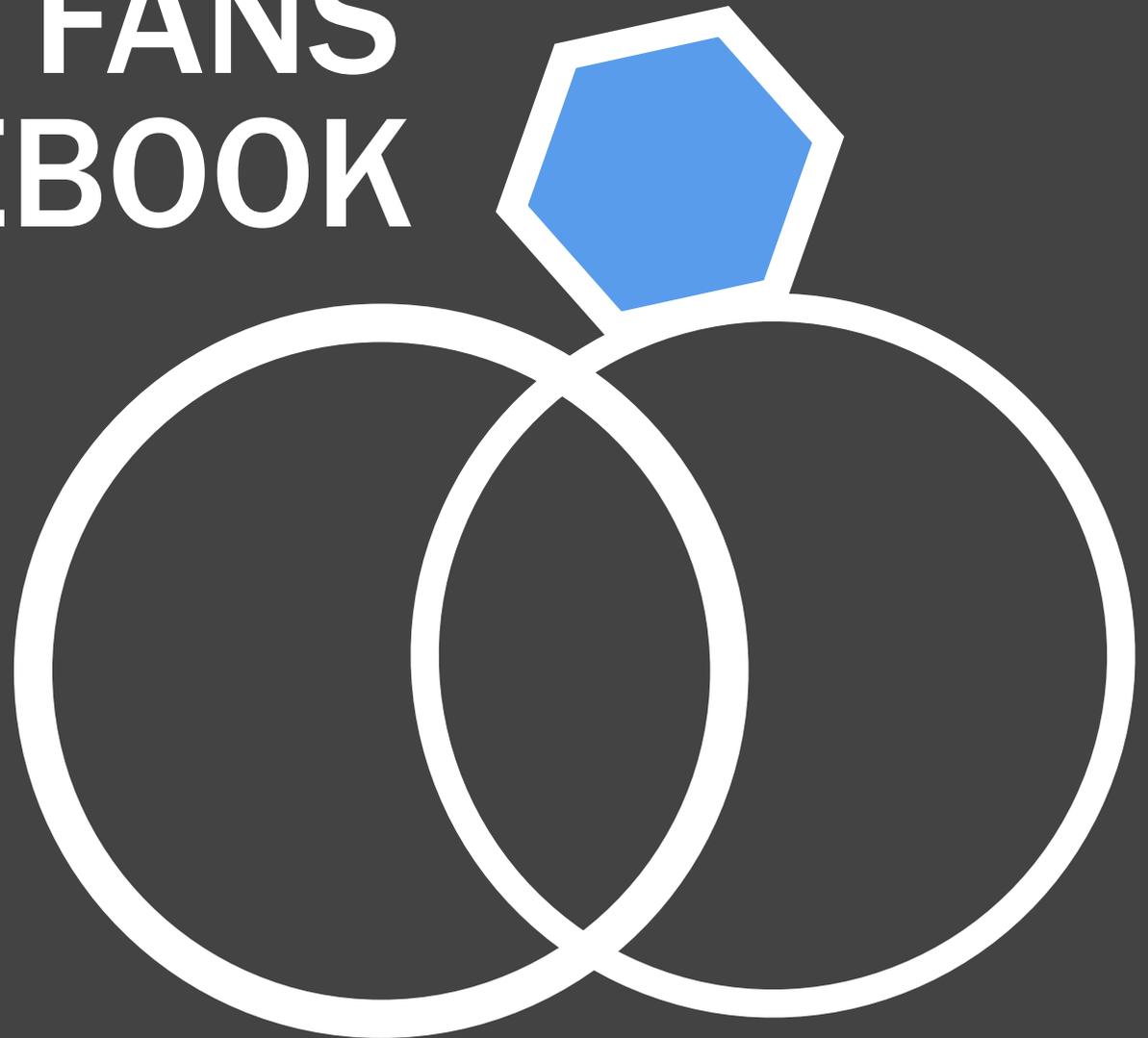# HOW TO
ENGAGE FANS
ON FACEBOOK

Tips for Attracting
Facebook Users to
Your Facebook Page
& Generating Loads
of Engagement

A publication of

HubSpot

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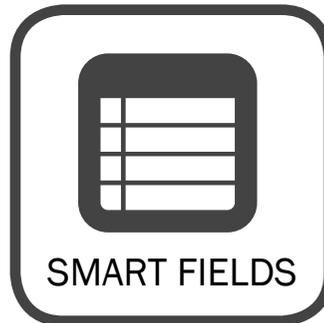
AN INTRODUCTION ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●

The next time you're at any social gathering, party, lunch or dinner with friends, pay attention to who people are most engaged with. Why are people so engaged with a particular person? Inevitably, you will realize that the people who are the most engaging are 1) the most interesting, 2) the most attractive, or 3) the most engaged themselves.

