

facebook

GROUPS

versus

FAN PAGES

The screenshot shows a Facebook Group page. At the top, the navigation bar includes 'facebook', 'Home', 'Profile', 'Friends', 'Inbox (790)', 'Ross Hair', 'Settings', and 'Logout'. The group name is 'Real Estate - eRealEstate on Facebook' with a 'Global' tag. The 'Basic Info' section lists the name, category ('Business - Real Estate'), and description. The 'Contact Info' section provides the website 'http://www.erealestate.com'. The 'Members' section displays 9 members with their profile pictures and names: Michael Thomas, Melissa Conrad Lax, Kieran Rodgers, Jan Gordon, Bryan Rette Littles, Cindy Barron, Paul Tarr, and Kathy Rauschenbeck. A 'Discussion Board' section shows 3 of 122 topics, with one titled '100% Purchase and Rehab Loans Available'. On the right, there are options to 'View Discussion Board', 'Promote Group with an Ad', 'Edit Group', 'Edit Members', 'Invite People to Join', 'Create Group Event', and 'Leave Group'. Below these are 'Share' and 'Group Type' (Open: All content is public) and 'Admins' (Ross Hair).

Versus

The screenshot shows a Facebook Fan Page for 'eRealEstate.com'. The navigation bar includes 'facebook', 'Home', 'Profile', 'Friends', 'Inbox (790)', 'Ross Hair', 'Settings', and 'Logout'. The page name is 'eRealEstate.com' with a 'Change Picture' button. Below the name are tabs for 'Wall', 'Info', 'Photos', 'Discussions', 'Boxes', 'Notes', and a '+' icon. The main content area shows a post: 'This is eRealEstate.com's Fan Page!' with an 'Attach' section and a 'Share' button. Below the post are two updates: one from Rich Mendoza about a private lending company in Northern California, and one from Juan Boldizar looking for agents and brokers in Chicago and Southern Illinois. On the left, there is a sidebar with options: 'Edit Page', 'Promote Page with an Ad', 'Add Fan Box to your site', 'Send an Update to Fans', 'Get more Fans with SMS', 'Suggest to Friends', 'Add to my Page's Favorites', 'Subscribe via SMS', 'Remove from my Page's Favorites', and 'Less'. A red arrow points from the 'Send an Update to Fans' option to the main post area.

Facebook Groups versus Fan Pages

So what's better – a Group or a Fan Page?

Here's the really short answer - it doesn't matter because you should set up both a Group and Fan Page.

Personally I prefer Groups to Fan Pages because I like to get an email notification into each Group member's email inbox. Fan Pages send an update to Fans but the update doesn't arrive as an email in their inbox.

At the same time I prefer some of the features and functionality that you get from a Fan Page but ultimately the ability to send a mass email to every group member is the most important feature to my business.

It's important to know how Groups and Fan Pages are different and how to get the maximum value out of each tool.

It's also important to know that Fan Pages and Groups have a number of overlapping features. They're both designed to allow a large number of Facebook members to connect with you and both have tools that allow you to invite, interact and communicate with members or fans. There are differences in how you invite, interact and communicate and this is the source of the debate between Fan Pages versus Groups.

Don't forget that the rules for Fan Pages and Groups aren't set in stone. Facebook regularly updates and changes its rules as they try to either improve or protect the platform. Their updates may be good or bad for your social media marketing strategy.

Finally, you need to understand very clearly how your messages or posts are published or delivered to your fans and members. I'm not afraid to tell you that it's frankly quite confusing as you need to understand the difference between news feeds, live feeds, status updates, activity updates and messaging. Facebook doesn't have a clear guide on how it all works and most gurus don't understand the subtle differences concerning how information is shared.

Number of Members / Fans

You can have an unlimited number of members and fans.

There is a limitation on Groups whereby after you reach 5,000 members you can no longer send out a mass message to the entire Group.

Advantage – Fan Page

Invite to Join

The invitation process is very different for Fan Pages and Groups.

i. The invitation process

Fan Pages allow you to Suggest to Friends.



Groups allow you to invite friends to join.



Advantage - Tie

ii. Who can invite?

Fan Pages allow anyone to Suggest to Friends. You don't need to be a fan or even a friend to suggest a Fan Page.

