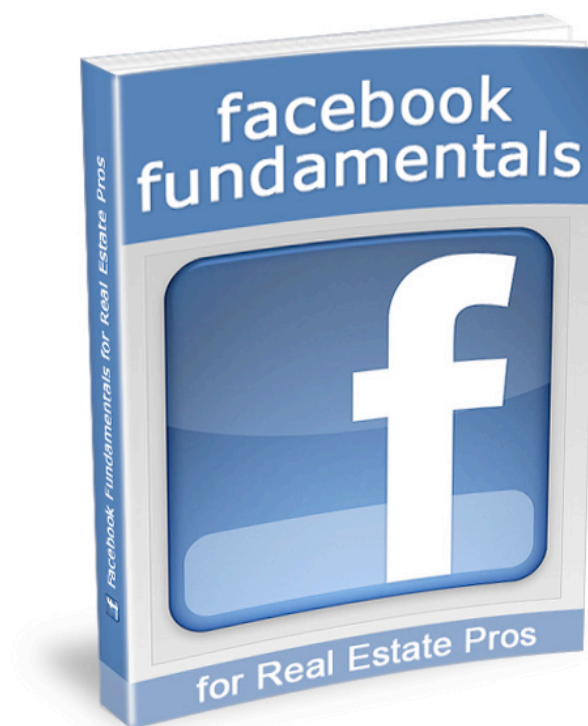


Facebook Fundamentals for Real Estate Pros

A practical guide to the fundamentals you need to know in order to build your real estate social network.

Provided by:

Scott Levitt
President of Oakley Signs & Graphics
www.oakleysign.com



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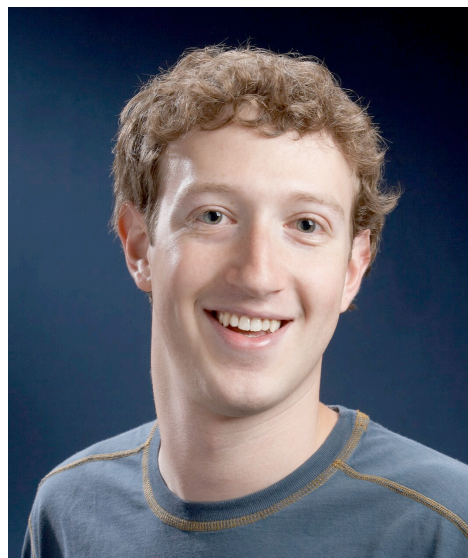
Facebook Fundamentals For Real Estate Pros

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What is Facebook?

Facebook is a social network started by Mark Zuckerberg several years ago, and it has bloomed from a small college-only network into a vast marketing resource used by everyone from a college kid to a small business owner. If you're just starting out on Facebook, this guide will help you understand where to start and where Facebook can take you.



Mark Zuckerberg
Facebook Founder

First off, we'll talk about the ways in which the general public uses Facebook, ways both efficient and frustrating.

Next we'll look at ways in which small business owners are using it, and then, we'll focus in on real estate agents and the ways in which they're using it.

Lastly, we'll offer some useful tips and how-tos about privacy on Facebook.

What's So Great About Facebook?

Facebook is so hugely popular because it can be whatever you make of it.
It's extremely versatile, and very easy to use.

- It's an ideal way to track down or keep in touch with friends and family members' whereabouts;
- a great way to network; to make new friends based on common interests;
- it can even be a great way to market yourself or your company!

Here are a few pointers on how to get the most out of it:

Your profile is like personalizing your desk at work; you only display what you want to show, and you can control what people see. You can share your vacation photos, your kids' artwork, announce to several loved ones at one time that you've just gotten engaged, or the title of the book that you're currently tearing through. Just be sure to remember that it's public – don't put anything up that you wouldn't do on your desk at work.

Search for old friends, schoolmates, or colleagues. It's surprising how many people you'll find. We've all been contacted by a former colleague or school mate who emailed us, then we emailed back, then it died off. But with Facebook, you can still be connected to people without the time commitment of having to keep up a correspondence via email letters sent back and forth.

Look for business opportunities and contacts based on common fields and shared interests. Facebook can be a great way to also meet others who work in related fields, i.e. freelance artists who've done children's books when

you yourself have recently completed writing your first children's book and are looking for an artist.

Add friends mindfully. As with most things, *quality* trumps *quantity* every time. The quality of your Facebook interactions depends of course on the quality of the friends you've added. So consider putting a limited profile up for folks you're still undecided about, then opening up a full profile to those you've actively chosen, or added.

