

## Facebook for Chapters

One reason for Facebook's breakout success is its ease of use. Creating a Group or Page takes only a few minutes, even for those who wouldn't normally describe themselves as computer savvy. We encourage chapter leaders to use Facebook to build community among members, to reach out to alumni from the area, and to promote chapter events. And, of course, we also encourage you to have fun while you're at it. Another reason for Facebook's success is that it doesn't have many rules, and we certainly don't intend to institute new ones of our own. Rather, we want to offer a few best practices.

### *For the UTAA's Benefit*

1. Please notify your alumni director after you've created your Group or Page so that we can promote it from the UTAA Facebook page and from the main UTAA website.
2. Please remember that the UTAA chapter programs serve all UT campuses. Wherever possible, please balance the use of Volunteer orange with Moc gold and Skyhawk blue.

### **First Decision: Group vs. Page**

If you Google "Facebook Group or Page" you will find a great deal of advice, much of it inaccurate and out of date. In early 2009, Facebook made some key changes to their Pages, making them more like personal profiles. This further complicates the decision of how to best reach and involve chapter members online. Here's the official word from Facebook:

#### *How are Pages different than Facebook Groups?*

Pages can only be created to represent a real public figure, artist, brand or organization, and may only be created by an official representative of that entity. Groups can be created by any user and about any topic, as a space for users to share their opinions and interest in that subject. Pages can be customized with rich media and interactive applications to engage Page visitors. Applications can't be added to groups.

Pages are designed to allow Page admins to maintain a personal/professional distinction on Facebook, while groups are a part of your personal Facebook experience. If you're a group admin, your name will appear on that group, while Pages will never display their admins' names. Additionally, when you take actions on your group, such as posting on your group's wall, these actions will appear to come from you as an individual. However, if you post or take other actions on a Page you own, it will appear to come from the Page.

As long as a group is under 5000 members, group admins can send messages to the group members that will appear in their inboxes. If the group exceeds 5000, admins can't send messages to all members. Page admins can send updates to fans through the Page, and these updates will appear in the "Updates" section of fans' inboxes. There is no limit on how many fans you may send an update to, or how many total fans a Page can have. It's also possible to restrict access to a group, so that new members have to be approved, but access to a Page can only be restricted by certain ages and locations.

-- <http://www.facebook.com/help.php?page=175> (April 16, 2009)

In summary, the key distinctions are:

- *Admin status:* If you create a Group, you will be identified in your postings and communications by your real name, just as if you were posting a comment on a friend's wall. If you create a Page, your personal identity will be subsumed by the identity of the chapter. On that Page, you will become, say, "Davidson Co. UT Alumni Chapter," and your picture will be replaced by whatever photo you've uploaded to represent the chapter.
- *Communication:* Groups and Pages both allow you to send notes to all members. If you message a Group (up to 5,000 members), it will appear in each person's Facebook inbox. Page administrators can contact fans in two ways: by posting a status update, which will appear on fans' front pages just like any other friend's update, and by sending a "Page Update," which will appear as a link in the top-right corner of each fan's front page.
- *Applications:* Pages allow you to use a variety of tools and applications that are unavailable to Groups. A word of warning, though: Many of these applications work better in theory than in practice. We've gradually stripped nearly all of them from the UTAA Page.
- *Membership Restrictions:* In general, anyone can become a fan of a Page; membership of Groups can be more tightly restricted.

### ***So which is best for an alumni chapter?***

Groups and Pages both feature the same essential tools: discussion areas, events, and places to post links, notes, photos, and videos. So we recommend you choose the option that best mirrors the size and personality of your chapter. Large chapters should probably use Pages, smaller chapters should probably create Groups. If you have additional questions, please contact UTAA Communications Manager Darren Hughes: 865-974-2507 or [darren@tennessee.edu](mailto:darren@tennessee.edu).

## Getting Started

Facebook offers useful and succinct how-to information, and given the frequency with which they update their tools, it's best to simply follow their advice.

### *Groups*

- General Information: <http://www.facebook.com/help.php?page=414>
- Creating and Running a Group: <http://www.facebook.com/help.php?page=826>
- Posting Content to a Group: <http://www.facebook.com/help.php?page=827>

### *Pages*

- General Information: <http://www.facebook.com/help.php?page=175>

## Best Practices

*Online communities don't just happen.* If you decide to create a Page or Group for your chapter, don't assume it will spontaneously and organically grow into a useful resource. Check in frequently. Respond promptly to comments and questions. Welcome new members.

*Avoid message fatigue.* Facebook users will voluntarily join your Group or Page, and presumably they will do so because they *want* to hear from you. But don't overwhelm them with emails (in the case of Groups) or Page updates. Generally, we post one or two status updates each week from the UTAA Page and only use personal messaging to get out particularly important information.

*Practice wise discretion when moderating comments.* We've all seen online discussions get out of hand. Although it's unlikely to happen, as the administrator, you might be called upon to remove or edit a member's comments. Please keep in mind that your Group or Page *does* reflect on – even if unofficially – the university and the UTAA. If you have questions or concerns about moderating comments, please contact your alumni director or Darren Hughes ([darren@tennessee.edu](mailto:darren@tennessee.edu)).