Groups only allow Group Admin to send out invitations. You can temporarily appoint a Group Admin and then allow the new Group Admin to mass invite all their contacts.

Advantage – Fan Pages

iii. How is the invitation sent?

Fan Pages send a message to your email inbox inviting you to become a fan.

Kathleen Cooper suggested you become a fan of JCKC Realty...

Facebook [notification+m3pd5kii@facebookmail.com]

To: Ross Hair

Kathleen became a fan of JCKC Realty on Facebook and suggested you become a fan too.

To see more details and confirm this invitation, follow the link below:

<http://www.facebook.com/n/?JCKCRealty&mid=1920d55G259409dfG36aee87G4c>

Thanks,
The Facebook Team

Find people from your Comcast address book on Facebook! Go to:

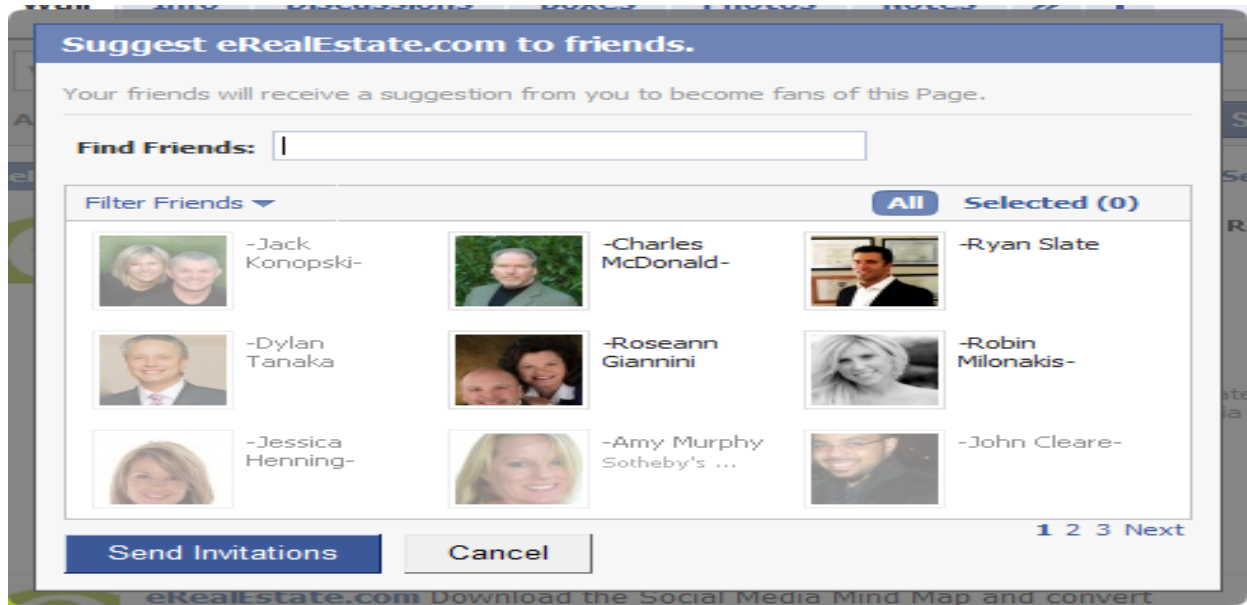
<http://www.facebook.com/find-friends/?ref=email>

This message was intended for rosshair@comcast.net. Want to control which emails you receive from Facebook? Go to:

