



Facebook Guide: Managing Controversy

Getting Started

We all just want a little attention, don't we? Granted some might demonstrate this more openly and, thanks to social media, more publicly. Since we're no longer in control of the message, as they say, it's up to the person behind the brand or organization to handle the attention getters, who can sometimes be detractors. With the added complexity and expectation of transparency, it makes it all the more important for you and your team to be prepared to manage controversy.

Here are some points to consider:

- **State the rules of engagement**
Consider stating your policies somewhere on your Facebook page or through a link from the page. Outline what's acceptable and don't be shy about saying that offensive comments will be removed from the page.
 - **Set the example**
It's important for administrators of groups or pages to be encouraged to express themselves kindly. Set the tone of the group by establishing a consistently positive and professional vibe.
 - **Don't cop out**
Deleting comments that might be critical of your group or cause, but are not offensive, is not cool. If you respond to a critical comment with an open mind and a willingness to listen, this may be enough to neutralize the mood and your detractor may back down.
 - **Breathe first**
Don't be too quick to respond to comments. A loyal group of fans or members often thwart the negative by defending the common good. Sometimes these supporters defend you or your organization better than you ever could. Let influencers influence each other. The words of your community of supporters sometimes carry more weight than the administrator's, so pause before you respond. You may even want to ask a couple of colleagues for their viewpoint; they may provide a perspective you haven't yet considered.
 - **Love thy neighbor**
Your opposition may be tempted to join your group or page. Identify your competitors, their presence on Facebook and their Facebook administrators. Know opposition might become involved in your Facebook community and decide in advance how you'd handle it. You don't have to tolerate comments that are blatantly over the line, and you are free to delete these if needed. However, you might be pleasantly surprised should the "conversation" turn out to be a healthy debate. Your competition may also just want to
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observe what you're doing on Facebook and may take a passive role in participating. If they choose this option, you may want to return the favor by observing them, too. You might learn something that could improve your Facebook community.

- **Take the high road**

Never argue with the opposition. It's poor form. Instead, err on the side of killing your opponents with kindness. Thank them for contributing their opinion and move on to a strong point of your cause.

Conclusion

Dealing with detractors can be handled in one three ways, often decreasing your time investment: convert them, surround them with neutral or positive influencers, or ignore them. Whichever strategy you prefer, it's a good idea to plan how you will handle high-profile detractors.

