

Lets talk about etiquette: Facebook and beyond

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Okay first things first, I am a voyeur when it comes to Facebook. I read more than I contribute, I squeal with joy, I shudder in despair, I am astonished, I am amazed, and sometimes I forget to breathe in despair with some things that I read online.

Welcome to the world of Facebook. A place where educators unite and visions are created; and a place where we can be judged for our thoughts and cut down for our ideas. Now this is nothing new, and for those who deny this isn't the case, I would love to hear what Facebook pages you subscribe to.

Don't get me wrong I love Facebook (and hate it at the same time) as much as the next person. I see it as a great networking opportunity as well as a place where pictures are posted as a source of inspiration, and a place where documents are uploaded to support others in their personal and professional journey.

So nice things aside, let's talk about comments that leave us thinking 'what the...was that'! I understand that we all have different perspectives. I appreciate that we all see the world differently. I value the fact that others don't think like me, but I just don't get why people take offence when their colleagues choose to think differently and consequently go on a verbal rampage online.

I'm no victim, but I have had my fair share of viscous comments about posts I have placed on Facebook. Luckily for me I am thick skinned and take the good and the bad with a grain of salt. However, I am not so sure about others in our sector who are yet to find their voice, and may not be as resilient as I am, and I fear that they will take offence (understandably) to being verbally cut down in public.

I am not going to go down the whole Code of Ethics argument to justify my position. However, I do urge people to consider the following:

- You are not always right when it comes to your beliefs, so allow others to have their own opinion without fear of being cut down
- There is no excuse for being rude to each other
- We all need to learn to self regulate ourselves in person and online
- If you haven't got anything nice to say or don't know how to give feedback in an appropriate and constructive way, walk away from your keyboard and have a cup of peppermint tea
- Chill out about spelling mistakes. We are online, not being published in a journal. I assume we don't all go around correcting people when they don't pronounce things correctly in real life? People make mistakes – welcome to life
- Remember, it is easy to find out where you work with one simple click on your profile. You are not only representing yourself, you are also representing your organisation

- Generosity and kindness can get you places and this is also true on Facebook
- We don't have to think the same in order to think together
- Everyone is entitled to their opinion but this is not a license to disagree with someone in a way that is offensive
- There is no room for racism, sexism, homophobia, ableism, etc., in real life or in cyber land
- Your journey is your journey and others may not have had the pleasure of your experience, and the opportunity to learn from their mistakes. Don't be a know it all
- Your tone and intent can be misread by others, so always double check and think critically about how your words may be read and interpreted by others (although there are no guarantees here)
- Don't bitch about your workplace in public. It is just not cool and it brings the sector down.

So are we all doomed? Should we all unsubscribe from Facebook and go back to pen and paper, or some good old-fashioned face to face communication? I think not. I believe Facebook has great potential to connect individuals to a world beyond our own.

We may never be able to create a space where debate is healthy, measured and valued, and that's reality. But there is one thing for sure, I'll always check my intentions when posting on Facebook (for myself, others and the sector), and I'll make the choice to ignore comments which undermine or hurt others (or I'll respond in a way that is diplomatic), and if I'm feeling a tad cheeky, I'll just block people!

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