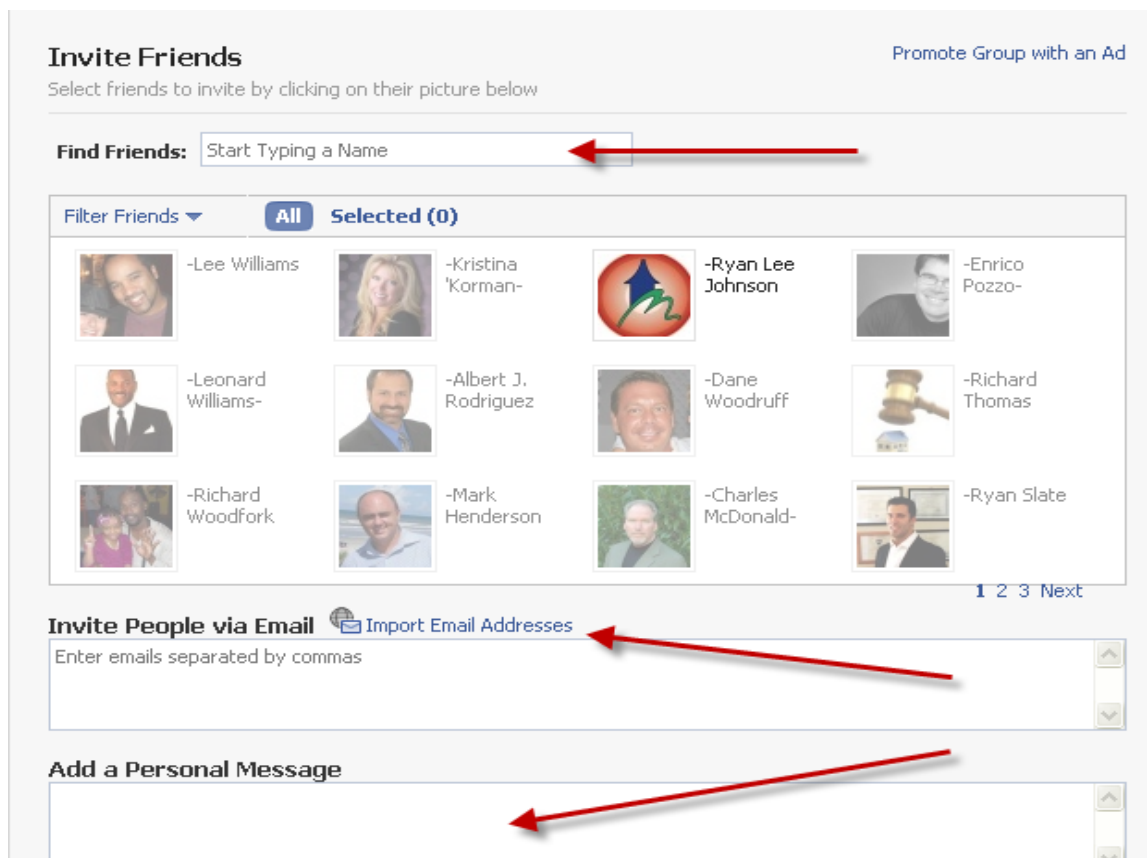
<http://www.facebook.com/editaccount.php?notifications=1&md=ZmJwYWdlX2Zhb19pbnZpdGU7ZnJvbT0xMzE4MTk0NjM3O29pZD0xNDU1NTI4OTAwOTQ7dG89NjMwNDU4ODQ3>

Facebook's offices are located at 1601 S. California Ave., Palo Alto, CA 94304.

The message is a standard message and does not include a personal message. You can only send a suggestion to your friends which you do by clicking on the profile picture of each friend. This is very time consuming if you have many friends.



Groups allow you to invite all your friends, add email addresses, import your address book and import a file from your computer. You can also attach a personal message to the invitation. The invitation is sent as an email to your email inbox.



This is a huge hidden advantage for Groups as you can import a list of contacts. The invitation is sent by Facebook so your deliverability will be almost 100%.

Power Tip – There is a work around to mass invite a list of contacts to a Fan page. You need to add the Event application to your Fan Page and then invite your contacts to an event connected to the Fan Page. You can attach a personal message to the event invitation.

