

## Social Media Integration: Look Before You Leap

Over the past few weeks, you may have noticed how far Facebook has gone in integrating with other platforms across the Web. LinkedIn, reportedly, is following suit. What do you do when total integration becomes available between businesses and social networks? This article looks at how some social media integration could cause problems for business owners – the advantage, however, is that you can look before you leap.

### *Facebook Connect*

In a previous article, I made mention of using Facebook as a personal site where you can connect with friends. After all, you need one safe place to hide away and just be yourself, right? Facebook has provided that privacy and security (if you applied their privacy and security features) for many people.

But, with the addition of Facebook Pages for business, Facebook began to reach out to a more professional crowd that wanted to go public with their Facebook updates, photos and more. Now, Facebook has reached out to developers and to other Web applications and venues to help spread the Facebook brand across the Web through [Facebook Connect](#).

Facebook Connect states in their opening page, "Facebook Connect is a powerful set of APIs for developers that lets users bring their identity and connections everywhere."

In some cases, you may find yourself caught in a dilemma about whether to go totally public or to avoid using some apps simply to remain incognito. In other cases, you may ponder whether to build a brand based upon using Facebook Connect. In all cases, you may wonder whether you really need to tie into Facebook or whether to wait to see how this blend of businesses and Facebook really pertains to a solid branding idea.

My suggestion is to wait for Facebook to iron out some of the wrinkles, but read further and then make your own decision...

### *Facebook and Huffington Post*

I've used [Huffington Post](#) (HP) several times here at DMXZone as an example of an aggregated news site. Now, the liberal HP has aligned itself with Facebook in a rare partnership called "[HuffPost Social News](#)."

