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## **Connecting through Facebook – is it really worth it?**

By Barbara Smith and Twila Del Fatti

Remember back to when Facebook was new to businesses. Did you hop happily onboard, confident in all the promises of “free” marketing? Perhaps you dipped a toe in the water more grudgingly, believing the dire warnings that if you didn’t get involved, you’d be left behind.

If you’re one of the many who adopted a “wait and see” approach, are you still waiting?

A lot of large companies still are; they haven’t found a way to make Facebook work for them within government regulations or their own corporate communication policies.

If they can’t figure it out, what’s a small business to think? Is Facebook all it’s cracked up to be, or is it a big time-waster?

At Silver Connections, we think that the truth, as is often the case in life, is in finding the right balance.

We can’t claim to be Facebook experts, but we have had lots of experience in building an audience on Facebook.

Our business is all about connecting people – consumers and businesses, businesses and not-for-profits, not-

for-profits and consumers. Silver Connections is like the 3-prong plug – we put all of these groups together, and electricity happens.

Sure, we could exist without Facebook; in fact, it’s only one of many ways that we make connections, but Facebook makes it a lot easier. Here’s what we’ve found out – tips that may help you too.

### ***How do we keep Facebook from absorbing the entire day?***

Worried you don’t have enough time to deal with a Facebook account? True enough, it needs some daily attention. And, like email, it can take your whole day if you don’t set some guidelines.

Typically, we choose to have Facebook open on the computer all day, just switching back for a check once in awhile.

The trick is to complete a task, *then* pop back to check. Don’t get distracted from the task at hand, wondering if you’re missing something on Facebook.

If we’re having a busy day out of the office, it works just as well to schedule some Facebook time first

thing in the morning, and last thing in the afternoon too.

We ask our staff members to spend 15 to 30 minutes on Facebook when they arrive so that they keep up to date too.

This way, Facebook gets the attention it deserves, but it doesn't consume our days.

***How do we come up with material to share?***

Sharing is the key word in this question. We make sure we follow lots of different people and organizations on Facebook. When we see something that others may benefit from, we just pass it along. By doing this, we help others to promote themselves. In turn, those who are following us get to know *us* too. Chances are, so do some of the people who follow them. You get the picture.

***How do you keep posts interesting?***

First of all, add a little note of your own to the post, telling people about your perspective.

A picture or logo really makes a difference to catching attention in somebody's busy news feed – especially if they are checking Facebook from a phone.

***What about grousing, grumbling and misinformation?***

Yes, it exists on Facebook as it does everywhere in the world. If we hear grousing and grumbling, our rule of

thumb is not to pass it on. If the grousing and grumbling is about you, that's another story altogether. But if you're in business, you've probably had to deal with this before in other arenas – answer it politely and offer to help fix the problem, just like you would do in any other case. Yes, others will see that you got a complaint. They'll also see how well you dealt with it.

And don't forget that everybody gets to see your customers' praise too. A testimonial for all to see is absolutely priceless. And while the saying is that bad news travels fast, when it comes to Facebook, good news travels just as fast – especially if you get a timely response out to your admirer.

While Facebook is only one way that we connect our audiences, it's a really powerful one. Balance is the key for us. We balance our Facebook communication with other ways of connecting, and we keep balance in how much time we devote to it. And when we want to get good news out, nothing spreads it as fast as our fans!

*Barbara Smith and Twila Del Fatti are co-founders and owners of Silver Connections, connecting communities to pre-screened, quality businesses and services. For more information about the businesses belonging to their network, go to [www.silverconnections.ca](http://www.silverconnections.ca). Silver Connections is a member of the Uxbridge Chamber of Commerce ([www.uxcc.ca](http://www.uxcc.ca)).*