

10 Ways Mark Zuckerberg Can Help Your Firm

By Dustin Lubertazzi, Senior Consultant, Sageworks, Inc.

It goes without saying that over the past 10 years, [technology](#) and social media have changed the way we do business. Marketing and advertising initiatives no longer only emerge in the form of flashy billboards, clever postcards, or engaging commercials. Gone are the days when networking consisted only of rotary club and chamber meetings. Social media has altered the way we communicate and share ideas; business owners who understand its importance and take advantage of its benefits will be well-positioned to sustain and grow their companies.

Social media sites are available in all shapes and sizes, with varying purposes. From MySpace to Twitter to LinkedIn and more, online communities offer countless methods for sending and receiving information across individuals and businesses alike. One platform, however, has seemingly resonated with the entire social network— Facebook. With over 500 million users, Facebook is a goliath in the world of social media. From its humble beginnings as a portal for college students to look at pictures of their friends and see who would be attending what party, it has surpassed all expectations and is now regarded as a marketing guru's dream come true.

Despite its profound effects on digital marketing, you don't have to be a tech wizard to use Facebook. Here are 10 simple features and tips that accounting and CPA firms can use to help retain top clients and attract high-quality, progressive customers.

1. Your Facebook Page. You may also refer to this as your profile. This will serve as your primary backdrop to let people (current and potential clients) know who you are and what your business does. Here, you can upload photos, logos, videos and other information about you and your business. If you are a sole-proprietor, your profile picture should be a professional picture of you. If you are creating this page for a multi-partner firm, you may want to choose a picture of the partners, or of the company logo. You can also include links to other websites, including your own (you do have a company website, right?). Don't ignore the "Networks" section of the profile either – make sure you clearly identify what city, town or neighborhood your business can be found.

2. Friend Finder. The friend finder is a tool that allows you to import contacts from your email accounts to identify those contacts that are already using Facebook. It also features people you might know on Facebook based on the number of mutual friends you have with the individual or business. Once you have created a profile, this tool provides Facebook users with an easy way to search for clients and other business contacts. After all, any type of networking starts with people you already know.

3. The Wall. Status updates can be posted on your wall. A status update is a newsfeed-esque platform where you can make announcements about yourself, your business, or anything else for that matter. This is a great way to let your Facebook "friends" know about any promotions you may be running. You can also post links to videos or articles that you might find meaningful for page visitors. This would be a great forum to display a referral incentive, [new service offering](#), or announcement of new additions to your staff.

McLean, Rotherham & Co., a CPA firm in San Diego, CA, used wall posts to keep current and prospective clients informed as the 2011 tax season approached. According to Managing Partner Jim Rotherham, they made between one and four weekly posts, ranging from simple tax tips and reminders to holiday wishes, resulting in approximately 80 new clients during tax season.

You can also post messages and reminders on other users' walls – another great way to share information. Be careful, though, as wall posts should not be considered private. Also, spamming walls is a major faux pas.

4. Host an Event. If you have ever organized networking events, luncheons, etc. for your clients and business partners, you know that printing flyers and mailing them out can be a bit tedious and inefficient. Next time, try scheduling an event on Facebook. Once you have added a description and pictures, forward the event invitation to your clients and prospects, and encourage them to pass it along to others. You can even track attendees through the RSVP function, as well. A few event ideas you may want to try include an open house, client appreciation luncheon, or professional service provider roundtable.

5. Join Groups. A Facebook group is essentially a network of businesses or individuals with similar interests. It doesn't matter if you join a group for personal or professional interests – each time you do, you become more visible to the online community.

6. "Like" other Pages. Similar to joining a group, "Liking" another page, picture, or wall post on Facebook creates more of a presence for you. Surely other business owners throughout your community have Facebook pages – "Like" them to show your support.

7. Facebook Marketplace. Think of Facebook Marketplace as online classified ads, similar to Craigslist.com. Marketplace is an online portal used for the exchange of goods and services. Many people also use it for recruiting and/or finding jobs. Marketplace is another great place to let folks know what services you offer, and what makes your firm unique. While you're there, keep your eye out for local talent.

8. Facebook Notes. Posting a note on Facebook allows you to share thoughts and information in a blog-like atmosphere. You can post things like company newsletters and important changes in tax law, or it can serve as a platform for you to offer your opinions on community issues or current events. Remember, this information can be seen by current and prospective clients – write things that would attract people to you. Here, you can demonstrate your industry knowledge and keep people informed.

9. Facebook Badge. Remember your aforementioned company website? With Facebook Badge, you can add a link from your company website to your company Facebook page, where users can see and share all of your posts and interests.

10. Facebook Ads. Without selling advertising space, Facebook probably wouldn't make much money. They offer users a pretty slick feature to design your advertisement and then provide you with an estimated cost of your campaign. Pricing can be based on either "cost per click," the number of times someone clicks on your ad, or "cost per impression," the number of times your ad appears on a page.

These are just a few of the many ways accountants and other business owners can use Facebook to create a stronger online presence. There are countless other add-ons and applications for advertising, market research, and increasing brand awareness. You may even want to visit www.facebook.com/marketing to get insight and best practices on a page run by Facebook employees. Facebook and other social media sites have had a strong impact on our business landscape and should be considered an integral piece in a balanced marketing strategy to grow your business.

About Dustin Lubertazzi: Dustin Lubertazzi is a Senior Consultant for [Sageworks](#), a leading provider of private industry data, financial analysis, and risk management software for accounting firms and financial institutions. Lubertazzi has worked with hundreds of CPA firms and banks to implement Sageworks' solutions for standardizing and documenting regulatory requirements, and adding value to client relationships. Prior to Sageworks, Lubertazzi gained professional experience in consultative roles for Takeda Pharmaceuticals and Morgan Stanley. His degree is from the University of Virginia.

If you are a member of the media and would like information on our products or company, please contact us.

Public Relations Department

pr@sageworksinc.com

866.603.7029 ext. 590