Social Media Marketing part 3 - Facebook

After LinkedIn, the second vital ingredient in your social media cake is Facebook. Facebook allows people to interact with your business, and you can use it to publish regular updates and offers.

Setting up a your Facebook page

If you are new to Facebook, it can take a while to get used to. Since it was launched in February 2004, it has been constantly evolving to try to compete with the other social media networks and encourage people to move away from them (remember Friendster and Myspace?). It has now evolved to the point where there are so many options and features that you can actually get courses on how to use it. (If you are interested, you can also take a masters degree in Facebook at the University of Salford). Starting out on Facebook is a steep learning curve, so here are a few pointers to get you started:

If you are a business then you will need a 'Facebook page' not a personal profile. Facebook pages share some features with personal profiles but they also include things like branding, analytics and advertising tools. Until a couple of years ago, you could create Facebook pages without requiring a personal account login, however the system has since changed so now you have to first create a personal account. This personal profile does not need to be explicitly linked to the business page so you can just create a personal account without filling in much information and then add a business page. Although it is better to create a full personal profile and use that in conjunction with the business page. As with LinkedIn, having a personal profile in tandem with a business page generates more trust with consumers and can be used to engage on a more personal level if required.

When making your Facebook business page, try to keep the name short. This will help if you decide to create ads in the future. In FB ads, the headline space is limited to 25 characters. Once you have created a Facebook page, you cannot change the name of the page if it has more than 200 likes. It's also helpful to have a short name when it comes to creating a custom Facebook web address.

Facebook allows you to create a custom web address (aka vanity url) so when you send the link to your Facebook page, instead of looking likewww.facebook.com/pages/my-business/857469375913?ref=ts it will look like www.facebook.com/mybusiness - you can choose your vanity url as long as it is not already taken. Make sure you get it right first time though because you can only change your vanity url once, if you need to change it after that, you will have to set up a whole new Facebook page and start over, and you won't just be able to move your followers across to the new one.

When creating your business page, exploit the 'about' section to fill in as much information as you can, including website address, contact details, company address, services, products, and links to specific pages on your site, for example, if you have a careers page on your site, you can add a paragraph about how great it is to work for your company and a link to your current vacancies page saying 'join us'. The text in this section is indexed by google so try to include your brand name a few

times along with a healthy sprinkling of keywords. If you have a price list, this can be included here, either as plain text, or maybe as a downloadable pdf.

Mobile users get to see a shortened version of your description, the 'short description' field in your about page. Desktop users get to see the long version so it's a good idea to make sure both these fields are fully populated. Get your web address at the top of each one to ensure that people will have a chance to see it.

In both description fields make sure you get call to actions in there, maybe "give us a call today" or "check us out now". Keep the call to actions quite short and punchy. You can also add discount codes or special offers as a reward for clicking on the link.

Include a company mission field in your 'about page' – this will let people know what the focus of your business is, and gain some insight into the business culture you try to foster. Again, this is a chance to include some relevant keywords.

