Google Expands Access to Its Business Messages Feature

|
16 hours ago
Google will expand its Business Messages feature in search and Google Maps to businesses of all types, enabling them to integrate the feature with their customer-service platforms.

Senior product manager Jake Mintz said in a blog post that Google recently added elements including smart replies, visual product carousels and unique welcome messages to Business Messages, adding that the feature provides a smooth transition from automated replies to a customer-service agent.

Hero/Google
The Business Messages feature is currently available in English, with other languages to be added soon.

Brands and messaging partners can sign up here for access to the Business Messages API (application-programming interface) and developer documentation, and a list of messaging partners currently on board is available here.

Mintz shared examples of how Business Messages has already been used:

- Woolworths, Australia's largest supermarket, enables customers to search for products and see their availability and locations within the store at their local outlets, as well as receiving updates on hours and Covid-19.
- Walmart is using the feature to give customers up-to-date information on store hours, options for pickup or delivery and safety precautions.
- MyGov teamed up with partner Amplify.ai to provide citizens in India with answers about hours, Covid-19

helplines and ways to volunteer and donate to the country’s 11,000-plus food and night shelters.

- Mattress Firm and messaging partner Podium sold mattresses directly via Business Messages by sharing videos and product information, despite stores being closed due to the pandemic.
- Dish and partner [24]7.ai slashed the average handle time for customer service by over 22% compared with other messaging channels.

Mintz said Google is experimenting with more ways to highlight Business Messages on search, and it will also be made available on mobile websites so that businesses can add the ability to message directly from those sites.

Hero, another Google messaging partner, is beta-testing the functionality with brands including Arhaus, Credo Beauty, John Hardy, Jonathan Adler and Oscar de la Renta.

Founder Adam Levene said in a blog post, “From the beginning, Hero’s mission has been to make connecting with your local store as easy as messaging a friend. As shopping evolves in response to Covid-19, that mission is more important than ever before. Using Google’s Business Messages, Hero is giving consumers the confidence to come in-store by making it simple to check availability and stock ahead of time, ensuring that their trip is worry free.”

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https://www.adweek.com/digital/google-expands-access-to-its-business-messages-feature/

Banco Central do Brasil Calls Time Out on WhatsApp Payments

|
11 hours ago
Brazil giveth and Brazil taketh away, as WhatsApp Payments, which were rolled out countrywide last week, are now on hold.

Banco Central do Brasil posted a notice on its website Tuesday, reading (translated from Portuguese): “Within the scope of its duties as regulator and supervisor of payment arrangements in Brazil, the Central Bank ordered Visa and Mastercard to suspend the start of activities or immediately stop using the WhatsApp application to initiate payments and transfers within the scope of arrangements instituted by these supervised entities. The BC’s motivation for the decision is to preserve an adequate competitive environment, which ensures the functioning of an interoperable, fast, secure, transparent, open and inexpensive payment system.”

No one from WhatsApp would comment for attribution, but the Facebook-owned messaging app indicated that it planned to continue its efforts in the country.

WhatsApp said in a blog post when it introduced the feature that it would enable people to send money securely or make

purchases from local businesses without leaving their chats in the app, adding that a special six-digit PIN or fingerprint would be required in order to prevent unauthorized transactions.

WhatsApp Payments is enabled by Facebook Pay, and WhatsApp said last week that the goal is to enable people to use the same credit card information across Facebook's family of apps in the future.

https://www.adweek.com/digital/banco-central-do-brasil-calls-time-out-on-whatsapp-payments/

Facebook Kicks Off Boost With Facebook Summer of Support

|
13 hours ago
Facebook kicked off a new initiative to help bring businesses of all types and sizes online, Boost With Facebook Summer of Support.

Vice president of global customer marketing Michelle Klein said in a blog post that the goal is to get millions of people the digital skills and information they need to rebound from the Covid-19 crisis via free on-demand online training, live sessions and conversations on topics including creative reinvention, going from brick-and-mortar to digital and reimagining customer service.

Other topics that will be addressed include building an online presence, getting creative with mobile phones and understanding page insights.