Add apps selectively. Apps are small programs you can run on your profile to extend its functionality. Ask yourself the simple question, "What do I want to achieve with this?" Then choose your apps accordingly. There are thousands of apps to add to your Facebook profile – don't add an app that focuses on how to meet your soul mate, for example, if your primary objective with Facebook is to use it as a professional tool. Read all app descriptions before you add one – know precisely what you're getting.

Remember: think of your apps like you think of your profile. First, there are the apps that will appear on your Facebook homepage. But secondly, there are those apps that will appear on your profile. You can also add applications that don't appear on your profile at all!

Curtail the news feeds. You don't need to know the minute your girlfriend has added the photos from her camping trip in Colorado, but you do want to see them. When you've got a minute. You would like to know the minute the same friend makes a new acquaintance that used to work with you... you're looking for a new job, and the former colleague might be able to help with that. You can go to your Facebook homepage and push the "preferences button." Use the sliders there to tell Facebook the kind of information you want to receive in your news feed, so you're not constantly being barraged by useless updates.

Ask questions. You can get the “My Questions” app, and dip into the vast well of common knowledge. Whether you have a specific question that requires a certain expertise or experience – i.e., *Does anyone know of a Bay Area house painter who doesn’t cost a fortune but still does quality work?* – or a more general question – i.e., *My in-laws are coming to visit, and they don’t eat anything! Where can we take them?* – you can tap into your network and see if they can help.

Lastly, a word to the wise: limit your time on Facebook. It’s very, very easy to lose track of work, or with friends and family actually there with you. If you’re a disciplined person, set time limits; if you’re less disciplined than you’d like to be, consider using an app like “Facebook toolbar for Firefox,” which notifies you when you have *a reason* to go to the Facebook home page.

Facebook for the Small Business Owner

Facebook can be an intrinsic part of running and growing a small business.

Clara Shih, author of "[The Facebook Era](#)," says:

“You need to be where your customers are and your prospective customers are. And with 300 million people on Facebook and still growing, that’s increasingly where your audience is for a lot of products and services.”

1. Facebook Pages are the best place for most businesses start. Bear in mind, there are two types of Pages – Group Pages and Fan Pages.

Group Pages: The Group Pages are like joining a club. Setting up a Facebook Group even requires that you appoint officers for that group, just like any organization would. Invitations are sent to others to join that group via e-mail blasts. A group page is great for organizing people around a cause.

Fan Pages: Fan Pages are more suited for companies and brands. They allow a business to collect “fans” the same way that celebrities and famous athletes do. A business can easily claim a vanity URL that reflects its name, as in www.Facebook.com/SkinStore. Facebook Pages can link directly to the company’s own website or to direct sales e-commerce sites like Amazon or SkinStore.

Clara Shih has some key advice. She recommends that **before they begin, small business newcomers ask themselves what their objective is**. Is it to build awareness? Is it to grow its’ customer base? She advises small

businesses to start small, and do things to help meet your objectives, and to be careful of wasting precious time.

Start by asking family and friends to become “fans” of your business’ page, to start with a decent presence, and then advertise and promote to grow your fan base. Remember that Facebook is a great word of mouth vehicle, as the average member has 130 friends – one person who becomes a fan of Mary’s Cupcakes can lead her two sisters to then make a visit to Mary’s Cupcakes, then they become fans, and then one of their husbands drops by to indulge his sweet tooth, he loves his cupcake and he tells his co-worker (who is planning the firm’s summer picnic this year) that he’s just found the perfect place to get dessert, the employee in turn places a huge order for the picnic... and so it goes. Take advantage of Facebook’s unique viral aspect.

Also, be sure to make your page reflect your business. Think of a Fan Page as your business’ own Profile, so add photos, comments and testimonials, whatever will help prospective customers get to know you and your business. People do business with people they know and like. Be sure to not lose the “you” on your Page just because it’s a business Page. You want to strike up a constant conversation with your customers and prospects.

2. Marketing and Selling Are Not the Same Thing. Facebook, or any social media for that matter, is *not the place for a hard sell*. But remember that people do business with people they know and like. Make Facebook less about selling, per se, and more about *interacting*. Engage with fans, answer questions, accept criticism or complaints, and be sure to keep the content fresh. You can use newsfeeds and status messages to let customers know daily specials or promotions, events, anything you’d like customers to know.

3. Create a Personalized Facebook Page URL. It’s one of the best ways to

promote your Page. Put it everywhere – on your business cards, your email signature, your flyers and ads. And keep content fresh!

