

# Social Media Part II: How to connect with customers on Facebook

A tool dealer's guide to using social media

BY PHIL SASSO

**Q** I read your column in the last issue of *Professional Distributor* and was sold on the benefits of using social media for my business. I've been monitoring social media from my flag and my manufacturers like you said. Now I'm ready to do my own thing. Where should I start?

**A** It's best to dip your toes before diving in headfirst, says Jim O'Hara of Clore Automotive. In the March Sales Q&A column, I spoke with O'Hara because he's a big proponent of social media for mobile dealers. (Read that column online at [www.vehicleservicepros.com/10624470](http://www.vehicleservicepros.com/10624470).) Here's a mashup of his thoughts and mine on diving in when you're ready.

Although Twitter is growing quickly, there are still more Facebook users, so I say start there. Once you're up on Facebook you can use Twitter to point back to your Facebook tips, deals and promotions. Plus, if you already use Facebook personally, you're ahead of the game since you already know the basics.

## Establish an individual Facebook account.

Many of us already have a personal Facebook account, but if you don't, you'll need one. That's because Facebook requires an administrator to manage the brand page. If you don't want to use your personal account, consider establishing a "professional" Facebook account using your business email address and link your business page from there.



Phil Sasso is president of Sasso Marketing Inc. ([www.sassomarketing.com](http://www.sassomarketing.com)), a technical marketing agency specializing in tools and equipment. Subscribe to his free marketing tips at [philsasso.com/blog](http://philsasso.com/blog).

## Don't use your personal account for business.

Your customers don't care about your Great Aunt Marge, your sports picks, or your skill at Farmville. Keep your business and personal life separate — you want to be all about tools to your customer.

## Create your brand page.

Create a new brand page at [www.facebook.com/pages/create.php](http://www.facebook.com/pages/create.php).

## Choose a good username.

On Facebook and Twitter, this is your handle to the social media world. Try to keep it short and memorable. Before you start you might even have a short list of backup ideas in case your first one is taken. Consider blending your flag name with your city, zip or area code like MacToolsChicago, MATCO90120 or Cornwell202. You can't change it, so try to get a name that fits — but don't stress over it. To paraphrase Shakespeare, "What's in a Facebook name?"

## Learn Facebook basics.

Get to know Facebook basics, if you don't already. There's a Facebook help center and YouTube channel that covers it all better than I can here (see sidebar, page 15). Don't expect to learn it all in one night. Just get the basics down; you'll learn the rest over time.

## Take it slow.

"I think it's best to start small," says O'Hara. "Crawl before you walk. Walk before you run. Just plan to do a post or two a week when you're beginning"

If you over-commit, you're more likely to fail, says O'Hara. But also, I think it's important to consider your customer and be considerate. They don't want to be flooded with information any more than you want to be flooded with information. A couple good posts a week are more than enough to keep their attention without overwhelming them.

## You don't need to be Hemingway.

Feel like your high school English teacher is looking over your shoulder? Don't sweat it. Just use spell check and read your post over once or twice. Then click and post. You can always delete [posts if needed. And this is all among "friends" after all, right?

Also, let me be blunt: most social media is a lot of hot air. Keep yours simple and don't post just to post. If you don't have anything to say, don't say anything. Better to keep quiet than to post something dumb and tarnish your credibility.

To make it easier, subscribe to your flag and supplier's emails and social media then just copy and paste interesting information. O'Hara suggests you add a personal note like "Thought you'd like this," "I get my shipment next week" or "This is next week's special. Should I reserve one for you?" Adding your own words makes a generic post more human.

## A picture is worth 1,000 words.

O'Hara also suggests posting photos of your customers holding a new big-ticket purchase or that week's drawing prize. Caption it with their names and shop names so your customers feel special and Facebook will alert them of the photos.

"You could have pictures of yourself with your customers," says O'Hara. "Maybe a shot showing off some guy's great new toolbox that he bought off you... other customers will ask about the box and maybe want prices. Who doesn't want to quote on a new toolbox?"

And also consider sharing YouTube videos. Many manufacturers have YouTube channels. Subscribe to their channel and you'll get an alert when they post something new. If you think it's interesting, Facebook or Tweet a link to it.

## Make it easy to follow you.

Hand out business cards with your Facebook and Twitter page link. You can even put a QR code on the back of the card - you know those barcodes that look like they have measles.

Anyone with a smartphone and reader can scan the code and instantly go to your page.

"I'd buy some new cards at Kinko's or something," says O'Hara. You can also create magnetic cards, stickers or sticky notes. And put in on every piece of literature your hand out along with your phone number and email address.

**Inspire customers to make the time to follow you.**

Give customers an incentive to join you by giving a special one-time discount to new Facebook "fans." Get them to stay with you by having exclusive online-only drawings and offers. If they get the same stuff online they get when you show up at the shop, they don't need to waste their time online with you.

Using social media as a dealer may seem a little overwhelming at first, but take small steps. Facebooking and Tweeting can be a good way to stay connected with your customer even when your truck isn't parked outside their shop. ■

**FACEBOOK TOOLBOX**  
 Some resources for Facebook to start out, or enhance your experience with the social media platform. To link directly to these and more resources, go to [philsasso.com/toolbox](http://philsasso.com/toolbox).

- FACEBOOK GUIDE: BASICS TO USING THE SOCIAL MEDIA SITE  
[www.facebook.com/help/?guide](http://www.facebook.com/help/?guide)
- FACEBOOK BRAND PAGE BASICS  
[www.facebook.com/help?page=262355163822084](http://www.facebook.com/help?page=262355163822084)
- FAQ FOR FACEBOOK PAGES  
[www.facebook.com/help/?topic=pages](http://www.facebook.com/help/?topic=pages)
- CREATE A BUSINESS PAGE  
[www.facebook.com/pages/create.php](http://www.facebook.com/pages/create.php)
- FACEBOOK VIDEO NETWORK: HOW-TO VIDEOS ON FACEBOOK FEATURES  
[www.youtube.com/facebook](http://www.youtube.com/facebook)
- TERMS AND GUIDELINES  
[www.facebook.com/terms\\_pages.php](http://www.facebook.com/terms_pages.php)
- FACEBOOK PAGE PROMOTION GUIDELINES  
[www.facebook.com/promotions\\_guidelines.php](http://www.facebook.com/promotions_guidelines.php)
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