7 Ways Your Content Can Increase Facebook Engagement

Raise your hand if you’ve ever wondered how some brands seem to dramatically and exponentially grow their fan and comment count, while others, even with a similar content strategy are still struggling. Fact is, there is real science behind what makes us interact with brands and businesses online.

While traditional wisdom points us in the direction of advice such as following the 60/30/10 formula, wherein 60 percent of your content is designed to entertain, 30 percent to inspire, and 10 percent on promotional content, it still doesn’t dive deep enough.

Since studies have shown that engagement with a brand can have a real impact on profit – comScore’s 2012 data shows a 38 percent lift in purchases for fans exposed to Starbucks advertising on Facebook, and fans of Target were 19 percent more likely to purchase at Target in the month following exposure to Facebook messages – how do we make the 60 percent more entertaining, the 30 percent more inspiring?

It’s critical to engineer your firm’s content strategy in way that makes it as engaging, and thus as effective, as possible.

Recently, members of Stanford University and the University of Pennsylvania released their findings from a study on the effect of social media content on customer engagement. In the study conducted via Facebook, Dokyun Lee and Kartik Hosanagar of
the University of Pennsylvania, and Harikesh Nair of Stanford, set out to investigate what type of content was more effective to engage the target audience for an advertiser on social media.

Some of the key questions they looked to answer included:

- Did informative posts talking about product price or features get a better response than persuasive or philanthropic messages, or vice versa?
- Did posts designed to solicit user response (“like this post if...”) actually work or did they turn users away?
- How does content strategy vary across industries?
- Since only about 1 percent of fans of a page actually engage with the brand by commenting, liking, or sharing posts, how can content be used to improve brand engagement?

In what is described within the study as a painstakingly thorough and exhaustive research and analysis process, they analyzed over 800 firms and over 100,000 messages, to come up with findings that had broad applicability across different types of businesses and industries.

Below are seven key points from their findings from the study and some recommended actions you can take based on those findings:

### 1. Persuasive Content Has the Highest Engagement Levels

**Finding**

Persuasive content, or content that works to build relationships such as small talk or banter, has the highest levels of engagement, especially if it contains strong emotional or philanthropic content.

Interestingly, philanthropy-related content and content with an emotional hook beat out

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http://searchenginewatch.com/article/2307522/7-Ways-Your-Conten...ed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+sewblog+%28Search+Engine+Watch+Blog%29
humor in terms of effectiveness when it came to engaging with consumers.

**Action You Can Take**

Go forth and showcase your brand’s personality, in the form of witty banter and engaging small talk to get to know your followers and to form emotional bonds.

Other things that work well include sharing interesting facts, posts that create empathy, or posts that share information about you. Don’t be afraid to discuss the values you stand for and your motivations, and best of all pick a charity to support, which your audience can relate to, and use the power of doing good to bring your community closer together.

Here’s a great example from Walmart.
2. Informative Content Negatively Impacts Engagement

Finding

Informative content, especially content that talks about price, deals, or product features, tends to have a negative impact on engagement. However, mixing in persuasive content with the informative content within the same message stemmed the negative effect on engagement.

Action You Can Take

Carefully review your messaging next time you want to share promotional content.
Is there a way you can add a more interesting hook? Can you be subtle in your messaging to promote your content in a less overt way or can you add in an emotional hook to relate to your audience and captivate their interest?

Amazon does a great job of using the emotional hook to invoke nostalgia first, and then mentions their LEGO deals:

![Amazon LEGO Deals]

3. Mentioning the Holidays Decreases Engagement

Finding

Mentioning the holidays actually decreases engagement, but the theory the authors have about this is that there are so many mentions of the holidays on Facebook, that the saturation dulls the effectiveness of the message.
**Action You Can Take**

By all means don’t shy away from mentioning the holidays at all, but do so in moderation. Try to come up with a different angle for talking about the holidays then your competitors, or what your audience might be getting exposed to.

For example, Old Spice went for a funny cartoon to acknowledge Halloween:

![Old Spice Halloween Cartoon](image)

**4. Less is More**

**Finding**

Overly long or complex messages lessen engagement rates as the study showed that they are liked and commented on less than shorter, more succinct messages.
**Action You Can Take**

Stick to the point and the old adage that less is more. Test different lengths to see what works best for you, but shorter messages that don’t get cut off with a "read more" link are much easier for people to read and react to.

Nice job by National Geographic here:

![National Geographic Facebook Post Example](image)

5. Make Your Posts Interactive

**Finding**

Asking questions or having “fill in the blank” style posts increases comments, but at the cost of likes. “Fill in the blank” type messaging is even more effective than questions for increasing comments.
**Action You Can Take**

Immediately make your posts more engaging by making them interactive.

Audiences react extremely well to little quizzes like plugging in a one word answer to a fill in the blank type question or trivia-type questions. This is a sure-fire way to get people vested to answer.

Make sure you respond to the people who comment to keep the interaction going and spark dialogue.

Here are some great examples:
6. Ask People to Take an Action

Finding

Asking for likes has a powerful impact on increasing likes, as does asking for comments, though the latter does come at the cost of likes.

Action You Can Take

Be bold in asking for the action you’d like people to take. Give them interesting reasons why they should like or thumbs up the page.

Calls to action work for a reason – telling people what you’d like them to do next can go
a long way toward increasing the odds that they will take that action.

7. Use Images

Finding

Photos tend to get the most comments and likes out of all types of content, even more than status updates or videos.

Action You Can Take

Have more fun with images and Photoshop – rather than posting a simple fact as just text, turn it into a little image, or post inspirational or interesting photos or illustrations that can attract attention and interest.
Here’s a great example from Rosetta Stone:

Summary

Reviewing the insights from the study, it’s still important to keep in mind the importance of mixing up the messages on the page. If suddenly all the content a brand posted on Facebook was only about philanthropy, it would backfire and not maintain the right brand image or customer interest. Test and devise a strategy that works best for your audience.

Have you tried other tactics that have worked well for you? Please share in the comments.
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