Advantage - Groups

iv. Entire Invitation Process

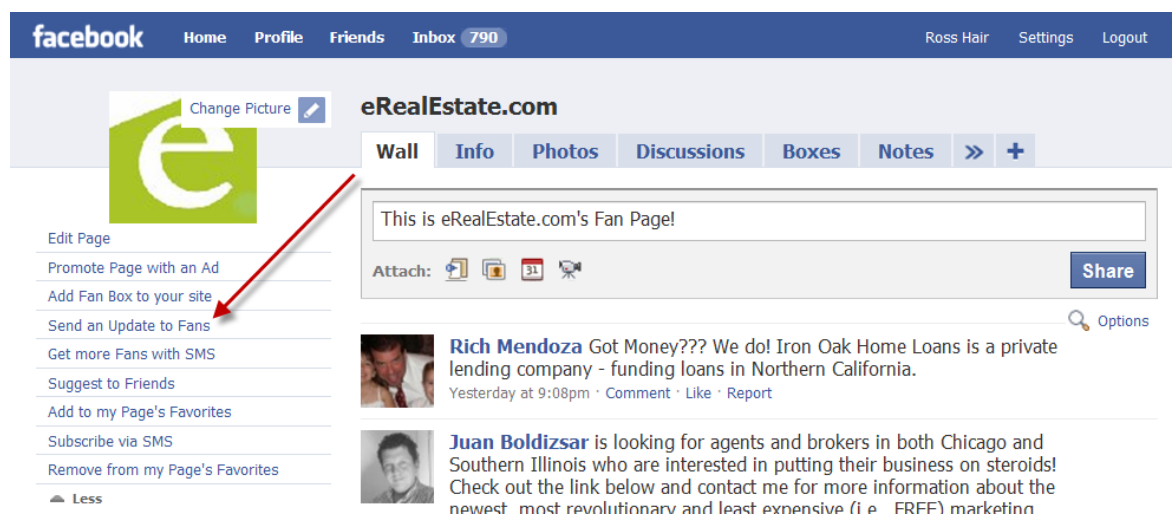
When you look at all the advantages and disadvantages I think the best overall feature is the ability to import lists.

Overall Advantage – Groups

Communication

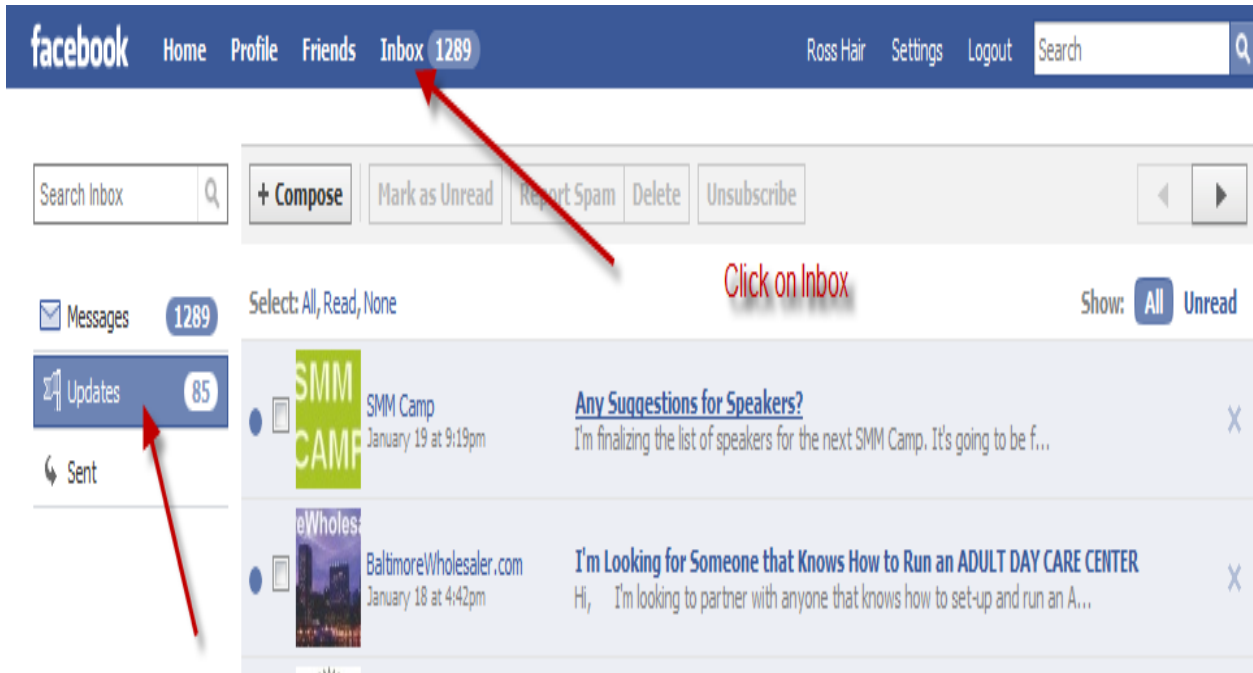
i. Send a message

Fan Pages allow you to send an update to all Fans.



