Timeline
People either love it or hate it. But whatever your opinion, the new Timeline format is coming to your Facebook profiles and fan pages, inexorably changing the way you interact with this social media giant. Facebook is promoting its new Timeline feature as a way to automatically track your life, month by month, and year by year. By taking advantage of a host of apps, you can quickly share with your Facebook friends every moment of every day, from you latte at Starbucks, to the song you're currently listening to in the car, and the restaurant where you're having dinner. It adds a deeper sharing dimension that wasn't previously possible with the classic Facebook layout. They call it "frictionless sharing".

Facebook officially converted all fan pages to the Timeline on March 30th, 2012. Mike Swift of The Los Angeles Times posted an article on how the new Timeline will affect businesses. In the article, he quoted Michael Fauscette, who is an analyst with the social networking research group IDC: "I think there is some pain that is going to happen, but you have to look at it from the overall perspective. I think it is a positive for most companies. It gives them a greater capability to promote their brand, and to really brand their pages and make them stand out."

Cover Photo
In some ways, that 815 x 315 "cover photo" area is a new boon to artists: It's a larger canvas upon which they can showcase their work. However, there are some rules that Facebook has placed on that cover photo. Your cover may NOT:
•   encourage other people to upload your cover to their own Facebook cover spaces. In other words, you can't have people "sharing" your cover photo in place of their own
•   include any prices, website address, shop url, discount coupons, email addresses, business addresses, or telephone numbers
•   ask friends to "like" or "share" your fan page or personal page. Or clever runarounds like having an arrow in your cover photo that points at the "like" button below it
•   contain copyrighted material (if you don't own the visual, or have permission to use it, don't)
•   contain any "call to action" phrases, like "get it now" or "tell your friends"

Something else you need to know: the image you use for your cover needs to be at least 815 x 315 pixels, or Facebook will automatically stretch it to fit. This could make your photo grainy or distorted, so keep those dimensions firmly in mind when you create or select your photo. If you use high resolution photos this isn't really a problem, but if you'd chosen a photo that's 72dpi, you'll want to make sure it meets those cover dimensions.

While your cover can't include contact information, it can include your company's name or logo, and possibly a slogan or tag phrase. This is actually very helpful in placing your brand right up front where people will immediately see it when they visit your page.   If you're short on space, you can always put your logo in your profile icon. But keep in mind it's a small space… 130 x 130. So if your logo is long, large or complex, that's probably not the best place for it.

Some ideas for what visuals you could include in your cover photo:
• your award-winning pieces
• yourself in action creating a piece
• your display in a gallery or consignment shop
• your booth at a craft show or convention
• people interacting with your pieces (get permission to include their likeness in your cover)
If you need some ideas and inspiration, Alveris Falcon posted an article showing 40 (Really) Creative Examples
of the Timeline cover photo.   I loved some of them, especially the one that shows a screen shot of someone's classic Facebook profile as his cover photo!

The Map
You can now tag your photos to locations on a map, which is helpful if you're a polymer clay teacher who travels the world to give classes and workshops, or you are an attendee who travels to polymer clay events. It also can track your travels if you go away for a vacation. You just click on the map icon (located below your cover photo), and then "add photos to map". A movie strip opens up and you choose which photo you want tagged to the map. If you don't want the map to show at all, you can "hide" it from your timeline altogether.

The About Section On Your Fan Page
This is the perfect place to put your company's name, website address, and contact information. It will show up right below your profile picture and is enabled for clickable links. You have just 140 characters to work with, so make every word count. You also have the expanded About section to work with, where you can talk about your company in greater detail. Put interesting and pertinent information about your company and it's history there.

Privacy
Considering this is your life we're talking about here, I'm sure you have some concerns about what is going public with Timeline and what isn't. Let me rest your fears at ease: Timeline is NOT changing any of your permissions on any of your posts, pictures, videos, comments, etc. What you've posted previously stays the way you set it previously.

If you're concerned about something you said once, or an embarrassing picture you posted last summer, or that really strange conversation with your husband's aunt… you have the ability to scroll through your entire timeline and edit anything you like. This could take quite a lot of time, if you've been active on Facebook for a number of years. Currently there's no other way to completely comb through your history without going month-by-month.

You can delete posts or images, change their visibility (permission to view), or make things pinned to the top of your timeline that won't change even when you make new status updates. You can use your Activity Log to see what you've been doing on Facebook. Only you can view what's in that log, so you are able to quickly see what you've been doing all across the site.

Can't I Just Get Rid Of Timeline Altogether?
Well, yes and no. You could revert your browser to an older version that Facebook's Timeline format doesn't support. So what you would see would be the "classic" version of Facebook, with the "wall" instead of Timeline. However, reverting your browser doesn't change what your friends will see. Timeline is a permanent layout that cannot be undone. Unless they revert their browsers too, your Facebook will show the Timeline to them. Using an older version of your browser may cause you problems with other websites online, so if you're seriously hating Timeline you'll want to have a dedicated browser just for Facebook, and use an updated browser for everything else.

Facebook is a great tool, and if you want to keep using it but really dread the thought of going back through your entire history to find things you don't want showing, you could delete your account and start over. You'll lose everything you'd previously posted but that's not necessarily a bad thing. It gives you the opportunity to be more careful about the information you make public, and it allows you to show again the photos of your artwork, which could garner new friends through people sharing what you've posted.

Whichever method you choose to interact with your new Facebook Timeline, keep in mind that Facebook is an "evolving" social media outlet. Change --whether welcome or not by the average user-- is a constant, flowing process. Sometimes change forces us to grow, and it can be a very good thing in the long run.