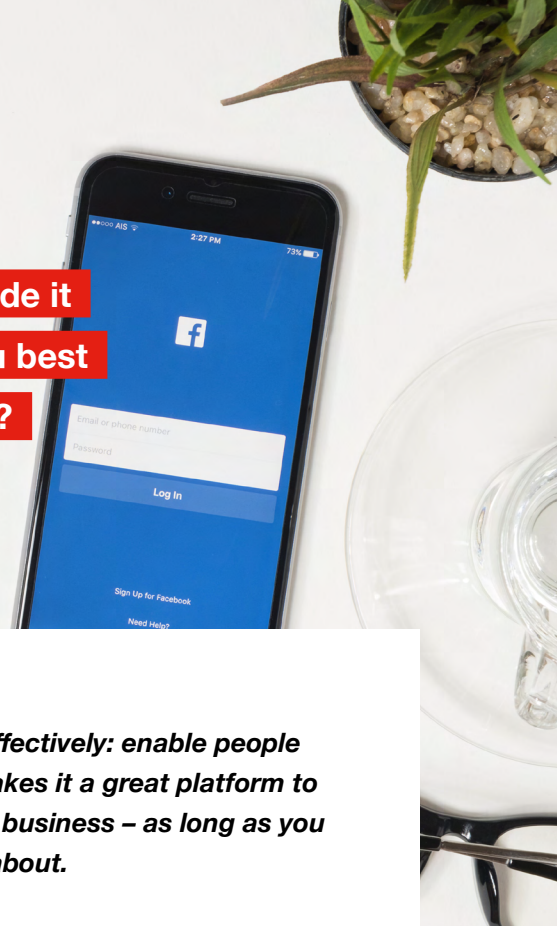


Facebook digital marketing guide for SMEs





Facebook's ability to let businesses engage inexpensively with a large target market has made it popular with small businesses. But how can you best harness the potential of this social media beast?

Facebook's enormous popularity comes from what it does so effectively: enable people to 'like' and share content with each other, on the web. This makes it a great platform to get word-of-mouth recommendations and social proof for your business – as long as you give people interesting or remarkable things to share and talk about.

Facebook doesn't charge businesses to have a page, but just because your page exists doesn't mean people are going to flock to it or be active on it. Indeed many business struggle with making their activity deliver results – all the more frustrating given that Facebook has a huge base of more than 1.65 billion monthly users worldwide.

Yet used in the right way, Facebook can be very effective. 'People probably spend more time on Facebook than any other social network,' says business networking strategist Andy Lopata. 'That surely presents an opportunity to engage more deeply with them and strengthen relationships. There's a huge opportunity for some.'

Facebook has some useful attributes that can support your business, according to social media consultant Krishna De. 'The beauty of the platform is that you can identify if your audience is there. You can engage with customers and show the 'personality' of your business.'

Many small business owners worry that marketing with Facebook means mixing personal life with business life. 'That doesn't need to be the case,' says De. You don't have to show that it's you that's managing your business page. Your avatar can be totally different and your personal profile can be completely separate.'

Facebook's strength is also its ability to attract customers who might never have found you, through the power of recommendation. 'Many potential customers discover a business via its Facebook page because of a recommendation or sharing by individuals in their Facebook network,' says Marie Page, co-founder of digital marketing consultancy The Digiterati. 'And whether with new potential customers or existing ones, you have **the opportunity to communicate those softer brand values such as your friendliness, good humour and commitment to customer care or innovation.**'



Ways to use Facebook

They key thing to consider is what content will be most interesting and useful to your audience, and share it.

Don't expect massive engagement initially, but experiment and learn. 'There's no point obsessing about the number of likes you have,' says Iain Martin, founder of Skippedia, a digital marketing consultancy specialising in the snow sports industry. 'Organic reach is typically low, so likes are good for the ego but may not do much for the business. Nevertheless, having a certain fan base offers credibility, so an early Facebook campaign in search of likes - to build up that base - can be worthwhile.'

Facebook is an excellent place to gauge reaction to content and fish for opinion and viewpoints. You can use tools such as [SurveyMonkey](#). Competitions typically get high engagement too.

With **Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg's recent public commitment to increasing the amount of video content**, short videos can do well because Facebook promotes these more than other types of content.

