

Facebook: What's it All About?

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The fastest growing online networking tool is **Facebook**, a free site that allows 500 million users to connect and share information. About 37% of Americans (116 million) have Facebook accounts, and on any given day more than half of those log in to the site. Some metropolitan areas have an even higher percentage of users, with more than half of the population of cities like Dallas and Houston logging in to Facebook on a regular basis.

So what's it all about? Is it just a bunch of teenagers figuring out where to meet up on Friday night? Far from it; Facebook is used by politicians, businesses, and non-profit organizations to raise awareness, and connect with colleagues and customers. While 65% of users list no political affiliation, the site is rapidly becoming a political tool, and often the pages of Facebook are covered with passionate policy debates.

Many of our RW clubs are already effectively using Facebook to recruit new members, promote Republican candidates, and encourage political activism. On the Facebook 'Wall' these clubs post information about their meetings, Tea Parties, and even 'Action Alerts' with contact information for elected officials.

If your club cannot afford a website at the moment, a Facebook page is the next best thing. Even if you have a website, you also should have a Facebook page, especially if you are interested in recruiting the next generation of Republican Women.

Using Facebook for your club is relatively easy; you do not need to be a computer whiz, and there are numerous resources that will teach you how to set up, maintain, and protect your Facebook account. Here are two useful sites:

Mahalo, an online "knowledge sharing service," has easy-to-understand, step-by-step instructions for setting up and maintaining a Facebook account, and there is even an instructional video for visual learners. <http://www.mahalo.com/how-to-use-facebook>

TechSoup is an online source devoted entirely to non-profit organizations, and while they primarily work with 501c3's, their article on using Facebook as a non-profit is also very helpful. <http://www.techsoup.org/community/facebook/index.cfm>

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*Source: Muhammad Saleem, social media consultant.