Chapter 7

Facing Facebook Groups

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In This Chapter

▶ Introducing Facebook Groups

▶ Choosing Groups versus Pages

▶ Finding, joining, and participating in group discussions

▶ Creating, customizing, and promoting your own group

▶ Measuring your group's success

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A great option for marketing your business on Facebook is Facebook Groups. In this chapter, we discuss how to find groups and join in on the discussion. We show you how to create your own group on a topic that can engage potential business clients, and how to promote the group to attract members and possible customers. Plus, we show you how to manage your group and measure its success.

With Facebook Groups, you can join and create up to 200 groups. Groups can be based around shared interests, activities, or anything you like. Groups are different from a Page (see Chapter 4) or a profile (see Chapter 2) since they are less about the business or person, and more about a shared interest or cause. Groups can be great, and perhaps a more personal option for marketing your business because you are relating to an audience around a cause or local issue that your business cares about so people can be more inclined to get involved.

What Are Facebook Groups?

You might have several reasons why you want to join a Facebook Group to help promote your business; conversely, you might even want to have your own Facebook Group instead of a Facebook Page for your business.

Groups are based around shared interests, activities, or anything you like. Pages are strictly for your business organizations, which includes artists and public figures. A good place to start is with a Page, but a more advanced marketing tactic may be to start, join, and be active in Groups that match your business in some way. (See Figure 7-1.)

Distinguishing Groups from Pages

For a Facebook Page, only an official representative of a business, public figure, nonprofit organization, artist, or public personality can create a Page and serve as its administrator (admin). Pages are designed to provide basic information about a business, featuring community building blocks, such as discussions and comments, upload user-generated content, and post reviews.

By contrast, any members can create a Facebook Group about any topic — and they do. Groups serve as a central hub for members to share opinions and discussions about that topic. Whereas Pages allow for a high degree of interaction and rich media with the addition of applications (apps), Facebook Groups do not allow for the addition of apps. (See Chapter 12.)

When an admin updates a Group's page, the News Feed story includes the name of the Group's admin. Pages, however, attribute updates to the Page and never reveal the admin's name. Groups also don't offer the status update capability, which has recently been added to Pages.

Figure 7-1:
A Facebook Group provides members with an online hub to share opinions about a topic.
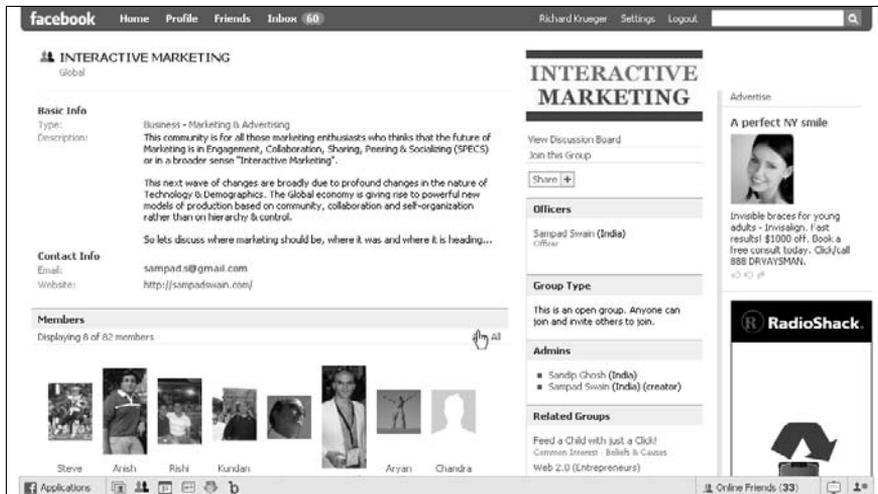
Group admins can send messages to the entire Group's individual Inboxes, provided the group has fewer than 5,000 members. Page admins, however, can't send messages to all fans. Group admins also have the ability to restrict member access by requiring a member approval process, whereas Pages can only restrict members from becoming a fan by age and location requirements.

