How Facebook Marketing is Changing (And How to Be Prepared)

Too busy to read? Just click the play button below to listen to this post.

Facebook, as a platform, is barely recognizable from the social network that launched to connect Harvard University students in February 2004.

And looking ahead, the Facebook of five years from now is highly unlikely to resemble the product that 2.2 billion people use every month right now.

That’s no bad thing. If Facebook is to thrive over the next 5, 10, 15+ years, it’ll need to evolve.

Here’s where we think it’s heading…

Back in January, Facebook founder, Mark Zuckerberg, outlined his vision for the future of Facebook on his Page:

What followed was an update that would prioritize posts from friends and family over public content from Pages in the News Feed.

And just a couple of weeks back, Facebook announced another significant update that could signal a new path for the platform – an update that only developers are likely to have picked up on so far.

On April 25, Facebook announced some API changes on its developer blog:

> *The `publish_actions` permission will be deprecated. This permission granted apps access to publish posts to Facebook as the logged in user. Apps created from today onwards will not have access to this permission. Apps created before today that have been previously approved to request `publish_actions` can continue to do so until August 1, 2018.*

These changes mean that developers, and platforms like Buffer, will be unable to post content on behalf of personal Facebook profiles. This brings Facebook's API in-line with Instagram's, meaning developers can only post to business profiles and pages on both Facebook and Instagram.

> *For more information on how these API changes relate to the Buffer product, you read this full overview with all the details in the Buffer FAQ.*

At Buffer, we believe it paints a pretty clear picture that Facebook wants individuals to be interacting with its products (Instagram, Facebook, Messenger, Whatsapp) and others on the networks in a manual, deliberate way – whether that is posting content, consuming content or engaging with content.

What this means for the Facebook ecosystem

Facebook seems very keen to encourage more users to share content and counter the decline of user-generated posts.

For example, its recent focus on Stories and Groups could be seen as a way to encourage more unique content. This, coupled with the "meaningful interactions" update, shows that Facebook might be hoping that more unique content shared by users, reaching more of their closest friends and family will help to spark more conversation and interaction on the platform.

In his January update, Zuckerberg shared:

> *The research shows that when we use social media to connect with people we care about, it can be good for our well-being. We can feel more connected and less lonely, and that correlates with long term measures of happiness and health. On the other hand, passively reading articles or watching videos — even if they're entertaining or informative — may not be as good.*

For many, Facebook has evolved into a passive experience. Somewhere you go to view a photo, read a news story or watch a video, but not a place you share and engage with friends.

Throughout 2018, and beyond, Facebook will likely continue to experiment with ways to connect users to those closest to them and encourage time on Facebook to be time well spent.

So rather than prioritizing content that might grab a user's attention, but drive little interaction, Facebook will favor the content that sparks conversations and brings people closer together.

As Brian Peters' explained in a recent post:

> *Active interactions such as sharing, commenting, and reacting will hold much more weight than "passive" interactions such as clicking, viewing, or hovering.*

The API changes could also help from a privacy and trust standpoint too, as users will know that every update shared by themselves as well as their friends and family will have come directly from them.

So no apps or third-party products will be posting on their behalf or accessing their own or their friends’ data without being given really explicit permission.

What this means for businesses on Facebook

It appears that Facebook wants to encourage businesses to continue to create and share high-quality content on its

platform and will continue to support third-party tools *(like Buffer)* that help businesses to create, schedule, publish and analyze the performance of their content.

At Buffer, we also believe that these changes will help to make Facebook a *"healthy"* environment for both businesses and individuals. As Joel recently shared:

> *These new restrictions are more likely to affect products that are pushing the boundaries of what are healthy social media strategies. We believe that the changes will result in a healthier ecosystem for Facebook and Instagram and, by extension, a better place to be for our mutual users.*

But what does this mean for marketing on Facebook? Here are a couple of thoughts…

Fewer posts will receive organic reach

Overall, I believe that this might lead to marketing on Facebook feeling a little more like search engine marketing – a direction we've been heading in for a couple of years as organic reach has declined.

On Facebook now, some of your best content will still reach your audience and organically take off *(similar to reaching page 1 of Google for a relevant keyword)* and this will happen for 1-2% of the best content on Facebook.

And for those pieces of content that don't break through organically, Facebook's advertising product offers the chance to display your content to your target audience using its incredibly powerful targeting features (similar to using Google AdWords).

Content should become a destination

There's also an opportunity for businesses to start thinking

about episodic content – the type of stuff your audience will actively seek out if they get into a routine of knowing when it’s published.

Much like how people might purposefully open Netflix to watch the latest episode of their favorite series, people will begin to actively seek out the best content on Facebook.

Moz’s Whiteboard Friday has made their blog a go-to destination for search engine marketers for a few years. And now we’re seeing similar on Facebook. For example, The Ringer’s NBA Desktop show has basketball fans heading to their Facebook Page to check out the latest episode every Tuesday and Friday.

But episodic content doesn’t have to mean high-end video production. It could be a weekly Facebook Live session, daily featured images or a question of the day (using Facebook’s polling feature).

Marketers need to start thinking about how they can make their content worth seeking out. It’s almost like “Inbound Marketing 2.0”.

Instead of interrupting the Facebook News Feed with content, how can you make your content a destination for your target audience?

That’s the big challenge ahead for social media marketers.

Over to you

What are your thoughts on the future of Facebook marketing? We’d love to hear your thoughts in the comments below.

http://feedproxy.google.com/~r/bufferapp/~3/dt_iH-YOEZ0/future-of-facebook