

Facebook Pages Guide

Introduction to Pages

Facebook Pages Overview

Over the past few years Facebook has witnessed a dramatic rise in new user adoption and with that rise has come the opportunity for brands to interact directly with existing customers and engage new ones. At the end of 2007, Facebook announced the launch of Facebook Pages and last week they launched a revised edition which includes a number of significant upgrades. There are numerous ways for brands to leverage Facebook but the overall branded experience is becoming increasingly integrated into a single offering as the new Pages product highlights. So what are the primary benefits and changes for the new branded pages?

Pages Are Profiles for Brands

One of the primary reasons for launching Facebook Pages was that many companies were using user profiles for their companies, in turn violating Facebook's terms of service. While I'm sure there were many other reasons for launching Pages, the easiest way to understand them is through viewing them as "Profiles for Brands". This means brand pages can essentially do everything that users can do.

Pages Have Access to Users' Feeds

This is probably the single most important feature within the new Facebook Pages product. Many in the press have described this as Twitter for Facebook. It's an accurate description but for those that don't understand what Twitter is, this makes things more confusing. Essentially when Facebook users become a "fan" of your branded page, they will be notified of your status updates anytime you update the status on your brand page, via the primary news feed on the homepage.

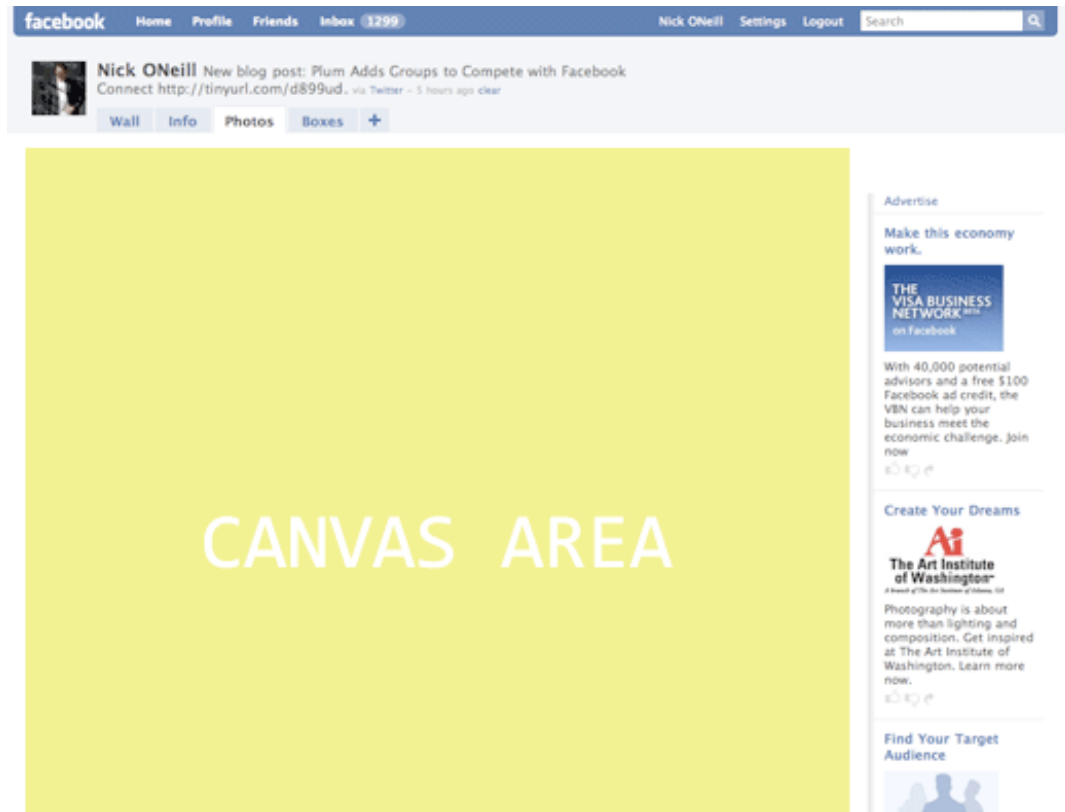
The News Feed is Now Real Time

This is actually an update to the site homepage but it will have a significant impact. Previously Facebook cached the homepage for at least 15 minutes in addition to automatically filtering all feed stories. This means that any feed story which made it to the news feed previously would stay there for a fairly long period of time. The news feed has since been redesigned to stream stories instead displaying the automatically filtered stories as "Highlights" on the right hand side of the page.

