

# 'Cause it's your birthday

Wishing people a happy birthday has become uber popular thanks to Facebook. The social network reminds you that it is your "friend's" birthday and makes super easy for you to post those two two words "Happy Birthday" on his/her wall. Oh yes, some people get more creative and wish you a great day, or to have fun. Depending on the number of friends you have, you could get dozens, if not hundreds, of greetings.

Does this mean that birthdays are more important now than ever? Is Facebook tapping into the little girl/boy in everyone who just loves her/his birthday and the celebration of it?

I think the birthday greeting phenomenon points to several things:

**Facebook has made it easy to connect without really connecting.** Posting Happy Birthday on someone's wall is easy. Writing a card or an email or (gasp) picking up the phone and calling, now that takes some effort.

**Facebook is ruling our lives.** If Facebook reminds us, then we remember somebody's birthday. If not, it is like it doesn't exist. Some people are living their lives on Facebook—using it to announce milestones (births, engagements, divorces), snub people, brag, proselytize, look for sympathy (oh...I am so sad says the status update).

**Facebook gives us a false sense of belonging.** This is a corollary to my first point. We think that if 100 people wish us happy birthday it must mean something. I assure you, it means little to nothing.

**Facebook has made a decision to promote birthdays, and we are all blindly following.** I don't see Facebook promoting anniversaries, or job promotions, do you? We have seen how Facebook arbitrarily decides what we should care about—witness

the new time line or the highlighted stories in the news feed—and we are powerless to change it.

Let me be clear—I am not against birthdays. Heck, there are fewer things I enjoy more than birthday cake (sheet cake, preferably chocolate, with some vanilla frosting...yum!). I am just against the new world Facebook is creating for us and the sheeplike way we are all following it.

If you aren't on Facebook, does it mean you don't have a birthday?

**Have you signed up for the DBMC quarterly newsletter? First issue of 2012 is coming up in February. Enter your name and email address on the upper right-hand side of this page.**