



Facebook for Independent Educational Consultants: A Brief Guide

With over 500 million users, Facebook is the world's largest social network and an important form of communication for many people, including high school students and their parents. Still, you may not have considered how the site can help you in your work as an educational consultant.

Here, Go See Campus presents details about the unique value Facebook can offer you and how it can support your clients in the college search. NOTE: The Independent Educational Consultants Association gave a workshop recently on "Social Media for Independent Educational Consultants". Explore resources at IECA's website for additional perspectives on using social media at <http://www.iecaonline.com>.

What is Facebook?

An online "social network" is an Internet system that lets people stay in touch with one another. It also helps connect them to new people and resources. Because of the sensitivity of some personal communications, privacy can be a major concern, and so high-quality social networks will go to great lengths to give you control over what information you make public. Facebook lays out its privacy features at <http://www.facebook.com/help/?page=419>.

What are the benefits of a social network? Well, millions of people, organizations, and companies make information accessible to you in a way that can be faster and more flexible than searching for the same information online. In Facebook's case, it's all free.

How Might Educational Consultants Use Facebook?

There are two good reasons to start using Facebook professionally...

1. Stay connected to college admissions trends

What if you could easily follow the latest news from the universities that your clients target? What if you could get updates on application procedures and announcements of new financial aid programs from admissions offices? And, what if it all could be done without filling up your inbox and overwhelming you with email?



Those are some of the reasons that universities have begun creating Facebook Pages: mini-websites that share information publicly with other Facebook users. You can connect to these Pages with a single click (the terminology for making this connection is "liking a Page".)

When you "like" the Page, links, messages, and other content from that Page will appear automatically whenever you log into Facebook. You can see if there is anything important from the colleges and pass it along to your clients. Providing valuable information on a consistent basis can help engage your students and parents in the college selection process.

Also, you can encourage students and parents who are already on Facebook to explore these university Pages for themselves. Some colleges make extra efforts to show their personalities through their posts, whether they are sharing pictures of campus, videos of recent school events, or answers to common questions. All of this can help in a student's search.

2. Promote your business

Consider creating a presence for your company on Facebook. This will allow you to

- be accessible to your target audience. While you may know that plenty of high school students are on Facebook, you might be surprised to learn how many parents are also active members of the site. If they search Facebook for "educational consulting services" in their geographic area, you will want your company to be one of the results they see.
- get exposure to potential clients. When someone "likes" your company's Facebook Page, the information, links, and events you share appear on that user's personal profile. Friends of that user may see the information you shared, and they may contact you to learn more about your services.
- receive referrals from clients. It's easy for a student or parent to pass along a link to your company's Page on Facebook to all of their friends.

Here are some tips for getting started with a company Facebook Page:



go see campus

Plan Campus Visits and Make the Most of the College Search at <http://goseecampus.com>



<http://facebook.com/goseecampus>



<http://www.twitter.com/goseecampus>

1. After you have a personal account set up in Facebook, go to "Create a Page" at <http://www.facebook.com/pages/create.php>. Choose "Official Page" and follow the directions.
2. Facebook will invite you to upload an image to serve as your company's profile picture. You might use your logo or a head-shot, but either way, be sure once you have uploaded it that it looks good at the top left of the screen as well as in the miniature version (the "thumbnail") that appears next to your posts.
3. Begin posting links, comments, images, and whatever content you think is relevant to your clients. It's a good idea to have some information already on your Page before you start inviting people to "like" it. Also, you may find it helpful to create a content calendar so that you are posting on a regular basis without overwhelming your clients.
4. Consider decking out your Page with applications from Facebook that you think will help increase visitors and engagement. You can do this by clicking "Edit Page", and then, clicking "Applications". Advanced users should consider applications that let you add your own unique content; the FBML application allows you to write HTML code within your page, giving it the same sort of functionality as your company's webpage. You can get this at <http://www.facebook.com/apps/application.php?id=4949752878>.
5. Begin promoting your presence on Facebook in all of your communications. When you reach 25 "likes", you can request a personalized domain name for your Facebook page, like <http://www.facebook.com/yourcompany>. The request form is at <http://www.facebook.com/username>.

The idea of getting involved with a new technology may be daunting. However, if you are already posting content to your company's website, incorporating Facebook is not much more time-consuming. Plus, it allows your content to reach your clients in places they are already visiting, and it expands your reach to a much broader audience.

--

If you already have a Facebook Page, let us know at <http://www.facebook.com/goseecampus> other ways you like to use it!