4. Run Facebook Ads. Many small businesses run ads weekly and even daily. The ads are a smart, targeted way to spread awareness of your brand and get new fans. Facebook allows you to purchase ad space for your Fan Page, just small banner ads to the right side of the page, but big enough to create awareness. They're targeted to those clients who would most likely be looking for your service through information gathered by profiles.

5. Send updates to Fans to subscribe to your notes. Going along with the above, once you have imported your blog through Facebook, you should then let your Fans know. Update them through your Facebook Fan Page with a link to where they can subscribe (which is found under the 'notes' tab of your page).

6. Get involved. One of the great ways you can generate interest is to give back to the community and get involved with a non-profit's Fan page. On Facebook, when you associate yourself with causes you care about, other people will gravitate towards your page through the connection. The character of Facebook draws people together who share similar interests, desires, or beliefs.

7. Update frequently. Once you have your Fan Page started, the next thing you need to do is set aside time to consistently do updates. Make updating and checking your Fan Page a regular part of your marketing schedule. Facebook is geared to accentuate new information; hence, the more you add, the more you'll get noticed. With your marketing efforts, the more you get noticed, the better. Don't forget that you can send all of your Fans updates via an email message from your page.

Facebook for the Real Estate Professional

Facebook is being added to many real estate agents' online marketing tool mix, an important social medium and one of the best places to find clients...

Remember: You need to be where the clients are.

Increasingly these days, 'where the clients are' means online social networking platforms like Twitter, LinkedIn, and the "Big Kahuna" of social media: Facebook.

A common misconception is that online social networking is mainly populated with only young people, but today almost 33% of adult Internet users (adults are defined here as ages 45 to 63) have a profile on a social networking site, which is up from just 8% in 2005, according to the Pew Internet and American Life Project.

Below find some of the ways real estate agents are using Facebook to their advantage:

1. As with small business owners in general, real estate agents should **start by encouraging past clients, family, and friends to 'friend' you, or to become 'fans' of your business page, or to add you to their networks.** Include links to your Fan Page and your customized Facebook URL in all your marketing materials... your website, blog, business cards, newsletter, etc. Also, post any other address you have – any Twitter account, or LinkedIn, Plaxo, etc – any other social network you belong to.

2. Become a Fan of National Association of Realtors, or a local real estate groups (i.e., Bay Area Real Estate Professionals, or Portland Realtors, etc). You can keep in touch with business contacts, can engage in post-conference or post-sale discussions, and can share data or information in a public, open round table that doesn't require the intimacy of a personal phone chat or email.

3. Create a Group. This is a hugely helpful way to reach out to potential clients. You can leverage your knowledge and become the expert, helping potential clients using your unique experience and expertise. It helps to name the group something that includes the potential benefit for the client, such as How to Sell Your Home Quickly in a Down Market, or Best Hints on How to Buy a Home in San Francisco... you're much more likely to get people to join your group if you mention what they stand to gain. Once you have a benefit specified in your Group's name, you'll want to ensure that the content you've posted does in fact deliver that benefit. If someone is looking for a specific thing, and he finds a group who promises to offer that very thing, but then after checking out the group's page, he finds nothing about what he was looking for, in all likelihood, he's gone for good from that group's page.

Another great benefit of joining or creating a group is that you can send direct mail to everyone who's a member and can build deeper relationships with clients and potential clients, and educate and help the people in your group. Becoming an expert in a given area is *always* helpful.

4. LivePads is a Facebook application to specifically sell your home.

The application is located here:

<http://www.facebook.com/apps/application.php?id=5319246444&b&ref=pd>

On the home page, simply click “Sell a House,” enter your details about the house, then click “Submit.” The following screen will ask you to submit up to three photos of the house (at least one is required), then “Submit” then “Finish.” The house is now located in your “Saved List,” and to add it to your profile, click the “Add to Profile” box. You can also send the listing to your friends on Facebook, and ask them to host the house on their profile. After you’ve added it to your profile, you will see “Profile Updated Successfully.”

5. Keep Up with Past Clients. Often former clients and/or referrals from them can be your best asset in real estate. Many real estate agents use Facebook to keep tabs on former clients less obtrusively, and to stay aware of what’s going on in their lives. Facebook is exactly the sort of place where people make announcements about big occurrences in their lives... a big promotion, a new engagement, the impending birth of a baby. These are exactly the sorts of events that precipitate real estate transactions. Being there when you’re needed can be more low-key than aggressively posting photos of your listings and giving the addresses out to all 182 of your friends and fans.