Adding a call to action button

After you have squeezed every bit of marketing juice out of the about page, it's time to add a call to action button. In the top area, you'll see a button labelled 'create call to action' – this is a very handy tool. Click on it and you'll see a popup where you can configure this button. You have a limited number of options in the button types, including book now, contact us, use app, play game, shop now, sign up and watch video. Then you can enter a URL for the button to go to and an optional url for the mobile version if different. Click next and you get the option of adding an app link for iOS and Android devices. Leave them set as 'website' if you don't have an app for your business. Once created, you will be able to see how many clicks this call to action button has generated in the right hand side of your page (your visitors won't be able to see this information). Mouse over the box and a popup will appear showing you a graph of how many people have clicked on your call to action button in the last week.
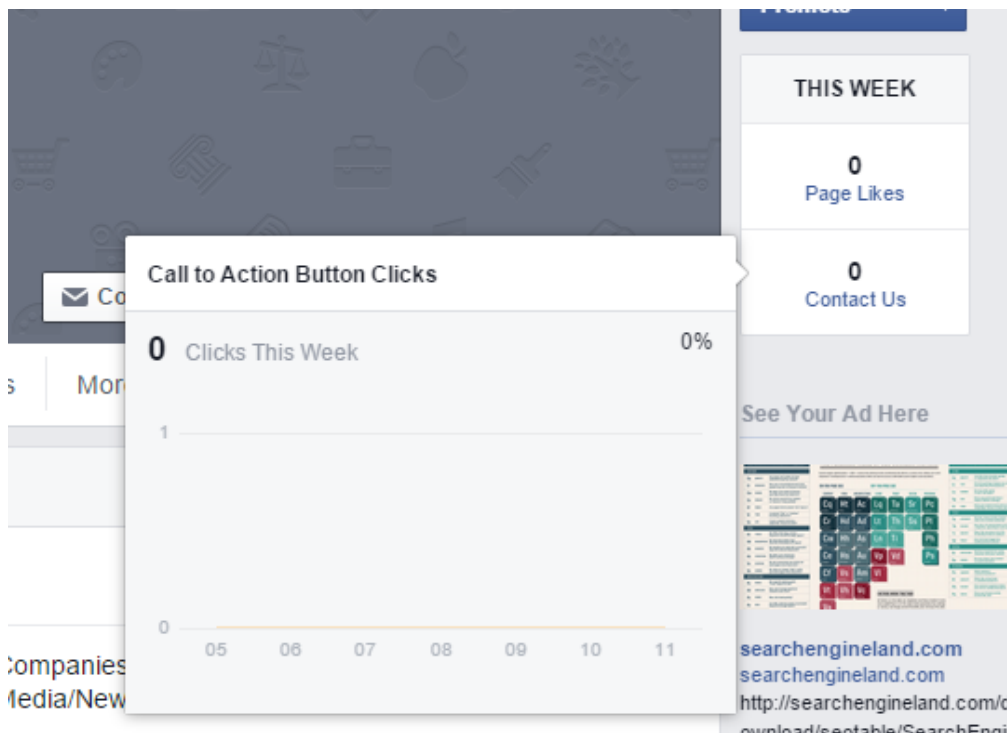
Fig 21: Call to action click stats in Facebook

Profile Picture and Cover design

Your profile picture should be recognisable when displayed in a small size, so avoid text in this image. A company logo (or part of it) usually works ok. This image will be seen on all news feeds and anywhere your page is mentioned on Facebook. This image is resized to 180 x 180px when uploaded and displayed as 160 x 160 pixels, but the small version is only 43 x 43 pixels. Ideally you should upload any square image larger than 180 x 180 and let Facebook resize it down. Do not try to upload any image that is not square as this can distort it.

When uploading a profile picture to your Facebook page, you can add a text description with the image. This is another opportunity to add call to actions and links to your website. You can also include the click bait elements from the description field above, i.e. offers, discount codes, etc.

The cover image is the larger image that sits at the top of your profile page. As with the profile picture, you can add a description which will appear when people hover over your photo, and will appear when people click on your cover image. IF you want to attract followers, give them some incentive here, e.g. "subscribe to this page to be the first to hear about new products and get secret discount codes available only to Facebook followers".

If you want, you can upload more than one cover image to rotate them regularly. This will push notifications to users to showcase your products with little effort on your part.

The format of your cover picture will be displayed as 851px x 315px on desktops and resized down on smaller platforms, so you should try to upload an image at least 851px wide. You can reposition

the image if it is too tall.

Apps and Tabs

One last thing to mention when setting up a new business page is that Facebook allows you to add extra tabs on your page. These tabs can contain 'apps' like event listings or competitions. To add an app, search in the search bar at the top, something like "google map tab" or "photo contest app" then click on the app page. In the app page itself there will be a button to add the app to your pages tabs. You can even add third party apps like an ecommerce app (such as ecwid.com) so you can sell products on Facebook, or an app for booking appointments.

