



Mastering Social Media

By Hannah Stonehouse Hudson

Facebook Is Not a Billboard

Facebook is not a billboard and should never be used as such. There seem to be a few lines of thought on social media when it comes to what professional, corporate and business pages are for and what that strategy should look like.

For some, Facebook is either just a way to post funny memes and videos to get attention and add likes (the egocentric “hey, look at us” model) or just a place for a company to post about and sell its product and nothing else (the “sales only” model). Neither is correct but both kinds of uses have their place as part of a well-planned social media strategy.

Why do I say that Facebook is not a billboard? Because if you only ask for sales without giving fans anything of value in return, you end up getting Facebook to not show your customers anything, which is the opposite of what you are trying to accomplish. The algorithms of Facebook are finicky and can be a confusing part of your social media plan. Facebook’s algorithms are specifically designed to give relevant and interactive content to its users. Facebook is actively looking for items and content that members will act on, view and share with other members of the community. That is the “social” part of social media. The more value your company adds to Facebook’s community in the form of engaging and useful information, the more Facebook’s algorithms will serve your posts to page fans and followers.

Your business’s purpose is obviously to sell product. The purpose of your overall social media plan is to drive traffic to your website, your newsletter or wherever you would like your potential customers to land to purchase product. The



Treating Facebook as a billboard will limit your reach in this important electronic medium.

social media plan per post, however, is not to drive traffic to your website; the plan per post is to drive engagement numbers up so Facebook’s algorithms know what you are posting is relevant to your fan base. As Facebook gauges what is relevant to your fans, it will increase views on that post and future posts. This, in turn, increases the number of posts that your fans see that are driving them to your website (or newsletter, etc.).

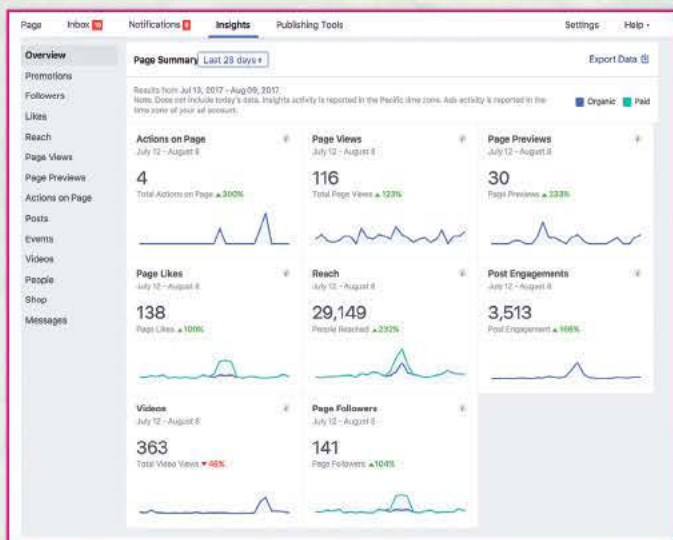
Facebook page’s reach per post is usually around 1 percent of your fan base organically. You can increase that number exponentially if you purposefully create interaction and engagement on a post. Asking relevant questions, posting fan photos, etc. are strategies that can be utilized to increase that engagement. The

more engaging posts are on a page, the more Facebook will serve future posts to your current fan base. If you have a sale coming up, making very engaging posts prior to announcing that sale and posting links to purchase (or similar types of posts) will actually increase the number of fans who see those sales-type posts. Facebook’s algorithms actually limit the number of your fans that see any posts that are sales in nature to less than 1 percent organically. That can be mitigated by having lots of interaction on the page prior to announcing anything or posting links to purchase



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You'll want to understand what these statistics mean for your Facebook page and how they reflect your progress or lack of it in building an audience of regular viewers.

products. Shooting for approximately 80 percent engaging content and posts and 20 percent sales-type, call-to-action content and posts is a good rule of thumb in general strategy. If you are trying to get lots of fan interaction prior to a new product announcement or another big announcement, at least 90 percent engaging and relevant content in the week or two prior is important.

It is often extremely difficult to gain back engagement numbers quickly, so if Facebook decides your information is not applicable or interesting enough to give to your target market in its feed, it will stop serving posts to your fans, fewer people will interact with your page and then even fewer of your posts will reach your current fans and followers. That is definitely the opposite of what you want.

You need to give fans and followers things of value (your products and services included) and make them want to come back for more.

So how do you do this?

Here are a few simple steps to avoid using Facebook like a billboard but still bring in potential clients or customers:

1) **Ask questions.** Fans love giving input (negative and positive). Types of posts that ask them what they like, want to share, etc. serve a few purposes:

- They do some market research for you.

- They help increase your views and engagement because more people want to answer. They want to be heard. The more people who comment, the more the Facebook algorithm will show these to your current fans and their friends.

- They build ownership. Fans feel like you are listening, so they come back for more.

2) **Do real-time posting.** Don't always just schedule a post, set it and

forget it. You have to show up online. Be there and engage. It doesn't have to be constant but it should be a regular occurrence. Ask about the fans; ask what they are doing and then respond back right away. This, again, builds your engagement numbers and makes Facebook's algorithm believe that you are relevant.

3) **Ask people to share your call-to-action type posts.** Sometimes people don't even realize that you want them to spread the word. If you ask, many will do it.

4) **Mix up your types of posts when you do need to post a sales-type item.** Different types of posts are served to different people. If you use a direct link in one post and a photo with a link in the comments in another, you will reach different fans because Facebook shows your fans what they interact with most. You can spread these out over a couple of days to reach the maximum number of fans organically.

Using Facebook to drive traffic and sell products and services to potential customers can seem overwhelming at times, as it seems that fewer and fewer people are being reached by your page organically. With a good strategy and an overall plan to increase engagement over the long term, however, it can become easier to reach more of the people who want to purchase from you. Give them quality content and avoid acting like Facebook is a billboard and your page will drive sales incredibly well.

Editor's Note: Hannah Stonehouse Hudson is the Director of Social Media and Digital Strategy for Bast Durbin Advertising, a full-service ad agency in the hunting, fishing and conservation industries for over 20 years. Bast Durbin specializes in media planning, public relations, social media, design and photography.

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