A Few Facebook Privacy How-tos: **Settings You Need to Know About**

1. Enlist Your Friend Lists: Facebook describes your Friend List as a feature that allows you “to create private groupings of friends based on your personal preferences. For example, you can create a Friend List for your friends that meet for weekly book club meetings. You can create Friend Lists for all of your organizational needs, allowing you to quickly view friends by type and send messages to your lists.

- A given friend can be on more than one list
- Friend lists should be used like tags, as used on other sites around the web
- Friend lists can have specific privacy settings applied to them. For instance, you may want to share photos from your Halloween party with your friend lists, and maybe even your family list, but definitely not your professional colleagues list. Also, you could configure your various friends according to where they live, i.e., I have friends in Manhattan from the years I lived in New York, and friends in Venice from the year I spent living in Italy, and friends scattered all around the eastern seaboard from going to grad school in Vermont.

Or you could configure them according to where you met them, i.e., that conference last fall in Washington, D.C., or all your various past co-workers, or your current, active clients.

2. Remove Yourself from Facebook Search Results: I have a friend whose ex-boyfriend has been trying repeatedly to contact her, despite her asking him to stop. She can protect herself from him knowing everything she’s been

up to in her professional and personal life by simply turning off her public visibility. If you also would like to remove yourself from Facebook search results, just go to your search privacy settings page. Under “Search Visibility,” click “Only Friends;” but remember, this will remove you from everything, so click “My Networks and Friends” instead, which is the default. And don’t forget to “Save Changes.” By selecting “Customize” from the Search Visibility drop down menu, you can make your settings even more specific.

3. Remove Yourself from Google: Facebook can be a great way to let people know how to get a hold of you. But many of us don’t want any of their information to be so public. On the Search Visibility Settings Page (mentioned in #1), you can also control of public searches, via search engines such as Google or Yahoo. Simply turn off your public search listing by un-checking the box next to the phrase, “Create a public search listing for me and submit it for search engine indexing.”

4. Protect Your Photo Albums: There is a specific Photos Privacy Page, which you can set up so that only those who you specify can view each photo album.

5. Protect Photos Tagged of You: There will be many photos, often many you haven’t even seen, that appear tagged on friends’ profiles or in the albums. In order to prevent these tagged photos (or videos!) of you appearing in all of your friends’ news feeds, go to your Profile Privacy Page and modify the setting next to “Photos Tagged of You.” Choose the option that says “Customize” and a box that allows you to individualize who can see this photo (pick Only Me, Some Friends, Only Friends, or Friends of Friends). You can also put individual names in a box next to the phrase, “Except These People” for very granular control.

6. Protect Against Published Individual Application Stories: There are a few applications that post notifications or news feed stories, or some apps post that their app has just been added by John Q. Public. Think it’s harmless? Try this

one on: The purpose of one such application, an app called Have Sex!, is to tell your friends that you want to have sex with them. (Yikes!) If you visit this application and don't take specific action to prevent it, a news feed story will be posted to your profile saying, "John Q. Public is having sex right now!" **Again, this is an extreme application and subsequent post, but there are many less lascivious applications that publish posts or stories about you without you knowing it.** You can avoid this happening by avoiding new applications you're unfamiliar with until you've researched a little, or by immediately checking your profile every time you do load a new application to ensure that it hasn't just loaded a potentially embarrassing notification.

7. Prevent Stories from Showing Up in Your Friends' News Feeds: Many people display their relationship status, and like to make public statements about the state of that relationship. Often times, these are things that would be inappropriate for certain people to see (like your boss, your mother, your ex, etc). But there are a couple of ways to control how your relationship status is displayed. The first thing you should do is uncheck the box next to "Remove Relationship Status" in the News Feed and Wall Privacy page. When a relationship does end awkwardly, you can avoid making things worse by avoiding a friend notification about it.

Also, your relationship status is in the "Basic Information" section of your profile. You can customize who can see your basic info on your Profile Privacy page, but bear in mind that other info -- pertinent things such as age, gender, profession, your networks -- are also within this section. Making *all* your basic information completely hidden to friends probably isn't the best idea, but controlling who sees news feed stories about your relationship status and changes, and who doesn't, probably is.

