



UNITED STATES SWIM SCHOOL  
ASSOCIATION



# Swimformation

United States Swim School Association Newsletter • Spring 2010

## Making Fans With Facebook Using Social Media as a Tool for Free Marketing

Dan Paulson - *InVision Business Development*

The growth of social media has changed the way people interact with information. Less than a decade ago, people got most of their information through “traditional” media. You found it in the newspaper, magazines, radio, and television. Companies spent large sums of money not knowing if their marketing was working. Then along came social media. Blogging and sites like MySpace and Facebook gave people the power to choose what information they wanted. In today’s marketplace, many companies empower their customers to interact with their products. While traditional media has become less desirable, social media has been growing in popularity. Yet many people are still trying to understand how to use it.



There are many social media sites. One of the best for brand building with consumers is Facebook. This site provides great opportunities to build loyal customers and build relationships with new ones. Many small businesses have a Facebook fan page or group, but few have tapped into the potential that Facebook brings. There are several free tricks you can do if you are a business-to-consumer (B to C) company and you receive much of your business through referrals.

**Marketing for free on Facebook:** First build a home for your fans: If you don’t have your own Facebook page, you need to create one. Next you should create a fan page. This is a page that you can use to promote your business. Facebook now allows you to create vanity URL’s which are custom addresses to reach your fan page. You will have to go through the settings to do this.

**Have a reason for people to go to your page:** People can now choose to view your information or they can ignore it. Determine what

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## Core Purpose .....

*To provide resources to assist our members in achieving their goals in the learn to swim business.*

## Core Value .....

*Provide opportunities for learning and sharing for our members. Help maintain high ethical and professional standards in our industry. Provide business development education for our members.*

# The Imagine Way

Lars Merseburg - Co-Founder of Imagine Swimming

At the Imagine School of Swimming in New York City, we like to say it's "the singer, not the song." This philosophy guides our growth, placing the talents of our teachers above a strictly prescribed curriculum. A passion for the sport of swimming is a prerequisite for the job, but an electric, creative personality is everything. This is how we have built an aquatic culture that has saved thousands of lives over the last eight years. However, at Imagine, children are taught much more than safety and the strokes.

Imagine prides itself on being a creative center where you will not find an assembly line teaching mindset. The program strongly believes that you cannot franchise dynamic early education. (Leave franchising to selling sandwiches and t-shirts!) Imagine requires prior experience teaching children and/or competitive swimming backgrounds, but most importantly a "way" with children and parents that is elusive and impossible to ignore when you see it. A strong teacher and mentor must be able to quickly adapt to a child's mood or the general atmosphere of a group of children of any age on any particular day. Despite a lengthy interview process requiring many hours of in-water training, along with a hefty Imagine Teaching Manual, we can usually tell if someone is an 'Imagine' within two minutes of meeting them.

It takes a certain degree of emotional and social intelligence of the aquatic pedagogue to read what the pupil needs, rather than blindly going through rigorous teaching steps and progressions that a teacher has been forced to follow on a particular day. Every child reacts differently to single-minded disciplinarian ways or, alternatively to laissez-faire learning environments. The teacher must learn to develop the sensibility to help each little person excel.

We realize that our location makes us exceptionally lucky, with regards to finding fantastic teachers. The "best and the brightest" have long flocked to New York City to pursue an endless variety of creative pursuits. Imagine seeks to tap that wellspring of creativity, hiring former swimmers who are now opera singers, novelists,

painters, or aspiring rock stars. Supporting these artistic pursuits is integral to the Imagine culture.

We encourage our teachers to draw on positive childhood experiences of their own and translate them into their swimming lessons. It takes some soul searching for all of us to go back and think about what activity or moment made us especially happy in the water and drew us back to pools, lakes and the sea ever since. Each Imagine teacher can re-live their childhood at Imagine in the most positive way, as if a fabled era is to return.

Unfortunately, traumatic childhood experiences often influence a student's progress. Fear is probably the number one obstacle to overcome in swimming. When we are hasty and timid, our body tightens, and we sink. Working through deeply rooted fears requires a great deal of patience from the instructor. It requires communication and the ability to listen to each student. Only when the child trusts the teacher, will he or she ultimately surrender to the water and float. When a student feels safe in the environment, he or she will then revert to taking on more daring challenges.

The most rewarding result from swimming lessons is watching the development of confidence. The teacher must aid them in raising their sense of self-worth and tailor the purpose of each activity to each child's physical and mental needs. Some might reckon this teaching approach produces a chaotic environment, but to the outside observer, Imagine lessons could not look more structured.

Teaching swimming the "Imagine Way" is meant to foster a lifelong love and passion for the water, expressed in a wide variety of underwater pursuits, from racing to surfing to snorkeling to diving, etc. Joining a team is only one aquatic avenue encouraged at Imagine. "Safe Fun" is the school's underlying motto for each and every lesson. While structure and a lesson curriculum are clearly essential, the life of the lesson is everything. And that starts with a brilliant, international cast of aquatic enthusiasts!

