PAYING TO PLAY
ON FACEBOOK

A guide to advertising. Facebook is becoming known as a pay-to-play tool as organizations are finding it challenging, if not nearly impossible, to get content into their audiences' News Feeds without creating an ad budget. Facebook acknowledges this occurrence and says that competition for each News Feed story is increasing and people are connecting and sharing more than ever.

The Basics

On any given day, an average of 2,000 potential stories from friends and pages could appear in a typical Facebook user's News Feed each time he or she logs in; of these, Facebook displays about 200. Breaking through the noise requires a thorough understanding of the way Facebook operates.

+Issue Ads
Advertisements that address issues of national importance (including but not limited to the military, the environment, budget, crime, civil rights, guns and taxes) are now classified as political or issue ads and they require a disclaimer as well as extra security. This means that individuals who administer the pages must go through Facebook's identity verification process. Before running issue ads, you should give yourself at least two weeks to complete the verification process. You may find out more about the issue ads certification process here.

+Build
Facebook uses an algorithm to determine if your message appears in your fans' News Feeds. Previously, Facebook took three variables into consideration: the people, organizations and news outlets a user interacts with, the types of posts (photos, videos or links) users interact with most frequently and posts with high user-engagement. However, in 2018, Facebook updated its algorithm to improve user experience and bring people closer together. Now, Facebook uses signals like how many people react to, comment on or share posts to determine how high they appear in News Feed. With this update, Facebook prioritizes posts that spark meaningful conversations among you, your friends and your family by predicting which posts that you might want to interact with most. Since space in News Feed is limited, showing more posts from friends and family means that content from publishers, businesses and organizations might see a decrease in user engagement. Keep in mind that content that generates conversation between people will appear higher in News Feed, so try posting more live videos and relevant updates and creating events, which often lead to discussion among viewers on Facebook.

+The Mysterious Algorithm
There is no way to track exactly how Facebook determines if an organization's content will appear in its fans' News Feeds. Facebook admits that as people increasingly share content, the organic reach of pages likely will continue to decline. One study found that the average number of Facebook post engagements has fallen by more than 20 percent since January 2017. While there are tips for organizations looking to maximize their organic reach, people unwilling to put money beyond their Facebook pages will find that their content is reaching fewer and fewer people.

+Getting Started
In order for someone to create an ad for a Facebook page, he or she has to be listed as a Page admin for that page.
To assign a user this role, go to the page, click "Edit Page" and select "Manage Admin Roles." As a good rule of thumb, make sure that whenever Facebook asks you to update your page's layout to its new settings, click "Update." Facebook changes constantly and keeping your page updated with new settings will help ensure that your content reaches the right audiences.

+Budget
The key to determining an appropriate budget for Facebook ads is to test. Try starting with a small amount such as $50 - $100 and experiment with the different types of ads to determine what your audiences respond to best. Try promoting the same post to two different groups of people: those who like similar keywords as your issue and those who like similar organizations. Track the reach of the ads to determine which performed better. Use the "When your fans are online" metric in your Facebook "Insights" section to ensure that you are promoting ads at the most popular times.

+Cost
Facebook allows you to pay for impressions (CPM) or pay for clicks (CPC). If your goal is audience growth, maximize your dollars by paying only for ads that people click on as opposed to paying per 1,000 people who will potentially see your ad. See more on bidding and pricing here.

Types of Ads

There are a few types of ads you can create. Choose the type based on your objectives. Manage each ad by clicking the "Manage Ads" tab located in the drop-down menu on the far right of your home page. Be sure to check the size guidelines for each ad. Here are a few of the main types of Facebook ads, but there are more than 10.

- **Boost your page posts:** This is the easiest and cheapest ad to create and results come fast. You can use this option quickly by clicking "Boost Post" on an individual post.

- **Get more page likes:** You can get creative here. Think about the images that describe your organization well. Look for ones that show what your organization accomplishes and who you impact. Use your own photos or use a source such as Flickr's creative commons or Google's Advanced Image Search to find free images. Upload up to six images, keeping in mind that text cannot take up more than 20 percent of the image. The Facebook Grid tool can help you determine if you have too much text. Next, write a short headline and message. Try using your mission statement, but add a bit of flair to it.

- **Invite people to an event:** Friends of your fans are the best new audience to target with this type of ad.

- **Send traffic to your website:** Create an ad that directs Facebook users to your website. You can use this to highlight a new blog post, your current advocacy campaign, your donation page or your homepage. Track the success of ads by installing a tracking code provided by Facebook to the webpages to measure conversions.

Audience Targeting

Facebook allows advertisers to narrow an audience using demographic targeting. To access audience targeting options, organizations must make the ad-runner an editor on their Facebook page, so they have access to manage and run ad campaigns. The traditional ads manager has gone through significant changes and its functionality closely resembles another Facebook tool – Power Editor. Facebook's Power Editor is more complex and usually is intended for use only by experienced advertisers and businesses managing multiple Facebook campaigns and ads.

1. **Targeting audiences based on interests and demographics:** Start by making a complete list of things your audiences might "like" on Facebook (e.g., TV shows, local news outlets or newspapers, volunteering). Identify your audiences' education level, which language they are likely to speak, age, gender, location and whether or not you'd like to target friends of your fans or broader audiences not connected with your page. Once you have this list, start experimenting to find your tailored audience group. You also can target users based on their donation behaviors. More on targeting is here.

2. **Creating Custom Audience groups:** Organizations may upload their supporters' data (email addresses and phone numbers) collected outside of Facebook to target ads to them on Facebook. This tactic is helpful to repeat an ask to current supporters of your organization on an additional channel. Seeing an ask more than once increases the likelihood that your supporters will respond. To create a custom audience, go to your "Manage Ads" tab, select "Audiences" from the left side and click "Create Audience." Then choose whether you'd like to upload your Custom Audience through MailChimp or a data file.

3. **Create a Lookalike audience to your Custom Audience groups:** After you create a Custom Audience, you can generate an audience similar to it. Facebook allows you to generate your Lookalike audience by taking all of the data points of your source audience and finding new, similar people using a set percentage sample (which you specify) of the population in your chosen country. Unlike interest-based targeting, lookalike audiences allow you to create the source audience, giving you more control and viewers who are more likely to be interested in your content.