Pages Can Integrate Multiple Applications

Earlier this week I posted the example of a robust branded Facebook page which integrates an application into the experience. Pages could previously integrate basic applications but now there is space to integrate applications that are just as robust as those with standalone canvas pages. Not sure of what "canvas pages" are? A canvas page is the space in Facebook below the Facebook header and to the left of Facebook's sidebar ads. Essentially you can now post applications which take up the full width of the page. I've gone ahead and posted a photo of the canvas area in the photo below.

Social Times Inc.



Brands Can Join the Conversation

Social media has always been about joining the conversation and for the first time ever on Facebook, brands can now be a significant part of the conversation. Just as I mentioned earlier, these conversations can take place within a Facebook Page as well as in a user's news feed. I can't emphasize how important joining the conversation is. While your social media strategy should continue to include other outlets (blogs, Twitter, etc), Facebook should now attract much more attention since there is the potential for conversation.

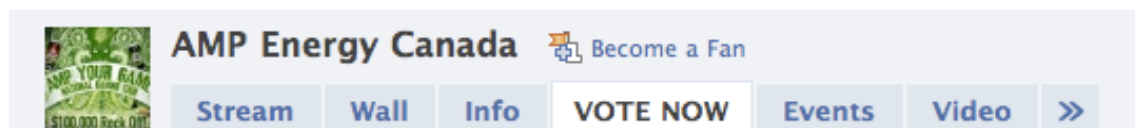
10 Tips for Creating Effective Branded Pages

General Overview

As I mentioned in the introduction to this guide, Facebook Pages present a massive opportunity for brands to directly engage with their existing and future customers, even the occasional passer-by. This conversation brings with it the power that all other social media tools and platforms provide which is why this latest release of Facebook Pages is so important for brands. Yes, changes will come to the Pages product over the coming months and years but as many early adopters know, it's often best to wait until the second version of a product arrives. Now that the second version of Facebook Pages has launched, it's time for you to take your brand to the next level.

Below, I have outlined 10 tips for creating engaging Facebook Pages. These are only the top 10 and there are many other lessons to be learned but this should serve as the ultimate starter guide for any brand/company looking to make their entrance into Facebook.

1. Develop Custom Tabs for Custom Ads



Advertising your brand's page is always extremely important. One of the greatest features of Facebook's new pages product is that you can link directly to specific tabs. That means you can separate which pages a user views by default based on the ad that they clicked on. For example, perhaps you'd like to target two groups of users in different geographic locations. You would display one advertisement for people in Washington, D.C. and those users will land on a page which is specific to users from Washington, D.C. A different page would be displayed to users from San Francisco for example.

While this system isn't necessarily the most scalable (for example having 500 tabs doesn't really make much sense), it can instantly increase the conversion of new visitors into fans. This method also requires a bit more investment in customization but I'd argue that it's well worth it, especially for smaller brands and companies.

2. Don't Let New Users Land on the Wall



Why on earth would I tell you not to let users land on the wall? Well, my biggest concern is that they'll bump into humpty dumpty. Seriously though, there is a huge opportunity to present users with engaging information and while the content provided by fans of your brand can be engaging, you have absolutely no control over it. That's why it's much better to have new visitors enter a controlled environment and then proceed to navigate through areas with less structure. Yes, the wall can be extremely valuable for letting users talk to you and your brand but such unfiltered waters are the last place you should force a new user to navigate through. Provide your users with a safe entrance to the muddy waters we call "social media" and they will forever thank you for it, trust me.

3. Create a Unique Page Image



I honestly believe that this is one of the most important components of a fan page. It's a simple component yet within the confines of a 200 pixel wide box, you would be surprised with the creative ideas that people come up with. Recently Rob Banagale, a guest author on AllFacebook, published an article entitled "[5 Creative Ways to Hack Your Facebook Profile Photo](#)". If you haven't read it, I suggest you check it out. More impressive than the photos included in the tutorial are the photos that numerous users posted at the end.

I cannot tell you how many standard Facebook Pages I've seen in which the basic logo is displayed. If your company has more than one employee (has extra resources), there should be no excuse for not creating an engaging photo for your Facebook Page. It's one of the first things users look at and it has the potential to leave a lasting impression so make it good!

