

▶ Navigating Social Media in a Pay to Play World

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It was only a matter of time before the once mostly-free social media marketing platforms Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn began charging users to more-effectively reach their audiences. As I see it, Facebook has been leading the changes in how and when organic brand content is being displayed across the social-sphere; and so, for the purpose of this article, I am going to focus on the changes Facebook has made and how to get the most impact from your social media budget.

In a recent article on MarketingWeek.com,¹ based on a Facebook blog post,² the reasons for Facebook's changes to its algorithm within that last year (changes that have caused the organic reach of a brand's page content to sharply decline to 3 percent or less), is explained. Organic reach "has fallen due to more content being shared on the platform, resulting in more competition for ranking in the News Feed, and Facebook's efforts to surface more 'high quality content' and clean up spam on the platform." It could be argued that Facebook made these changes to make more money—and make money, they do! But Facebook says this is not the case, and goes on to explain that if the News Feed were to show every piece of content shared, allowing users to decide what they want to see, the organic reach of brand content would decrease even further. Instead, Facebook says, "its platform should be treated like TV, search, newspapers, radio and 'virtually every other marketing platform' and that brands should use paid media to achieve their business objectives."

So, how can you effectively and creatively use social media to make an impact in your marketing successes without throwing a large amount of money at the effort? Fortunately, there are still opportunities to reach your target audiences through truly organic means, and I still believe that Facebook offers extremely well-targeted and cost-effective options when choosing to purchase social advertising.

To improve your organic reach, try these seven strategies from The Daily Positive:³

1. Add Photos. Posts with photos get 39 percent more interaction.
2. Be Concise. Posts around 80 characters in length get 66 percent more engagement.
3. Use Emoticons. Posts with emoticons get 33 percent more comments and shares.
4. Post on Thursday and Friday. These days show 18 percent higher engagement rates.
5. Post Questions. Engaging your audience with questions generates 100 percent more comments than those without.
6. Run Contests. Thirty-five percent of fans like a page for the chance to win something.
7. Offer a Coupon or Discount. Forty-two percent of fans like a page with special offers.

When you're ready to spend some money on your social engagement, there are a few options to choose from, and strategies that will help improve your success. When you want to increase the engagement of your social content (this is content you've posted to your page), there are two primary ways to do this: boosted posts and promoted posts. The basic differences are in the level of targeting available and the bidding and budgeting options. Boosted posts are a quick way to show your posted content to either "fans or their friends" or "people you choose through targeting." The fans and friends option can expose your content to a potentially untapped audience, but may also go to people not in your geographic area or with any interest in your content. Targeting allows you to select people who will see your ad based on location, age, gender, and their interests. Both options allow you to select how much you want to spend and over how many days to spread the budget.

The other option, promoted posts, gives you greater flexibility in targeting, pricing, and your desired objective. With a promoted

post, desirable options include increased page post engagement, increased page likes, and increased ability to drive traffic to your website. You'll notice your options for targeting increase from within the Ads Manager, which can help you ensure the right people see your content, and as with boosted posts, you will be able to watch how your ad performs and run detailed reports.

To have the best chance at overall success, try split testing your ads—also known as A/B testing, when you run two or more similar ads to test which one performs the best, add conversion tracking to your website with a snippet of code provided by Facebook, and monitor Facebook Insights and Google Analytics for tracking engagement.

REFERENCES

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2. "Organic Reach on Facebook: Your Questions Answered" | Facebook for Business | June 5, 2014 | <https://www.facebook.com/business/news/Organic-Reach-on-Facebook-UK>
3. "7 Strategies That Will BOOM Your Facebook Engagement" | The Daily Positive | May 22, 2014 | <http://dalepartridge.com/7-strategies-will-boom-facebook-engagement/>

MAKING YOUR FACEBOOK POSTS MATTER

7 STATISTICS THAT CAN RAISE YOUR ENGAGEMENT RATE*

1 ADD PHOTOS

39%
PHOTO POSTS GET 39% MORE INTERACTION

Photos account for 93% of the most engaging posts, and photo posts get 53% more likes, 104% more comments, and 84% more click-throughs than text-based posts.

2 BE CONCISE

250 CHARACTERS
80 CHARACTERS

SHORTER POSTS GET 23% MORE INTERACTION

Posts below 250 characters can get you 60% more engagement, while cutting to less than 80 characters will get you 66% more engagement.

3 USE EMOTICONS

33%
EMOTICONS INCREASE COMMENTS BY 33%

Posts with emoticons get 33% more comments, get shared 33% more often, and get liked 57% more than posts without emoticons.

4 POST ON THURSDAY & FRIDAY

THURSDAYS & FRIDAYS HAVE 18% HIGHER ENGAGEMENT RATES

Engagement rates are 18% higher on Thursdays and Fridays, compared to other days of the week.

5 POST QUESTIONS

QUESTION POSTS GET 100% MORE COMMENTS

Questions generate 100% more comments than standard posts with statements, and questions with quick or limited answers tend to get the highest number of comments.

6 RUN CONTESTS

35% OF FANS LIKE A PAGE TO PARTICIPATE IN A CONTEST

35% of fans like a page to participate in a contest, and using contest related words, such as winner, win, entry, contest, enter, and promotion are more likely to engage people.

7 GIVE COUPONS OR DISCOUNTS

42% OF FANS LIKE A PAGE TO GET A COUPON OR DISCOUNT

Coupon-based campaigns receive some of the highest engagement rates, with 42% of fans liking a page to get a discount or coupon.

ENGAGE YOUR USERS. POST, COMMENT, AND CONNECT!

*Source: Sales and Marketing Research, powered by permission by Facebook.
<http://www.marketingweek.com/2014/06/06/7-statistics-that-can-raise-your-facebook-engagement-rate/>

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