When you send an update a message is sent to your inbox and stored in the Updates folder. The problem with this is your inbox is defaulted to your messages folder and very few people ever check their Page Updates.

I wonder how many of your fans will ever see the Fan Page updates.



Groups allow you to send a message to all Group members as long as your Group has less than 5000 members. After 5000 members you can't send a message to the Group.

Here's a screenshot of one of my groups with fewer than 5,000 members:



Now here's a screenshot of the Group with more than 5,000 members. Do you see what's missing from this picture?

The screenshot shows the Facebook interface for a group named "Real Estate - eRealEstate on Facebook". The top navigation bar includes "facebook", "Home", "Profile", "Friends", "Inbox" (with 790 notifications), "Ross Hair", "Settings", and "Logout". The group's profile picture is a green house-shaped icon with a white "e". The "Basic Info" section lists the name, category ("Business - Real Estate"), and a description. The "Contact Info" section shows the website "http://www.erealestate.com". The "Members" section displays 8 of 5,652 members with their profile pictures and names: Michael Thomas, Melissa Conrad Lax, Kieran Rodgers, Ian Gordon, Bryan Rette Littles, Cindy Barron, Paul Tarr, and Kathy Rauschenbach. The "Discussion Board" section shows 3 of 122 discussion topics, with a link to "Start New Topic" and "See All". A blue link for "100% Purchase and Rehab Loans Available" is visible. On the right side, there are several menu options: "View Discussion Board", "Promote Group with an Ad", "Edit Group", "Edit Members", "Invite People to Join", "Create Group Event", and "Leave Group". Below these is a "Share" button with a plus sign. The "Group Type" section indicates the group is "Open: All content is public." The "Admins" section lists "Ross Hair" as the administrator.

That's right – I can't send a message to the Group members.

ii. Post to Wall

Fan Pages allow you to post to the Fan Page Wall.

The screenshot shows the Facebook interface for a Fan Page wall post. The top navigation bar includes "Wall", "Info", "Photos", "Discussions", "Reviews", "Boxes", and a plus sign. The main content area features a text input field with the placeholder "What's on your mind?". Below the input field is an "Attach:" section with icons for photos, videos, and a calendar. To the right of the input field is a "Share" button. Below the input field, the page name "Ross Hair" and the page type "Just Fans" are displayed. A "Settings" button is located in the bottom right corner.

The post is published to your live feed. The main problem with this is most fans have their feed set to News Feed and not Live Feed. This means that most fans will not see the post.



The post also appears in your Pages tab.

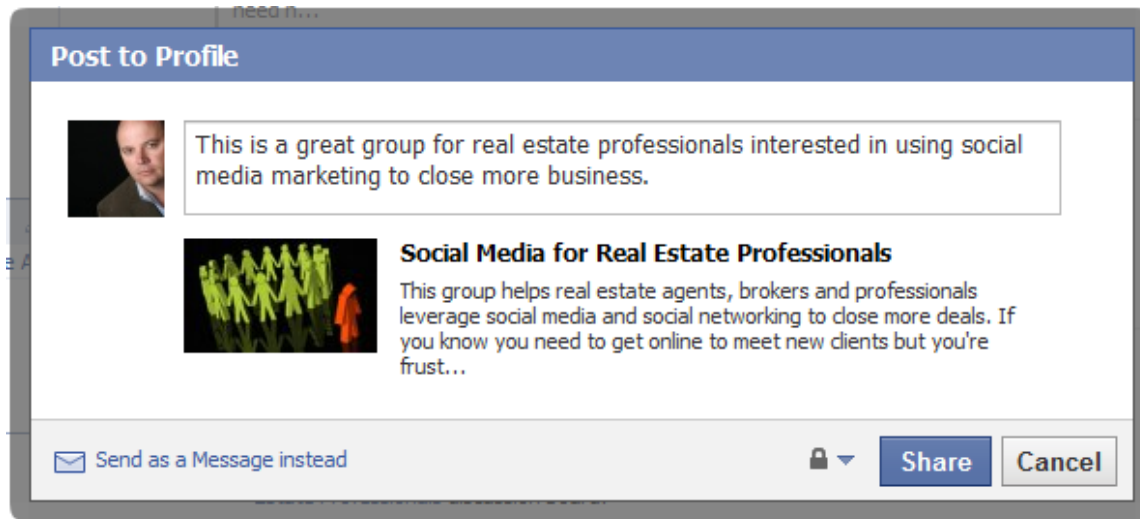


This is also a problem because few fans will ever check their Pages folder and consequently few fans will see your post.