Voila! You now know everything you need to know about increasing the engagement between your customers and your brand on Facebook.

Well, there's a bit more to it. What is interesting to your audience? How do you make yourself attractive through social media; and when, how, and how often should you engage. These three qualities result in the highest engagement and the most interaction, between people regardless of whether the venue is real or virtual.

FIRST THINGS FIRST: HOW'S YOUR EDGERANK?

In 2011, Facebook introduced EdgeRank, an algorithm that determines what shows up in any given Facebook user's news feed. The EdgeRank algorithm, uses three components, each referred to as an "edge" (hence the name), to guide what appears in users' news feeds. These are affinity, weight, and time decay (or timeliness).

AFFINITY

Affinity is determined by the amount of interaction between any two given Facebook users. The more your interact with a fan, the more likely your posts will show up in that fan's newsfeed.

WEIGHT

Weight refers to the type of post. A share, for example, carries more weight than a comment, a comment is weightier than a Like, and a Like 'weighs' more than a click on the post.

TIME DECAY

Time Decay refers to post timeliness. Like any piece of news, the older it becomes, the less relevant and important it is, thus less likely to appear in newsfeeds,

The lower your brand's EdgeRank is in a user's Facebook account, the less engaged your brand will be with that user, and the fewer opportunities you will have to engage. In fact, on average, only about 17 percent of a business page's posts show up in a fan's news feed. With that, let's look at how to boost your edgerank.

MAKE IT PERSONAL

A lot of the content people post on their Facebook page is personal, everything from "My baby took its first steps today" to "I just had the worst piece of pizza ever." It's the kinds of things friends, family, and co-workers share with each other because that's what friends are for -- to share the highs and lows of your life.

Just how personal you get with your Facebook content depends on your business. Little League scores, church socials, community gatherings, are prime examples of great, personal content to share on your Facebook page if yours is the type of business to which such things are suited. What can you do if you are a B2B company, or a large retail brand? Give your content on Facebook a personal touch no matter what you are posting.

Sharing personal content makes your fan base feel connected to your brand, it makes you more human. People respond to that. Why not encourage personal sharing from your fans too? Ask people to share something about themselves in response to one of your posts.
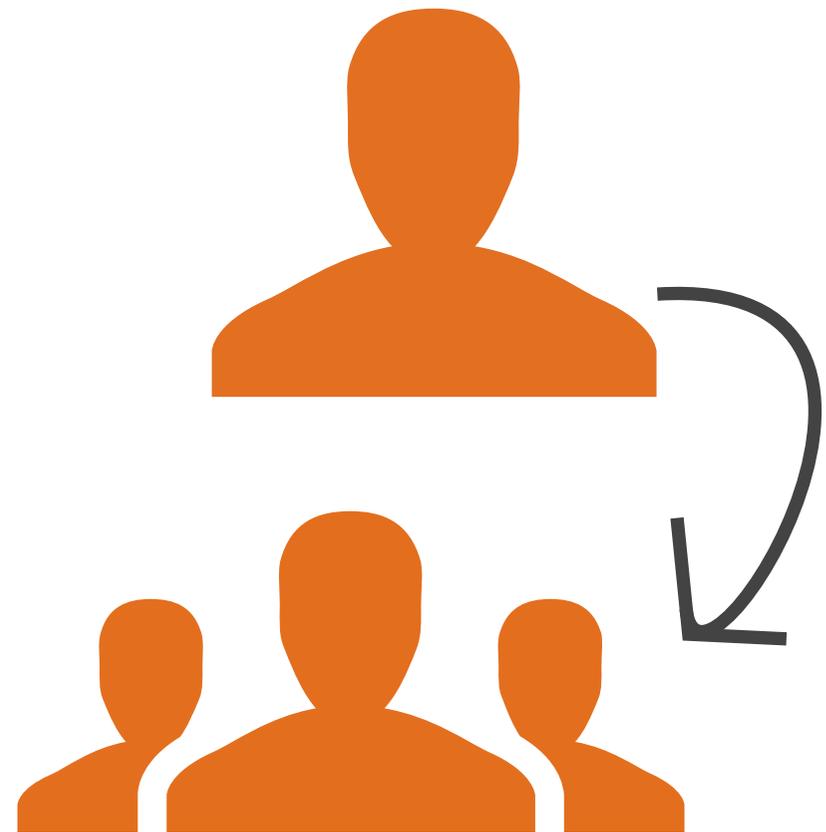
EMPLOY VISUALS

Visual content helps draw in and engage Facebook users. Facebook's research shows that photo albums, pictures, and videos increase engagement by 180 percent, 120 percent, and 100 percent, respectively, more than content without visuals. Meanwhile asking Fans to write captions on your photos increases engagement 5.5 times more than a standard post.