Sharing content

So now you have your Facebook page all set up and optimised, what's next? As mentioned earlier, Facebook is a hugely powerful platform and to go through all the features would be beyond the remit of this book. If you want to explore Facebook to further exploit its features, it's worth viewing a few video tutorials on YouTube. However what you need to concentrate on next is getting people to like your page. The first thing you need to do next is make sure you get your Facebook buttons on your website or blog. Add both 'like' and 'share' buttons on your pages in an easy to find place. Generally immediately after the content, or near the top of the page (or both if you can get away with it). If your web design allows it, having tabs at the edge of your site works really well as they are easy to find but unobtrusive. If you have products on your website, you will need to add buttons right next to the product description if possible. You can either get the embed code directly from Facebook, or use something like www.sharethis.com which has a nice widget that you can use to put the share buttons on your site (and you can use it for free).

When using share buttons, Facebook will automatically select the first image on your page to include in the shared post, but you can help this along by adding meta tags to tell Facebook which image to use when sharing this page. The metatag looks something like this:

<link rel="image_src" type="image/jpeg" href="http://mywebsite.com /myimage.jpg" />

Sometimes this tag doesn't work, so it's worth also adding an og:image meta tag like this:

<meta property="og:image" content="http://mywebsite.com /myimage.png" />

You can also customise the text that appears in the facebook sharer app by adding more meta tags like this:

<meta property="og:title" content="Custom title goes here" />

<meta property="og:description" content="this subtext appears under the title" />

And you can specify the link url too like this:

<meta property="og:url" content=" http://mywebsite.com /mypage.html" />

It is possible to add code to the sharing button to do that same thing as the meta tags, but it is better to have them in the page in case people just paste the url of your page into a Facebook post without using the share buttons.

Once you have added sharing buttons on your site you should start adding news stories and fresh content, and tell everyone about it using your share buttons. Facebook now allows larger thumbnail sizes so get some attractive images on there. People like sharing stories better when they have a funny caption, or the image is really interesting to them. You should also be proactive in liking other people's pages that you think might be interested in your services. This is especially useful if you have a B2B business.

Facebook hashtags

When adding posts, you should add relevant hashtags. This is a feature Facebook stole from Twitter, but is less commonly used. Clicking on hashtags will show people recent posts relevant to that topic, so if you can post messages relevant to recent news events, then more people are likely to see your post. Look out for what's trending on Facebook (shown in the right hand side of the site normally) for inspiration.

You can use your company name in hashtags, then you can link to these posts in your blogs and business cards and marketing materials. When you add hashtags to posts, you can display all posts with this tag by going to www.facebook.com/hashtag/mycompanyname which show up all posts containing #mycompanyname. You can even go further and give individual employees in your company their own hashtag e.g. #MykeAtBlackbox or something similar. Then these people can put that link on their business cards.

If you really need to get a bigger audience fast, then there is not getting away from it, you will have to pay for advertising. This is covered in the next chapter.

Facebook competitions

Competitions are a great way to get yourself noticed. Create a competition with an attractive prize and require people to share your post in order to win a prize. This virtual word of mouth effect will spread your brand awareness across Facebook quite quickly. It can also encourage people to like your Facebook page so giving you more followers. Having people follow you is like having their email address for email marketing. It means that if you post anything to your company page, it will pop up on all your followers news feed. So your primary aim on Facebook should be to try and get as many likes as possible.

Reciprocal Advertising and Cross Promotions

If you have a related business with a local supplier, you can set up reciprocal advertising, on your Facebook page you can advertise a link to your partner business and they set up a link back to your

business. This is similar to traditional link exchange schemes (covered in an earlier chapter of this book) but you can extend that further to create cross promotional activities. For example, say you had a bike shop, you could make a deal with the newsagent next door for a free copy of cycling weekly when you spend £10 or more, or you could make a deal with the sports shop around the corner so they give customers a £20 off voucher for your shop if they spend £40 on sports equipment.

