

The Facebook 'Reachapocalypse' Reality



For several years and through a lot of tough competition, Facebook has managed to maintain its status as the most popular social media network. Although there seems to be an evolutionary shift by the Millennial Generation away from Facebook and on to other networks like Instagram and Snapchat. But, for the moment Facebook is still the network to use. It has also proven itself as a more cost effective advertising medium than traditional offline marketing.

Facebook makes continual feature changes that are said to be in the best interest of how friends keep in touch; however those same changes often create new frustrations for business owners. In April 2015, Facebook changed their News Feed algorithm to make posts by family and friends appear higher than non-paid posts shared by business pages. The result was that most businesses on Facebook experienced a decline in their organic reach as their non-boosted posts were buried at the bottom of someone's feed.

Facebook offered a free content delivery service to all businesses for a several years, which allowed early adopters to have thousands of fans reading their posts every day. Prior to 2010, you could post something to Facebook for free and have almost 100% organic reach to your fans. Since then, they have slowly made it impossible to get your messages seen unless you pay at least \$1 to have your message delivered, which is known as "boosting a post." Consider it to be the cost of a postage stamp on social media.

There have been several changes to the News Feed algorithm in 2016 starting with one that caused a sudden improvement in organic reach in January followed by a reversal down to abysmal levels in August. The Facebook 'Reachapocalypse' is here today. I've already measured dozens of non-boosted business posts over the last few months that had zero organic reach. According to the social media optimization platform SocialFlow, the average business page on Facebook has felt a 52% drop in organic reach between February and July 2016.

Even though social media delivery was once free, you still had to pay for the labor to get it done. It's now just the opposite because every Facebook change causes a higher expense for businesses trying to use it. Successful usage of Facebook now comes with the cost of labor, boosting every post, and paid ads. Furthermore, simply boosting a post is probably a waste of your money unless you correctly target your audience, which leads to the need to pay for social media scheduling and ROI measurement tools or an outside agency for help.

Using social media tools to schedule optimal posting times while also paying \$1 to boost your posts will improve the chances that people who like your page will see your posts. For \$2 per post, you'd be able to reach more people and have a better chance to interact with people who like, share, or comment on the post.

Another factor that's turning Facebook into an expensive ad medium is the type of content that they now favor. Video content is getting further organic and paid reach than shared links, photos, or simple text posts. Producing original video content takes more time, technology, and a bit of artistic talent to create something engaging. Those production costs further increase your marketing expense. Even if you boost a perfect video post on Facebook, there's still no guarantee it will reach your audience unless you create some customer engagement. You'll reach more people if your post is inviting enough to be liked, commented on, or shared. You also need to reply back to people who comment on your posts. Even though you'll still be paying to boost your posts; your organic reach will increase over time as customer engagement increases.

Another way to increase organic reach is to share your page posts to your personal account. Since Facebook focuses on friends and family, sharing your own post will help you gain a little organic exposure to your network of friends. As a jeweler, you've probably heard many experts warn you of the personal security risks involved with posting to your personal Facebook account, and there are many risks when you divulge your location.

You should never worry about sharing your page's posts that involve your latest products, announcements, or general information. It should be safe to share those with your friends and to the public without any safety concerns. This approach will increase the organic reach of your page's post.

For the moment, I suggest the following overall strategy for retailers using Facebook:

- Share videos, photos, and links to informative web pages
- Boost all of your posts with a minimum of \$1 for 1 day
- Share your page posts to the public using your personal account
- Reply to users who comment on your page posts

Don't try to sell something every time you post to your business page. Social media is supposed to be a fun and informative place without sales pressure. Your Facebook goal should be to develop close relationships with many of your customers, so they can become influencers and social amplifiers for your store. As a rule of thumb, before you post anything to your page ask yourself if the post will charm your customers and help improve those relationships.



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