

SIX

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FACTS

EVERYONE
NEEDS TO

KNOW



Brad Huebert

Introduction

I'm glad you picked up this ebook.

Facebook has become so integrated into so many of our daily lives that it's almost invisible. By invisible I mean we hardly give it a second thought.

You've probably already heard some great advice about the dangers of Facebook—you know, setting boundaries, avoiding predators, and not posting stuff that will get you fired.

That's not what I'm going to offer in this little ebook. What I'd like to do over the next few pages is peel back the layers to help you understand Facebook and what it is. That way you can use Facebook instead of being used by Facebook.

As one of my commenters pointed out, this material is:

“So obvious and yet I've never seen this expressed before, in years of FB and S~M~ research.”

I hope to make you say, “Huh” several times over.

And then do something about it.

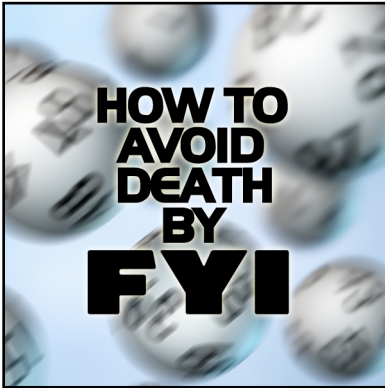
Let's get started.

First, a little geekishness.



Now we're ready.

One: Death by FYI



FYI...

We live in one of those lottery ball popper machine things.

The balls represent the frenetic stream of information bouncing all around us.

FYI...

According to Richard Wurman, who wrote *Information Anxiety* (1989, Doubleday), a typical edition of *The New York Times* contains more information than the average person in 17th-century England was likely to come across in a lifetime.

Which means—and I'm just guessing here—that the average web-savvy person probably gobbles up more information in a single day than our granddaddies did in a year.

FYI...

I'm not sure we need all that information. No, I am quite sure we don't need all that information.

FYI...

A few minutes ago I almost clicked on my "Seth Godin's Blog" tab on my browser. He's always got something good to say. Some serious FYI. But I stopped myself.

Why? Because I'm in the middle of a busy week and I've already got enough on my plate and far too much on my mind. I don't need another bit or byte or quote or quibble. I just don't.

FYI...

Many of us use info surfing—whether on Facebook or Yahoo! or Pinterest or Twitter or blogs like this one—as a diversion, a time killer, maybe a coffee break. But I'm not sure inhaling more information is always a healthy break.

FYI...

I think FYI is killing us.

FYI...

I already have enough information to live my life. I'm not saying we should stop learning (I'm a lifelong learner); I'm saying maybe it's time we regulated our information intake and spent more time meditating on the information we aren't doing enough about already. It's true, Seth's blog may have just the gem I need to hit a home run today.

Right now, though, I'm going to let it go and be content with getting on base.

FYI...

I think we believe the key to a better life is hidden in the information we don't have yet instead of applying the information we do have.

FYI.

I think it's pretty important to stop ourselves a few times throughout each day and ask, "Do I really need more information?"

I also think those of us who produce information for a living need to acknowledge that endless info dumping can strip us of our humanity and reduce our souls to printing presses.

Which is why it's so important to know why we're using social media like Facebook.

Two: 12 Facebook Philosophies



Zuckerberg's social behemoth was founded in 2004. Eight years later (as of June 2012) Facebook now hosts 955 million users. To put that into perspective, Facebook's "population" ranks third in the world, right behind China and India. It includes as many people as the United States, Indonesia, Brazil, Pakistan, and Canada, combined.

So never mind my question; you're probably on Facebook. Even many grandparents I know have given this Facebook thing a try.

The first time you log in, our "join," you're greeted by nine simple words:

Connect and share with the people in your life.

This is the *stated* purpose of Facebook. This may or may not be what Facebook is to you. Which led me to a revelation:

I have a Facebook Philosophy.

We all do, in fact. So do you. A philosophy is "a theory or attitude held by a person or organization that acts as a guiding principle for behavior."

What is Facebook to you?

Why do you use it?

How do you use it?

How often?

Your real answers to these questions form your Facebook philosophy. Facebook is probably more than one thing to you, but here are twelve Facebook Philosophies that many people hold. And while it's going to be tempting to laugh and snort and say, "Oh, that's totally Bob, he does that all the time," it's probably more important that you start by looking in the mirror.

