

How to Make Facebook Work

for Your Business



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Introduction

As the scope of digital marketing expands, small business owners find themselves spending more and more of their time navigating across social media's challenging landscape. While Facebook offers a myriad of possibilities for those looking to expand their customer base, many businesses are left in the dark as to how to efficiently and effectively utilize it. Learning how to customize a marketing plan for your page can save you time in the long run and leave you time for other aspects of your business.

ThiveHive selected nine small business owners from across a broad spectrum of industries that exemplify the best examples of business owners making their Facebook page to work for them. You will learn how to tailor Facebook pages to fit the needs of your business and customers.

The goal of this guide is to provide you with both general guidelines to customized a Facebook marketing plan for your business as well as industry specific insights from a spectrum of enterprises. Combining the lessons gleaned from our case studies and our own marketing expertise, you will learn how to complement YOUR business with a customized Facebook marketing plan.

PART 1. PLAN YOUR PAGE

The most successful Facebook business pages aren't necessarily the ones that business owners spend the most time on. Their pages garner a wide following and generate high levels of engagement because they have an understanding of what they want to gain from their Facebook page. On average, the small business owners ThriveHive interviewed spend 30 minutes to a maximum of an hour a day on Facebook interactions.

Define a Set of Purposes for Your Facebook Page

Whether your page is being used as a market research tool for your business, or to update current customers on new products and offerings, demarcate reasons for why your business is on Facebook. A defined set of purposes will help you work out how much time and effort to allocate for Facebook marketing.

Our case studies show that successful small business owners have found a multitude of novel ways to use Facebook that both serve the needs of their business AND engage with their fan base. Use these ideas gleaned from our research to think outside of the conventional applications for your page.

Think outside the box to find uses for your Facebook page that would complement and fill the needs of your business.

PART 1. PLAN YOUR PAGE *cont.*

Sell a Lifestyle, Not a Product

For businesses that have a niche market or sell big-ticket items like houses, cars, or vacation packages, cultivating a fan base on Facebook can be difficult. A person only makes these purchases a handful of times and has no need to see property listings or special cruise deals on their News Feed every day. One way to engage and broaden your audience is to use your Facebook page to sell a lifestyle, not a singular purchase.

Penrose Realty, a luxury real estate broker, posts links about high-end furniture or designer fashion products that tie into their brand. They are cultivating an audience for their properties and keeping their fans engaged in between purchases.

Build an accessible Work Portfolio

Upload pictures of your portfolio on your Facebook page to showcase the work you've done. Your work becomes sharable and accessible to a broader audience. Whether you are a landscaping company or a graphic designer, it's a good way to gain credibility for the quality of work you do and to get feedback.



Generate Buzz with Positive Customer Feedback

Your Facebook page gives you complete control of your business's image. Businesses on sites like Yelp or Trip Advisor rarely have 100% positive reviews. Boost your business's image by tagging satisfied customers in posts and uploading rave reviews.

Keep these points in mind when you are searching for ways to utilize your business's Facebook page:

- » The number of “likes” and level of engagement on Facebook pages is unique to each type of business.
- » More “likes” does not necessarily translate to valuable leads. Research your target audience to better understand the preferences of your customers. Your Facebook page should attract an audience of potential customers, not passive users.
- » Educate yourself about competitors and others in parallel industries to identify your goal for the level of engagement and set realistic goals.
- » Map out a sales conversion funnel and brainstorm ideas to convert Facebook traffic and “likes” into sales for your business.

PART 2. Cultivate Your Audience

4 Ways to Start Growing Your Network and Build Relationships

1. Invite friends and their extended networks to “like” the page to build a base audience. This is advantageous not only to get the Facebook page up and running, but also to provide you with a valuable test audience. Use your initial audience to:

- » See what types of posts attract the most engagement
- » Crowd source ideas and suggestions for your business
- » Generate word of mouth marketing through your networks

2. Offering promotions and sponsoring contests is a fast way to gain more followers. The more interesting the incentive or deal, the more likely it is to generate “shares” and “likes”. You could:

- » Trade discounts for “shares” and “likes”
- » Host a drawing for products or services your business
- » Host an event that your fans would want to share and bring friends to (For example, the launch of a new product, a cooking demonstration, or a tasting event are ways to get your fans to register for emails or newsletters)