The following are some key differences between Facebook Groups and Facebook Pages:

- ✔ Groups are not public, so the search engines cannot index them. Groups are only visible to Facebook members.

- ✔ As the owner of a Facebook Group, you can dictate how open you want your group's membership to be. You can make your group open to all Facebook members; closed, so that only Facebook members approved by the group's owner can see it; or secret, which is an invitation-only group that's not visible in a Facebook Groups search.

- ✔ You cannot add apps to a group like you can to a Page, so you are less able to take advantage of some of the more interactive features of a Facebook Page.

- ✔ Groups have it easier when it comes to recruiting other Facebook members. Unlike Pages, you can send invites quickly and easily to all your Facebook friends requesting they join your group.

- ✔ It's easy for your friends to send out an invite to all their friends to join your group — giving Groups a leg up on some viral marketing where Pages have a more difficult time.

- ✔ Sending a message to all group members is easier, and the message appears in the members' Inboxes. Inviting the group to an event is also easy (see Chapter 8 for more information on Facebook Events).

So you might want to consider a Facebook Group if you want to have a serious discussion where members can really get involved, perhaps around a cause or a topical media issue that you want to enlist support on.

The key is keeping the discussion flowing with the members of the group. You might be better off joining a few groups to see how it's done before jumping in to create your own. In the next section, we discuss how to find groups that might be relevant to your business.

Finding a Group

Finding a group is not very hard, and Facebook offers two ways to locate Groups: the Search feature in the top right of your screen or the Applications menu in the lower navigation bar.

Use the Facebook Search box

For our Pop Tot Tees example, we searched *tees,* but we also could have searched *T-shirts, kids,* or even *pop art* to yield some groups that we might want to monitor. The typical Facebook search for *tee shirts* brings results from all over Facebook. (See Figure 7-2.) Now, it's your turn.

REMEMBER

1. **In the Search box, at the top right of your screen, type a name or title that interests you.**

   Be sure to select the Groups tab in the search results so that you are only looking at Groups.

2. **Click either the image or the name of the group that you want to visit.**

   In the search results, be sure to note the number of members, the type of group, and any recent activity, so that you have some indication of how active the group is before you visit.

TIP

You can also gain quick access to Groups by using the bookmark icon displayed in the lower navigation bar. Hover over the icons with your mouse to find the Groups icon, and click it for easy access to the Groups page. Remember that not all features display icons.
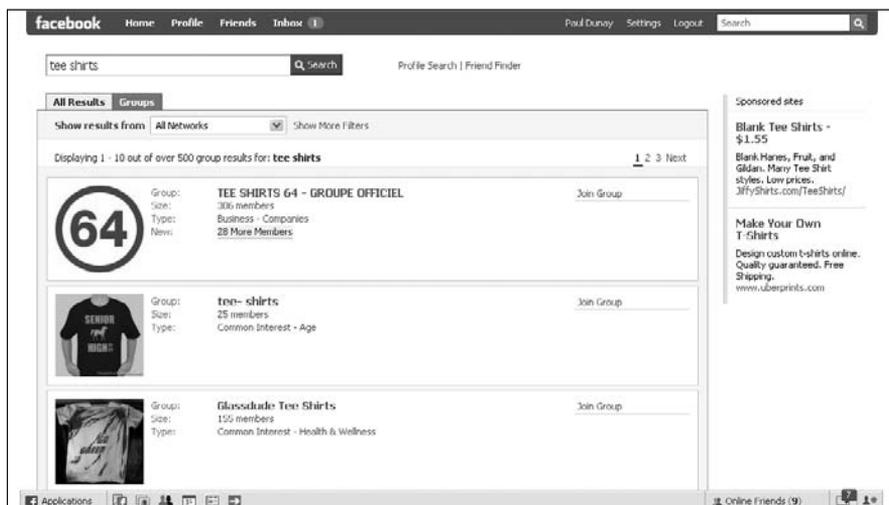

Figure 7-2: Results of a search for tee shirt groups.