Speakers will include: National Basketball Association Hall of Famer and entrepreneur Magic Johnson, The Profit host Marcus Lemonis, UWG chair and CEO Monique Nelson and O'Shares Investments chairman and Shark Tank personality Kevin O'Leary on tactical tips to help a business succeed; and small business owners Emmie King of Nandy's Candy and D'Andra and Mikaila Ulmer of Me & the Bees Lemonade on how they have adapted their businesses during the pandemic.

Boost With Facebook Summer of Support lasts six weeks, and each week will feature a different theme (descriptions written by Klein):

- **June 24 through 28, The Changing World:** The world is in a state of accelerated change. It's not just about the pandemic; innovation itself has put us in a permanent state of flux. To thrive as a business, you need to understand how to respond to this new paradigm.
- **June 29 through July 5, Resilience:** Sometimes opportunity can look like a setback. The businesses that succeed are the ones that can reframe a setback as a new way forward. Find out how to stay resilient in moments of change and make your downturns work for you.
- **July 6 through 12, Reinvention:** That one transformative opportunity might just be out of reach—and you just

might have to try a little reinvention to fully grasp it. We'll show you how remaking your business can help you unlock these new opportunities.

- **July 13 through 19, Reemergence:** Once a crisis ends, how do you enter into the new landscape? Successful reemergence into the market means understanding which parts of your business to keep and what needs to evolve.
- **July 20 through 26, Customers and Commerce:** If you're an asset to your customers in times of uncertainty, you stand to gain when the economy picks up again. Learn how to make your business essential through customer-focused processes and smarter commerce.
- **July 27 through 31, Community:** Essential businesses help communities stay strong and flourish, whatever their size or composition. Learn how to keep your business a vibrant and important member of your community—however you define "community."

Facebook also rolled out an online business guide with step-by-step instructions on establishing a digital presence, connecting with customers for free and getting started with advertising.

Finally, fashion designer, TV personality, author and former small business owner Tan France stars in new Facebook Watch show Boost My Business, in which he meets with small business owners from across the country and helps them find creative solutions to challenges such as acquiring new clients, boosting online sales and encouraging website visits.

Klein wrote, "We remain committed to small businesses and will continue to explore new ways to support you. Earlier this year, we announced $100 million in cash grants and ad credits to help businesses through this challenging time, and last week, we committed over $200 million to support Black-owned businesses, Black creators and nonprofits serving the Black community. Boost With Facebook Summer of Support is just one more step we're taking together on the journey to helping get

you back to business.”

https://www.adweek.com/digital/facebook-kicks-off-boost-with-facebook-summer-of-support/

Can the Facebook NPE Team Predict the Success of Its Newest App?

|
9 hours ago
The Facebook NPE Team unveiled its latest test application, Forecast, an invite-only beta iOS app.

Crowdsourced predictions are the driving force behind Forecast, and the app enables members of its community to pose questions about the future, make predictions and discuss the topic.

Product lead Rebecca Kossnick said in a blog post that making predictions and participating in discussions will only be available via the app to invited community members in the U.S. and Canada, but all of the predictions and discussions can be viewed on the Forecast website and shared across platforms.

People interested in participating in the beta can apply here.

Facebook NPE Team
For its rollout Tuesday, the Facebook NPE Team invited people in the health, research and academic communities to make predictions about the Covid-19 pandemic and its impact on the world.

Kossnick said all questions are submitted by the Forecast community and moderated for clarity using Facebook's moderation guidelines and community standards.

Users can discuss the reasoning behind their predictions, visit profiles to see other users' predictions and opinions and follow each other.

They can also view their own prediction track record over time and see where they stand on leaderboards for individual topics.

Kossnick wrote, "People are increasingly searching for information to help them understand what the world might look like tomorrow, next month and beyond. We believe that a community built around predictions is not only a good way to surface crowdsourced wisdom, but may also help to encourage healthier online conversations across a broad range of topics."

The Facebook NPE Team—NPE stands for New Product Experimentation—released three apps in May: Invite-only iOS

app Collab, which brings fans and creators together to create, watch and mix and match original videos, starting with music; Venue, for Android and iOS, which enables commentators and fans to experience live events together in a new, interactive way; and CatchUp, an Android and iOS app aimed at facilitating phone calls and group calls.

https://www.adweek.com/digital/can-the-facebook-npe-team-predict-the-success-of-its-newest-app/

Facebook Rolls Out Tool to Help Businesses Comply With California Consumer Privacy Act

|
10 hours ago
Facebook introduced Limited Data Use, a new tool that helps businesses on its platform comply with the California Consumer Privacy Act.

