that helps people come to know, like, and trust us, so that they are more willing to do business with us.

Private information is that information that we are not comfortable with the whole world knowing. For my own business, for example, I share pictures of my kids, which is personal and helps other parents relate to me, but I do not share their names or ages, which is information that I consider to be private.

Yes, social networks like Facebook do have privacy settings, yet I don't consider them to be entirely reliable. You could make a mistake, or the social network could make a change. Why risk having information get out to your prospects that you don't want them to know? Your best bet is to share only that information that you are comfortable having the whole world see.

The best privacy setting is this: if you don't want someone to know something, don't post it to your social networks!

The fact of the matter is, as a network marketer, you need people to know about you and your business. You don't want to hide your business under a rock. You *are* your business...it's you personally that people need to connect with.

It's the relationships they build with you that cause them to want to do business with you. This means that you must be willing to share some of yourself through your social networks, in order to build the relationships that lead to new business.

What this also means is that you need to think about what is generally accepted by the new people you'll meet through your business, because you'll want to be sure you don't offend them! When you move outside your general circle of friends and family, you're going to find people that have strong opinions that may be very different from your own. So it's a good idea to avoid hot-button issues that generate controversy... particularly about politics and religion.

Here's an example: There was recently a Facebook Page that was being shared that expressed a certain political opinion. Some people thought it was really funny, and had no qualms about hitting the "Like" button.

However others found the Page deeply offensive, to the point of reporting it to Facebook. Those that “liked” the page were taken aback. They had no idea anyone would take it so seriously. It was intended as a joke.

There were people who chose to disassociate themselves with people that liked that page, because they felt so strongly about it. This was a missed opportunity for those distributors.

It's also important to recognize that it's not about just you anymore. Everything you say online can reflect on every distributor within your company.

Because of this, when you use social media for business, you want to carefully consider what you post, and how it could be perceived.

You see, when you post things that others might find offensive, it could be seen by the prospects your colleagues are working with as well. Imagine if a fellow distributor had been working with a prospect for 3 months, and they were *this close* to joining your company. Then they see something you posted which they take offense to. They decide not to join because they think that everyone in the company must feel that way, and they won't fit in. How would you feel if someone did that to you? You'd be pretty unhappy, wouldn't you? So don't do it to anyone else, either.

Social media tools can have a powerful impact on your business. They can help you find new prospects, and build the relationships that lead to success. But it's important to remember, when you begin using these tools to promote your business, that what you say reflects on the *entire* business, and not just you. Be sure to respect the differences between using social media for personal use, and social media for business, in order to build a thriving and profitable business.



Jennifer Fong is a speaker, consultant, and trainer, who teaches direct selling companies and individual direct sellers how to use social media effectively as a business building tool. A former direct sales company CEO, Jennifer built her company from the ground up, and understands what it takes to build, lead, and train a team, as well as the 3 major principles of any direct sales party plan business: book, sell, and recruit.

A champion of social networking and social media marketing in the direct sales industry, Jennifer is passionate about teaching direct sellers how to use social media tools to enhance their businesses, while remaining true to the basics of a party plan business.

She provides consulting services to direct sales companies, helping them skip the learning curve and achieve immediate success through a comprehensive social media strategy.

She also coaches and trains individual direct sellers, and other business owners, on how to put the principles of social media to work in a profitable way, maximizing the return on their social media investment.