

facebook

launches timeline
for brand pages

a POV by the Emerging Media Lab



At its February 2012 [fMC](#) event, Facebook launched several new updates for marketers on the platform, namely:

1. Brand Pages will now feature the new Timeline layout, similar to personal pages.
2. A new ad unit called “Reach Generator” will allow brand pages to publish News Feed stories to up to 75% of their fans.
3. Premium ads on Facebook are now available for in-News Feed placement (including on mobile devices) and as fans log out of Facebook.

The new brand page layout and the Reach Generator ads are designed to seamlessly integrate with one another and help highlight prominent brand content to fans. Ultimately, this should be an advantageous shift for brands on Facebook, but in the short-term, it may necessitate some re-assessment of content, conversation, and paid advertising strategy. Timeline affords brands more creative flexibility with their pages, while also encouraging them to be very thoughtful about curation. They now have a lot more power as content creators, but they will also have more responsibility to create distinct and compelling content on a regular basis.

Brands will shift away from static, app-centric content and page design

While many brands have invested in the creative development of the Facebook applications and tabs that resided on the lefthand side of the page, Timeline only displays a selection of these apps. Our [FanIndex](#) norms show that creative innovation has become a less important differentiating attribute of brand pages over time, in part due to the fact that relatively few fans find their way into pages’ app/tab sub-navigation. Now, brands will need to highlight a smaller selection of tabs and apps, which they can showcase at the top of the page with a custom image, as well as using their News Feed updates to direct traffic to those portions of the page.



Copywriting and conversation content will become increasingly important

Over the past year, we've seen that the quality of News Feed updates is an important differentiator in a brand page's performance: while regular, trustworthy updates from the brand are expected of a page, it's the usefulness of that content and the style of conversation that set apart the best pages. Timeline affords great opportunities for brands to show off their cool content, whether it's eye-catching photography in the cover photo or through status updates, especially relevant or engaging posts that the brand wants to "pin" to the top of the page, or even brand posts turned into Sponsored Stories. These enhanced creative opportunities will encourage brands to be mindful and strategic about how they plan their pages and what they post. We see from our normative FanIndex database that the best pages focus on interaction with fans, building a sense of community and a good sense of fun!

Brands will need to be careful curators – and moderators – of their pages and presence on Facebook

New features like pinned posts and Reach Generator ads will draw increased attention to the brand's own posts, but Timeline also makes the brand page experience more personalized to individual fans. Now people on a brand page can see how their friends are engaging with a given brand, meaning a brand should be quick to encourage positive engagement and equally quick to quell any negative feedback that may arise. Since the latter often happens in the context of customer service, Timeline also allows brands to turn on "direct messaging" – customers disgruntled about their latest bill can now converse privately with customer service. The flip side is that customer service reps must be quick to respond, lest impatient or neglected fans strike back on the Wall after all.

All in all, the new design changes to Timeline support the shifts in fan attitudes and behavior that we have observed over time from our FanIndex work. Modeling brand page strategy around engagement, interaction, and community will help brands take advantage of the fact that most fans interact with the brand through the News Feed rather than by visiting the brand page. For those fans who do visit brand pages, they will be greeted with a less-cluttered design and better integration with other brand content from friends. While a thoughtful conversation strategy and engaging content will remain the underpinnings of a successful page, Facebook has now provided a variety of tools, both paid and unpaid, to amplify brands' visibility and success on the platform.

To learn more about our FanIndex solution and normative insights, please contact your account manager or sales@dynamiclogic.com.