3. Interact with compatible businesses to extend your network:

- » Link other businesses to your posts for cross-promotional marketing
- » Piggyback off of pages that have already established a following
- » Use the News Feed function to your advantage; interact with individuals and businesses to stay visible

4. Engage with individuals to generate more “shares”:

- » Tag customers in pictures or screen shots capturing positive moments
- » Share behind-the-scenes photos to give an insider's look
- » Post your customer's pictures of your product

PART 3. Optimize Your Posts

Businesses on Facebook have noticed as much as a 44% to 80% drop in their posts' organic reach since Facebook implemented an ongoing series of changes to its News Feed algorithm. Growing your reach and fan base organically has become a big challenge for small business owners.

Although the News Feed ranking changes can be confusing and challenging to keep up with, Facebook is becoming more transparent about their news feed algorithm. Here are 5 ways to optimized your Facebook posts to increase their visibility on News Feed.

1. Prime Posting Time

Do you know when your fans are online? Before Facebook's overhaul of its analytics dashboard last year, figuring out the best times to post involved a lot of guesswork or monitoring.

Now, page admins can find the best times to post by checking "When Your Fans Are Online" tool in their Facebook Insight dashboard. Since the News Feed algorithm changes have made it difficult for your posts to appear in your fans' News Feeds, posting at a time when most of your fans are online can help increase your posts' organic reach.



PART 3. Optimize Your Posts *cont.*

2. Respond to Comments

Take advantage of Facebook's threaded comments feature and respond to fan comments and questions. Even if it's a quick "thank you" or acknowledgment for the comment, you'll be increasing visits to your post as well engagement on your page.

3. Link-Shares as Status Updates

The best way to share links is to use what Facebook calls a "link-share". Instead of embedding links without images into your status updates, "link-shares" posts pull the metadata automatically (title, photo, and meta description) into the status update box.

All you need to do is add a link in your status and let Facebook do the work. Copy the URL of the link you want to share and past the link into the status update box on your Facebook page. Facebook will populate the data, and the link will appear in your fan's News Feed like this:



If your blog doesn't have an image, you can add one using the "upload image" option. However, if your blog post contains multiple images, Facebook will give you the option of selecting which image to feature.

Facebook automatically populates this metadata



Lastly, once Facebook has populated the metadata into the status update box, you can delete the hyperlinked URL to clean up the appearance of your post. The metadata that Facebook pulls (the image, title and description) is hyperlinked so there is no need for the redundancy of another link.

It's also a good idea to add a description of the link to draw your audience's attention to your post. Including even a short description can lead to higher levels of engagement.

PART 3. Optimize Your Posts *Cont.*

4. Image Optimization for Links

Facebook has super sized the image size of link-shares to 526 x 274 pixels on desktop news feeds- up from its previous size of 154 x 154 pixel. That translates to more space and prominence when your posts show up in someone's News Feed. Look at the difference between an image optimized link-share and one that is not.



The recommendations for page owners sharing links are to include images that are 1200 x 627 pixels, although images can still be set to a minimum of 560 x 292 pixels. Implementing these recommendations will make link-shares on your Facebook page more appealing visually, thus increasing click-through rates.

If you're posting links to your blog posts for example, adapting to these changes can significantly increase traffic to your website.

5. Focus on Content Quality

Whether you're posting your own blog posts or sharing content that you found elsewhere, the quality of the content is directly linked to how many people will see your posts. Facebook has stated, "This means that high quality articles you or others read may show up a bit more prominently in your News Feed, and meme photos may show up a bit less prominently."

This is especially true for Facebook audiences viewing content from mobile devices. So what factors make up high quality content? Ask yourself these questions before posting:

- » Is this timely and relevant?
- » Is this from a source you trust?
- » Would you share it with your friends or recommend it others?
- » Is this content genuinely interesting? Or is it just link bait with no substance?

PART 4. Optimize Your Content Output

Generating content can become a big time commitment if there is no forethought or plan in place. It's helpful to write a list at the beginning of each week or month of topics to post about. Initially, setting up a Google News Alert for industry or local news takes a couple of hours, but will save you time in the long run when you're running out of ideas.

Keep in mind that the type of content that will be most successful on your business's Facebook page is entirely contingent on your target audience.



