

Let Facebook users choose how they want to identify

Lindsey Treffry/Moscow-Pullman Daily News

For most, Facebook is a part of the everyday human experience. The social media platform is so intertwined in our culture that any small changes can seem dramatic.

Take, for example, the new Facebook Messenger app, which users have been forced to download on their smartphones if they want to continue privately messaging friends and family. People freaked because of privacy fears. Some tech writers incorrectly reported Messenger users would have their photos compromised or their cellphone microphones hacked. Despite the rumors, the Messenger app does not do anything or ask for anything different than the regular Facebook application.

Last week, though, the social media site, which reported last quarter to have 1.19 billion monthly active users, took its monopolized power too far when it asked individuals operating personal profiles under pseudonyms, stage names or any name not matching the one on their driver's license, to change it to their legal moniker.

As an everyday Joe, that doesn't seem like a big deal, but it is for a portion of the LGBTQA community, specifically transgender people, or drag queens or kings, who now face discrimination because of the forced switch.

Brian Daniel Peters, a drag queen performer from Seattle, took his opinion viral on Facebook in a video to followers.

"I get that Facebook is a free service that we all have the right to choose to use or not to use," he said. "However ... Facebook has become so integrated in our society They are a publicly traded company and they are making a ton of money. And they want more."

Officials at Facebook likely didn't realize the requirement would out some people, who might not be ready for such attention, and put others at risk - those who may be survivors of abuse, bullying and domestic violence. But it does.

"Why are you, as a corporation, getting to choose how we, as human beings, get to identify?" Peters said.

Facebook is all profit these days. Its stocks are booming, and its users are growing. In order for Facebook to remain the top social media site, the business needs to listen to the people who use it. If the names policy must be enforced to track cyberbullying or predatory crimes, keep the names private, not searchable by other users and with the capability to display whatever name us humans want to claim.