The social network said in a blog post that when a business elects to use the feature, Facebook will process information about people in California as that business' service provider, meaning that it will limit how that information is processed as specified by state-specific terms.

Facebook added that businesses may notice an impact on their campaign performance and effectiveness when using the Limited

Data Use tool, and their retargeting and measurement capabilities will also be limited.

The social network will implement a transition period, which will last through July 31 for most of its business tools, and it will automatically limit how it uses data that businesses send through those tools about people from California.

After July 31, businesses must activate Limited Data Use in order for this to happen, but if they do so during the transition period, it takes effect immediately.

More details are available here on Limited Data Use and which business tools it supports.

https://www.adweek.com/programmatic/facebook-rolls-out-tool-to-help-businesses-comply-with-california-consumer-privacy-act/

Twitter Makes National Election Days Paid Holidays for Employees Worldwide

|
13 hours ago
Twitter is making national election voting days paid days off for its workforce around the world.

Senior communications manager Nick Pacilio said teams responsible for functions related to elections, such as security, will be on hand during elections, adding that the

previous policy was to give employees two hours off of paid time to go vote.

He added that the new policy applies to Twitter's contract workforce, as well, and the company will advise third-party partners about the closures so they can plan similar initiatives for their teams or find them other work.

Pacilio shared Twitter's internal email: ""Given the importance of voting, going forward, all national election voting days that take place on a weekday will be a paid day off. Since the U.S. presidential election falls on a work day (Nov. 3), we will plan to close all U.S. offices on that day. For all other elections, if you do not have enough time outside of working hours to vote or your country doesn't already have a process in place to address this, you should take the time you need to do so, and you will be compensated for the time off."

https://www.adweek.com/digital/twitter-makes-national-election-days-paid-holidays-for-employees-worldwide/

Twitter Corrects Bug That Caused Billing Information to Be Stored in Browsers' Cache

|
13 hours ago
Twitter sent emails to its business customers alerting them that information may have been compromised.

The social network said in those emails that it initially learned of the problem May 20, adding that the bug, which has been resolved, caused business users' billing information such as email addresses, phone numbers and the last four digits of credit-card numbers to inadvertently be stored in web browsers' cache, meaning that it was possible that other people could access that data in cases where computers are shared.

Twitter senior communications manager Laura Pacas said, "We became aware of an incident where if you viewed your billing information on ads.twitter.com or analytics.twitter.com, the billing information may have been stored in the browser's cache. As soon as we discovered this was happening, we resolved the issue and communicated to potentially impacted clients to make sure they were aware and informed on how to protect themselves moving forward."

She would not specify how many customers may have been affected.

https://www.adweek.com/programmatic/twitter-corrects-bug-that-caused-billing-information-to-be-stored-in-browsers-cache/

Covid-19 Continues to Influence Facebook IQ's Topics to Watch

|
1 hour ago
Women 25 through 64 and men 65 and up drove conversation about bentonite in May, making it one of Facebook IQ's Topics to

Watch for the month.

Conversation about bentonite and associated topics Aztec, clay, diatomaceous earth, Europe, face Fort Benton (Mt.), medicinal clay, mineral, pesticide and Wyoming was up 3.4 times compared with May 2019 and 1.6 times versus April.

Facebook IQ wrote, “Bentonite is a powder derived from volcanic ash that’s said to have a range of benefits, from digestion to skincare. In the context of skincare, bentonite absorbs oil and draws out bacteria and unwanted substances without causing irritation for most people. Bentonite-based clay masks are growing in popularity, especially among people looking for solutions for acne-prone skin. Some are even buying pure bentonite powder and making do-it-yourself products by mixing the powder with water or apple cider vinegar. People are increasingly seeking out self-care activities at home, as well as embracing natural ingredients, like bentonite, in their beauty routines.”