This type of advertising works really well with social media because both businesses can use the same promotion to reach a much larger audience than they would be able to do just using their own followers.

Avoid click baiting

You've probably seen the adverts "This video totally blew my mind" or "I couldn't believe my eyes when I saw this" or "You won't believe what happens next…" This type of social media marketing is called 'click baiting'. The word "click baiting" used to be used to describe a legitimate form of SEO in which people were encouraged to visit your site based on the call to action and the relevancy of the content. Now it's generally used in a more pejorative epithet to describe these sorts of low value links with outlandish claims attached on the front.

There are other types of click bait around which are of equally poor status, these are:

"10 things you didn't know about…" or "20 celebrities who" - these are called 'listicles'.

"I'll never look at a carrot in the same way again" - cryptic titles which give you no idea what the meaning is.

"60 million people can do this, can you?" - challenging title, with a bit of cryptic thrown in

"This woman talks about why she refused cancer treatment (and it's not what you think)" – self-undermining title.

After a while of being on social media (and clicking on these sorts of click baits) you usually get to the point where you assume that these sorts of links contain nothing worth reading, so people get tolerant of them. Not only does click baiting make people less likely to click on your page, it also means that the clicks you do get will be of very low quality and will make you look like you're desperate for traffic, so may damage your online reputation.

Getting personal

Your Facebook fans are valuable, but they are also real people. So if you get a question from one of them, you should try to answer in a personal way. This can be done using 'mentions'. Mentions are a means of linking a person's profile in your Facebook post. To do this, put an @ symbol in front of their name when writing the reply. When you do this, a drop down menu will appear underneath and if you select their name in the dropdown, Facebook automatically puts their name as a link.

When their name is 'mentioned' in a post, this will send the person a notification that they were mentioned and may also put that on their wall, (depending on their privacy settings). You can shorten the name to use just their first name by putting your cursor just after the surname and pressing backspace. Using first names makes it more informal and personal.

If you are replying to a post, you can also add your own name as a link. This is especially useful if there are multiple people who are admins on the account.

When posting to Facebook, use the word 'we' and 'our' to talk about your fans. This gives them a sense of community, for example "We now have 500 fans, thanks for all your support guys" or "Have a look at our newest fan of the month, Jennifer!"

Audience Research

One of the great things about Facebook is that you don't just get to tell people stuff about yourself, but you also find out really useful information about your target audience. When someone becomes a fan of your page, you get to see things like what films they like, what music they listen to, what other interests they have, and what other Facebook pages they have liked. You could do this with individual accounts to get ideas on possible promotion strategies, or you can use Facebook to get more representative information.