Case Study: Healthy Gourmet



Athens, Georgia
 Industry: Food Retail
 No. of Employees: 3
 Year Founded: 2011
 Time Spent On Facebook: 20 Min/Day
 Amount Spent On Facebook Ads: None

Community involvement, especially for a business owner in a small town, drives your Facebook presence.

Experiment with posting at various times in the day to find the optimal time to post content for generating sales.

Two years ago, Anne and David Wells purchased the Healthy Gourmet, a local food boutique that had been around for ten years. Anne created a business page because it was much easier to update on a regular basis and monitor than the store's website. She spends \$2000 to \$3000 annually on advertising in local newspapers to drive traffic to her regularly maintained Facebook page instead of her website. Currently, she uses her page as a tool for connecting to her existing customer base.

In addition to publicizing events in the store, like cooking demonstrations, Anne often posts about newly arrived inventory so her Facebook fans can reserve specialty items or even request certain items to be restocked. She consistently posts around 10 to 11am so that her customers can reserve products and pick them up during lunch or after work. The store's Facebook page is also regularly linked to other local businesses and establishments. Anne features locally produced products from other small businesses and has found that community engagement drives more traffic to her page.



FAR LEFT

Anne tags products from local businesses to engage the community of small business owners and their supporters in Athens. The same goes for local charity foundations.

IMMEDIATE LEFT

Think of novel ways to promote your product. Anne posts not only a tantalizing picture of the salmon to promote her store's offering but also shares a recipe.

Case Study: Penrose Realty



Boston, Massachusetts
 Industry: Real Estate
 No. Of Employees: 9
 Year Founded: 2010
 Time Spent on Facebook: 30 Min/Day
 Amount Spent on Facebook Ads: \$240/Month

If the market you're targeting is local, post content about local restaurants, concerts, news.
 When your customer base has a low turnover rate, find content related to their lifestyle to retain your fans.
 Use your Facebook platform to test out new marketing campaign ideas.

When Eric and Chris set out to revamp their market strategy, they needed to test out their idea about creating a lifestyle brand to market their real estate company. Penrose Realty caters to a niche market, selling mid- to high-end apartments in Boston. To grow their clientele base, they believed that they needed to start nurturing a younger demographic.

Creating a lifestyle brand meant incorporating content about fashion, technology, food, travel, and architecture into their marketing campaign, a large undertaking. Eric and Chris found Facebook to be the perfect platform to test out their new marketing strategy and learn more about the interests of their niche market.

Penrose's Facebook page has gained a large following of 1,700 within a year of its launch. While their test audience has responded well to what Eric and Chris call "lifestyle" content, they will begin to add property listings into their site. Since the "lifestyle" blog approach to Facebook marketing has resulted in high levels of engagement, Penrose is now building a company website to mirror its Facebook page. The store's Facebook page is also regularly linked to other local businesses and establishments. Anne features locally produced products from other small businesses and has found that community engagement drives more traffic to her page.



FAR LEFT

Articles with useful advice appeal to most Facebook users- especially if it's a quick read.

IMMEDIATE LEFT

Posting timely content about the local news will resonate with realtor's target demographic.

Case Study: Chicken & Rice Guys



Boston, Massachusetts
 Industry: Mobile Food Service
 No. of Employees: 4
 Year Founded: 2012
 Time Spent on Facebook: 30 Min/Day
 Amount Spent on Facebook Ads: None

Launch your Facebook presence with an event that will go viral.

Be consistent with offering promotions to gain a steady following.

Tagged pictures of customers generate the most "likes".

Behind the scenes pictures and updates make the customer feel invested in your business.

Chicken and Rice Guys, a food truck in Boston, organically grew its initial Facebook following from 200 "likes" to its fan base of 1,515. How? When the page first launched, the owners of the truck invited their friends to follow and share the page even before they were ready to sell their product. Pictures of the unfinished truck as well as updates about recipe changes gave Facebook users an insider look at the process and built a bond between the business and their customers.

Next, they created a raffle event offering a year's supply of chicken and rice. Facebook users entered the drawing by "liking" the page and clicking on "Attend". The event went viral and attracted 600 more "likes" to the page.

To keep their audience engaged, the owners post several times a day with updates on their current schedule, pictures of satisfied customers, behind the scenes pictures, local events, special offers, and even weather updates.