Diary. Some people feel compelled to record calorie counts, shoelace breakages, bowel movements, you name it. Every. Single. One. Flush. Repeat.

Tool. Facebook is a means to an end, whatever end that may be —all the way from social planning to cyber-stalking to sales.

Community. Facebook is what Mark Zuckerberg says it is: Connecting and sharing with the people in your life." All your FB

friends are people you know personally, so you turn down friend invites from strangers or even people on the fringe of your world.

Mission Field. Facebook is a place to post pictures of Christian puppies with Bible verses. Or, for some (like me) a place to share thought-provoking truths hoping to engage in dialogue.

Market. Facebook is an untapped resource, a billion starving customers waiting to devour your products if you can just get their attention.

Scrapbook. Facebook is where you post all your photos, personal and otherwise, because you're sure everyone has nothing better to do than scroll through thirty golden shots of you bathing your dog.

Platform. Facebook is a place to network, to build a tribe, to become known so you can extend your reach. It's your personal or business website.

Distraction. Facebook is a welcome numb-down, a great time-waster used to eat up company time or forget your real life worries so you don't have to turn to drinking.

Playground. Facebook is a great getaway where you can browse interesting quotes, keep up with people, and have a few laughs.

Bragging arena. Facebook is a perfect way to post stuff you're proud of because after all, people should know.

Necessary evil. Facebook is a stupid waste of time but everyone is on it so you have to sell your soul and use it just to keep up.

Social outlet. Facebook is the fairy land where I can feel social without having to take face-to-face social risks. Clicking "like" a few times a day means I'm a nice person who cares.

That's not an exhaustive list, but I think I've made my point. And here's the thing: Your Facebook Philosophy will guide your behavior on Facebook. It's also likely that you started with one philosophy, and picked up another few along the way.

Newsflash: Mark Zuckerberg (and now an army of shareholders) are making money off of us. Gobs and gobs of it. He wants us to use Facebook, true, but even more, he wants Facebook to use us.

Cha-ching.

I think it's important to know why we use Facebook so we can become aware of what we're doing. The second step would be to ask ourselves, "Am I okay with my current Facebook Philosophy? Is it healthy? Do I need to make or adjust some rules for myself so that I don't slip from using Facebook to Facebook using me?"

In the next chapter I'm going to show you why this matters on a personal level.

Which one or two philosophies resonate most with you?

Three: Four Key Concepts



The previous chapter helped you see that you have a “Facebook Philosophy.” (PBP). It probably also helped you identify your own Facebook flare. Now I want to unpack four important implications.

Embracing these concepts can change the way you use Facebook. For the better, I hope.

First, remember that...

1. Everyone else has a Facebook Philosophy, too.

Let that sink in. Obvious, right? But how about this:

2. Everyone has a different Facebook Philosophy than you have.

Well, duh.

But think about what that means. It explains why you get so annoyed by the *Photo album* FBP people.

"That's not what Facebook is for," you mutter. Why? Because you're a *community* person.

Or how about your frustration with the acquaintance who's a *diary* FBP person. "I don't need to know you drove to Superstore to buy milk," you exclaim, after reading their hundredth inane post of the day.

Or why you hate getting Farmville updates from friends. Or Friend Requests from people you hardly know. The list goes on. Why don't these people understand?

Because everyone can decide what Facebook is... for them.

3. Facebook'R'us.

There's something magical thing about being a Facebook user. When you type in www.facebook.com, it re-routes you to your personal profile, your unique homepage.

Facebook may boast 955 Million users, but if you created one of those "Mall Maps" to help locate yourself in the Facebook landscape, the red dot that says "You Are Here" would always be smack dab in the middle. In other words, you are Facebook.

Say that out loud: ***I am Facebook.*** Feels pretty good, huh. Well, it's true. But so is everyone else who uses it.

4. The Nation of Facebook

Facebook isn't just a social network, it's a society all it's own. Which means we need to stop thinking of ourselves as Facebook users and start thinking of ourselves as Facebook citizens.

A society needs it's citizens to move beyond merely using to contributing. This has always been the cardinal rule of social media: Try to give more than you get. But what if we added two more guiding principles to that mantra:

Tolerance. I will let others define and use Facebook the way they want, without insisting they hold my exact Facebook Philosophy. Which means I will let "photo album Bob" live another day.

