Chapter 2

Joining the Facebook Community

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In This Chapter

▶ Learning how to make new connections

▶ Signing up with Facebook

▶ Finding friends and adding them to your list

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*F*acebook is all about making connections. Whether it be reuniting with old high school chums, or meeting new people with similar interests, Facebook provides a framework that makes it easy to discover, reach out, and share with others. Smart marketers are discovering ways to attract and grow their network of Facebook clients, known as *fans* in the Facebook universe, to achieve their objectives.

But before you can market to Facebook members, you need to be part of the Facebook community. Facebook offers plenty of opportunities for organizations to get exposure, many available for free. But, before you can create a Facebook Page, start your own Facebook Group, run a Facebook ad campaign, build a Facebook application, or sell your wares on the Facebook Marketplace, you need to be a Facebook member. So, if you haven't already taken the plunge, what are you waiting for?

So, What Took You So Long?

If you're like many people, perhaps you thought (or still think) that Facebook wasn't for you. That Facebook is all about fun and games and flirting and preteen angst, which has no value as a business tool. Or that only bad things could come from sharing your thoughts, pictures, likes, and dislikes for the entire world to see.

Or, perhaps your children's protests sounded the loudest warning, bringing both trepidation and a feeling of being so out of touch with technology that you'd be rejected, denounced, or publicly drawn and quartered by the *digeteria* (a cute name for the digital elite).

But now, after all your belly-aching, procrastinating, and gnashing of your teeth, you've decided to join Facebook and see for yourself what the fuss is about and how it may help to expand your business. It seems a day doesn't go by when you don't read something about the Web's newest phenomenon, or worse, receive an invitation to join from a friend or work associate. And although you might be familiar with professional online networks, such as LinkedIn or Xing, you've so far resisted the lure of Facebook.

After all, you're resourceful, a true professional with real business acumen. Relax, you can figure this out. If 250 million people have already discovered and joined Facebook, how hard can it be?

Networking in Facebook

If you imagine a map representing all of your relationships and then expand it to include the external relationships of each of those contacts, you get an idea of the concept behind a social network such as Facebook. When you connect with folks through the Facebook confirmation process, it's as though you're inviting them into your circle.

Whether you're representing yourself, a business, a nonprofit organization, a polka band, or a political cause, in Facebook, just like in the real world, your ability to form strong relationships and influence your fans determines your ultimate success or failure in achieving your objectives (that is, getting what you want).

Engaging with your fans

Facebook wasn't the first online social network, but has arguably done the best job in providing its members a safe, social environment in which their actions (for example, posting a photo album), if they so choose, can be automatically broadcast as news stories to those friends who are interested in reading it.

Businesses are now realizing the value of being part of Facebook to engage their fan base. It's this viral capability, or ability to broadcast actions as news stories, that has helped fuel the growth of Facebook and makes it an ideal environment from which to market to other members.

Embracing openness

Although no man is an island, Facebook is making it harder and harder to live in anonymity. That's why there needs to be an implicit, trusted, symbiotic relationship with people in your circle of friends. Your Facebook friends' actions might very well end up on your Facebook profile, and similarly, your actions could end up on their profile. This trade-off between privacy and openness is difficult to balance for most new members, not to mention marketers looking to leverage social media.

To some extent, Facebook requires a new mindset based on the concept of openness. Facebook marketers need to embrace openness, while understanding the inevitable challenges and pitfalls that go along with it. Unlike previous mass media (such as, print, radio, and television), Facebook is a two-way medium, lending itself to a new kind of relationship between consumer and marketer — a relationship based on trust, openness, and transparency.

It's important to note that there is a major generational shift in the amount of information people disclose via online social networks. The younger generation (teens and college students) has much less fear and trepidation of broadcasting their lives, warts and all, via Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, blogs, and other social media, whereas those who didn't grow up with the Internet are typically much more hesitant to release even the slightest bit of information.