Use the Facebook Applications menu

The other way to find Groups is to use the navigation bar at the bottom of any Facebook screen.

1. **Choose Applications⇨Groups.**

   The Groups page displays and is split into two sections. (See Figure 7-3.) The left side shows you groups recently joined by your friends, and the right side shows you groups you have joined.

2. **Click either the image or the name of the group to access the group's page.**

TIP

If you find a group that really matches with your business and you are thinking about reaching out to its members in an attempt to sponsor the Group, don't. It's a good thought, but that option no longer exists. Facebook did away with sponsored groups in favor of Pages.

When you access the Group's landing page, note at the top of the page any recent activity posted by the group admin in the Recent News section. Also, look for dates of any photos or videos that have been uploaded as well as any recent discussions on the Discussion Board. You might see how many members they have and whether you want to browse any related groups.

Figure 7-3:
Finding a group that is right for you.
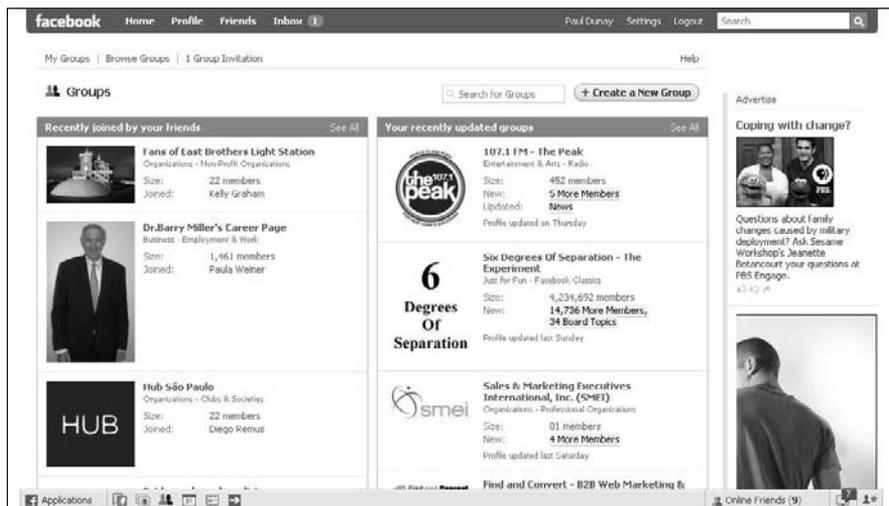
The most important part of the group is the Wall and the Discussion Board. This is really where the action is. But you need to join the group to get a sense of how active that group is and if you want to contribute.

Joining a Group

After you identify a group that matches your interest and has an activity level that matches with your objectives, it's easy to join the conversation.

All you need to do is navigate to the page of the group you wish to join and click the Join this Group link under the group's photo in the top right column. (See the preceding section on using the Search box and the Applications menu to find a group.) Keep in mind that you can join up to 200 groups and that each group appears under the Groups section on your profile. (See Figure 7-4.)

Participating in a Group

One of the Golden Rules of social networks and other forms of social media is to spend some time observing and listening to the conversation. It's good to get a feeling for the cadence or rhythm of the group's conversations before you barge in and change things.
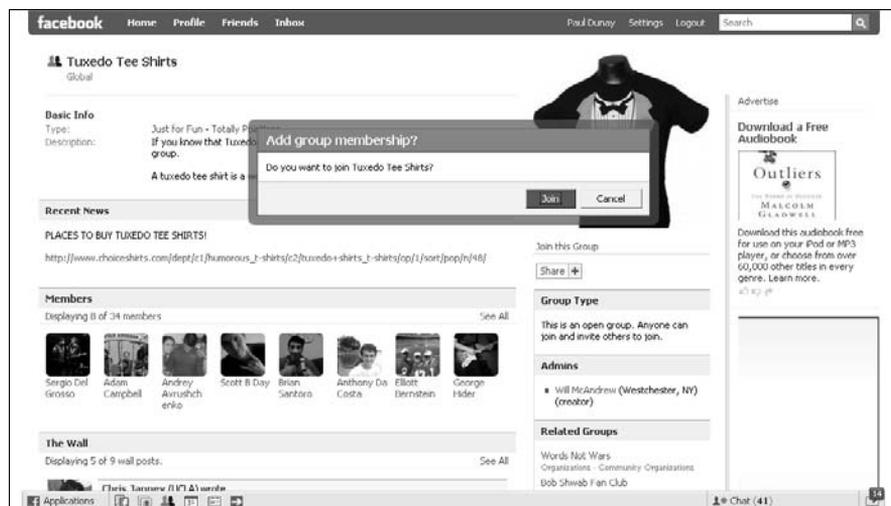