The photo posted above is a unique user profile photo but I think it illustrates how you can develop creative profile photos that take advantage of the awkwardly positioned border. If you have other creative profile photos or Page photos that you've created or seen please let us know about it.

4. Integrate Applications To Increase Engagement

The last thing you want is for users to land on your Facebook Page and leave immediately. The greatest opportunity you have to capture their attention is through engaging applications. There are currently over 55,000 applications on the Facebook platform and a relatively large portion of them can be directly integrated into your fan page. Over the coming weeks there will be numerous applications that are built around the soon to be updated Facebook Page API which will make it easier for brands to launch a relatively engaging Facebook Page within minutes.

For larger brands I highly recommend that you develop a more robust experience for the user. Games, quizzes, and other types of dynamic content in general can help keep users on your Facebook Page for longer durations of time. As you know, we live in an attention economy and that means you want to get all the attention you can from consumers. One thing you should make sure is that your application has a call to action so that when a new user lands on the page they are immediately engaged.

VOTE FOR ONE OF THESE NEW VIDEOS
Check out the **video tab** for all past performances!



Campus: Brock
Votes: 358

VOTE! **COMMENT**



Campus: Lakehead
Votes: 148

VOTE! **COMMENT**

5. Join the Conversation, It's Not Optional Anymore



As I stated before, this is the first time that brands have the opportunity to be a major part of a user's conversation on Facebook so take advantage of it. That means every time someone comments on your new status, a photo, a video, a discussion thread, or anything else, you need to comment on it. Gone are the days of a one-way conversation in which the brands talk down to their customers. We are in the midst of a conversational revolution and your company needs to be part of it. At this point, you don't have the option not to participate.

Failing to engage your customers and potential customers means less revenue, and it also means you'll be losing to your competition who is engaging with their customers on a regular basis. Whether you are a small business (dentist, physician, plumber, restaurant, etc) or a large corporation, you need to be talking to your client and the only way to do that is through a two way dialogue. They'll ask you questions that you can reply to and you can ask questions as well. Ask about what would improve their experience with your company. Also, ask them about the world in general because at the end of the day, they're humans just like you.

It takes extra effort to engage your clients and going that extra mile will always keep clients coming back. You want to promote an exceptional brand right?

6. Publish Interesting and Relevant Content

Just like in other areas of social media (blogs, Twitter, etc), it's extremely important to provide interesting content to your readers. Facebook is no different. By regularly referencing other relevant content, your fans will keep returning to your page. While attracting repeat visitors is not the single most important component of fan pages, repeat engagement is easily the second most important variable. In virtual economies, one of the most effective measurements of the state of an economy is repeat usage. Facebook pages and other digital content channels are no different. Users that return to your page regularly are significantly more likely to become paying customers.

Even more important is that existing customers who return to your Facebook page are more likely to continue as customers. The bottom line is that a plain looking Facebook page is not doing your company any favors. Yes, having any sort of presence is always better than nothing at all but if you took the time to read through this guide, please do me a favor and make a little extra effort to create an engaging Facebook page. So how do you find interesting content?

While I won't dive too deep into the details about finding interesting content, you should be able to find relevant content to your readers by doing a search on [Google Blogsearch](#), and leveraging an RSS reader like [Google Reader](#). Typically I would assume that most readers of this site know what RSS is but if you don't it's a simple way to read the content on sites without actually having to visit each site individually. If you want to learn more, check out Google's [Feed 101](#). If you want the short answer for finding interesting content: look for it. I wish I could say it's easier than that but unfortunately it still takes time to find interesting content.

You can turn to other forms of content aggregators like Delicious.com and Digg.com but those typically only serve specific communities. If you are outside of the new media industry, you'll have to use traditional sources like Google News, Google Blogsearch, and the mainstream media.

7. Repost Comments By Other Users

If you are on Twitter, reposting information is essentially the same as a retweet. By reposting a person's information, you are complimenting them and they will be more likely to pay attention to you. I should note that I'm using "you" and "your brand" interchangeably in this part because in social media, you should be placing a face on your brand. Right now Fan Pages aren't extremely conducive to putting a face on the brand but that will change overtime. Reposting the information that other users post is extremely valuable.

