

New Opportunities to get Connected on Facebook

CONNECTIONS SOCIAL MEDIA SYSTEMS THINKING

BY NICK BURCHER, HEAD OF SOCIAL, MEDIACOM EMEA 15 DEC 2014

Content overload has forced changes to the way Facebook delivers organic reach, but systems thinking offers new opportunities for brands on the world's biggest social network. By Nick Burcher, Head of Social, MediaCom EMEA

Facebook is built on the promise of “making the world more open and connected,” but – in a world in which there is more content being created than there is time for consumers to consume – Facebook can’t connect everyone to everything.

Videos (such as the 17 million created during the ALS ice bucket challenge), friend posts, brand posts, photos, check-ins, games, apps and advertising are all fighting for our

attention. On average, there are now 1,500 stories that could appear in a person's news feed at log-in. No one could possibly consume them all!

Facebook's response to this challenge has been to filter the news feed in order to prioritize quality and relevance. Facebook has also tried to reduce what it sees as news feed spam ("Like this post if you're happy it's Friday..."), requiring brands to be even more thoughtful about what they produce.

One side effect of these changes is that organic reach for brands has been consistently declining. Research from Social@Ogilvy showed that, by 1Q14, organic reach had dropped to 6%. In other words, only 6 out of 100 fans would ever see a post.

Thinking in systems

While this might appear to be a crisis for brands that have invested heavily to recruit and develop fan communities, other changes on the platform have actually created more opportunities for bold and imaginative marketers.

This is because successful promotion on Facebook now comes from thinking about the whole system, not just the silo of organic reach. New advertising formats coupled with innovative ways of building out audiences, such as objective-based targeting, custom audiences and lookalike targeting, give brands access to paid advertising options they've never had before. Combine this with Facebook's recent announcements on the potential of Atlas and the opportunities for brands are considerably enhanced.

Additionally – as Internet-enabled devices proliferate and the importance of cookie-based marketing starts to wane – the ability to use Facebook-type, first-person log-in data to target users across devices will become increasingly important.

A people-centered approach

All this puts Facebook at the forefront of personal identity targeting. This is especially true as we enter an era in which fast content and programmatic buying enable brands to operate

“in the moment”, using content and connections to instantly canvas one’s entire communications ecosystem to determine what message to place where and when. Working with a content approach such as MediaCom’s “Inspire Inform Involve” framework can help brands focus and maximize the potential for attention and engagement.

A great example of this is what MediaCom Beyond Advertising produced with Volkswagen in Germany around the FIFA World Cup. VW has football sponsorship assets in Germany, but it wasn’t a FIFA World Cup sponsor. The question became, how could VW participate in the conversation at a level that would both be credible and visible across a three-month period?

Our answer was “Das Fan Auto 2014”, a campaign that featured three social media stars competing to create the ultimate fan car, which MediaCom manufactured and displayed at dealerships across the country. The campaign was fuelled by supporting YouTube video and Facebook activity (both paid and organic), which also encouraged voting and participation.

“Das Fan Auto 2014” was created using a system that centered on “Inspire” content, which was then amplified through the involvement of the Facebook community. The resulting 89% campaign awareness, 25% engagement rates and high brand preference scores all came from taking a systems view that pulled everything together into a huge integrated campaign that included including traditional sponsorship properties, social media and dealer marketing.

“Systems thinking allowed VW in Germany to cut through the FIFA World Cup clutter and enhance positivity towards their brands,” says Bernd Hoffmann, CDO of MediaCom Germany. The German footballer Thomas Mueller even featured the Fan Auto Tiguan on his personal Facebook Page.

Changes to the feed experience are only the latest moves in Facebook’s produce roadmap, but one brand truth will always remain: marketers need to think about content and connections, embracing the bigger picture and a systems thinking approach.

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