The owners also solicit feedback from their customers. Advice they have received ranges from expanding their services to include catering, to adding new locations to their route. The owners say that having immediate access to their customers through Facebook has helped them make improvements to their business and accelerate growth at a much faster rate than without Facebook.



LEFT

Behind the scenes look at the process of building a business create a loyal fan base.

ABOVE

Ask your customers for feedback. Offers like this one will transition passive Facebook fans into engaged customers.

Case Study: Pond Tastic Water Gardens



Orlando, Florida
 Industry: Construction
 No. of Employees: 2
 Year Founded: 2003
 Time Spent on Facebook: 10 Min/Day
 Amount Spent on Facebook Ads: \$50/Month

Effective Facebook marketing is about using its mobility and accessibility to your business's advantage.

Use your page as a platform to showcase your work.

A novel way to generate referrals- tagging your customers with work you did for them lends credibility to your business.

If you walk into Pondtastic's retail location to inquire about their custom built ponds, co-owner Theresa will immediately greet you at the counter with her computer. She'll pull up the business's Facebook page so that you can scroll through a cornucopia of images and videos from previous landscaping jobs. All the visual content is accompanied by tagged reviews from satisfied customers. It's a two-person husband and wife marketing team with Jim using his phone to supply the content from the job site and Theresa using their Facebook page as a selling tool at the store.

Before Jim's consultation with potential customers, Theresa will task them with looking through Pondtastic's extensive portfolio on Facebook and ask them to pick out jobs they like or don't like. The page gives the customer a behind the scenes look into the building process, finished ponds, and allows them an opportunity to contact Jim and Theresa's previous customers for referrals.

The owners of Pondtastic use Facebook platform to streamline the selling process- Jim can optimize his time by meeting with potentials clients who are now educated about the business and know exactly what they want.



A breakdown of the process of building a custom pond along with pictures of the finished product demonstrates Jim's expertise in your industry.

A video capturing a finished pond with the client relaxing is more effective than a typed rave review.

Case Study: Havana Rumba Cabana Restaurant



Louisville, Kentucky
 Industry: Restaurant
 No. of Employees: 30
 Year Founded: 2004
 Time Spent on Facebook: 30 Min/Day
 Amount Spent on Facebook Ads:
 \$15/Month

- Find positive reviews from other social media platforms and post them your Facebook page.
- Create visual content for special offers using free mobile photo editing apps.
- Diversifying the content of your posts appeals to a variety of client needs.
- Set Google Alerts for your own business to keep up to date with both positive and negative reviews.

Ingrid is the one-woman marketing team for all of her husband's restaurants including their flagship, Havana Rumba. Because she holds a full time job, she manages all her Facebook marketing through her phone, using any free time she has to respond to customers on her restaurant pages. She also uses her phone to generate visual content like promotional posters, and individualized thank you posts to customers

When the restaurant first opened, Havana Rumba offered a gift certificate for Facebook likes, growing the number of fans to around 1000. Ingrid has kept the momentum that the initial incentive grew and expanded the restaurant's fan base to over 3,000 users by being consistently accessible to, and engaged with, Havana Rumba's customers.

Not only does she spend time responding to customers, Ingrid is also online looking at sites like Trip Advisor, Yelp, Foodspotter and Twitter to source positive reviews and customer pictures to post on Facebook. Through her cross platform marketing strategy, Havana Rumba's Facebook page has become the social media hub where all the others intersect.



FAR LEFT

Posting tweets or positive reviews from other social media platforms connects you on an individual level with your customers.

IMMEDIATE LEFT

Posting Accolades for your business isn't just vanity. It gives your fans a reason to come celebrate with you.

Case Study: Osmosis Day Spa Sanctuary



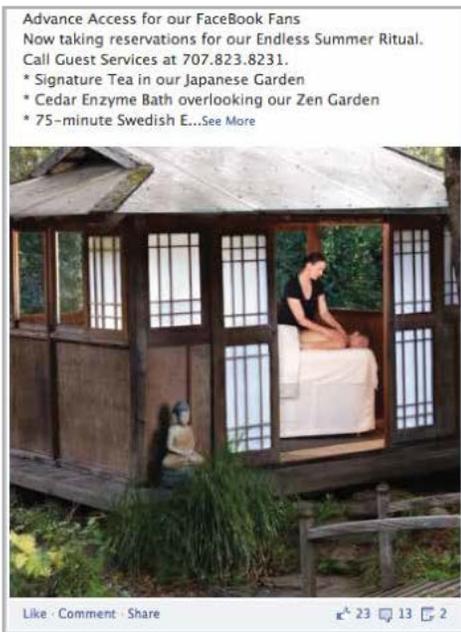
Freestone, California
 Industry: Health and Beauty
 No. of Employees: 85
 Year Founded: 1983
 Time Spent on Facebook: 15 Min/Day
 Amount Spent on Facebook Ads: None