Facebook IQ

Facebook IQ
Discussion about bodyweight exercise and associated topics burpee, CrossFit, Memorial Day pullup, physical exercise, pushup, resistance band, sit up, squat, strength training was up 2.4 times year-over-year and 0.9 times month-over-month, led by the 25-through-49 age group in both genders.

The social network’s research arm wrote, “Bodyweight exercises, like pullups, pushups and squats, allow people to build muscle without needing fitness equipment. They’ve become increasingly popular during the pandemic, as people look to stay in shape while at home. For people who don’t have weights or the space for more elaborate equipment, these exercises are a great option. Many fitness apps are providing virtual classes on to do these exercises properly. People are finding ways to maintain their fitness and embracing exercises that help them break a sweat without leaving the house.”

Facebook IQ

Facebook IQ
Speaking of exercise, men 18 through 34 drove a 2.1 times jump versus last May in conversation about cycling shorts and a 1.3 times uptick from April.

Associated topics included clothing, cotton, crop top, fashion, leggings, pajamas, skirt, spandex, trousers and T-shirt.

Facebook IQ wrote, “Designed for bicyclists and popularized in the 1990s, cycling shorts are now making a splash among younger generations who aren’t necessarily riding on two wheels. These tight-fitting bottoms are generally made from stretchy and sweat-wicking materials, making them comfortable for both working out and working from home. People are pairing them with other athletic wear or even dressing them up with

formal apparel. Some celebrities and influencers are sporting these styles and sharing their looks online, boosting their popularity. While cycling shorts are by no means new, they’re becoming a fashion staple as people choose clothing options that are versatile and comfortable.”

Facebook IQ

Facebook IQ
Talk about frozen food was up 3.5 times year-over-year and 0.9 times month-over-month, led by women of all age groups.

Associated topics included chicken food, French fries, fruit, ice cream, lunch, potato, refrigerator, snack and vegetable.

The social network’s research arm wrote, “Frozen foods are known for their convenience. However, they’ve typically been critiqued for their limited nutritional value when compared

with foods cooked with fresh ingredients. Brands have recently revamped their frozen entrees and sides to include healthier choices. Some have expanded their offerings to include gluten-free, low-carb and vegan options. In light of the pandemic, even restaurants are innovating in this space, offering customers high-quality meals that can be saved and reheated easily. This food category seems set to grow as people discover that they no longer have to choose between nutrition and convenience.”

Facebook IQ

Facebook IQ
Men 35 through 64 wet their whistles with vermouth last month, tripling conversation compared with May 2019 and causing it to rise 0.7 times versus April.

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https://www.adweek.com/digital/covid-19-continues-to-influence-facebook-iqs-topics-to-watch/

Twitter Quickly Responds to Accessibility Concerns on Its Voice Tweet Test

|
3 hours ago

Twitter shared a Juneteenth message via voice tweet
Twitter responded quickly to accessibility issues that were brought to its attention regarding the test of voice tweets it kicked off earlier this week with a limited number of iOS users.

Product lead Kayvon Beykpour said in a tweet, “Really appreciate the feedback we heard from customers on missing accessibility support for our iOS voice experiment yesterday. Sorry we let you down. We’ve already fixed a few issues today (will be in the next release), and exploring more improvements (like transcription) now.”

He also linked to a series of tweets from Twitter Support that provided more details.

> *We’re sorry about testing voice Tweets without support for people who are visually impaired, deaf, or hard of hearing. It was a miss to introduce this experiment without this support.*
>
> *Accessibility should not be an afterthought. (1/3) https://t.co/9GRWaHU6fR*

> — Twitter Support (@TwitterSupport) June 19, 2020

Twitter Support said issues related to vision accessibility were addressed, including making voice tweets identifiable on the timeline and other accessibility improvements, and these will be added to an upcoming iOS release.

The social network is also exploring ideas on how to support manual and auto transcription, as well as how to build a dedicated group to focus on accessibility, tooling and advocacy across all products, in partnership with the @TwitterA11y and @TwitterAble teams.

And a passionate, apologetic response came from Twitter product designer Maya Patterson, sent as a voice tweet and written out.