Figure 7-4:
Joining
a group
devoted to
the Tuxedo
Tee Shirt.

You'll find that only a portion of the group really participates actively and many members are just lurking in the background. That's okay, and don't let that discourage you from wanting to participate. If you are truly looking to learn more about Groups, then we encourage you to take the first step and jump into the conversation. It really is the best way to learn about how social networks operate.

You might also find that in some of the larger groups people tend to try to hijack the conversation by posting links to their own groups or related Web sites. Don't try this tactic. Technically, it's considered spam, and Facebook members have a very low tolerance for spammers.

Any member who is considered a spammer can and will have their profile shut down by Facebook. Although the rules on spamming are not published any-where on the site, it is widely considered taboo by the members of the group, the group admin, and of course, to Facebook.

Creating a Facebook Group

When you get the hang of how a group works, as a marketer, you might want to start your own group to support your business. Creating a group is actu-ally quite simple, and a group contains elements that are similar to those on a Facebook Page. (See Chapter 4.) To decide whether to create a Facebook Group or a Facebook Page (or both), see the earlier "What Are Facebook Groups" section to be sure a Facebook Group best matches your business objectives.

Securing your Group's name

Before jumping in and creating your group, we suggest that you conduct a search for the name of the group you want to start so you can see whether any existing groups or Pages have that same name. Having a name that has never been used on Facebook isn't required, but a unique name helps you to distinguish yourself, so we recommend it. Also, note that Facebook doesn't let you own a name in the same way as when you reserve a Web site address (URL). Other people can use a name that is similar to or even identical with other names on Facebook.

To conduct a search for group names, you can use the Search box at the top of any Facebook page, which we discuss in the preceding "Use the Facebook Search box" section.

Setting up your Group

After you choose a group name that you want to use, you can go ahead and create your group.

1. **Choose Applications➪Groups from the lower navigation bar.**

   The Groups page displays and is split into two sections. (See Figure 7-5.) The left side shows you groups your friends recently joined and the right side shows you groups you have joined.

2. **Click the Create a New Group button at the top right of your screen.**

   Facebook displays the Create a Group page, as shown in Figure 7-6. In our Pop Tot Tees example, instead of creating a group based on the Pop Tot Tees corporate name, we created a group devoted to the best retro tee shirt fashions.

3. **Provide the following basic information about your group:**

   • Group Name: Because you did the research in the earlier section, "Securing your group's name," go ahead and plug in the name you chose.

   • Description: Be sure to put some extra effort into creating a good description of whatever your group is about. You want it to sound enticing to prospective members so that they will join. Usually, a statement that includes the benefits of belonging to your Group is a good place to start.

   • Group Type: Allows you to specify the type of group. Notice how the diversity of types here differs from Facebook Pages.

   Group types include Business, Common Interest, Entertainment and Arts, Geography, Internet and Technology, Just for Fun, Music, Organizations, Sports and Recreation, and Student Group. Additionally, many of the group types have subgroups.

   • Recent News: Consider this a bulletin board type of news. It could be anything, but again, be sure to pick something that people believe in and want to rally around.

   • Office: Either the name of your business or the name of the group.

