



## **Businesses Must Prepare for Upcoming Changes to Facebook**

*If you have not begun preparing your business' Facebook presence for upcoming changes, now is the time to start. Substantial alterations to previously free marketing activities are set to roll out on March 30<sup>th</sup>.*

Article -

Communicating with current customers and reaching new ones on Facebook is about to change dramatically. This is not news, but more of a friendly reminder to those that have not made preparations for the shift. Beginning March 30<sup>th</sup>, Facebook will be implementing substantial changes to rules that govern appearance and functions of a business' Facebook page. The Timeline format will be the only layout option, which will mean significant changes in the appearance of many Facebook business pages. By restricting certain features, the social media giant is aimed at enticing businesses to purchase features that companies are currently using for marketing and other gains free of charge.

As the Timeline format becomes the status quo, this means the end of welcome pages. The welcome or landing pages that have widely been used to introduce visitors to the products or services a company provides will no longer be the first thing visitors see, this will be relegated to the apps section. The Timeline will be the first thing visitors see, so it will pay to make it count.

### **Reaching Facebook fans is changing**

Already, companies may only be reaching 16% of their fans per week. Even though these fans have "liked" your page, the distributions are being throttled by Facebook. In order to reach a larger number of fans/customers, businesses will need to implement the Reach Generator tool. Reach Generator guarantees 75% of distributions will reach fans each month and 50% each week. Clearly a significant jump from 16% although there is a price tag attached to this function.

### **Visual presentation of your business on Facebook is changing**

The main photo will be enlarged and occupy the largest piece of real estate on the welcome page. While this billboard-like image may sound like a positive change for businesses, it would be best to enlist some top marketing minds to manage this for your business. The reason is that there will be several restrictions imposed on this image that will require a creative mind to maximize marketing potential. The new restrictions prohibit any promotional messages, and when Facebook says "any" they mean it. This means no calls to action like discount offers, invitations to "like" the page or even a company web address or contact info. Again, keen marketing strategies will surely make good use of this space, but it will not be easy.

In addition to the photos tab/app, there are only 3 tabs visible on the main page. Designate one of those as your number of “likes” and a business is only left with two tabs that can be seen immediately by customers visiting the page. These tabs may be easily changed as frequently as desired, though here again the limitations will require thoughtful use of this feature in order to be an effective marketing tool.

### **Why so many changes you ask?**

Anyone reading this is likely to be aware of the upcoming public offering by Facebook. Speculation and common sense would suggest that this is part of many efforts to boost the profitability of the company prior to the IPO. For businesses using Facebook for marketing, it will certainly change the way social media marketing has been done in the past, but could also provide a substantial edge to businesses that are willing and able to pay for the now additional services.

### **When is this happening?**

While several of the significant changes are mentioned here, there are others that are not and should be investigated to understand the full impact on your business. Full implementation of these changes is scheduled for March 30<sup>th</sup>, yes THIS March 30<sup>th</sup>. Companies that have not made adjustments themselves by this date will automatically be converted to the Timeline format. While much of the same information will still be there, the appearance of the page will likely be unappealing if action is not taken prior to the conversion.

### **What should you do about it?**

These changes are certainly not the end of marketing on Facebook, although the proactive businesses will be the ones that come out on top in the early running of the conversions; creative marketing and a Facebook budget required. Still it would be wise to consult your internet marketing agency, or find one if you are currently handling your social media marketing alone. The continued growth and evolution of social media marketing mean that those that use it wisely will have an edge.