Since the lines are blurring between many people's professional and personal lives, you need to realize that business relationships may in fact crossover and become part of your Facebook personal network of friends. But that doesn't mean your entire life or business needs to be an open book. Basic common-sense rules that apply while on Facebook include:

- ✔ Only disclose information that you're okay making publicly available.
- ✔ Don't be nasty or offensive because you never know who will read your post.
- ✔ Never reveal personal details that you might regret later.
- ✔ Never publish your contact information.

Whether you're commenting on a photo or writing how you feel as a status update, the information that you disclose is not necessarily a private conversation. Openness has its risks and consequences, so you have to decide where you draw the line.

Getting Started on Facebook

Now that you've glimpsed how Facebook can be a great marketing tool for your business, you need to sign up and start using this social networking tool. You'll then be on your way to joining, creating a profile, uploading your photos, and finding friends for fun and profit.

TIP

Facebook often changes its Web site without prior notice. Some of the features in this chapter might appear slightly different from what we describe at the time we published this book. Please note that we strive to be as current and accurate as possible.

Joining Facebook

To sign up for your own Facebook account, all you need is a valid e-mail address.

REMEMBER

Businesses can create their own dedicated presence on Facebook (see Chapter 4), but you still need to be a Facebook member to access much of the site, use its features, and interact with other members.

Follow these easy steps to register with Facebook:

1. **Open your Internet browser and go to `www.facebook.com`.**

   The Facebook welcome screen appears, as shown in Figure 2-1.
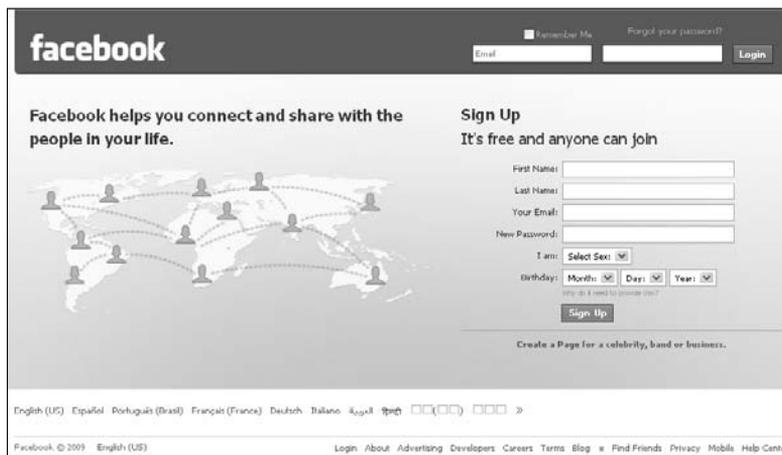
Figure 2-1:
The welcome screen allows for easy sign-up.

2. In the Sign Up section, type your First Name and Last Name in the name fields.

3. Type your e-mail address in the Your Email address field.

Facebook sends a confirmation e-mail to this e-mail address, which completes your sign up process.

4. Type a password in the New Password field.

5. Select your sex in the I Am drop-down box.

6. Select your birth date in the Birthday drop-down boxes.

Please note, birth date is required to ensure that all members comply with age requirements. Often, members who do not care to share their actual birthday use Jan. 1 in the date field. Also, Facebook gives you the option of hiding your date-of-birth year, to shield your actual age.

7. Click the Sign Up button.

After you click Sign Up, the Security Check feature appears, as shown in Figure 2-2.

8. Type the *captcha* that you see in the Security Check section.

A captcha is a security feature in which you need to enter the exact phrase you see on the screen.