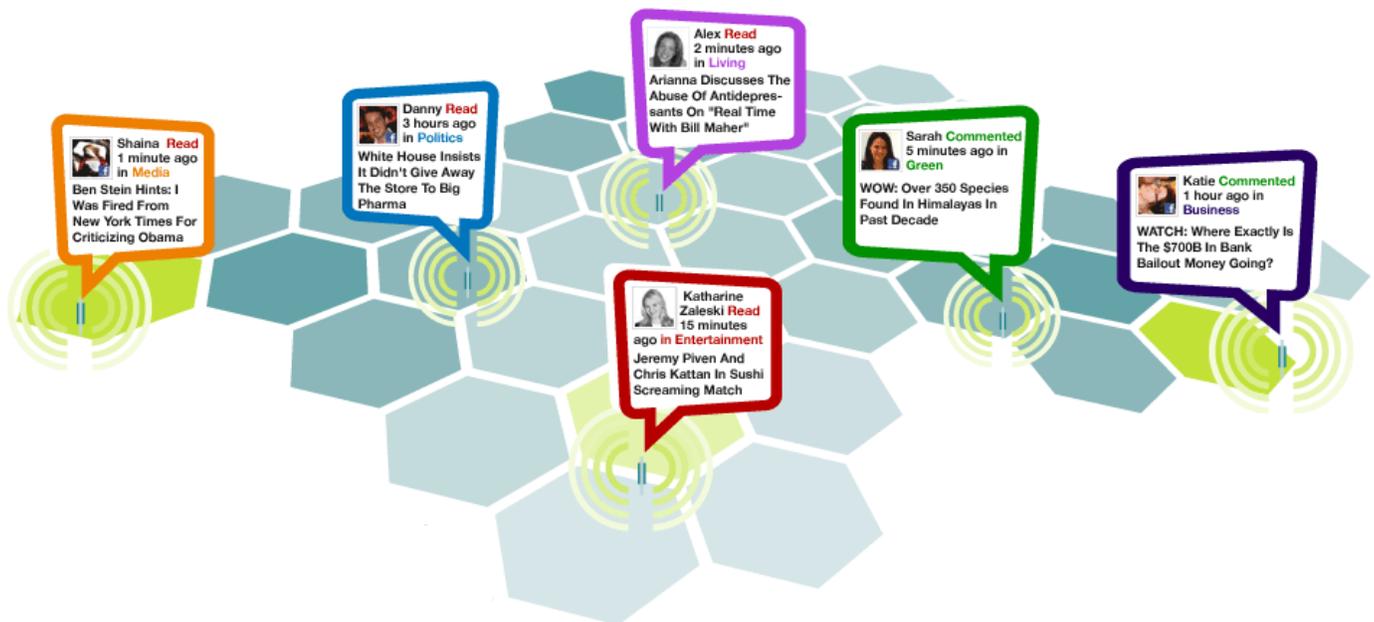
# HuffPost Social News BETA

Connect with Facebook

HOME	POLITICS	MEDIA	ENTERTAINMENT	SPORTS	COMEDY	BUSINESS	LIVING	STYLE	GREEN
TECHNOLOGY	WORLD	BOOKS/NYR	IMPACT	NEW YORK	CHICAGO	DENVER	VIDEO	BLOGGER INDEX	

## HuffPost Social News connects you with friends and the news

Join Now!



This site aggregates HP even further by pulling together news stories that Facebook friends have recommended or commented upon while reading through the regular news site. In the process, it also shares a given user's Facebook profile picture with a link back to that user's page when sharing comments.

Was this partnership a good idea for HP? Was it a good idea for Facebook? Was this partnership, above all, good for users? According to [Cnet News](#):

*This use of Facebook Connect is unusual because Facebook typically does not undertake many official partnerships with third-party sites when it comes to its developer APIs. And this particular partnership may come under some scrutiny: The Huffington Post, which began as a political news site and has since [expanded into many other areas of coverage](#), is controversial – not only in terms of its partisan leanings (it was co-founded by left-of-center pundit Arianna Huffington) but because the [majority of its bloggers are unpaid](#) and because some critics have argued it [relies too heavily on third-party content](#) that it doesn't always pay for.*

This concept, according to Cnet, is similar to [TimesPeople](#), a social network that The New York Times launched last year:

Welcome to TimesPeople  
Get Started

TimesPeople Lets You Share and Discover the Best of NYTimes.com

6:40 PM

Recommend

The New York Times

TimesPeople

Get Home Delivery | Log In | Register Now

Collaboration is changing the way we do business.

**The Latest** Happening right now on TimesPeople

Get Started

Lisa Goehler recommended: **The Cancer Lounge** 6:40 PM

laodan recommended: **How Will Religion Evolve?** 6:40 PM

Juana Summers recommended: **War's Other Enduring Videos** 6:40 PM

conceptual posted to Twitter: **Can Crispy Green Go National?** 6:39 PM  
"Can Crispy Green Go National? - http://bit.ly/8bQmaU"

conceptual recommended: **Can Crispy Green Go National?** 6:39 PM

Ad Smith recommended: **Food Stamp Use Soars, and Stigma Fades** 6:38 PM

**What else can you do with TimesPeople?**

- Install the Facebook App >
- Read the TimesPeople FAQ >

**Most commented**

- America vs. The Narrative
- Food Stamp Use Soars Across U.S., and Stigma Fades
- Swiss Vote to Ban New Minarets
- The Wizards' Wizard
- Afghans Detail Detention in 'Black Jail' at U.S. Base

**Most rated/reviewed**

- The H-Man
- The Blind Side
- Five Easy Pieces

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I agree that the concept is similar – and, therefore worrisome to businesses – for two reasons:

- Both HP and the Times have political leanings (I firmly believe, after working in the newspaper business for several decades, that no news coverage is totally unbiased);
- Both venues may prove to be largely unwieldy and, therefore, ineffective.

Fortunately for other business owners who are new to Facebook Pages and other social networking sites, Facebook has jumped into a liaison with HP that is at once seemingly politically motivated and, in addition, a move that appears to make journalism seem less important than reports from people "on the street." According to Facebook's COO, Sheryl Sandberg:

*"The Huffington Post has led a revolution in how people discover and consume news. With the integration of Facebook Connect, HuffPost Social News is now leading the way to make news even more of a social experience, giving people new ways to share and filter news and current events through their networks of friends on Facebook."*

The warning bells should be going off in your head right now. First, what if you despise the Huffington Post for their political stance? Secondly, what if your market does not agree with the Huffington Post? Are you going to visit HP and comment?

Even if you align your idealism with HP and you want to appeal to people with that same ideology, do you want to brand yourself and your business with both Facebook and with HP?

