

[As published by the National Law Journal on November 18, 2010](#)

Facebook and the fear of worlds colliding

Adrian Dayton / Special to NLJ.com

November 18, 2010

In a classic episode of the TV show *Seinfeld*, George Costanza's friend Elaine calls Susan so that they can go see a show together. It is kind of Jerry's fault — after all, he suggested Elaine call Susan. George is not happy about this. You see, George has two worlds. The world with his friends Jerry, Kramer, and Elaine, and his world with his girlfriend. Keeping these worlds separate is extremely important to George. George tries to explain this to Jerry and by the end of his conversation yells, "It's just common sense — anybody knows you've gotta keep your worlds apart."

As attorneys and professionals, George's "worlds theory" also applies to us. Some of us like Facebook — we check it in the morning, we talk about our weekends, share the odd Youtube clip. We feel safe in our Facebook world of friends and family. Then one day, our best client sends us an invite on Facebook.

So what do you do, confirm or ignore? I mean, this is an important decision. Facebook is your sanctuary, and with your client on the site, doesn't that mean a loss of freedom, of watching your tongue and what you post? The answer is no, not as long as you take the time to set up your privacy settings.

People do get in trouble for what they say on Facebook, and now Facebook is officially cautioning people:

"Just as in your offline life, there are some people who you want to be more open with than others, which is why Facebook gives you complete control over how you share information," Facebook spokesman Andrew Noyes [said recently](#). "People who use Facebook should ensure their sharing settings are consistent with the way they conduct themselves in the real world."

How do privacy and sharing settings work on Facebook?

Basically, they allow you to customize who sees what information on your Facebook page. What this means specifically is that you can create separate lists of contacts — one for friends and another for business contacts. Each will have unique privacy settings. Don't want business contacts seeing the not-safe-for-work (NSFW) pictures your old roommate published to your wall? Want to keep casual acquaintances from seeing pictures of your child's birthday party? With privacy settings, you can create two separate worlds on Facebook. Here's how you do it.

This is a three-step process, so stick with me.

1. Create two separate lists on Facebook.

Go to Facebook.com.

Click on "Friends" on the left tab.

Click "Edit Friends."

Click "+ Create a List" on the right.



I recommend creating at least two lists — "friends and family" and "business contacts."

2. Select the appropriate contacts and assign them to a list.

Go to Facebook.com.

Select "Friends" on the left side tab.

Scroll your cursor over the name of a friend and it will give you the option of "Edit Lists." Simply check off which list he or she belongs in.



Even if you don't have any business contacts on Facebook, once you create the list (with the appropriate privacy settings) you can then select which list people go in as you accept friend invitations on Facebook.

3. Adjust your privacy settings.

Go Facebook.com.

Click "Account" on the top right-hand corner of Facebook.com.

Select "Privacy Settings."



Click on "Customize settings" at the bottom.

You then can choose which lists have access to everything, from the wall posts by your old college roommates to the pictures of your daughter's wedding.

Choose Your Privacy Settings ▶ Customize settings

[← Back to Privacy](#) [Preview My Profile](#)

Customize who can see and comment on things you share, things on your Wall and things you're tagged in.

Things I share

Posts by me Default setting for posts, including status updates and photos	Everyone ▼
Family	✓ Everyone
Relationships	Friends and Networks
	Friends of Friends
	Friends Only
	Customize
Interested in and looking for	Everyone ▼

Choose the category, and then you must select "Customize" one final time to choose which lists have access to which information. This may seem like a pain, but once you have it set up, you won't have to think about it again.

Professionals can no longer ignore Facebook. Statistics from ALM and Greentarget have clearly demonstrated that Facebook is being used by not just lawyers but by in-house counsel across all age categories. "Worlds are colliding," as George famously declared. It's happening whether you like it or not. Now you just need to be ready for it.

Adrian Dayton is an attorney, speaker and strategist helping large firms build their online presence through blogs and social media. He is the author of the book [Social Media for Lawyers: Twitter Edition](#) (Ark Group 2009) and the [blog Marketing Strategy and the Law: Social Media Edition](#). If you have any questions or comments about Facebook privacy settings or social media in general, send them to info@adriandayton.com.