9. Click the Sign Up button again.

10. In your confirmation e-mail, click the link to authenticate your membership.

Congratulations! You are now officially a Facebook member — one in a community of more than 250 million people around the globe.
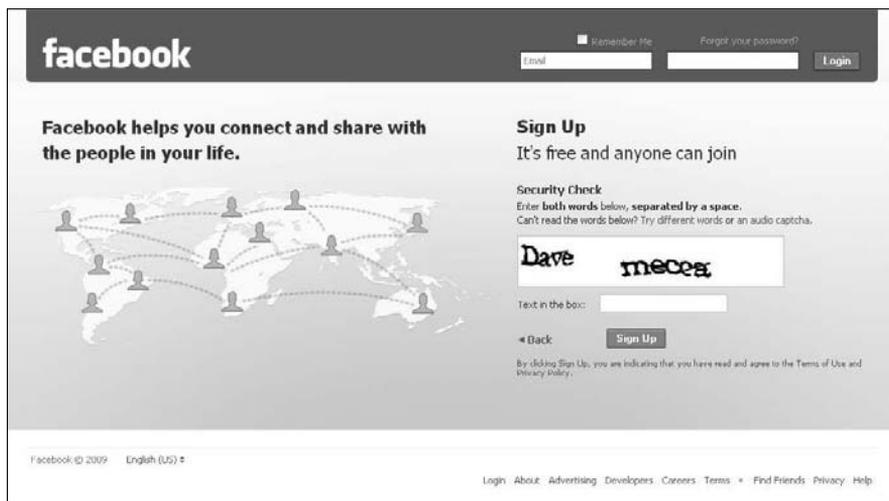

Figure 2-2: The Facebook Security Check feature for member registration.

Creating a personal profile

Facebook tries to make filling out your profile information as painless as possible with a simple, three-step process. You can choose to enter as much or as little information as you desire.

Although your protective side may be telling you not to reveal anything about your personal history, it's important to note that by adding this information, you're making it easier for people you may know to find you. However, the eventual number of contacts you add as friends and the amount of information that you disclose is entirely up to you.

For example, by not listing your high school, you won't be included in search results for that particular school; therefore, you're invisible to classmates who might be looking for you. Likewise, by not adding previous companies that you worked for, past associates looking to reconnect with you will have a harder time discovering your whereabouts.

REMEMBER

Providing personal information on this page is not mandatory; you can simply skip these questions by clicking the Skip this step link in the lower-right corner of the shaded box. If your goal is to sign up as a business member to create a business Page, then follow this simple three-step process, and head to Chapter 4.

WARNING!

Only disclose information that you're comfortable having publicly available. This goes for profile questions on political views, religion, relationship status, as well as for age, sex, and home neighborhood. Don't ever post unsavory or compromising photos as your profile picture, or anywhere within Facebook. Your actions are transmitted to others in the form of news alerts, so don't do anything that you wouldn't want everyone you're connected with to know. There are too many stories of people losing a job or a job opportunity because of improper images on their Facebook profile pages.

Find friends

After responding to your confirmation e-mail, you are then whisked off to the Find Friends Using Your Email Account page, as shown in Figure 2-3. To find people on Facebook that you already know, use your existing contacts, already stored in your Webmail account (Facebook supports AOL Mail, Microsoft Hotmail, Google Gmail, Yahoo! Mail, and others) and Instant Message account (Facebook supports AIM and Windows Live Messenger). You can then simply select the contacts that you want to *friend* via Facebook.

REMEMBER

If you provide a friend's e-mail address, Facebook stores this information to send invitations and reminders, to register a friend connection if your invitation is accepted, to allow you to see invitations you have sent, and to track the success of its referral program.

Figure 2-3:
Import your existing contacts to reach out and friend someone you know.
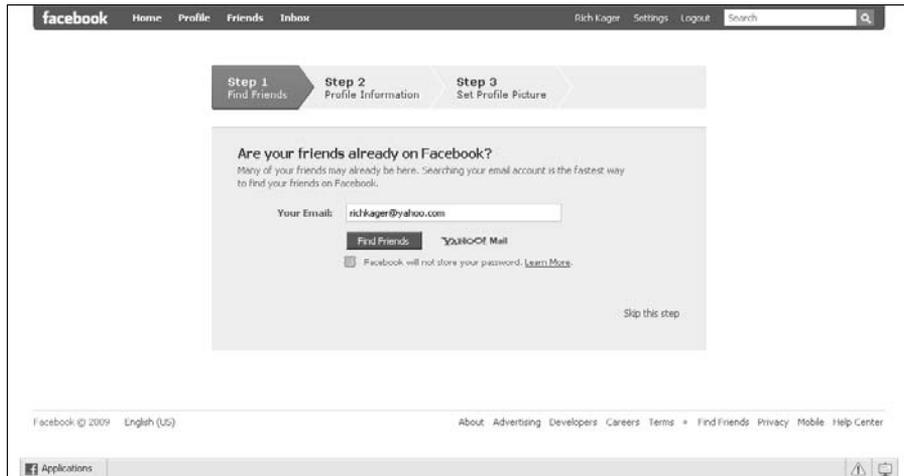
Facebook then extends a friend request to those contacts. Contacts that are existing Facebook members receive a friend request notification on their Facebook profile page. Contacts who are not registered members receive an e-mail invite from Facebook.