If you have content that is particularly timely, such as participation in an event, consider a broadcast using Facebook Live. 'People love the fact that this is a live broadcast and that they can interact in real time,' De says. 'Plus Facebook prioritises this content, so the reach is greater.'



Businesses thriving on Facebook

Funky Fairy took to Facebook primarily to engage with customers, ask questions and get feedback on products and are indeed cited by Facebook as an example of a success story.

Albeit with a far smaller following, Dental Media City's posts show the human element and personality in their business. Guildford music store

Andertons really punch above their weight on Facebook with clever, innovative content whose humour facilitates engagement and viral reach. Their love for all things rock really shines through.

Commercial artist Gillian Arnold uses Facebook to try out new ideas, with engaging content that steers clear of being overly promotional.



Facebook Marketing – tips and insights

SET UP

Getting the basics of your page right will stand you in good stead. So consider the settings carefully as you create your page.

Choose an appropriate category

When selecting a category, make sure it's appropriate for your business. If you are a local business, choose this for your business type to enable customers to 'check in' geographically. But if you don't have walk-in traffic, then 'company', 'organisation' or 'institution' may be more suitable.

Gauge opinion – proactively

Seek opinions of your page at an early stage. Is it giving the right impression? Sit down with friends and look at the page together to quickly uncover what content is sending out the right message - and what isn't. Make sure your friends are clear that you want their honest feedback.

Remember 'About'

The About section is a crucial part of your Facebook page. Describe your business in an active and interesting way, using keywords that your target market might use. In your description, include your website URL and contact details to encourage visits and enquiries.

Manage your tabs

As well as seeing your activity feed, visitors to your page can choose to see specific things like your photos, videos, events or likes – simply by selecting a tab on your sidebar. Make sure you add relevant tabs or manage the ones that appear there. For example, if you promote regular events, you could move that tab up to the top of the list. You can even [add a shop section](#) to sell via Facebook.

Invite some – not all at first

Once you've posted a bit of content, invite your friends to like your page. Asking close friends and family to like the page first will give it some initial credibility before you spread the word more widely.



POSTING AND SHARING CONTENT

When posting content, keep it full of personality, says De. ‘Your product and packaging shots don’t work nearly as well as lifestyle shots that show the personality behind the business - and how it interacts with people.’

Consider your ‘newsfeed competition’

Creating content designed specifically for the social newsfeed is absolutely critical. ‘The newsfeed is an incredibly crowded place’ says Alex Clough, Social Media Director at digital communications agency Splendid Communications. ‘Your posts are up against content from people’s personal lives, along with funny videos of cats. So you need to create communications that can attract attention within in this very competitive feed.’

Avoid hashtags (for the moment)

According to Marie Page, ‘Facebook was late in the game in enabling hashtags and they have never really worked well on the platform.’ Several studies have shown significantly worse reach results for posts that included hashtags. ‘Whilst I doubt the Facebook News Feed algorithm expressly throttles posts that include hashtags, I suspect that hashtagged posts tend to be more promotional in nature - something that the algorithm definitely dislikes.’

Tag other pages

It’s a good idea to tag other business pages in your posts, where relevant. ‘This is likely to boost your exposure,’ Page says. ‘Especially when FB considers there to be good overlap between the likes and interests of your respective pages. You can do it by putting an @ sign before you start typing their page name. Martin agrees: ‘As well as being a great way of reaching out or thanking other people’s pages, tagging increases the chances that the business you tag will like and share your post, boosting organic reach for the post in other people’s newsfeeds.’

Post video content

If you have uploaded a video to YouTube, upload it separately to Facebook rather than just sharing the YouTube link, De advises. ‘Facebook will prioritise that content much higher than a shared video from another platform like YouTube because Facebook wants to be the host of the content.’



ENGAGING AND PROMOTING

Posting content on Facebook is, of course, only half the story. It's critical to follow up your efforts with the tools and actions that will make sure the widest audience are finding and engaging with it.

Get involved in groups

While Facebook Pages might be the primary way for businesses to market themselves on Facebook, 'Groups' can be hugely effective.