   • Email: Use either a personal e-mail address or an address that you created just for receiving e-mail about the group.

   • Street: Street of your business location.

   • City/Town: City or town of your business location.

You do not have to fill in these last four fields — and in the case of city or street, it might be best to leave blank if you are seeking a national or international presence.

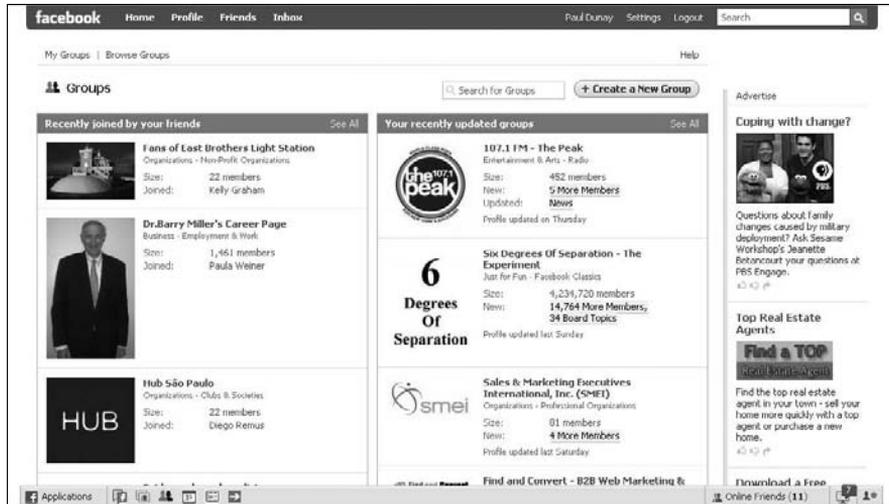**4. Click the Create Group button when the information is just the way you like it.**
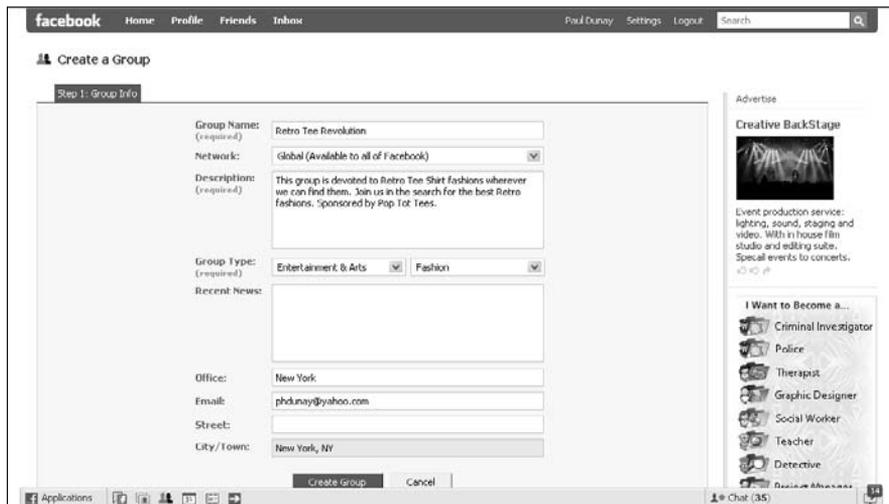

Figure 7-5: The Groups page.

Figure 7-6: The Create a Group page for Retro Tee Revolution!

Customizing your Group

After you create a Group, it's time to customize your group. You can now upload a picture for the Group; any picture that you have the rights to use and distribute in a JPG, GIF, or PNG format that is less than 4MB in size. (See Figure 7-7.)

You can also add a link to a Web site outside of Facebook or even to your Facebook Page, if that is appropriate, which links Facebook members to your organization.

TIP

Members of Facebook are generally more comfortable if you add links to locations within Facebook rather than outside Facebook.

The Options section (see Figure 7-8) is where you select whether it is okay for Facebook to list other related Facebook Groups within your Group and enable the Discussion Board, Wall, and Photos features.

