
Robbie Kellman Baxter's Top 10 Reasons Professionals are Staying Off Facebook...and Why They Should Join Anyway!

by Robbie Kellman Baxter



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STRATEGIES

I'll admit it—I'm a Facebook junkie. I also have accounts on LinkedIn, Twitter, and my college and business school communities that I diligently keep current. But I love Facebook. I love playing WordTwist with my dad, my sister and my college friends. I love reading status updates and knowing who's organizing their sock drawer and who's inspired by Thomas Friedman's latest article. I love looking at photos of people's vacations and scanned images from camps and bar mitzvahs of the 80s.

I also believe that my time on Facebook is about more than just fun. It's actually a way of building deeper relationships with people in my professional community. People ask me all the time why I spend so much time on Facebook—and I tell them that it's good for business. Look at who's using it most—people just out of college and people on the cutting edge of technology—VCs, entrepreneurs, industry analysts. It's obvious that it is the way we will be communicating in the future. So you might as well figure it out now. Below are the top reasons my professional colleagues are staying off Facebook—with my rebuttals.

1. It's a time-sink. You can spend the whole day playing on Facebook. Some of my personal favorite time wasters include browsing the photo albums of acquaintances, clicking on the pages of friends-of-friends to learn about their interests, playing WordTwist, and watching funny videos. *Robbie says: there are so many ways to waste time—you can waste time watching TV, or chatting on the phone—but that doesn't mean we give up TVs or phones. Treat Facebook the way you might treat any other type of connecting activities—phone, face-to-face etc. First, make sure you only participate in ways that are enjoyable for you. Second, be disciplined about how, and how much, time is spent on Facebook.*
2. It infringes on my privacy. This is a big concern with my colleagues. What if my boss saw that my status said that I was in a job interview, or was nursing a hangover? What if a prospective client saw the photos of a girls weekend-what happens in Vegas should stay in Vegas. Do I really want my grandma to know that I'm politically liberal? Certain status updates could lead to some

uncomfortable conversations that never had to happen. *Robbie says: Facebook has many ways to protect your privacy. You can limit your entire presence on Facebook, down to your name, to your network or just your personal friends. You can choose not to post comments or photos that might conflict with the image you choose to project. It should go without saying that posting "...hates her job" or "...is soooo wasted" should not be posted (or emailed for that matter) anywhere public.*

3. It could be dangerous. The privacy issue can go one step further into more dangerous territory. For example, there are probably dozens of scams that are based on information that is easily obtained on Facebook. We don't know exactly what those scams are, but it is easy to imagine unsavory activities that take advantage of having our contact information, photos of loved ones and all-too-frequent status updates. With all the issues around identity theft—it just seems safer to avoid unnecessary publicity. *Robbie says: it is interesting to note that the Facebook vanguard, both younger generations and the older VCs and business execs working in social media, seem comfortable keeping their entire profiles available to the public—maybe we are all a little overzealous about protecting our security on Facebook—given that we leave doors unlocked, hand our credit cards to teenaged shop clerks and our car keys to valets we don't know.*
4. I prefer to stay in touch in other ways A lot of great networkers have avoided participating in any of the social networks because, they say, they just don't need another channel to communicate. They prefer to get together in person, or on the phone, or stay current via email. They send long newsy holiday cards and host annual pool parties—so why do they need another way to keep in touch with the same crowd? *Robbie says: everyone has their preferred way to communicate—if it is important to you to be connected, you need to respect the preferences of your friends and colleagues. In addition, Facebook is a really efficient way to reconnect with people from your past—it's quick and easy to search specific names, and you can find other friends by reviewing the friends of your friends. I've "found" some great old friends I haven't seen since junior high school on Facebook.*
5. It doesn't help me professionally—it's just for fun, and I prefer to have fun in other ways. I do not like to network, and do not see any value in Facebook. I can't see any professional results from Facebook. *Robbie says: the value of networking goes well beyond work. If you accept that people help each other succeed professionally, and people are more likely to help those they know well, then Facebook is actually an efficient way to maintain and grow relationships with a broad group of friends and acquaintances across the globe. And knowing people's personal and professional lives gives you a level of intimacy that strengthens the bonds.*

6. I don't want to know so much about other people, it's creepy. I can go on Facebook and see my cousins chugging beers at college or in-hospital photos of my client hours after giving birth. A friend of mine was uncomfortable to stumble upon photos of her rabbi partying on a Saturday night. Even if people go to great lengths to keep their Facebook page private, they have little control over what other people post. For example, I know several psychologists who are invisible on Facebook to everyone but their close friends—and yet many of them are tagged in other people's photos. *Robbie says: once you get on Facebook, you will find some people more interesting (or more creepy) than others. And you can decide whose profiles you want to follow more regularly and set preferences accordingly. Just as in real life there are people we can't get enough of and people we've already had enough of—on Facebook, it takes all kinds!*
7. I like to keep my personal and professional lives separate. I spend enough time and energy at work. I don't want to know about people's feuds, toddlers and household projects. If I cross the line with my boss or direct reports, the relationship might get too intimate in a weird way. *Robbie says: Fair enough. If you don't want your colleagues to know you as a person, then you probably shouldn't be on Facebook. I can virtually guarantee that as soon as you set up your Facebook profile, your colleagues will try to friend you. There is really no polite way to ignore them—because ultimately, the only reason you can give is "I don't really consider you a friend...and FB is only for my friends". But why would you want to keep your colleagues from getting to know you? I know so many people who carefully avoided working with friends or crossing the "colleague" line with folks at work. Once it happens, people generally find that friends are great to work with. Friends have an extra incentive to cover your back, and help you succeed. The Great Places to Work Institute has found that the single most important factor in being a great place to work is having a "best friend" at the office. And, if you have friends at work, you'll never have to eat alone.*
8. It's too hard! I don't know how to post photos and don't have any idea how to come up with the clever status updates that everyone else seems to have time to do. *Robbie says: My parents and in-laws are on Facebook, as are my teenage cousins. If you're smart enough to get online, you're smart enough to set up and use a Facebook profile. Trust me on this one.*
9. My kids will think I'm spying on them. Facebook is for the younger generation. It was started on a college campus and was designed for students. I will look ridiculous on Facebook, and embarrass my teenagers. *Robbie says: It may be hard for the teen set to believe that adults are finding tremendous value in using Facebook, but it's true. As of February 2009, about 45% of all Facebook users were*

over 25, with the fastest growing demographic women over 55. And, by the way, seeing what your kids are doing on Facebook is an important part of parenting in today's world.

10. It might send the wrong message about me and my level of seriousness. Facebook is an activity for people who share too much about themselves and aren't hard workers. *Robbie says: some of the most intense people I know are on Facebook, including most Venture Capitalists and Tech Company executives. These people often are part of the vanguard of new technologies—the first people to use laptops, iPhones and other indispensable modern conveniences. Facebook isn't popular with all professional communities yet—but it soon will be—at least among the professional communities where relationships give you a competitive advantage.*

Facebook has been a great way to build more relationships with clients and colleagues. By using Facebook, I'm also current on careers of old friends and colleagues—in some case leading to great professional conversations and partnerships. If you have relationships with people already, wouldn't it be nice to have an easy way to know what they're doing professionally and what's on their mind?

Take a chance. Establish a profile and connect with 10 friends who are already on Facebook. See if it is for you. If you don't try, you'll never know!

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- [American Chronicle](#)
- [Small Business Informer](#)