TIP

To prevent someone from finding you on Facebook, search for that person's name, and click the click the Report/Block Person link on the right side just below their photo.

Add profile information

Type your education history, work history, and associated years on the Fill Out Your Profile Info page, shown in Figure 2-4. Yawn! This can take a while! Click the Save & Continue button when you finish.

TIP

Business professionals may want to use the city where their company or industry is based. For example, many hi-tech professionals outside Northern California still prefer to list Silicon Valley as their regional network because of the access it provides to other Silicon Valley members.

Set profile picture

First impressions are everything. Never underestimate the importance of a good profile picture. Facebook is a visual medium and everyone is interested in personal appearances. Make your face count on Facebook. And to be sure, it should be your face — not your pet, your child, your significant other, or, worse still, the Facebook default image.

To add your profile picture, roll your mouse over the existing Facebook default image and you see the link prompting you to upload a picture. Click the link. Notice a pencil icon by your options in Figure 2-5. Whenever you enter Facebook edit mode, you see this pencil icon.

Figure 2-4:
Fill out your profile with education and work history.
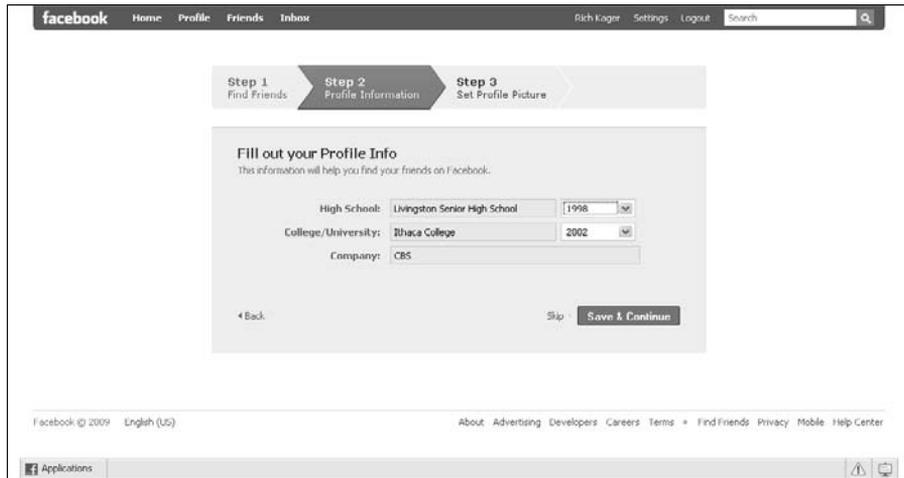
Figure 2-5:
Adding your profile picture is a snap. You can even take it yourself if a digital camera is connected to your computer.
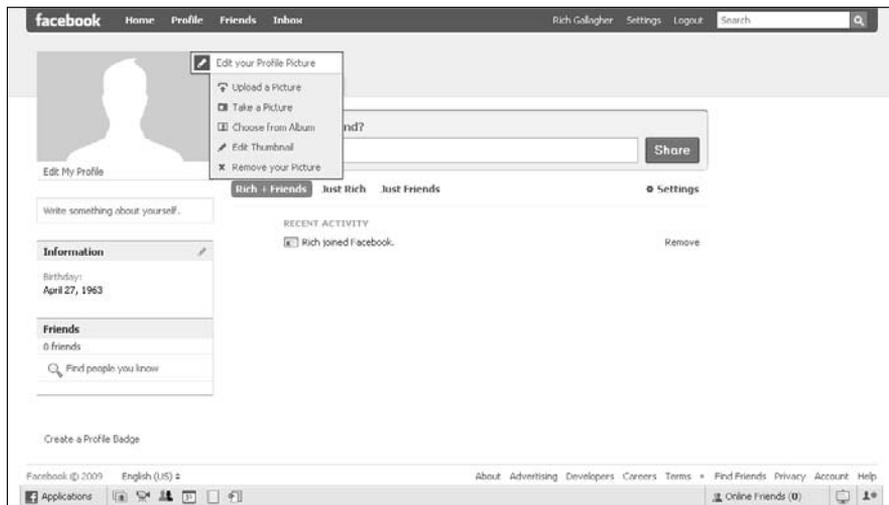
You are then presented with a range of picture options, including:

- ✔ Upload a Picture
- ✔ Take a Picture
- ✔ Choose from Album
- ✔ Edit Thumbnail
- ✔ Remove Your Picture

For first time users, click Upload a Picture to search your computer's hard drive. Select an image file and click Upload. You can upload a JPG, GIF, or PNG file up to a maximum of 4MB. You also have the option to use Facebook's edit, delete, and crop tools. Figure 2-6 shows a rather hip profile photo.

Figure 2-6:
You can further adjust your profile photo by clicking Edit Thumbnail.
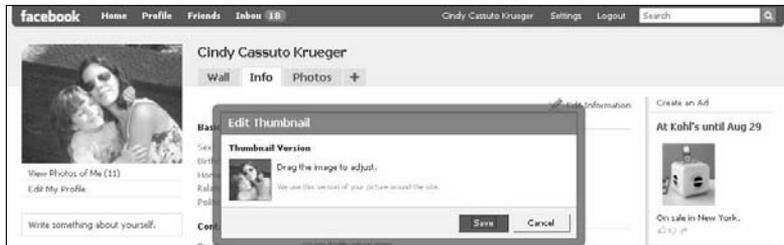
TIP

A neat trick to using larger images is selecting Choose from Album within your profile picture edit menu. You can then select an existing photo that you have previously uploaded to a Facebook photo album, which expands the image to a height of 600 pixels.

TIP

If you don't have a suitable image on your hard drive but have an external or built-in camera, you can choose Take a Picture from the profile picture edit menu, which then asks for your permission to allow Facebook's internal Take a Profile Picture application to capture your picture and automatically upload it to your profile.

You can change your profile picture at any time. You can even set up a profile photo album and rotate between those images. After you have a profile photo, you can further refine it by *tagging* the photo, where you attach names to people pictured in the photo. If they're a Facebook friend of yours, they receive a notification that they're tagged in a photo, along with a link back to your picture. See Chapter 6 for more information on tagging.

One of the most compelling yet daunting aspects of Facebook is that each member gets to create his own profile. This is a chance to define yourself via responses to both standard and more esoteric questions, such as Write Something about Yourself. Like you, your profile should be unique, honest, and engaging.

REMEMBER

One final note about customizing your Facebook profile. As Shakespeare's Hamlet said, "To thy own self be true." That could just as easily have been written about Facebook profiles in addition to the prince's quest for the truth. Be honest, be transparent, and most of all, *be yourself.*

Logging into Facebook

When you're a Facebook member, you can log in from most computers connected to the Internet.

To log into Facebook, surf over to www.facebook.com and you'll see two entry fields on the top for your e-mail and password. When you log in, use the same e-mail address that you used when registering. Click the Login button and you're immediately taken to your Home page.

TIP

If you are on your own computer and want to be remembered on future visits, click the Remember Me check box above the e-mail field. This allows you to avoid the login process and go directly to your Home page when entering the site.