These settings can help you restrict what members of your Group can do and post for other members to see. While we always recommend being as open and transparent as you can when using social media, there may be a time when you want to restrict access if a Group member is getting out of hand.

Figure 7-7:
Uploading a picture for your group.

REMEMBER

You select the group's accessibility level in the Access section. The access levels of Facebook Groups are:

✔ **Open:** Groups that can be found by anyone on Facebook when doing a search. Anyone can join the group and anyone can see the Wall, Discussion Board, videos, and photos in the group.

✔ **Closed:** Groups that require approval by the group admin to join them. Anyone can see the basic group description information but only members can see the Wall, Discussion Board, videos, and photos in the group.

✔ **Secret:** Groups that can't be found by using a search or even in member profiles; they truly are secret. Membership is by invitation only; therefore, only members can see the Wall, Discussion Board, videos, and photos in the group.

After you are invited to a group or join a group on your own, you might spend some time observing the conversation before you choose to participate. To find out how to limit membership in your own group, go to the "Limiting membership" section, later in the chapter.

Generally, when setting access and publicizing the group, we recommend casting the widest net for your business. After you enter this information, click Save Changes to start promoting the group. Notice that Facebook asks you to invite your Friend List to join the group. You can pass on this for now until you read about promoting your group in the upcoming "Restricting Membership" section.
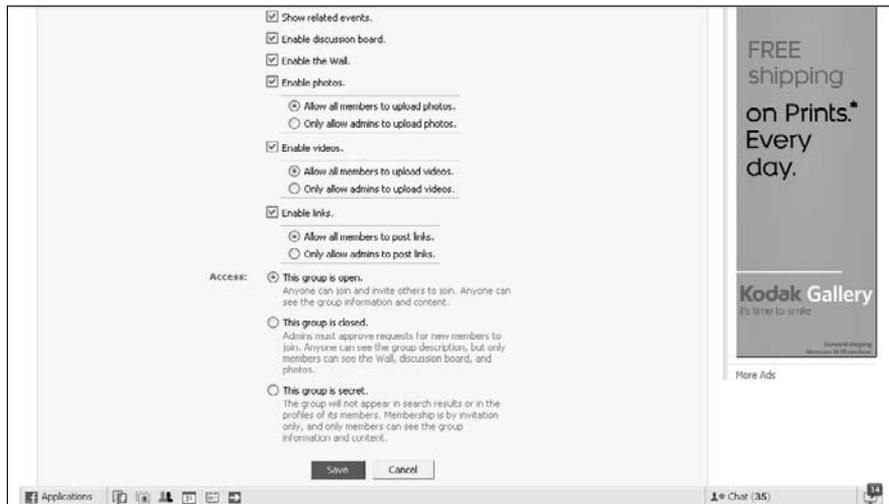

Figure 7-8:
Setting up the dynamics of your group.

Promoting Your Facebook Group

After you create your Facebook Group, you need to promote the group and keep it updated with fresh content. Facebook Groups work similar to a blog or a forum in the sense that you can use them to communicate with a large audience quickly and easily. But building that audience is the real trick.

Growing your group is a never-ending process. Existing members need to see that new members are joining all the time to reinforce their confidence in the group — sort of a third-party validation. And the more members you have means the more people viewing your content and the more perspectives in your discussions.

A popular theory states that 90 percent of the participants in the group are silent, 9 percent are sometimes active, and 1 percent are very active. Therefore, if you have 200 or 300 members, only two – three people are very active, and one of them is you.

One method of building your membership in the group is to promote your group with an advertisement. You can use the Promote Group with an Ad link under the group's main photo with three simple and easy steps. (See Chapter 10 for a full discussion of advertising on Facebook).

We tend to think of groups and Pages as growing organically. But with groups, you build membership by leveraging existing members to bring in new group members, as well as by having a healthy and varied discussion on your group's relevant issues.

Reaching out to Group members

Reaching out to all your members is clearly one of the fun and easy parts about having a Facebook Group compared with having a Facebook Page (see Chapter 4).

