

Facebook for Business - Reaching out with ease

You may already be running a Facebook business page and if not, chances are you're thinking about it. Having a Facebook page for your business is a great way to maintain rapport with your clients, build a bigger audience and help raise awareness for your brand, product or service.

Recently however, Facebook changed the rules surrounding business pages. This means that your organic reach won't go as far as it once did, for a number of reasons. There are now so many businesses with Facebook pages that the amount of people posting at any time can be enormous. This affects whether your post will specifically appear in the newsfeed of followers. You now have to work a little harder to have your posts seen by more people.

So what is organic reach?

This is the total number of people who see your post through unpaid distribution, generally those who have chosen to follow or like your business page. But if they're not online at the time of your post, it may be missed altogether.

Here are some strategies to increase your organic reach on Facebook.

Be open

There is no better way to build trust with your audience than to be open. By making your brand and team relatable by posting real photos, updates and information about what goes on in the company (within reason) you can truly gain trust with readers. This nurtures brand loyalty and familiarity, encouraging post likes and comments which promote your post and display it more frequently in Facebook feeds. Create an element of transparency by posting work outings, team events, birthday shouts or awards won. (A good photo would be a group of people out to a restaurant dinner or on a team building activity)

Be available

Let your fans know you're there for them. By encouraging interaction and responding to this, you are providing access to your brand. Think about different ways your fans can interact with you whether this is through forums, or other social media platforms such as Twitter and Instagram. Perhaps look at running competitions - even if it's for a bottle of wine or a movie voucher. Each of these ideas will help you expand your organic reach and potentially gain a wider following. Everyone likes to win stuff! Don't be daunted by the idea of other forms of social media either. It's actually quite simple. Most programmes now are linked together in a way that allows you to simply tick a box to send the information update across various platforms. The initial setup only takes a few minutes and once you've done this, these updates can be sent directly from your website or blog. The added benefit is a larger organic reach and higher rankings in search engines.

Be positive

This one almost speaks for itself. Before posting anything, think about your social media marketing voice. What kind of character or persona are you trying to portray? What's the tone you intend to use? Be mindful of the language, whether it be playful, savvy or a tad more formal and ensure you always post with a purpose. Is your post to inform, entertain or sell?

Targeted reach - fine-tuning Facebook

When you market your business, product or service on Facebook, you have a number of different options. If you write a post and leave it at that, this post will only go as far as your organic reach (the

total number of people who see your post through unpaid distribution). You can look at taking this a step further though and branch into paid advertising.

You have the option to boost either your post or your entire page. First, it pays to clarify something. A post is a status update and your business page is the canvas you post to. So a single post might update us on a particular special or competition you're running whereas your page tells us what your business is about.

Boost Post

You can boost an individual post by paying an agreed amount of money. Then that particular post will be marketed to more people and show up in more feeds at more times throughout the day. You don't want to boost every post though. There should be a good balance between business posts and non-business posts. Boosting business posts over non-business posts makes much more sense as these will encourage and promote your actual product or service.

Promote Page

Rather than just focusing on one individual post, this feature promotes your entire page. It will show up on the sidebar as well as in the feed of others as a 'suggested page'. Promoting your page as a whole can encourage more people to like your page and in turn, extend your organic reach.

So it really depends on what kind of marketing you want to do and your overall objective. If your main goal is to get more likes and extend your organic reach, the best option is to boost your page. If you simply want to let your audience know about something specific, it would be best to boost a particular post.

The fun part is targeting the marketing to different demographics and monitoring the outcome once the ad has run its course. Facebook provides comprehensive, analytical data to you after each campaign.

You can experiment with targeted Facebook marketing. Establish your budget first - how much do you want to spend? How many days would you like the ad to run for? What demographic would you like to target? Facebook will ask you each of these questions when you set up the marketing for each ad. Start with a small budget, run the campaign and see what happens. Notice the outcome and from there, devise a strategy for each new campaign.

FYI

Organic reach: the number of people who can see your posts through unpaid distribution on social media such as Facebook.

Paid reach: the number of people who can see your post as a result of ads on social media.

Targeted reach: the people who are most likely to spend money with businesses like yours.

Viral reach: the number of people who have seen your post because a friend has liked, shared, or commented on your post.

Netiquette – do's and don'ts for Facebook

Devise a strategy for your Facebook page and keep it up. When you sit down and devise a plan you can also establish what your social media marketing voice might sound like. It can be consistent with your marketing in other media or be more tailored to a particular group. If you're concerned that

keeping up a Facebook page on a regular basis is not feasible, elect someone from within your team to help out. Most employees see social media as 'fun' and are, more often than not, willing to participate.

The other option is of course paid advertising - this is where your targeted reach comes in.

When you have your Facebook page up and running, keep thinking about your overall strategy. Here are some more things to consider when it comes to posting.

DO

Post regularly

Before you even write anything online, establish a strategy for your posts first and foremost. How often are you going to post? What will be the subject of each post? Don't attempt to post daily, if you're not sure you're going to have anything to say. At the same time, don't overload your readers with too much information. Like unsubscribing from emails, they will quickly 'unfollow' your page.

Respond to comments

If you were to have a conversation with someone in person, would you simply ignore him or her? Probably not. The same applies to cyberspace. Be polite, ask questions and encourage interaction. Not only is this a great way to find out about your target market, but the more interaction on your page, the more likely your organic reach is likely to be.

Keep an eye on competitors

When you have a business page, Facebook allows you to follow other business pages and gauge how well they're doing in comparison. Keep an eye on what works for your competitors and what doesn't. Are they receiving comments and interaction from clients? Are they running competitions and promotions that you might also be able to run? Keep in mind that if you do run a competition on Facebook, there are rules and guidelines that must be adhered to.

Be timely

Try and establish what times of the day your followers are looking at Facebook, and target your posts to these times.

DON'T

Be desperate

Don't straight out ask for likes and shares. Encourage people to like and follow your page in a more subtle way. Though it doesn't hurt to acknowledge when you reach a milestone, such as 100, 200 or even 1,000 likes. In a way, you're showing the world of Facebook users how well you're doing.

Be all about the business

Don't just post about business. Have some fun. For every two business related posts, throw a light-hearted, unrelated post in the middle and try to link it back to your business in some way. This builds rapport and can also reach out to those from outside your current market.

Write a novel

Don't write screeds of information in a post. If you need to, simply write it elsewhere such as a blog or your website and attach a link.

Facebook can be a wonderful marketing tool when used correctly. At this stage, there doesn't seem to be a downside to using it for your business, but if you're going to have a Facebook page, have a strategy first and always keep in mind some of the basic do's and don'ts.