> My personal response to the Deaf/HOH Community:
>
> Uh point blank period, we fucked up, I fucked up. Uh we launched a test and we should have included accessibility features in that test. That was a huge error, and one I personally have made myself sit [cont] pic.twitter.com/avAImLl9t7
>
> — Maya Gold (@mayagpatterson) June 19, 2020

Highlights include: “Point blank period, we fucked up, I fucked up. We launched a test and we should have included accessibility features in that test. That was a huge error, and one I personally have made myself sit with all day today … As a Black woman, I wholeheartedly understand what it feels like to be excluded, to be the one who has to advocate for myself and my community. And it is frustrating. It is gut wrenching. And it’s not OK. And I’m so sorry … that this feature was probably triggering and honestly a slap in the face to all of the work, the decades of work that you all have been putting in to raise awareness about … including

accessible features in your design and development process from the start.”

The main Twitter account followed suit, as well, sharing a Juneteenth message as both a voice tweet and in text form.

Twitter began testing voice tweets Wednesday.

People with access to the feature can open the tweet composer on their iOS device, tap the new icon depicting wavelengths and tap the record button to begin recording.

Voice tweets can be up to 140 seconds in length, and if the time limit is exceeded, a new voice tweet automatically begins, creating a thread.

Tapping the done button will bring users back to the composer screen, where they can share their voice tweets. They will appear in Twitter’s timeline alongside other tweets. Tapping the image will enable people to play the audio.

Playback starts in a new window, so users can listen to voice tweets while continuing to scroll through their timelines.

Voice tweets are available for consumption by everyone on Twitter, whether or not they have access to the creation process.

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https://www.adweek.com/digital/twitter-quickly-responds-to-accessibility-concerns-on-its-voice-tweet-test/

Pinterest CEO Ben Silbermann: ‘Parts of Our Culture Are Broken’

|
25 mins ago
Pinterest CEO Ben Silbermann addressed a litany of allegations by two former employees earlier this week in an email to staff.

Ifeoma Ozoma and Aerica Shimizu Banks took to Twitter Monday to air their grievances, which included issues over salary and leveling, as well as retaliation they allegedly faced after speaking up. They are both Black women who held the title of public policy and social impact manager before leaving the company in May.

Silbermann wrote in his email—which was obtained by Bloomberg News and confirmed as accurate by Pinterest—” What I’ve learned over the past few weeks is that parts of our culture are broken. Truthfully, I didn’t understand just how much work we have to do. That’s not an excuse, that’s a failure in leadership, and I’m truly sorry for letting you down. I’m grateful that so many of you had the courage to share your experiences honestly and openly.”

He admitted that the company lacks diverse representation, particularly in senior leadership, and said recruiting plans for senior-level roles are now “baked into” the core role expectations and performance reviews for Pinterest’s leadership team.

Silbermann also pledged to add a person of color to

Pinterest’s board of directors by the end of the year.

Across the company, Pinterest will raise the standard for building diverse slates across all roles and report on progress during weekly recruiting reports.

Pinterest will require all employees to take classes on building inclusive teams and unconscious bias, and Silbermann wrote, “My team is doing a monthly breakfast to learn more about an aspect of systemic racism and inclusivity and will host a monthly meeting with their own teams, including bringing in outside experts to share their experiences of systemic racism.”

Silbermann also addressed content on Pinterest’s platform, saying the company will establish a metrics-based understanding of how inclusive its product experience is currently and set measurable goals to improve on it by featuring a diverse set of creators, businesses and merchants.

The company will improve representation in teams across engineering, product and design through both recruiting and development, and Silbermann promised to rethink inclusion in forums where decisions are made.

Silbermann addressed the issue of employees being afraid to raise concerns with their supervisors or with human resources, along with questions over whether the company’s compensation structure is fair, writing, “We need to get to the bottom of these. We will hire external experts to comprehensively review the compensation of our employees starting with people of color, then expanding to other groups. We are also finding external experts to independently review our other internal processes.”

He added, “I want to make our culture better. And that starts with me. I own this. I care about all of you more than you might know or feel. Most important, I still believe that we can make Pinterest a company where Black employees, people

from all underrepresented groups and everyone will be proud to work. It will be a hard and long road. My deepest thanks to everyone who is helping push the company forward. We have a lot of work to do.”

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