1. **Choose Applications⇨Groups from the lower navigation bar.**

   The Groups page displays and is split into two sections. (Refer to Figure 7-4.) The left side shows groups your friends recently joined and the right side shows groups you run or have joined.

2. **Click either the image or the name of the group to access the individual group's page.**

   In the right column, under the group's main photo, you see a list of choices starting with Message All Members.

3. **Click the Message All Members link.**

   A page displays that looks very similar to an e-mail form.

   Only the admin of a group sees the Message All Members link under the group's photo. So if you are looking around on a group's page, you won't see this option.

4. **Write a short message on your hot topic in the Subject line and a deeper explanation in the Message area.**

   You can get the word out very quickly and keep your members engaged with the group. (See Figure 7-9.)

5. **Click send to message all the members.**

   Also, if you have more than 1,200 members, Facebook does not allow you to send a message to everyone, only groups of 1,200 or less have this option.

You might want to decide how often you want to reach out to your group's members. Your contact strategy can range from daily to monthly. In our opinion, daily might be too often for some organizations, but not if you're running a political campaign and your Facebook Group is the center of your community. Weekly might be okay for some businesses where special deals are offered that are available only on Facebook. We tend to think bi-monthly is a good cadence for most businesses and that monthly might not be enough to keep your members' interest piqued.
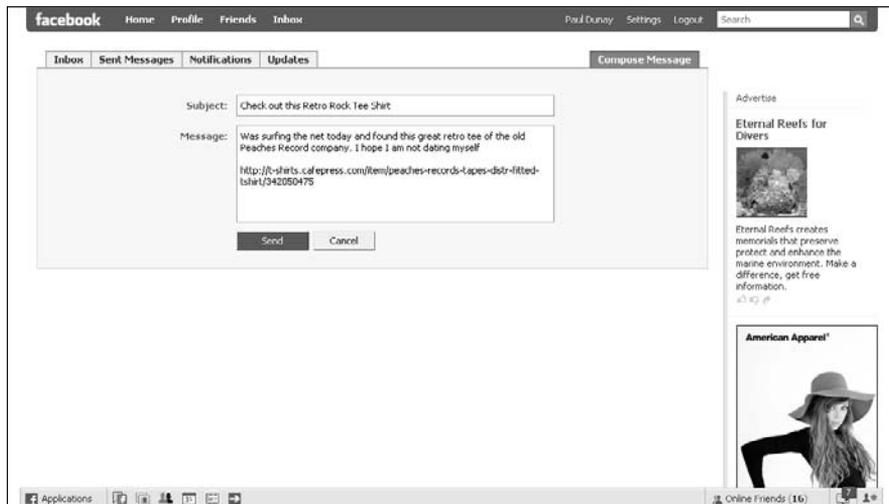
Figure 7-9:
Composing a message for all group members with a cool link.

REMEMBER

Anyone who joins your group after you send a message to your members does not know the message was sent.

If you want to invite people to respond to your message by commenting or joining the discussion, the Wall or the Discussion Board is your best bet.

Generating comments

Just like any good blog on the Web, members of your group come back repeatedly when the content stays fresh and is relevant to their needs. Therefore, you should try to provoke discussion by posting relevant links to external blog posts, research papers, case studies, online magazine articles, news sites, and so on. Besides links, consider uploading images and videos for your members to view — for example, if you're into travel, why not post pictures or videos of great looking destinations!

We find most of the comments happen on either the Wall or the Discussion Board. Generally, we find that the Wall is used for more casual comments, such as, "I totally agree!" or "Great idea." They don't further the discussion, but they do help by appearing on that members' News Feed and all their friends' News Feeds, giving your group more visibility and the chance that someone who is just a casual commenter might want to join your group. Think of them like a mini endorsement!