If you plan on promoting posts, spend money on the posts that are already garnering attention or choose to promote posts that will lead to sales.

Measure and track Facebook metrics to learn more about your audience and your target market.

Thirty years ago, the inspiration for Osmosis Day Spa was born from a trip that owner Michael took to Japan. Today, it's a nationally renowned destination with a Facebook page that reaches a minimum of 500-600 users with every post. Michael utilizes his Facebook page to set himself apart from other spa owners, and establish his presence as an innovator and leader in the health and spa industry. The quality and diversity of the content in the posts shows that he's not just selling a one-time spa experience, but a way of life. He consistently posts several time a day sharing health insights, video tours of his sanctuary, and is highly responsive to fans posting on the page.

Michael uses Facebook to keep his fan base engaged and also gauges the popularity of promotional offerings by the level of engagement, using the platform as a test audience. He meticulously tracks Facebook metrics to determine what types of posts to promote to generate a viral hit and optimize his marketing budget. He still experiments with posting different types of content and is constantly surprised at what type of content acquires the most "likes" and shares.



ABOVE

Use the event functions on your Facebook page to keep a track of the invitees to follow up with potential clients. Informative event sessions are also a way to show your expertise.

LEFT

Special offers for Facebook fans generate viral buzz and increase the reach of your Facebook page.

Case Study: Margie Jordan, Travel Agent



Jacksonville, Florida
 Industry: Travel Agency
 No. of Employees: 3
 Year Founded: 2005
 Time Spent on Facebook: 30 Min/Day
 Amount Spent on Facebook Ads:
 ~\$210/Month

Pay attention to your own insights. The most popular posts aren't always images. Experiment to find what engages your fans.

Cultivating new fans is critical if you have customers with a low turnover rate.

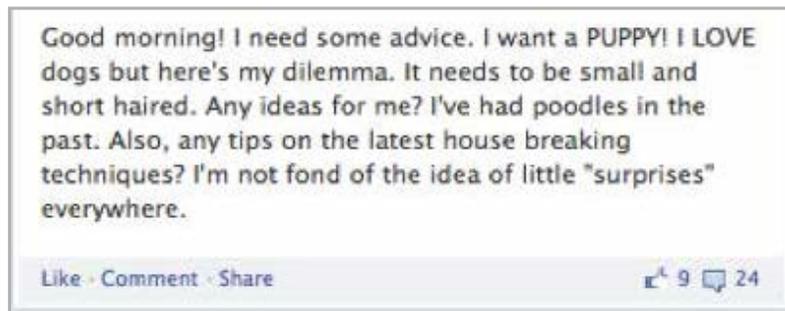
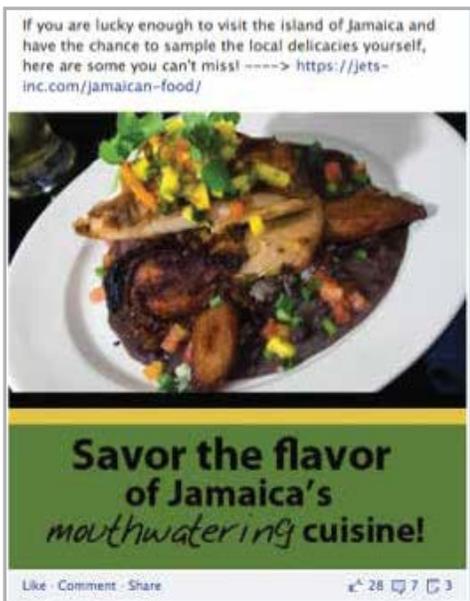
The goal is always to direct fans to your website or get them to sign up in your database.

Start discussions on your page by asking questions.