'Groups have really taken off in the past couple of years, and give you the opportunity to offer useful advice and tips and build credibility and trust,' says De. Page agrees: 'With groups, reach is way higher and engagement can be off-the-chart in comparison with pages - because it's more like a community.'

Create your own groups

After participating in some groups, consider creating a useful one of your own. For instance, if you're a DIY contractor, you could start a group where people could discuss home improvement innovations and solutions. 'Groups need to be managed well though,' warns Page. 'No one wants to join a Group that is very brand-centric and where the Group owner does little more than promote their products. It's all about the theme or cause.'

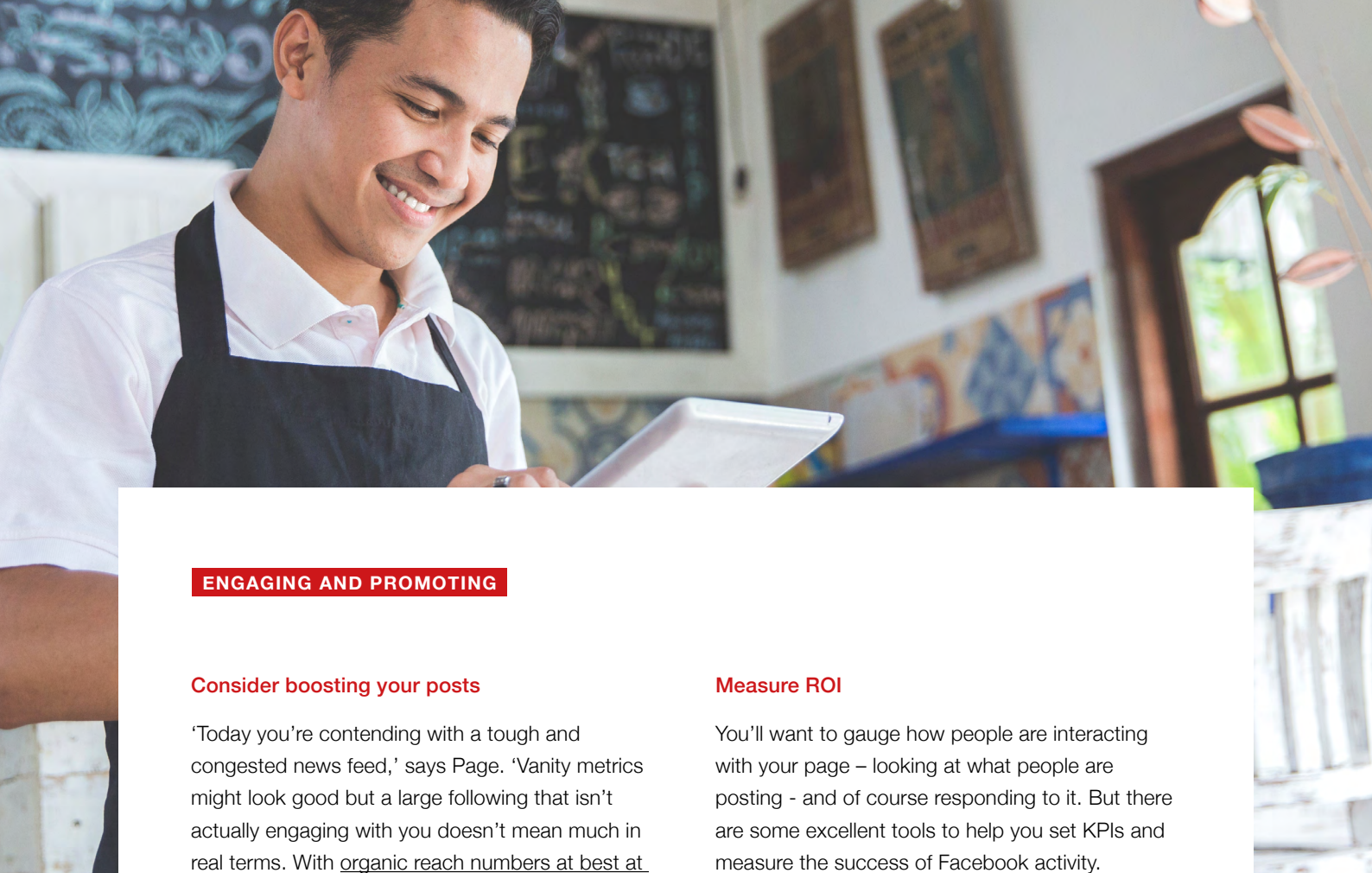
Use social plugins

Your website and Facebook page should work together, seamlessly cross-promoting each other. Your marketing funnel will often work at moving traffic from your Facebook page to your website or blog. However, you'll also want to make sure you give your website visitors a way to like and share your content on Facebook and to interact with your page.

