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About 1 year ago [David Spark](#) 53

12 Great Tales of De-Friending

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David Spark (@dspark) is a veteran tech journalist and the founder of [Spark Media Solutions](#), a storytelling production company.

De-friending has always been awkward. Social networks offer one click “remove a friend” options, but it still doesn’t make the decision any easier.

What follows is a collection of stories about de-friending. In summary, what I discovered is that everyone approaches their social network differently and it’s impossible to communicate all those nuances when you choose to de-friend.

As you read, keep in mind that these are all one-sided stories. The interviewees made their best guess as to why the de-friending happened or how the offending party felt after being de-friended. I purposely didn’t include stories of de-friending romantic exes because those de-friendings are obvious. If you see a real name and in some cases a link to their profile page, I received permission to publish. In all other cases where people wished to remain anonymous, I replaced their name with the first name of one of my ex-girlfriends or one of my wife’s ex-boyfriends.



1. Squashing opportunists trying to grow their network

Andrew Bouchard is a member of the Nashville swing dance scene and it’s reflected among his Facebook friends. One day a request came from Jane Dubuffet (not real name), who happened to be friends with five other of his swing dance friends. He couldn’t remember her, but friended her anyway.

Soon after, Andrew received an invitation to join the group “Who is Jane Dubuffet?” Having all fallen for Jane’s friendship requests, the group of 50 members quickly discovered that this mystery woman had infiltrated the Nashville swing dance scene just to grow her business network. Unimpressed, Andrew decided to scratch Jane off his dance card.

2. Getting laid off can be embarrassing, especially if you were bragging about your job

Liz’s college friend Dave wouldn’t shut up about his new high powered consulting job. After a few quick promotions that inflated his head, the bubble burst. Dave got laid off. Ashamed, he quickly closed up his social network so certain people, like his

ex-girlfriend, wouldn't find out and take pleasure in his misfortune. So he began de-friending all those connected to his ex, like Liz, who worked with his ex.

3. Parents can be embarrassing exhibitionists

On Facebook, Lauren leaves outrageous status updates about her mock drug use. Her mother, new to Facebook, wasn't in on the joke. After seeing an update announcing that Lauren's superpowers might be tempered by PCP, her mother responded and laid into her. In turn, Lauren looked at her mother's profile and saw that her mom posted a photo of herself in the pool, nude! While Lauren couldn't actually see any of the naughty bits, it was obvious to Lauren that her mother was nude. Lauren called her mom on it, de-friended her, and ever since their relationship has been strained.

4. Take a hint. I don't want you in my show

Coordinating an arts management program, Aaron accepts friend requests from more artists than he puts in his shows. While Aaron accepted Dustin's MySpace friend request, he let him know that he wasn't good enough to be in one of his art shows. Retaliating, Dustin began leaving nasty messages on Aaron's blog and MySpace profile. Aaron de-friended Dustin on MySpace and Facebook only to discover that even if they weren't friends, Dustin could still leave nasty personal messages through his Facebook profile.

5. Guilted back into re-friending

Denise V.'s kickball teammate had a little too much to drink one night after a game. His obnoxious behavior really got to her. She had enough. Not wanting to see his updates anymore, Denise de-friended him to which he quickly responded, "Whoops, I may have de-friended you accidentally when I was removing some coworkers. Or else you de-friended me on purpose because you are a hater..." Caught, Denise felt obliged to re-friend him because they have so many mutual friends and they see each other once a week. Having told her friends the story, Denise is often jokingly referred to as the "hater."

6. De-friending can regress mature women into a high school gossip mob

Jill received a message from her friend Megan asking, "When are we getting together? Miss you." Moments after that message, Jill discovered that Megan had de-friended her on Facebook. That was odd. She gets a "let's get together" message, the two of them hang out twice a week, and they have lots of mutual friends. All signs that made Jill believe she was Megan's friend. Jill didn't realize that Megan was on a rampage, a three day de-friending bloodbath, cleaning out her Facebook friends list.

The behavior was so strange that all the mature 30-something women who were in Megan's original friend pool turned into gossiping teenagers. Why did some of them make the cut and others didn't? Turns out some friends who stayed on were told by Megan that they were being left on because they could be valuable to Megan's professional network. One friend was told that she was kept on because Megan thought if she de-friended her, which apparently she wanted to do, she would lose her social standing in the group.

7. I really love the Minnesota Vikings, and I don't care if that ends our friendship

On Sundays, [David Erickson](#) goes into full "I love the Vikings" Twitter mode with his [MST3K](#)-like running commentary throughout the game. Most people follow him for his marketing advice, but often get fed up once a week on Sundays. David doesn't get upset that people stop following him. He knows it's not personal. He just really loves the Vikings.

8. Don't leave or we'll all de-friend you

[Steven Ortley](#) gave his 2-week notice to his small 35 person PR firm. He was going to leave for a larger competitor, Weber Shandwick. The move came off as a personal insult to his coworkers. As he walked out the door, 18 of his former coworkers immediately de-friended him on LinkedIn. He hasn't spoken to any of them since, but expects he will since he's in such a small community. Until then, Steven prepares himself for the inevitable by having awkward conversations about his 401K transfer with his former office manager.