When Margie first started a Facebook page under her company name JETS, she experimented with building another page under her personal name. The new page under "Margie Jordan" gained a much larger following so she adapted a more personal approach to marketing her business. Her strategy is reflected and consistent throughout the content of her posts. She posts news about her family, asks her Facebook fans for help in choosing a puppy, and shares her opinions on controversial issues.

To increase user engagement, Margie will also post questions to start discussion. These posts also become research tools to get input and figure out which travel destinations to promote next. Other times, industry related topics like airline baggage fees or new TSA measures initiate the most debate and generate "likes".

Margie sees the likes as a way to build community. As she's engaging on Facebook, she constantly thinks about how to move her fan base into her database and covert them into actual sales. Often, she will entice her Facebook fans with excerpts from her newsletter to encourage them into subscribing to her monthly newsletters as a starting point.



ABOVE

Margie found that her audience is more responsive when she's sharing personal information or asking a question.

LEFT

Post not just pictures of the destination, but also pictures of food from the locale to pique fans who have different interests' curiosity.

Case Study: AMCO Auto Insurance-Corpus Christi



Corpus Christi, Texas
 Industry: Insurance Agency
 No. of Employees: 35
 Year Founded: 1991
 Time Spent on Facebook: 30 Min/Day
 Amount Spent on Facebook Ads: None

Initially, grow your audience by engaging with your employees on Facebook. For example, ask them to share the page with their network.
 Post Q&As to display expertise in the field, especially if you're just starting to establish or expand your business.

Amco, a company founded over 20 years ago, started using Facebook in conjunction with the company's efforts to branch out to smaller neighboring towns in Texas. It established a Facebook page for the central office in Corpus Christie. Initially, to grow a Facebook following, Amco encouraged employees from all its branches to "like" the page and share the page with their network.

Amco also initiated contests to incentivize "shares"- for example, offering tickets to the waterpark to every 50th new fan.

To further boost their presence, Amco encourages their employees to engage with the business page using their personal Facebook pages. This type of engagement brings their employee's network even closer to the business's page. The goal is for Amco to stay visible on the News Feed even when the business page is not putting out content. Already the company has a reach over 600 fans and has generated business through its Facebook network.



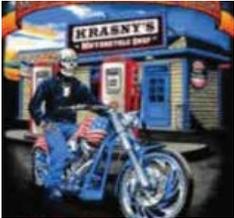
ABOVE

Contests are a good way to generate interest when you're growing your initial base. Use the momentum from the contest to further grow your presence.

LEFT

Especially in an industry like insurance, it's more inviting to put a face on the company. "Meet your agent" is a great way to humanize the company.

Case Study: Krasny's Motorcycle Shop



Topeka, Kansas
 Industry: Motor Repair Shop
 No. of Employees: 2
 Year Founded: 2008
 Time Spent on Facebook: 10 Min/Day
 Amount Spent on Facebook Ads: None

Facebook is especially useful to generate word of mouth business when you serve a niche market.

All your Facebook marketing can be done through your phone. Host events to share your expertise and show your passion for your industry.

Diversifying the content of your posts appeals to a variety of client needs.

For Bill, the owner of Krasny motorcycle shop, Facebook fills all his marketing needs. He has gained 30 new customers from his Facebook page created just two years ago. When he started his business, he spent \$3,100 on a radio ad that only brought in two customers. He quickly realized that his shop serves a niche market that couldn't be reached effectively with costly ads. Because the biker community is small and tight knit, Bill started using Facebook to reach the right audience and build his following through referrals on Facebook.

Bill often posts stage-by-stage pictures of the bikes while he's servicing them and tags his customers in them. The posts are useful for keeping his customers informed about the progress on their bike. These posts get high levels of engagement and bring him new business when the customer's friends see the work being done.

The content posted is also diverse enough to appeal to the variety of needs of Bill's network. He hosts barbeques for the local biking community, offers special deals on parts and refurbished bikes, and posts videos. He does all his Facebook marketing through his phone. At most, he spends 15



FAR LEFT

Updating your customer with stage-by-stage pictures of the product being serviced brings customer service to another level. It also draws attention to your quality of work and level of expertise.

IMMEDIATE LEFT

Short video posts garner a lot of attention and don't take much time to make. This video was shot on Bill's phone.