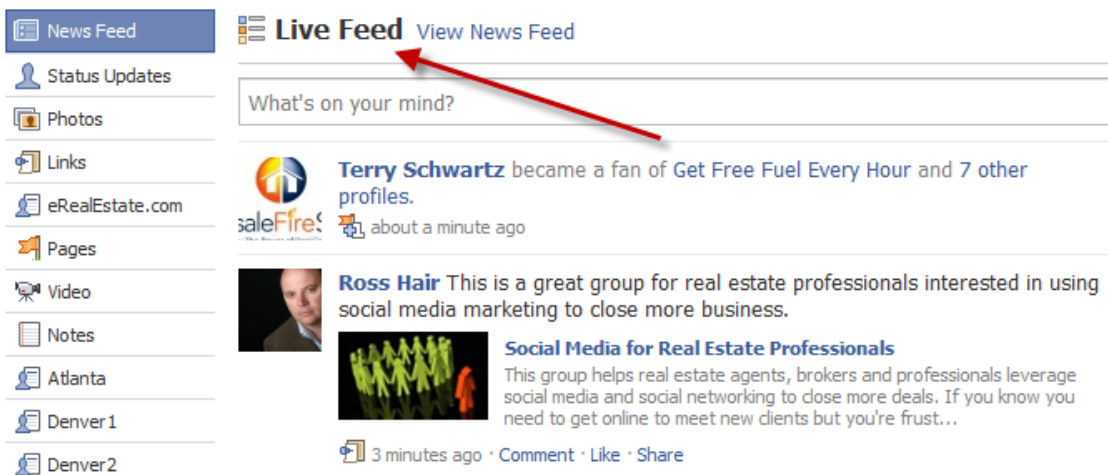
Share

Both Fan Pages and Groups allow you to “share” the Group or Fan Page.

Both Fan Pages and Groups allow you to post the “share” to your personal profile and you can add a personal message.



The post will appear in your live feed. Notice also that the post from my Group appears as a post from me personally and displays my profile picture and a link to my name.



There is also a second way to share. Instead of posting to your profile you can “Send a Message Instead”. It works the same for both Groups and Fan Pages.

Advantage - Tie

Activity

Posts to the Group and Fan Page walls and certain activities are sent to group members and fans.

When you join a Group or Fan page it's published in your activity feed.

Advantage - Tie

Visibility and Search

Fan Pages are visible to the public and are indexed by the search engines. This means that anyone can view the Fan Page, it can be found through search on Google and has SEO value.

Another advantage is that you can get a “pretty” or unique URL for your Fan Page. All you need is 25 fans.

Here's the Fan Page for my home town of Niwot, Colorado – www.facebook.com/niwot (how's that for a great URL).



Groups are only visible to Facebook members who are logged into Facebook. You can't get a pretty URL and much of the content on the site is not indexed by the search engines. This may change as you can open up privacy settings for your Group.

Advantage – Fan Pages

Applications

You can add applications to Fan Pages but not to Groups.

This is a huge advantage as you can custom your Fan Page with FBML, add contact capture forms and thousands of applications

Advantage – Fan Pages

The Winner

I don't want to give you a "it depends" answer but it really does depend. Why do you want the Group or Fan Page? How large will it get (remember the 5,000 member rule for Groups)?

I get the best return from my Groups as I found that the most important feature for me is the ability to mass email the Group. Most marketers prefer Fan Pages but I'm going to stay with the minority and vote Groups.

Winner – Groups

About Ross Hair

Ross Hair is bald, a fan of real estate social media and chief experimenter at [Social Media Marketing Camp](#).