For new members, logging in to Facebook is always a chicken-and-egg-type situation. Without many friends, not many News Feed stories are generated. So, Facebook presents new users with the following options (as seen in Figure 2-7):

- ✔ **Find People You Email**
- ✔ **Find People You Know**
- ✔ **View and Edit Your Profile**

Figure 2-7:
The Home page for new members connects you with people you know.
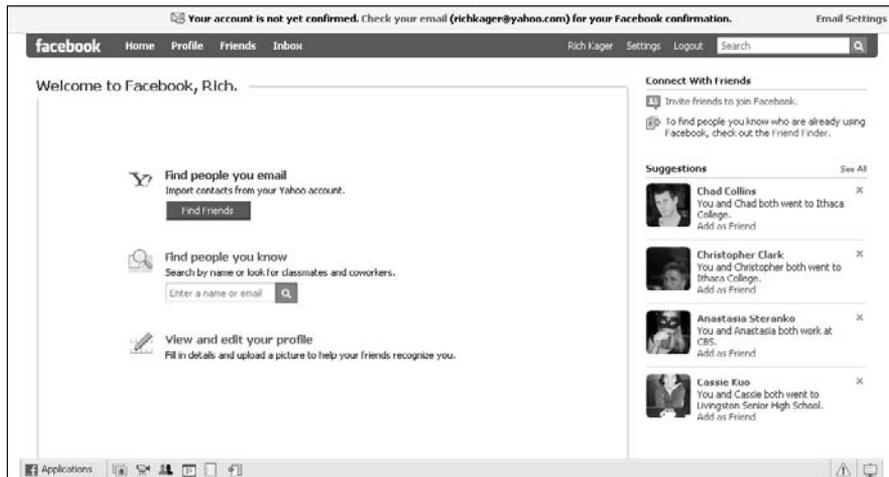
Finding Friends for Fun and Profit

After becoming a Facebook member and setting up your personal profile, it's time to start making friends. After all, being on Facebook without friends is like being in a forest with no trees. It gets lonely and there's not much to do or see.

Facebook members add connections by *friending* one another. That is, you send a friend request to someone, and the other party confirms that you are indeed a friend before becoming your Facebook friend. If a friend request is rejected, Facebook does not send the person who made the request a rejection notification. When a friend invitation is confirmed, Facebook sends a confirmation notice to your registered e-mail address and posts it to your News Feed and Notifications menu depending on your privacy settings (see Chapter 3).

As you grow your network of friends, this can be a significant asset to your business. By having an opt-in audience, you can leverage your friend-base through comments, updates, and Inbox e-mail. Just like in the real world, having influential friends can benefit you in many ways. You just have to know how to influence the influencers. If you launch a Facebook Page (for more information on building a Page, see Chapter 4), you can transition your friends into fans of your Page through gentle coaxing.

Finding friends

You can find friends and contacts by using several search and import capabilities within Facebook. To start, return to your Home page by clicking the Home tab on your top navigation bar. Facebook displays the Find People You Know link in the center of this page. Click this link and Facebook displays all your search and import options, as shown in Figure 2-8.

At the bottom left of the screen, you see the Find Former High School Classmates, Find Current or Past College Classmates, and Find Current or Past Coworkers links. These tools are useful in tracking down old friends, family, and associates. There's also a default search box for searching via name or e-mail address.

Drill into each of the search functions a little deeper to get a sense of the search options available. For example, with the classmate searches you can add the class year(s) that you attended or graduated from a particular school, or leave the year fields blank to return the widest possible matches. By experimenting with narrowing and widening the results, you can discover many close contacts, familiar names, and old friends long forgotten. Figure 2-9 shows a search for friends using the school search feature.

