Managing a neighbourhood Facebook group

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Neighbourhood Facebook groups

Facebook groups are a virtual way to bring neighbours together and create a sense of community. Group members can connect through things like sharing recommendations on new local businesses, providing updates on neighbourhood projects, and posting information about events. Despite the benefits, there are also challenges associated with Facebook groups like conflict, difficult comments, and privacy.

This guide provides new and experienced moderators with helpful information to create and manage a neighbourhood Facebook group.

Nextdoor, Slack, Microsoft Teams, WhatsApp, and other platforms can also be used to support group connections. When thinking about connecting virtually, explore different options and see what best meets your needs.

Starting a Facebook group

This section provides some important tips for getting your Facebook group started.

- There is a difference between Facebook groups and pages. On groups, all members are allowed to post and on pages only admin members can post. To learn more about the differences and decide what option is right for your neighbourhood, check out this <u>article.</u>

- Develop clear rules for your Facebook group to outline what types of behaviours and posts are allowed. For help getting started, explore other neighbourhood Facebook groups in Waterloo and check out their rule sections.

Rules don't have to be long, formal documents. An easy to follow set of rules can help establish a positive group environment and promote acceptable behaviour. For tips on writing rules, check out this <u>video</u>.

- Develop a clear process for dealing with difficult behaviour and when people break the rules. This may include a number of warnings, consequences for breaking rules, and grounds for removal from the group. Make sure the process is clear and group members are aware of it.

- If you are establishing a group specifically for neighbours in your neighbourhood, consider how you will screen people. Will you ask prospective members for their address or street prior to joining? Or will membership be invite-only? To learn more about screening, check out this underline article and video.

- Know your role as moderator. Group moderators make sure rules are being followed, monitor the group, and keep members engaged and informed by sharing information.

What is the difference between a group admin and a moderator? Admins are the owners of the page and have greater permissions. Moderators can be assigned to manage the page and their permissions are slightly limited in comparison to admins. For more information on these different roles, check out this Facebook help page.

- Moderating Facebook groups can be time consuming and sometimes difficult. Consider recruiting other neighbours to help as co-moderators and co-admins. To add an admin or moderator to your group, review this step-by-step guide.

- Promotion is important to encourage new members to join your Facebook group. Spend time thinking about promotion early on. If you have a phone or email list, use this contact information to spread the news about the new group. Also, consider creating and distributing flyers, chatting with your neighbours, and posting information on a neighbourhood chalk or message board. It's a good idea to promote the group in different ways.

- When creating your group, spend time selecting the right privacy settings. Privacy settings determine who can join the group, see posts, and if the group is searchable. While you can update group privacy settings after creation, it's important to protect member privacy from the start. For information on privacy settings, check out this article posted by Facebook.

Privacy is important. In addition to privacy settings, make sure group members respect each other's privacy. Think about this when creating your group rules.

- Features of Facebook groups and pages can change. To check out what is new, visit Facebook's community website. Here you'll find updates and helpful resources.

Managing a Facebook group

Once you've created your Facebook group, it's time to start developing your virtual community. This section highlights some helpful tips for posting content and managing your group.

- Dealing with negative comments and posts is a difficult part of moderating a neighbourhood Facebook group. People respond to situations differently and there are some issues that make neighbours frustrated and upset. While conflict and disagreement are normal responses to change, being respectful to neighbours is essential. It's important to be prepared for how your group will address these posts and comments.

- Adding key word alerts can also help you monitor your group. This feature allows you to add a custom list of words and phrases that may require attention. When these words are mentioned in your group, admins and moderators will receive a notification. For example, if your group does not allow buying and selling, flag words like "sell," "buy," or "for sale." Moderators will be notified when posts or comments contain these words and phrases. For more information on setting up and using key word alerts, visit this guide.

- Neighbours may want to advertise their small businesses or fundraising initiatives. Decide how you want to handle this and have a clear process in place. Some neighbourhood groups do not allow advertising, some have limitations on when it can be posted, and others do not. Think about a solution that works for your group.

If a post is causing a lot of negativity and rules are being ignored, consider outlining why the post is not allowed, turning off comments, or removing it entirely. This may be necessary if the post/comment violates group rules. If you are removing a post or comment, consider reaching out to the person that posted it through private message to let them know why you are removing it.

- Posting regular updates, information on community events and initiatives, fun quotes or riddles, and photos of the neighbourhood, are great ways to keep members engaged in the Facebook group. Consider working with fellow admins and moderators to develop a posting schedule or weekly post goal.

- Creating content to post on your Facebook group can be time consuming. To save time and still share important details, consider sharing posts from other pages or people. Some local examples may include the City of Waterloo, Region of Waterloo, and local organizations. Before sharing, make sure the post is relevant, appropriate, and from a reliable and reputable source. Keep in mind that some posts may not be shareable due to privacy settings. If a post is shareable, you will see a small share icon.

Sometimes a simple, positive question can encourage members to chat and participate. For example, what is something great that a neighbour has done to help you recently?

- Consider the dangers of posting and interacting online such as privacy violations, cyber bullying, phishing, predators, malware, and cyber scams. The Waterloo Regional Police Services (WRPS) provides online safety tips for parents and children. Check out the Online Safety and Social Media page and the Online Crime Safety page.

- Planning group events is a great way to promote neighbourhood engagement. Facebook has a variety of tools that support event planning and promotion. You can create event pages that display details, poll group members to determine what events they are most interested in, and post announcements about upcoming events. For information on the event planning tools, check out this helpful guide.

- Sharing photos of neighbourhood events and projects is a fun way to keep members informed about what is going on. Before taking and sharing photos of neighbours, make sure you have their consent. If you are taking photos at a public event, it's a good practice to display a poster to let attendees know that photos are being taken and how they will be used. For a template poster, reach out to neighbourhoods@waterlo.ca.

- The best way to protect yourself from copyright concerns is to develop and post your own graphics and images. Instead of posting an image that you found on the internet, you can create graphics or promotional material by using a free online tool like Canva. To learn more about copyright and posting content on Facebook, check out this online FAQ.

- While Facebook is one tool for connecting with neighbours and sharing information, make sure you are connecting with neighbours that don't use it. Sharing information in multiple forms (such as mail-outs, on different social media platforms, posters, signage, and word of mouth) helps make sure all neighbours are informed and included.

Resources

Check out these helpful resources for information on neighbourhood Facebook pages and groups:

- <u>Chris Englert shares her experiences as a moderator of her neighbourhood's Facebook group.</u> She provides real, helpful guidance for dealing with difficult posts, limiting membership, creating rules, etc.

- <u>Facebook offers a variety of helpful resources</u>. Learn how to start a new group, change privacy settings, and create a sense of community in your group.

- Check out the <u>list of tools that are available to use in Facebook groups</u>. Explore how to schedule posts, use keyword alerts, or co-watch videos as a group with Watch Party.

- <u>Canva is a free, online graphic design tool that help users create social media content.</u> Use this site to create a Facebook cover page, design posts, or make a promotional video!

- Surveillance Self-Defense provides tips and tools for safe online communication. Check out this article to <u>learn how to reduce privacy risks associated with Facebook groups</u>.

This toolkit was last updated February 2024.