9. Don't use my personal life as leverage in business negotiations

Doug Cone works hard and plays hard. After getting a little behind on a project, Doug's colleague took advantage of their social networking friendship at work by using Doug's [posted Facebook photos of his weekend rafting adventures](#). In team meetings, his jealous colleague would complain, "...and you are [sending pictures having fun in rivers with a bunch of girls](#)." Now de-friended, the colleague doesn't seem so distracted by Doug's weekend adventures.

10. I'm ok with your race and religion, but not your political beliefs

I was not surprised to hear that many people de-friended during the political season. Here's a quick roundup of the offending issues that pushed people to pull the de-friend trigger:

- An argument about abortion rights ended with [Jay Ferrari](#) being called a baby killer.
- A good friend of [Allison Nazarian](#) called the candidate he didn't like a "Nazi." After the de-friending and a discussion, Allison re-friended him, but they don't discuss politics online anymore.
- Marsha became scared of one friend who announced on his status updates that he hoped all the candidates died in a plane crash.
- Marianne had enough of her friend's political propaganda harassment. Unfortunately, de-friending didn't stop the harassment as it continued on email where she had to block him.
- Claire Kiefer had to pull the plug on a friend who announced, "I don't really HATE Mexicans, but I am sick of all the immigration rallies" and another who photoshopped an Obama campaign sign with an Islamic flag in the "O."

11. Trying to de-friend your best friend's ex-girlfriend

Chris de-friended his best friend's girlfriend during their breakup. Even though the de-friending was unprompted, Chris got roped in with the ex-girlfriend complaining, "How can you say, 'Let's be friends' and then ask Chris to de-friend me on Facebook!"

12. Keep your online flirting to one woman at a time

[Michelle Reynolds](#) began cautiously dating David, a guy she met on MySpace. While they were dating Michelle noticed that David was also sending flirtatious messages to some other random woman online. The pick up lines were identical to the ones David had been using on Michelle. He said things like, "Thinking about you," "Let's get together," and "When can I see you?"

While in full blown multi-flirt mode, David began telling Michelle he wanted a relationship. In addition, Michelle saw David send a message to the other woman announcing he was going to take the next plane out to see her. Having seen enough, Michelle finally confronted him, and David began begging and defending himself, "Gimme another chance...I flirt with all my friends like this...I have no interest in that woman at ALL..." Michelle didn't believe him so she deleted him.

Three weeks later Michelle looked at David's MySpace page and the other woman's. Turns out they both had publicly professed their undying love to each other and had moved in together.

I'm sure you've been de-friended or had to de-friend someone. It's always uncomfortable. Please share your story. I'm sure we can all learn from your misfortune. For more insight, please check out "[When technology tells us we have no friends](#)," and "[The awkwardness of de-friending](#)."

David Spark (@dspark) is a veteran tech journalist and the founder of [Spark Media Solutions](#), a storytelling production company. More importantly, he has lots of great friends. Read more of Spark at his blog [Spark Minute](#) or listen and subscribe to his "[Be the Voice](#)" blog and podcast.

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[Melissa](#) 1 year ago

This is hilarious, and so true. I recently wrote about having way too many "friends who aren't my friends" in my social networks. This fits right along with it! <http://tr.im/1hki>

Like



[Daniel](#) 1 year ago

Wired just ran a great piece about what it means to be a "friend." Your spouse, your kids, even exes are lumped into this strange category called "friend."

I say if you don't like them, don't friend them. Period.

Like

 [inthefastlane](#) 1 year ago

I just de-friended a bunch of people on facebook. Not because I was mad, but because they really never communicate with me in any way (most were H.S. "friends/acquaintances) and I was tired of their status updates.

Also, I un-followed a few twitterers because they twittered too many times in a row. I don't want 12 twitters in a row from one person, taking up my whole front page.

Like

 [Jannifer](#) 1 year ago [in reply to inthefastlane](#)

I've had the same experience where I sent friend requests to anyone and everyone in my address book and 99% of those have NEVER communicated with me whatsoever! Since I used my email primarily for business, my "friends" were people I'd done business with. But to my dismay, I'd discovered that I had unwittingly invited a COMPETITOR into my network! (long story). I also go to a large church and though it would be a good idea to try to become Facebook friends with as many of those as possible. Basically most people I added as friends were acquaintances only, so therefore nobody has any interest in my business activities or personal life for that matter. So basically they are never communicating with me in any way. I de-friended the compeditor on Facebook and seriously looking at a de-friending spress on Facebook. And I also had twitters who were twittering too many times, taking up the whole front page. I still have some of those. I just don't have time to watch non communicative broadcasting or people who never communicate with me whatsoever. What's the point of social networking if people aren't social??

