



How to outsmart the social media giant (and your competitors) in light of the News Feed overhaul.

BY TROY COLE

The social media behemoth is at it again. Mark Zuckerberg, founder of Facebook, made a big announcement at the beginning of the year that has many business owners on edge. The gist of his comments is this:

- Facebook is a place for you to share memories and communicate with friends and family;
- Businesses are clogging it up; and
- We're going to cut the amount of business content in your News Feed to make you love Facebook more.

In other words: "People aren't using Facebook as much as they used to, so we hope that reducing the amount of business content you see is going to fix that." There it is: Facebook is going to show your practice's posts to fewer people. Let's sort this out.

WHAT IT MEANS

First of all, this is no shocker. Facebook has been deprioritizing business content in the News Feed for a while now. Five years ago, organic posts had a 10% to 20% reach in the News Feed, meaning that, out of 100 people, Facebook would show an

organic post to at least 10. That may not sound like an impressive reach, but it's quite generous compared with what it is today: 2% to 3%, maybe. Post something to your 5,000 followers, and 100 people see it. (Mind you, this doesn't apply to the random one-off post that goes viral and gets shared all over the place. We're talking about 99.99% of the content that practices share on Facebook.)

So what's the plan now that Facebook is cutting your reach yet

again? Is it time to ditch Facebook altogether? Not so fast. Facebook still has plenty of life left. In fact, Facebook's changes can actually help you leverage the platform even more if you're willing to adjust your approach. In this article, I share four tactics that you can use to rewrite your Facebook playbook and outsmart your competitors on the world's largest and most powerful media platform (also see *Social Media Tactics*).

SOCIAL MEDIA TACTICS

- ▶ Produce only multiuse creative assets
- ▶ Use Facebook advertising
- ▶ Help patients create their own content
- ▶ Use your Facebook page to showcase your credentials



1

PRODUCE ONLY MULTIUSE CREATIVE ASSETS

If your social media strategy is like that of most practices, you have team members or maybe an agency creating so-called *fun content* for your Facebook page that hopefully people will like and share. You are spending time and money to create this content for your social media. How can you make the most of those investments? Only create content that can be used across multiple media.

Here's what I mean. Normally, you might say: "Hey, we need a new video to post on Facebook. Let's film Sally Jones when she comes in for her postoperative visit." Take that idea one step further with this question: "If we film Sally, how many ways can we use that video?" You can take one video and repurpose it for Facebook, Instagram, blog posts, in-office waiting area TVs, emails to patients, retargeting ads, YouTube ads, and YouTube organic posts. Sally's video isn't just a Facebook post; it's a long-term, multiuse asset, which is the best type of content to create.

2

GET ON BOARD THE FACEBOOK ADS TRAIN

Facebook is the world's largest water cooler, with more than 2 billion users. Facebook has hundreds of data points on every single one of those individuals. And wouldn't you know, Facebook is so generous that it gives us marketers the opportunity to use those data points in our ad targeting. It's no secret that Facebook makes its money when practices like yours buy ads. This is another factor in its decision to reduce the reach of your business page. Facebook doesn't want you to have free exposure; it wants you to pay, which is fine. Here's why.

Facebook's ad platform is the most advanced marketing system in history. It is at your disposal, so use it to your advantage. You no longer have to hope that Facebook will show your posts to people. You can still use its ad platform

to serve specific ads to the exact types of people you want in your office. Video ads, retargeting ads, lead generation ads—you name it—can be created to target specific demographics.

Don't rely on Facebook's organic reach, which it continues to cut out from under you. It's time for you to take control. Set up a Facebook ads account or find someone to do it for you, and start to take full advantage of this powerful platform.

3

HELP PATIENTS CREATE THEIR OWN CONTENT

Generally, when we talk about making Facebook posts, we speak about creating content to post on your practice's Facebook page. For example, you make a video, post it, and hope that people see it and share it. This is exactly what Facebook is continuing to throttle ... from your business Facebook account. However, Facebook isn't reducing the reach of individual accounts. In fact, Facebook plainly stated that it will show more individually posted content in the News Feed. This is a huge opportunity when you start to ask the question: "How can I get patients to post about us on their own social media pages?" This is the core of your new social media strategy.

The easiest way to do this is to film videos or take photos on your patients' phones instead of your office device. Ask them to post it and tag your practice. If you have an in-office marketing person who is responsible for social media, this is the perfect task for him or her to take on.

Ask your patients if they want you to film their procedures. Have a selfie station or fun backdrop for photos. Just remember to create the media on the patient's device and have the patient post it. This is the key.

4

USE YOUR FACEBOOK PAGE TO SHOWCASE YOUR CREDENTIALS

Although Facebook has said it won't show your organic posts in the

News Feed, you still want your page to be a great marketing tool, should a prospective patient decide to check it out. When someone visits your Facebook page, you want him or her to say: "Wow, these guys are legit!" So, in addition to posting the multiuse content discussed above, be sure to post about your speaking appearances, professional engagements, and awards, and do it in a humble-brag sort of way.

"We're honored to receive the Best Docs in Town award for the third year in a row. Thank you to our awesome patients and peers who voted for us! We love you!" This is a quick and easy way to turn your Facebook wall into an authoritative fanfest that will impress new prospects. Plus, it's fast, easy content for you to create.

CONCLUSION

The driving force behind Facebook's decisions is always user engagement. The more people who use Facebook, and the more often they use it, the more money Facebook makes. So rest assured, Facebook is not dead or dying. It is just changing the rules a bit to continue its market domination; this is a little frustrating for us as marketers, but nothing we can't handle.

I'm not worried about you. Your world—the world of ophthalmology—is one of ever-changing technology, and you understand the need to grow and adapt. Plus, now you're well-armed with tactics to leverage the world's largest media company to attract new patients and crush your competition. Go ahead and forward this article to your team so that they can get these items rolling next week. ■

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