Organizing to Use Facebook Advertisements: A Planning Tool for Extension Professionals, Businesses, and Communities

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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to explain how Extension professionals, businesses, and communities can use Facebook advertisements effectively. The article is a planning tool that introduces Facebook's Advertiser Help Center, explains some applicable key concepts, and suggests best practices to apply before launching a Facebook advertising campaign.

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Introduction

To be sure, Extension professionals are using Facebook and Facebook advertising to connect with their audiences (Hill, 2014; Israel et al., 2015). Extension professionals also use Facebook to help businesses and communities improve economically (Barnes & Coatney, 2014; Barnes & Coatney, 2015a; Barnes & Coatney, 2015b). But using Facebook advertisements can be complex, and when tools are complex, businesses and communities may spend additional resources to understand their operations, functionality, and usefulness. In other words, the learning curve can be steep and expensive. To maximize the value gained from using Facebook advertisements, following some helpful guidance can be critical.

The purpose of this article is to provide a practical tool that summarizes some key tasks that should be done before using Facebook advertisements. Training on how to use Facebook advertisements is the focus of a course offered through Mississippi State University's Extension program called Mississippi Bricks to Clicks (B2C) (http://www.msbrickstoclicks.com/). The B2C program trains entrepreneurs to understand both economics and management best practices applicable to using social media in business and how the use of social media can translate into economic value.

Organization and Planning

The first thing to do is consult the Facebook Advertiser Help Center (https://www.facebook.com/business/help/326113794144384/) to learn about the various paid advertisement

options in Facebook. The help center provides guidelines and specifications for creating advertisements (https://www.facebook.com/business/help/458369380926902/), tools for creating advertisements (https://www.facebook.com/business/help/638274812874211/), information for promoting a Facebook page (https://www.facebook.com/business/help/558265824244459/), and ways to target fans (https://www.facebook.com/business/help/433385333434831/). Before launching into the world of creating paid advertisements in Facebook, learning the following best practices should be a prerequisite.

- Start with a comprehensive review of the Facebook ads guide (https://www.facebook.com/business/ads-guide/?tab0=Mobile%20News%20Feed). This guide provides information about advertisements for Instagram as well.

- Recognize that Facebook now offers the option to sell products directly from a Facebook page. As you keep this in mind, one consideration may be to build an advertisement that promotes a link to a business's product or service. With this recent update, Facebook has moved into the world of facilitating e-commerce.

- Learn what the term *impressions* means. *Impressions* refers to the number of times an advertisement entered the screen for the first time. In this context, *screen* refers to the placement of an advertisement (i.e., mobile newsfeed, desktop newsfeed, desktop right-hand side). Impressions are bought when paying for advertisements.

- Learn what *reach* means. *Reach* refers to the number of people an advertisement was shown to. Whereas *impressions* refers to the number of times an advertisement entered a screen, *reach* refers to people—specifically, the number of people who had an opportunity to view an advertisement.

- Learn what *frequency* means. *Frequency* refers to the average number of times an advertisement was shown to each person. Impressions are bought on the basis of a potential reach with respect to an audience selected for an advertisement. A useful rule of thumb is to keep frequency at four or less to both minimize costs and present potential fans with fresh images and messages.

- Learn about the Facebook ads manager (https://www.facebook.com/business/help/415745401805534/). Through the ads manager, you learn how to set up payment methods, how to measure results, and much more. This task takes time, but it is an essential step before creating any advertisements.

- Know the target audience for a paid advertisement. Where do the primary customers for the business reside? Are they male or female? What ages are the people most likely to have interest in a specific business product or service? The more information that can be used to understand the customers who are likely to buy the product or service advertised, the more likely a Facebook paid advertisement will be effective.

- Understand that several paid advertisement options exist (https://www.facebook.com/business/help/458369380926902/). The most common are a page post engagement advertisement and a page "like" campaign, but you should learn about all the options.

- Make sure the Facebook page has fresh, engaging content before starting a page "like" campaign. One paid advertisement option is promoting a business's Facebook page by targeting fans who are most likely to be interested in the page. This strategy builds a page's "likes." Some businesses have organized a giveaway or a

contest to run simultaneously with certain paid advertisements.

- Learn from others' successes. Facebook has documented several success stories showing how businesses have used paid advertisements to facilitate business growth (https://www.facebook.com/business/success/). Study the stories of businesses that are most similar to the business that is considering the use of Facebook paid advertisements.

- Consider the creative aspects of an advertisement and any technical constraints imposed by Facebook:

  - Obtain high-quality images, as many as 10 if possible. Image size should be 1200 x 444.

  - Make sure that any image used is not more than 20% text. If it is, Facebook will not allow its use.

  - Think about and identify the business's core message. Crafting an advertisement's copy (the text message that accompanies an image or images) can take time. Moreover, there are limits to how much text may be included in an advertisement. For example, when creating a Facebook page "like" advertisement, the advertisement copy can have only 90 characters. Knowing the business's core message will help you create concise and effective copy. It is important to develop this copy before creating the advertisement itself, especially if a team of people are involved.

Conclusion

The most difficult part of using any social media advertising tool is simply getting started. The purpose of this article is to alleviate that difficulty in some measure. Extension professionals also can use the information in this article to begin thinking about how to attract clientele to Extension programs by using Facebook advertisements.

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