This is one issue that's on the table – whether or not to comment on HP stories (whether you agree with them or not) using your Facebook identity. If you can answer the questions immediately above, then you have your answer.

### ***Facebook Connect and Your Business***

Another issue with Facebook Connect is the possibility of connecting your business with Facebook in a similar fashion. What if you like the concept that the integration of Facebook and Huffington Post represent? What if you could integrate Facebook with your business in the same way? While I thought about doing a Facebook Connect possibility such as the one Huffington Post has, I also was at a loss as to how I could justify it. The reasons against my decision included:

1. The market that reads Appomattox News is somewhat liberal, but it also appeals to people who are middle-of-the-road politically. I don't want to alienate those latter readers, as I enjoy their numbers when it comes to SEO.
2. My market for that news venue also is split between regular Internet users and those who are clueless when it comes to social media. Not only do that latter bunch not know how to use it, they don't care about it. Why would I confuse them with popups that ask whether or not they want to connect to Facebook when they read or comment on my site?

Your situation may be entirely different, however. If you think – long and hard – about the possibilities that could happen if you connect with Facebook in the way that HP has with Facebook and you come up with more positives than negatives, then you might think about using Facebook Connect with your business as well.

But, before you do, think about one more thing – how smoothly will that integration go for you?

### ***Integration and the User***

I read HP, mainly for the comments. And, since the headlines go to some news that is off the radar for mainstream media, I also get to read about news that may not hit mainstream media for days. For instance, HP runs some stories today that CNN may pick up on a day or two later.

But, when HP began their integration with Facebook, I was thoroughly annoyed as a user. There were a few glitches that have since been ironed out, but that almost turned me away from HP altogether:

- First, I like to follow some people who make comments on HP stories. Before Facebook Connect, following someone was a piece of cake – you simply clicked on the “follow” link after that user's name. After Facebook Connect, there was one point where you could not follow someone without aligning yourself as a friend with that person on Facebook. For me, that was not an option.
- Secondly, every time I make a comment, a Facebook Connect box pops up asking me to share my comment on Facebook. Since I am myself on Facebook, but go incognito on HP, there was no way I was going to flash that comment on my Facebook profile. I have a mission on HP, one that I don't care to share even with my best friends.
- Finally, not only is that popup annoying, it slows down my reading and response time. Going back to my reasons for not using it for Appomattox News, I can only imagine how this integration may slow down readership in areas that have dial-up and little to no broadband.

Before you decide to integrate Facebook Connect with your business, go to HP and learn more about what it's like to be a user before you make that leap.

### ***Conclusion***

While integrating Facebook with your business might prove to be a smart move, think two – nay, three – times before you make that decision. Look at the possible problems from every angle before you decide to

move forward with an integration like this. One lesson that HP is learning – although they may not admit it – is that this broadening of a social base also is changing their readership.

HP has been known for a liberal and well-read or educated readership. But, the broadening of a social network base also opens the door to other readers who are not so liberal and who are not so well informed. In fact, some people who comment at HP now are tagged as “trolls” as they leave behind talking points from the opposing political party, thereby diluting a conversation to a series of baits and responses that can turn ugly.

While I welcome debate and ideas that are well-informed or thought-provoking, my relationship with HP has changed since August. I no longer enjoy reading comments, and sometimes I look at HP as having sold out. They've gone from a provocative venue to one that is loud, brash and – at times – seemingly irrelevant. All this for...what? Numbers?

Before you take umbrage at anything I've said above, remember that what I say is based upon my personal history with that Web site, its content, and the changes that have occurred on that site. I have no answer as to why HP is doing what it's doing or why – I just know that my experience with this venue has been altered drastically since its alliance with Facebook.

So, I wonder whether this alliance would be good for my business – that's a natural progression for my thought processes. And, as I read about other expansions – such as the one that [LinkedIn](#) has planned – I wonder how that will fit into my personal and business plans as well. I just hope that my perspectives will help you think about how all these changes fit into your business plans as well as your personal life.

One word of warning that I would like for readers to take seriously: with all the changes that have come about with Facebook, I definitely would not drink and surf. Facebook may have land mines located everywhere before long, and a loss of an alert frame of mind may prove costly.