Some Things Should Remain Private – What Not to Share On Facebook

By Yaara Lancet

Ah, Facebook. The grandfather of all social networks, where we all share all sorts of weird things without a second thought. Despite its horrible reputation when it comes to privacy, Facebook still manages to lull us into a comfortable and safe feeling, in which many of us forget ourselves, the world, and the fact that absolutely anyone can see what we post on Facebook.

What is it about Facebook that makes it so easy to forget? Ask anyone on the street if they like Facebook, and most people will answer in a resounding "no". They're tired of the frequent interface changes, they don't like Mark Zuckerberg, and they *absolutely hate* how it hurts their privacy. No sooner had they said that, will they be posting something private on Facebook without giving a second thought. And it's not only *"they"* that do that. We all make these mistakes, at least from time to time.

Although it should be pretty obvious by now what you should or should not share on Facebook, it never hurts to refresh your memory. Perhaps you've forgotten yourself again in the heat of the moment, or haven't quite decided what you want your Facebook account to be about. It's time to clean up your act. Follow the tips below, and make sure you're not putting your privacy, job, and security in danger.

Decide: Is Your Facebook Private Or Professional?

This is a very important decision to make, and one you should take the time to think about. Is your Facebook account a place to stay updated with friends and family, or is it a professional account

you want prospect bosses to see, and use to interact with colleagues about work? Unless you're going to be extremely careful about it, your private life and professional life is going to clash.

It doesn't even have to be something obvious like complaining about your work or boss and having it reach the wrong eyes. It can also be sharing inappropriate links or photos of you and having them wind up in the wrong places. In his article about why you shouldn't integrate Facebook, Twitter, & LinkedIn (http://www.makeuseof.com/tag/integrate-facebook-twitter-linkedin/), Dave tells all about why you shouldn't connect all your social accounts, especially if they're used for different purposes. Nevertheless, many of us do that, and have inappropriate links from Facebook wind up on LinkedIn. Awkward.

Since Facebook is geared into sharing with friends, the best thing to do is to keep work-related things away from it as much as possible. There are other networks for that. If you must use your Facebook account for work-related things, or show it at a job interview, make sure to clean it up (http://www.makeuseof.com/tag/clean-up-your-facebook-before-you-go-looking-for-work/) first and make it more professional.

Anything Work Related (Unless it's Positive)
This is an extension of the previous point, but it's worth reiterating. Do NOT use your Facebook account to complain about your work, your salary, your boss, or even things such as the long drive to work, how tired you feel while in the office, or how you'd rather not get up from bed today.

Are you supposed to be at work from 9 to 5? Posting five status updates and 4 photos during that time might not be the brightest idea, especially if you have colleagues (not to mention bosses) in your friends list. People tend to forget this, but other people *can see* when you posted things.

If you must share something about work, you can share interesting job openings, share your actual work, if possible, and even tell your friends how much you like your job. Don't go too far with that one, though, or it might start to look weird.

I Have A Job Interview/Date/Ultrasound Tomorrow!!!!!!

Exciting things are fun to share. When something exciting is going to happen, you want the world to know, even if it's against your better judgment. Think twice (or more, if necessary) before posting anything of this nature. Is this exciting thing going to happen *for sure*? Is the outcome necessarily positive? Does everyone really need to know about this right now?

Being disappointed is bad enough as it is without having to share your disappointment with the world and explain why it happened. Some job interviews and dates don't go that well, and you might not want to share that you're pregnant before you're 100% sure everything is going to be OK. In addition, not everyone on your friends list should know about these things. Your workplace might not appreciate you having a job interview tomorrow, for example. Use your common sense to figure out the rest.