Ensure each piece of content on your site has a like and share button next to it. You can add these manually, or you can use a slick third-party service such as [Add This](#) or a WordPress plugin to customise your buttons and make adding buttons easier.

Competitions work well

Competitions are an effective way to encourage engagement. But make them relevant to your business and invite interaction that will create content that promotes what you do. 'Let's say you are a coffee shop – you want people to interact and be sharing their experience at your business,' says De. **'Encourage people to post specific content, perhaps linked to a giveaway competition,** such as their favourite drinks or food items from the menu.'



ENGAGING AND PROMOTING

Consider boosting your posts

'Today you're contending with a tough and congested news feed,' says Page. 'Vanity metrics might look good but a large following that isn't actually engaging with you doesn't mean much in real terms. With organic reach numbers at best at 11% of your fan base, you are still going to need to boost your posts with ads to get them seen even by your fans. So growing your fan base through 'Page Like' ads can be a good idea.'

Never beg

Be wary of begging people to like and share your content. 'Users dislike it and it makes you look desperate,' says Page. 'What many people don't realise is that **the News Feed algorithm will actively throttle posts that have words such as 'Like', 'Comment' or 'Share' in them.**

Measure ROI

You'll want to gauge how people are interacting with your page – looking at what people are posting - and of course responding to it. But there are some excellent tools to help you set KPIs and measure the success of Facebook activity.

'The way to assess whether you are getting a return on your investment is to measure everything. Ensure you use the Google URL builder to create custom URLs and then review Analytics on a regular basis to see what traffic is being generated,' says Martin. 'Facebook Insights gives you lots of data and you can compare the engagement on different posts. In general, I'd value a share above a comment, and a comment above a like.'

Clough agrees that measurement tools can be very effective, but warns against expecting content to do too much. 'Sharing a video, for example, is unlikely to result in trackable direct sales,' Clough warns. 'It's a less direct path. The key thing is to create for the real world: Think 'audience-first', know what you want to achieve - and measure it accordingly.'

Further resources

How to set up your Facebook page

<https://www.facebook.com/business/learn/set-up-facebook-page>

Create your business page

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/create/>

Andy Lopata, business networking strategist

<http://www.lopata.co.uk/>

Digiterati Academy – low cost practical online training in social media

www.digiterati-academy.com/

Krishna De, social media consultant

<https://www.krishna.me/>

Communication agency Splendid

www.splendidcomms.com

Skippedia's Facebook Live best-practice tips

<http://www.skippedia.co.uk/2016/11/facebook-live-advice-tips-and-best-practice/>

Winning at Facebook Marketing with Zero Budget by Marie Page

<https://www.amazon.co.uk/Winning-Facebook-Marketing-Zero-Budget-ebook/dp/B01LYZLIJ4/>

Training for using Facebook advertising

<https://www.facebook.com/blueprint>

News about Facebook for business

<https://www.facebook.com/business/news>

Optimise your video on Facebook by allowing it to be cross-posted

<https://www.krishna.me/2016/facebook-twitter-videos/>

Create Facebook captions for your video

<https://www.krishna.me/2016/create-srt-captions-for-facebook-videos/>

Facebook page guidelines for business

https://www.facebook.com/page_guidelines.php - if you are running competitions reach the relevant section on the page

Facebook pages - tagging your products

<https://www.facebook.com/business/help/1655062744733202>

Promoting your local business with tags

https://www.facebook.com/business/help/1658201091126791/?helpref=hc_fnav

Help about Facebook ads manager

https://www.facebook.com/business/help/415745401805534?helpref=faq_content

Tagging people and pages in photos

<https://www.facebook.com/help/227499947267037>

Beyond these Facebook resources, eConsultancy is a source of training and courses

<https://econsultancy.com/>