Facebook search used to be able to show demographic information by using search queries like 'fans of x that like y' or 'fans of my page that are women' but this to no longer possible. Instead, in May 2014 Facebook launched its powerful new tool call Audience Insights.
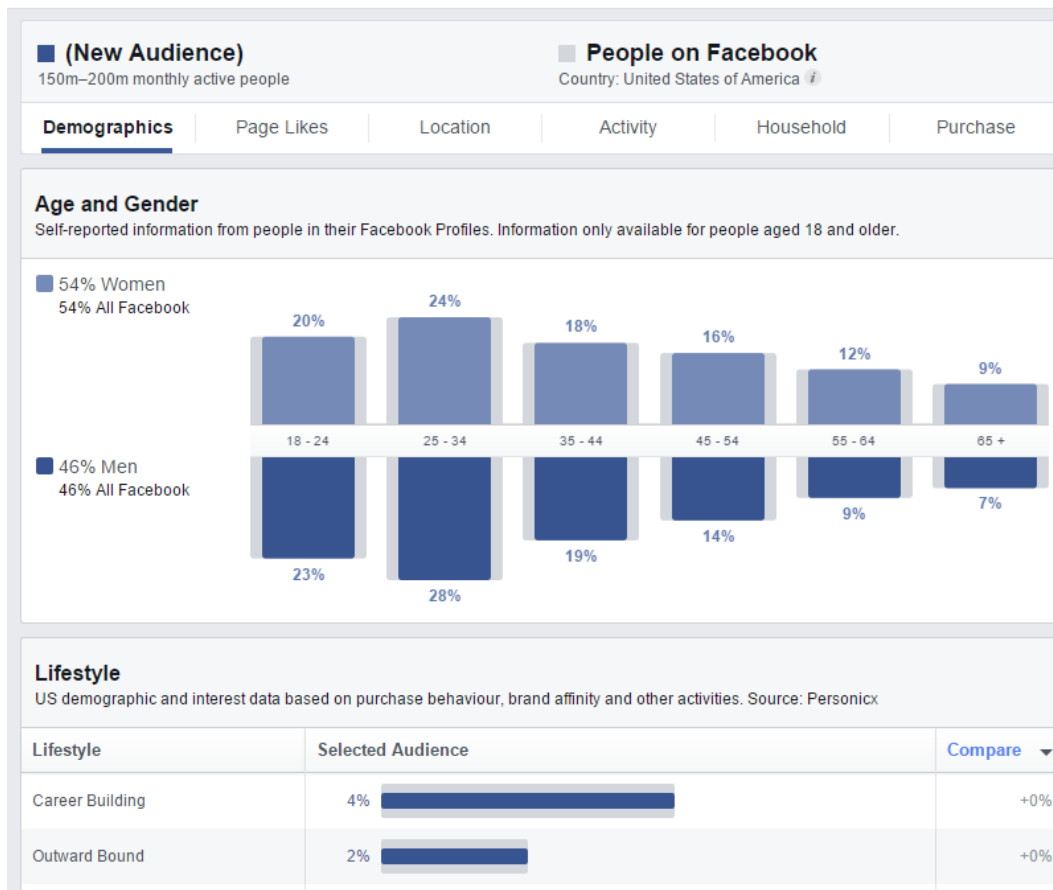
Fig 22: Audience Insights on Facebook

This is a fantastic tool that lets you see information about your fans including demographics, interests, location, activity, home ownership, purchase behaviour, education level, job area and more. You can filter this information by age, gender, interests, connections, and more advanced filters such as political leanings or life events.

This tool can tell a lot about your Facebook followers, but you can also use this tool for general research on the demographics of Facebook.

Another trick you can use is to put your competitor's page into insights so you can see the demographics of your competitors. This can be very handy if you want to target those customers more keenly.

To access Facebook Audience Insights, go to https://www.facebook.com/ads/audience_insights then select either 'everyone of Facebook' or 'people connected to your page' in the popup to start. Note, you need more than 1000 likes to view demographic data on your own page.

Frequency and format of posts

Research has also found that the best time to post on Facebook is 8pm to 12pm on a Wednesday or Sunday, and posting once or twice a day leads to 40% higher user engagement. Posting more than 4 times a day results in a decrease in engagement due to over-crowding user's news feeds.

Posts with less than 80 characters in length receive 66% higher engagement than longer posts and concise posts of around 40 characters have the highest engagement levels.

'Question' posts generate more than double the amount of comments than statement posts, so if you want to engage user interaction and get fans talking to each other, then posting a question is a good way of doing this

When posting offers, it has been show that using the phrase "£ off" is much more effective than "% off". Customers prefer to avoid doing maths so knowing the real world value of an offer is much more successful than the % value offer (even though % off may actually save more money for the consumer).

The most effective posts contain a short description with a single images. Status only posts also generate higher engagement. Try to avoid more complex posts like those with multiple links, thumbnail photos and videos.