Don't overuse this though! I can't tell you how often I see people on Twitter retweet other users continuously, hoping that it will suddenly increase their follower base drastically. While it will help, this is not something which should suddenly drive thousands of users to your fan page. Instead, it's a good habit to get into as overtime you and your company's reputation will build for engaging users on a regular basis.

8. Update Regularly!



While it's extremely important to monitor the conversation that users are having within your branded Facebook Pages, it's also extremely important to help spark the conversation. By posting questions to users, creating new topics within discussion forums, and performing other activities that create dialogue (such as the previous one mentioned), you'll keep users coming back to your Facebook Page. This is similar to the concept of posting blog posts regularly (which by the way can be automatically imported to your Facebook Page) on your company blog.

Just as I've emphasized the importance of quality content and engagement with your fans, the most important thing is persistence. Unless you keep engaging your fans on a regular basis and continue to post interesting content, you are going to find it difficult to continuously attract new fans.

9. Post and Tag Users in Photos and Videos



Tagging users in photos and videos is probably one of the most effective promotional activities that you can do. The only challenge is coming up with content to tag users in. The best way to get photos and videos of your fans is through hosting events as I mention in the next tip but if you can't host events, you'll need to come up with creative ways to tag your fans. So how do you do that? That's a bit more complicated but nothing that a creative marketer can't figure.

One way would be to introduce a contest to your fan page and then tag the winners of those awards in a trophy photo. If you want to take that idea a step further you could actually integrate your fans' photos into the trophies. This is just one idea though and there are a limitless number of ideas out there. Tagging users is a naturally viral process because as soon as you tag one person, their friends see it and then users are driven to that album which in this case, resides within your fan page.

There is one extremely limiting factor about fan page photos though: you must be a friend of a user to tag them! Yes, it's unfortunate and honestly I don't think it makes much sense. While Facebook should enable fan pages to tag members of the page, they haven't done so yet. Theoretically I could suggest leveraging "guerilla tactics" or overly aggressive techniques to tag members. What are these "guerilla tactics" that I speak of? Well you can figure it out on your own but one example would be adding a fan as a friend for the sole purpose of tagging them in a photo.

I don't recommend using this technique or any technique similar to this though because you may end up in Facebook jail (a.k.a. getting banned from the site). For the time being I would recommend posting as many relevant photos as possible and tagging those users that are in them. The more tagging that takes place, the quicker your page will spread.

10. Leverage the Power of Facebook Events

Events provide an amazing opportunity for brands to reach out to their fan base. Best of all, these events don't actually need to be in person events! While it's not possible to view the network density of the fans of your brand (you can't easily see how many fans are friends with each other), when multiple people RSVP to an event there are increased odds that your event will be distributed through the social graph, in turn driving new users to your brand's page.

Like previous tricks or tips that I mentioned, there are inherent limitations. The primary one being that messages sent out to an event created through a fan page do not end up in a user's inbox. Instead, those messages are sent via page "updates" which are displayed in a separate area. Fortunately, Facebook's redesigned homepage, which is launching this week, includes updates at the top of a user's homepage, making them more visible.

So Where Are My Million Fans?



I know that I started this article by suggesting that you could attract millions of users to your Facebook fan page. I firmly believe that it is possible but it will take a lot of effort. Putting forth that effort though can produce substantial rewards. I've only touched on ten strategies that can be used to drive new fans to your page but ultimately, the more time you invest in your brand's Facebook page, the better response you'll get.

Yes, you could choose to simply set up a page and let it stand there because your brand alone can attract hundreds of thousands if not millions of users. If you've read this far in the guide though, I'm guessing your brand alone will not cut it. Instead, through persistence and consistent attention to your branded page, you will be able to generate new customers and retain existing ones. No, a Facebook page should not be the end of your company's social media strategy but with 180 million or more Facebook users and millions more joining every week, there is no excuse not to be on the site.

But Nick, you told us that we'd have millions of fans though and that's why I read this article. Yes, I did! There are many more techniques to improve the rate at which fans return to your Facebook page and I am glad to share those with you. Thankfully, you have registered for our newsletter so you will be receiving tips in the near future! I know, I teased you with all these tips, but honestly this should be enough to get you started. If you have any tips that you'd like to share us with please do and we'll share it with the community.