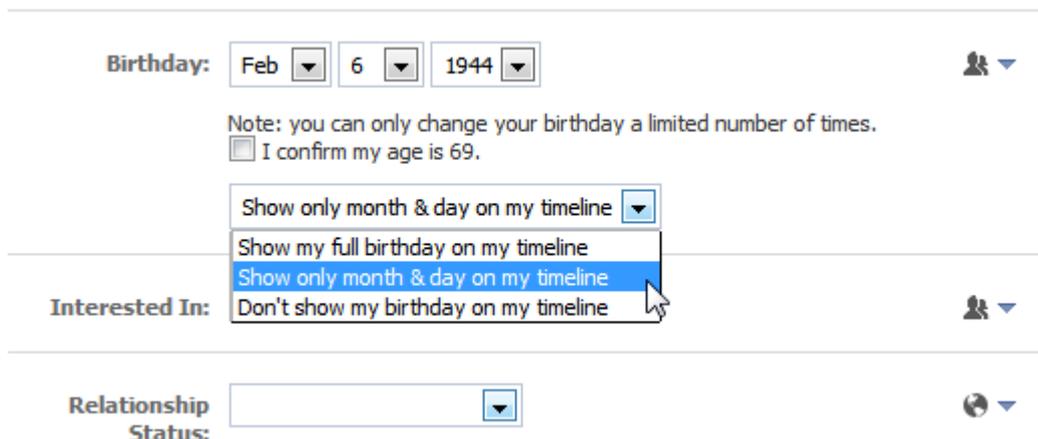**Don't Make It Too Easy To Break Into Your Home**

Your Facebook profile and account might be hidden from the public (as they should be), but this doesn't mean information can't get out. No matter who is supposed to see it, you shouldn't share information that can put your security at risk. And this is surprisingly easy to do.

Did you share your full address on Facebook? Everyone knows where you live. Did you just check-in with Foursquare into the mall? Did you just share that you're going on a week-long vacation? Now everyone knows your house is going to be empty or is empty right now. No matter how you look at it, this is not good. It might sound paranoid, but better safe than sorry.

Don't Make It Too Easy To Break Into Your Account
This follows the same idea as the previous point. Don't ever underestimate people's ability to connect the dots, when they really want to. Do you use your child's or dog's name as your password? Well, you shouldn't, but if you do anyway, it's not as hard for people to guess as you might think. If you've share password hints on Facebook, or even the passwords themselves in the form of names or dates, don't be surprised if someone manages to put 2 and 2 together.

Full Birth Date & Location

This is a no-brainer, but some people still forget about this. Sharing your full birth date and place on Facebook can lead to privacy breaches, and in extreme cases, even identity theft. I'm not saying you should become super paranoid about everything, but this kind of information does not belong on the Web, where anyone at all can see it. If you'd like to get birthday wishes on Facebook, a day and a month is enough, a year is not necessary.

Be Graph Search Ready

Have you heard of Graph Search (http://www.makeuseof.com/tag/cool-things-to-search-for-with-graph-search-weekly-facebook-tips/)? Despite the uproar it created, Facebook's new search finds nothing you didn't put there yourself. So don't click like on inappropriate things or things you don't really like. Don't add random things to your hobbies as a joke. Don't add life events that never happened. These things can backfire badly with Graph Search.

To get a better understanding of this, check out Angela's tips on preparing your account privacy for Graph Search (http://www.makeuseof.com/tag/prepare-your-account-privacy-for-facebook-graph-search-weekly-facebook-tips/).

The (Should Be) Obvious: Anything You Don't Want The World To See

There are many more things one should never share on Facebook, and they all fall under this heading. You must get it into your head that *anything* you share on Facebook can be seen by *anyone.* Your privacy settings (http://www.makeuseof.com/tag/hide-your-personal-information-on-facebook/), while extremely important, will not save you from embarrassments every time. Don't post photos if someone should not see them. Don't say where you are if someone shouldn't know. Don't post photos of your child with their full name. Don't complain or gossip. And for crying out loud, don't talk negatively about your significant other, even if they don't have a Facebook account.

Facebook can be great for keeping up with friends and family, but it can easily become a potential trouble source if you go too far. Keep it simple and fun!

Source: http://www.makeuseof.com/tag/some-things-should-remain-private-what-not-to-share-on-facebook/?utm_campaign=newsletter&utm_source=2012-03-05