Figure 2-8:
Facebook provides tools to help you discover contacts and grow your friend base.
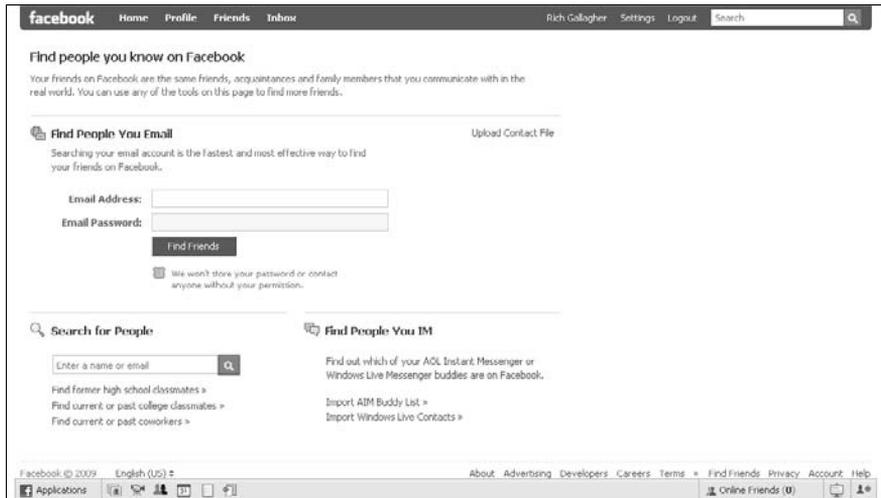
Figure 2-9:
Looking for friends using Facebook's Search page.

REMEMBER
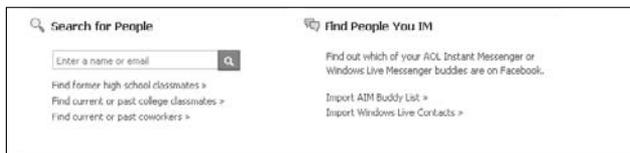
It's up to you who to friend. If you receive a friend request from someone, you don't have to accept it. If you don't actually know the person or have any friends in common, a good rule of thumb is not to accept the request, unless your goal is to expand your network no matter what. You can find all outstanding friend requests on your Home page. If you want to accept the request, simply click Confirm. If you don't want to accept the request, click Ignore.

After you identify a Facebook member worthy of your friendship, you can extend a friend request by clicking the Add as Friend link to the right of that person's name within the search results. You also find these other links: Send a Message, View Friends, and View Friends in Common (if any). It's always a good rule of thumb to send a personal message when friending folks so they have a point of reference when they receive your friend request. Typically, they'll reply with a friendly message back.

By viewing a person's friends, you can get a good sense of his network, which might then lead you to discover additional friends. This *social graph* is how people tap into friends of friends in an effort to expand their own network. Facebook even shows you friends that overlap with the Friends in Common view. Click this link to see which friends you have in common. After all, a social network can be thought of as circles that intersect at certain points. Or, six degrees of you!

You can also send a friend request from within someone's profile page. Simply visit their profile and click the Add *(name)* as a Friend link directly under their profile photo. ***Note:*** Because you're not already friends, you only have access to profiles of members with a common network, depending on their privacy settings.

By clicking this link, a friend request is sent to the person and you receive notification if the request is accepted. Additionally, you can also choose Send a Message or Poke without having to be a friend. If you *poke* someone, they receive notification that they are being poked by you the next time they log in to Facebook. It's a gentle way to let someone know that you're thinking of him or her.

Creating friend lists

After you have a healthy number of friends, Facebook lets you organize your gaggle into lists, or groups, with its Lists feature. For example, you can create a work list that consists of co-workers or business contacts. Lists allow you to quickly view friends by type and send messages to an entire list. Facebook allows up to 100 lists with up to 1,500 friends per list. (See Figure 2-10.)

To create a list, click Friends at the top of any Facebook page. On the Friends page that appears, click Make a New List on the left. Type a title for your list. You can add friends to your list by typing your friend's name into the Add to List field. You can also click Select Multiple Friends to the right of the field, which allows you to select numerous friends from your entire list. After making your selections, click Save List to store your changes.

If you have more than two lists, click the Expand box next to a friend from the Friends page to quickly add that friend to any of your lists.

You can contact a list from within your Inbox. Entering the name of your list into the To box allows you to send a message to everyone on the list. When you select the list you desire, the list expands to show all members of the list; the title of your list is never visible to other members of Facebook. So, if you put a bunch of geeks in a list and name it "Geeks," they'll never know you classified them as such. Another advantage is that you can create separate privacy settings for each list. See Chapter 6 for more on Facebook settings.