Temperance. It's one thing for non-photo album people to give the photo-album people grace. It's quite another for the photo-album people to wake up and realize that not everyone sees Facebook as a photo album like they do.

As a mere Facebook *user*, I might be tempted to think, "I am Facebook. Deal with it."

As a Facebook *citizen*, though, I realize there is a word for unwanted communication: Spam. Do I really want to be a spammer in this burgeoning society?

Nope. At least, I hope not.

So Facebook gives me the freedom of self expression. But it also gives me the responsibility to express myself in ways that benefit the community.

Diary people, no posting about bowel movements and how many times you blink in a day.

Photo people, I do not want to see fifty pictures of you walking down the street.

Marketing people, try giving a little.

You get the idea.

Four: What's a Profile?



A Facebook profile is more than just that thing you need to join Facebook.

Most of us think of our "official profile" as the only one that matters. You know, your avatar, your info, the banner graphic.

The truth is, your profile isn't just your bio info. It's everything you post, like, share, vent, display, and do online.

Whoah.

It's true. You're "putting yourself out there," so to speak. No matter what your profile picture is about, people are constructing an online avatar for you in their minds. To them, you are what they see, read, and observe—even though what they see is limited, often inaccurate, and colored by personal bias.

What's the lesson?

Well, I shouldn't do or say anything online that I wouldn't do or say in person.

Why?

Online, people are picturing me saying things and taking their internal snapshot as gospel truth—without the benefit of actually reading my tone and body language.

If the real me died, my Facebook profile would still exist. This wouldn't mean *I* was still alive. So my profile isn't *me*. Or even really part of me—because if I deleted my entire profile I would still be fully myself.

Right?

So what, then, is an online profile?

Your Facebook profile is an artificial extension of yourself.

Emphasis on the word *artificial*.

Online life is complex. I must simultaneously behave as though people see me and my profile as one, while never losing sight of the fact that my profile isn't me at all.

Trippy.

But so important.

Five: Facebook is a Meritocracy.



Huh?

Facebook is a meritocracy.

What's a meritocracy? It's like a democracy on steroids. Everyone is voting all the time for everything.

If you're a marketer, you know this all too well and are already leveraging your products and services accordingly. If you're a simple Facebook user, though—I mean, citizen—it means that you're being leveraged.

Time to wake up.

Webster says a meritocracy is "a system in which the talented are chosen and moved ahead on the basis of their achievement." Applied to the web, it's not about people, it's about information.

Content.

Facebook is a content valuation system.

When you "like" or "share" or comment (on a status, photo, or link) you're voting for it.

The more votes something gets, the more merit it has been given in the nation of Facebook. Facebook is a system where we, the people, put ideas in power by giving them merit.

A meritocracy.

All social media sites are a form of meritocracy, actually.

But...

Did you know that Facebook operates with a complex algorithm based on merit?

That you don't see all your friend's posts with equal opportunity?

It's true. Every time you like, share, or comment on someone's content, Facebook takes note. Over time, you are far more likely to see posts at the top of your feed from people you have previously liked than people you haven't.

Over time, you're ranking people's voices in your Facebook world.

This is why your friend's post with the pic of their new baby boy (the one they posted three days ago) is still at the top of your feed in your iPhone.

It's got 67 likes, many of them fresh. Which means it's been voted to the top, and will stay there until the current level of engagement trails off.

Remember what we learned earlier: You are Facebook, the king or queen of your little domain. Vote wisely. Shape your kingdom with the values you want to see manifested.

And be careful about which ideas you help rise to the top.

Six: Practical Advice for Parents



We can't wrap up this ebook without addressing parenthood.

My oldest two kids (ages 13 and almost 16) are both on Facebook. Maybe yours are too, maybe not. Mine have been using Facebook for awhile.

Why have I let them use it? Two reasons.

1. Youth Group at our church.

Our Youth Pastor has embraced Facebook as a basic fact in the life of a teenager and uses it to communicate with kids about Youth Group related stuff. So he's created a Group for our Youth and uses it like a free website. He still sends parents their beloved emails, of course.

2. Facebook, for now at least, is so basic to the life of a teenager that to keep my kids from using it would put them at a disadvantage with many of their peers.