The Discussion Board is really where the debate happens. You should actively try to keep the conversation going on your group with a cadence of regular discussion topics. You might want to generate a list of weekly discussion topics that you can use to keep things moving forward. Having a strong discussion topics list allows you to always have an idea available. Alternatively, when new ideas come to mind or something happens in the media, you can use them to jumpstart a discussion.

Posting to your Discussion Board is quick and easy. If you are posting for the first time, you see a link on your Discussion Board that reads, "There are no discussions. Start the first topic." Select that link, type your topic and post, and click the Post New Topic button when you finish. (See Figure 7-10.)

If you have an initial discussion topic, then you can go to the Discussion Board and select the Start New Topic or See All links to continue.

REMEMBER

A strong group has lots of discussions, and with any luck, provides some healthy debate about the issues. So don't be afraid to provoke a debate; that's what you're hoping to achieve!
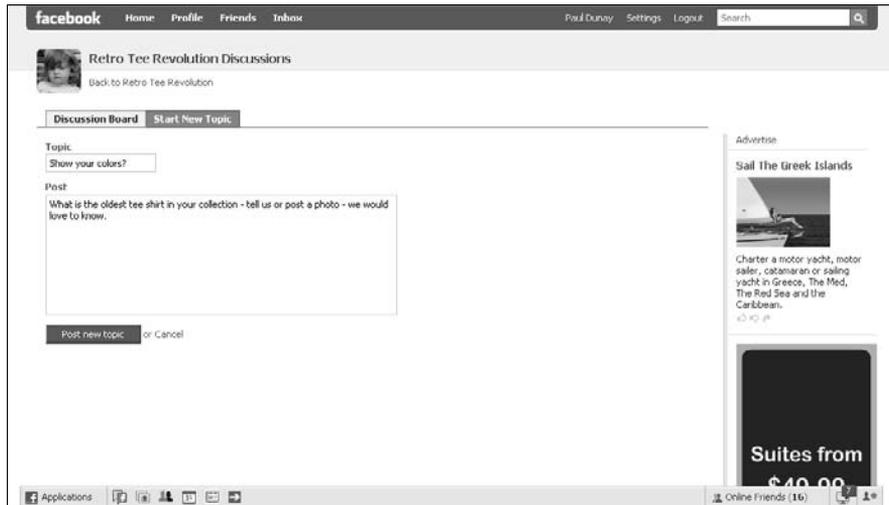
Managing Your Group

After you know how to promote your group and keep the discussion flowing, you might want to think more broadly about how to manage and measure your group.

Here are some metrics you can use to measure the success of your Facebook Group:

✔ Number of members in your group

✔ New members who join per day/week/month

✔ Ratio of new members to people who left the group

✔ Ratio of members who are Facebook friends versus non-friends

✔ Activity on Wall and Discussion Board

✔ Members who accept invitations to join your events

You don't have to use all of these metrics, although they are good indicators of how your group is performing. We suggest picking a few and monitoring them with either a spreadsheet or database so you have a way of understanding the trends in the data. Sure, you can see that membership has gone from 124 to 136 in one month, but what if you didn't know that is a 10 percent jump, down relative to last month's jump of 22 percent?

Limiting membership

Changing the group's type is easy. You can make your group open to all Facebook members; closed so that only Facebook members approved by the group's owner can see it; or secret, which is an invitation-only group that's not visible in a Facebook Groups search.

1. **Go to your Facebook Group.**

   In the right column under the group's main photo, you should see a list of links.

2. **Select the Edit Group link.**

3. **Select the Customize tab.**

4. **Select the Group Type that you want.**

5. **Click Save.**

Depending on your need or the development of your group, you might want the group closed until you're fully ready to launch.

Deleting a Group

Removing or deleting a Facebook Group is relatively easy. All you need to do is to remove all members from the group, remove the other group admin (if any), and then remove yourself. You see a message that reads, "You are attempting to remove yourself from a group for which you are the last member. If you remove yourself, the group will be deleted."

Facebook runs a periodic sweep of Groups aimed to remove empty groups. So Facebook takes care of deleting the group a short time after you empty it of the members and admin.