Like

 **Am** 1 year ago

My former best friend de-friended me on facebook, saying that she thought we had "grown apart." I late come to find out that she was dating my ex-boyfriend. She saw me go through the terrible break-up, his cheating (did I mention that he had a fiancÃ©e I didn't know about?), etc. She explained to me that the new relationship was "going in the serious direction." She was completely confident that their relationship was "different," and said that it was okay that they started dating, since she and I had "grown apart" and were no longer friends. The naive little girl that she was only realized that he was cheating on her about six months later.

Like

 [excogitate](#) 1 year ago

i was a victim of the "but not your political beliefs".

i had friend that used to be a customer when i had a coffee cart in san diego. once i joined a political facebook group she contacted me by commenting negatively on my joining. i commented back, and that was it. well, until i voted against her candidate in the election and proceeded to post a "reflection" on my blog about my dealings with members of her particular party during the election season. she read my post and informed me via facebook we could no longer be friends due to my political opinion (and consequently "unfriended" me). rather than argue with me personally, she told a mutual friend (who falls on her side of the political spectrum) about our disagreement so he could fight on her behalf. sad for her; good for me, as the mutual friend and i have enjoyed a great exchange of ideas on my blog for the last month or so.

Like

 [BracletSeeds](#) 1 year ago

What are you supposed to do about distant relatives who revel in spam comments? This has been a tricky one for me.

Like

 [Marian Merritt](#) 1 year ago [in reply to BracletSeeds](#)

You know, the only person I've defriended was a second cousin's child who called his mother foul things via Facebook's Wall and it was showing up on my newsfeed. That raised far too many issues for me to deal with!

Like

Jennifer 1 year ago

David,
Will you be my friend?

Like

wikignome 1 year ago

I use twitter and other microblogging tools, plus linked-in. I've created a Facebook account, but haven't spent any time setting it up or populating it. So maybe my perspective on this starts from a different place from most people's, but it's a perspective that may become more common: I think it's important to distinguish "friending" from "following" -- I never follow anyone with the intention of declaring myself their friend, nor even of eliciting a return follow. When someone follows me, I look at what they post online to see if it's interesting. If it is, I want to read more, so I follow them. I also follow lots of people whom I'll never meet -- it's like subscribing to their blog posts. If I follow someone and that person doesn't look at my posting history, or looks and decides that what I post isn't stuff he/she cares to read regularly, I don't take it personally if he/she doesn't return the follow.

In fact, if I thought my following someone amounted to a friend request, I'd follow fewer people, since I've no desire to put someone who doesn't know me well (or at all) on the spot like that.

Like

Anna 1 year ago

I'm disappointed, as always, to see the political un-friending stories. Politics should absolutely be discussed in open forums. Spamming does NOT = discussing. Politics does NOT = race and religion as taboo topics. Problem is people don't know how to have those discussions in a civil manner. Rather than throw out the whole topic, why not learn how to discuss in a manner that doesn't end friendships (both real and online)? When political discussions shut down, you can chalk that up as a loss for the health of American democracy. I hope that's not what this writer is promoting.

Like

TL 1 year ago [in reply to Anna](#)

How can you say politics shouldn't be taboo, but religion is? They are taboo for the same reasons - both can bring up bad feelings. If you are close enough to someone that you can discuss politics regardless of where you stand, great. Same with religion. You can say many of the same things about religion: when religious discussions shut down, you can chalk that up as a loss too, because religion is helpful for many people. Both politics and religion are and should be taboo among people who aren't close enough to talk about it, or it's as good as saying "Here's what I believe; let's never be friends" before you even get to know someone. Most people aren't comfortable saying what they really think politically to people they don't know, so bringing it up prematurely isn't "promoting discussion," it's "making others feel awkward around you."

Like

JH 1 year ago [in reply to Anna](#)

It sounds like a lot of the political de-friending incidents mentioned here weren't due to people breaching comfort zones in one-on-one conversations. Many of these de-frienders got offended at a posted item, photo or status update ON THE OTHER

PERSON'S PROFILE, and took that as a reason to cut off contact with that person. If people can't respect their friends' right to express themselves, then Anna is absolutely right--we do have a problem.

[Like](#) **Rob Gokee** 1 year ago

I recently did a "purging" of "friends" on both MySpace and Facebook. I have a MySpace profile only for business, and I felt the need to get rid of people who were incommunicative and adding people for the sake of, well, adding people.

On Facebook ,I went from 192 to 65 friends. I got rid of the people who never respond to my comments or messages on their own profiles, and people with annoying status updates. Frankly, they won't even know I'm gone. There are a few others I'd like to "unfriend", but I can't because they'd immediately ask why and I'd have to tell them I really don't like them as people.

[Like](#) **wikignome** 1 year ago

That said, I have un-followed people for the kind of thing you mention in your post -- someone generally posts about stuff that interests me, or his/her posts are entertainingly written, but he/she sometimes goes on a spree of posting about something that's a complete waste of space to me. I'll even re-follow when someone appears to recover from such a "fit".

The lesson here, I think, is to either keep your posts well-mixed OR stay focused. If you have multiple posting personalities, one of which may take over for extended periods, maybe that one should have a separate posting ID.

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