Personally, I believe the pros outweigh the cons, but not everyone agrees.

Last year my son's school outlawed mobile devices. While their intent is noble, I think they're sticking their heads in the sand. Far better, I think, to teach kids how to use social media than to ignore it—especially since the world we're preparing them to navigate is built on said technology.

And I say all this the morning after my daughter posted some stupid stuff on her profile. More on that in a minute.

Yes, Facebook can gobble too much time and opens up new temptations and land mines—but so do many things in life.

Yes, Facebook can replace genuine, face-to-face community—but it also increases a sense of connectivity previously unavailable to our kids. In some ways, they're far more connected to each other than I was with my friends growing up.

Yes, Facebook creates a space where kids can express stupid, hurtful things—but it also encourages self-expression and creates a space where shy kids can now share things they find hard to say in face-to-face conversations.

Yes, Facebook is full of pointless blather. But it also helps people learn social cues. If you say something pointless, no one "likes" it or shares a comment. Say something stupid, someone may just

call you on it. Of course, the flip side is also true—if your friends are jerks they can reinforce stupid behavior.

All this to say, Facebook isn't inherently evil. Which is why I let my kids use it.

But here's how we do it:

1. I have more than 1,000 friends on Facebook, so I've created a "Close Friends" Group of about thirty people that includes my kids. This helps me zero in on what they're doing online.

2. I keep up on what they're posting.

As a part of this, we also have their Facebook login info just in case we need it (see Infracrion #4, below).

Also related, I hold the administrative rights/password on all my kids devices. I've disabled YouTube, Safari, and set the content ratings myself.

3. We've already discussed online predators with the kids and not to post info that could help sickos locate them. No talking to strangers. Only befriend people they know, that kind of thing. The basics.

4. When they post something sketchy or stupid, we talk about it.

Not on Facebook, in real life.

Of course, if we can't talk right away I comment on what they've posted. Kinda like, "Um, why did you post this? Need to talk after school, buddy pal."

If a kid isn't willing to talk about what they've posted, they're not mature enough to use Facebook. Facebook is about posting things for discussion.

5. We use their dumb posts / likes / comments as teachable moments.

A few important lessons: Kids (and adults, apparently) need to understand what they post online isn't an alter ego, it's an extension of their own heart and mind and people read it that way.

If you say something stupid to your friend, your grandma reads it too.

What you "like" is a reflection of who you are, so be very careful what you endorse.

When posting or commenting, we need to ask, "Is this who I am? What I want to be known for?" If not, don't post or comment.

These kinds of discussions have been pure gold with our kids.

6. When my kids do something stupid on Facebook, we take away the iPod and drive over it, right?

Wrong.

That would remove the opportunity for them to learn from their mistakes, which is the same thing as refusing to prepare them for life.

Facebook mistakes are inevitable, so if they happen sporadically, we just talk it through. If they pile up *in a short period of time*, though, we handle it like so:

First infraction: Discussion ensues, helping them understand what they've done and why it matters.

Their response to the correction is more important than what they've done. This may include discussions about how frequently they post.

Yesterday I made one of my kids post an apology for something they'd posted earlier. The apology went something like, "I posted something stupid today, sorry, this is not who I want to be as a person."

Second infraction: Take the iPod away for a day or two, discuss the issue, then give it back. Their response to the correction is more important than what they've done.

Third infraction: Take the iPod away for a week and discuss the trend they're establishing. Discipline includes introducing the concept of deleting their profile and making them start over after the week is over if things don't improve.

Again, their response to the correction is more important than what they've done.

Fourth infraction: Never been here. To get to this point would indicate more than stupidity. It would indicate rebellion. I would take away the iPod for a month, delete their FB profile, and lay out even stricter rules for the relaunch. If I had to do this more than once, I would probably rethink iPods themselves.

I think parents often feel powerless because Facebook is such a big part of life.

Don't give into that thinking.

We're the parents. We've got to act like it.

Because no one else will.



Well, that's it. Be sure to check out my Facebook fan page for geeks, *Geek Faith Tribe*:

<http://www.facebook.com/christian.geeks>

And don't miss my blog,

<http://www.bradhuebert.com>

Thanks for reading, I hope this was a big help.

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God bless!