8. Controlling Who Sees Your Contact Information: One of the smartest things to do before you begin approving friend request from people you haven't

been in touch with for a while, or don't know very well, is to make your contact info visible only to close contacts. Your personal email and phone number are simple things to set, but if we overlook it, people we don't know well can contact us, and we might not even know how they got our info. But you can edit it right from your profile. You should see a "Contact Info" area under the "Info" tab. When it displays, just click "Edit" and a screen should appear. For each contact item in your profile, you should set custom privacy settings to keep from being bothered by people you don't know well. This is also a great area to take advantage of friend lists. If you're in the habit of grouping your friends according to specific parameters, you can easily and efficiently make sure you're following good privacy practices.

9. Keep Your Friendships Private: You want to respect the privacy of your friends. Turn off your friends' visibility to others... you have no idea who might want their information (marketers, ex-spouses, etc), or for what purposes. To edit their visibility, go to the Profile Privacy page, scroll down to the setting that says "Friends," and modify the setting to the appropriate selection.

10. Avoid Embarrassing Wall Posts: Every now and then, a friend of yours might post something inappropriate or embarrassing. Facebook gives you the power to edit your wall postings visibility. You can also edit which friends can post on you wall. To edit who can see your wall: on your Profile page, click the "Settings" button on the wall. You'll see a box that says, "Who Can See This?" Select "Custom" from the drop down menu, where your group of friends will each show up (i.e., Grad School Friends, Amici Italiani, Family, etc). Below that, there is a "Limited Profile" box, where you can specify who can not see posts made by friends.

To edit who can post to your wall: go to your Profile Settings page and find the section called "Wall Posts." Here, you can disable a friend's ability to post on your wall.

These are just the most basic ways to set your privacy settings, but don't forget the obvious -- if you don't want something to be seen, don't put it on Facebook. Keep in mind that while you can edit the visibility of many of your profile sections, there's really no way to completely control what pictures or videos your friends can make visible. Be aware of what is available in the way of privacy settings, and be smart about making use of them.

Be aware that Facebook frequently releases new designs and some of these privacy options may shift their location once and a while. You can always access Facebook's help section here:

<http://www.facebook.com/#!/help/>

Summary

The best practitioners of Facebook make their social networking more about interacting, less about the aggressive hard sell. They never forget that while there might be relevant and strategic marketing uses for Facebook as well, its initial purpose was *social* networking... interacting, remaining in achievable, realistic contact with our friends, family, and fans, who in all likelihood are flung out all over the globe. They use status updates, newsfeeds, and posts to tell fans and friends about events in their lives, to share what they're up to, what's on sale with their shoe boutique, what the seasonal menu is at the hot new restaurant downtown, what the cupcake special of the day is at the local bakery, anything they want fans or friends to know about. **And they keep their pages' and vanity URLs' content fresh, relevant, and fun to read.**

They use the social networking platform of Facebook as one part of their total online social media presence, or as one segment of their integrated online marketing effort, or both. And they have a blast doing it!

Become a Fan of Free Help for Real Estate Agents!

The screenshot shows the Facebook interface for the page 'Free Help For Real Estate Agents'. The page is owned by 'Oakley Signs & Graphics'. The cover photo features the Oakley logo. The main post is a text update from 'Free Help For Real Estate Agents' dated 'Yesterday at 9:41am', discussing Google Voice for real estate listings. The left sidebar shows a list of fans, including Michael Corbett, Alvin Brezell, Kristin Kreer Rivas, Roland Spadafora, Kristy Philbrook, and Scott Levitt. Below the fans is a video section with a video titled 'Greetings, from Scott Levitt'. The right sidebar shows a post from 'Mariellen Puckett' dated 'Yesterday at 11:49am' and another post from 'Ubaldo Diaz' dated 'Yesterday at 2:26pm'. There is also a video greeting from Scott Levitt dated 'Wed at 10:29am'.

Like most social media, the best way to learn is by doing... so get in there and be fearless! Mix it up, make some mistakes, and eventually, you'll learn how to build your social network and drive leads!

Once you join, be sure to become a fan of Free Help for Real Estate Agents on Facebook!

<http://www.fhfrea.org/facebook/>

Now You Know! (Don't Miss Our Newsletter, too...)

Hopefully you've found this introduction to Facebook for real estate professionals useful. Now is the time to conquer any fears you have and start the next phase of your professional network. If you have feedback or ideas, don't hesitate to contact us! We'd love to hear how Facebook works out for you.

ALSO: Be sure to sign up for our [Tuesday Tactics email newsletter](http://www.TuesdayTactics.com) to be the first to receive specific, actionable advice, tools, and information that will positively impact your real estate career:

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Sincerely cheering you toward real estate success,

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