Even something as simple as a smiley face emoticon in your post can increase Likes by 57 percent, comments by 33 percent, and shares by 33 percent over posts without them. Emotions engage people even if they're just a digital doodle.

Use pictures in your posts to attract the reader's eye, then, surround the picture with clever, compelling content to keep them reading. Relate your images to your product or service, and drive them to custom landing pages on your company's website.
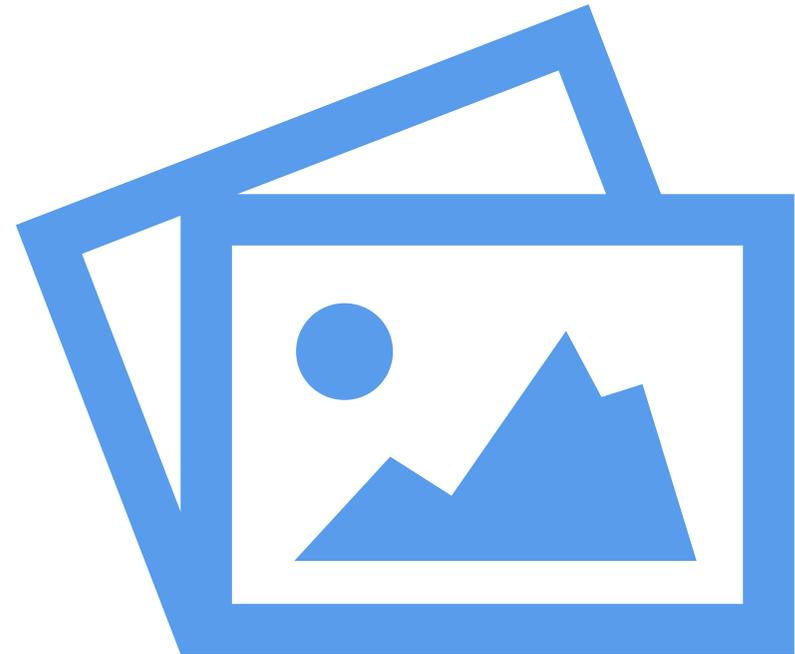
LAUNCH CONTESTS

Running a contest on Facebook is one of the most effective ways to increase engagement. Keep in mind that Facebook has very specific guidelines about what you can and cannot do when running a contest on your page.

A contest must, first and foremost, meet the goals and objectives you have set for the contest itself, and how it will further your brand's cause. If engagement is your goal, how will you measure that? Number of comments? Number of social shares? Number of new Fans? Number of entries?

Set clear objectives for your promotion and design the contest accordingly. Prizes can be real or virtual, one-time or ongoing. For example, your contest might anoint the Fan of the Week, a mere title, or you might give away a prize for the most creative use of your logo in a Fan photo (Don't forget to have your fans vote to choose the winner for even more engagement). Contests must also be done through a Page App.
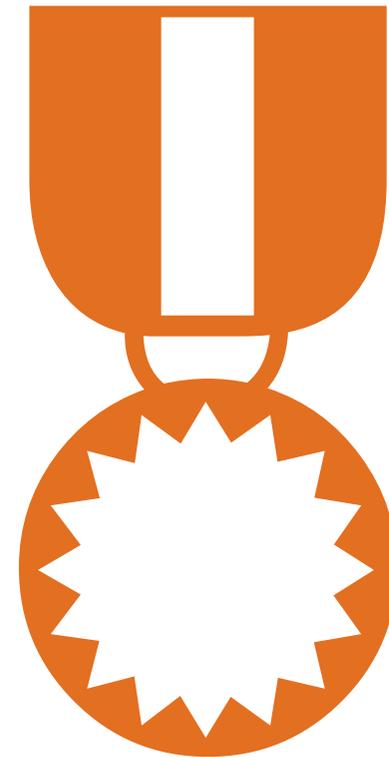
BE FUNNY

Comedy helps a brand connect to their audience. Brands that make people smile after a long day at the office, or better yet, laugh, often have high levels of engagement. Humorous images, comics, and memes are highly shareable content, as Facebook users want to share these images with your friends, thus increasing your reach.

Humor can be simple, like a photo of a cute baby with a funny caption, or a dog chasing his tail. At HubSpot, we work to create funny memes and images that our audience can relate to.
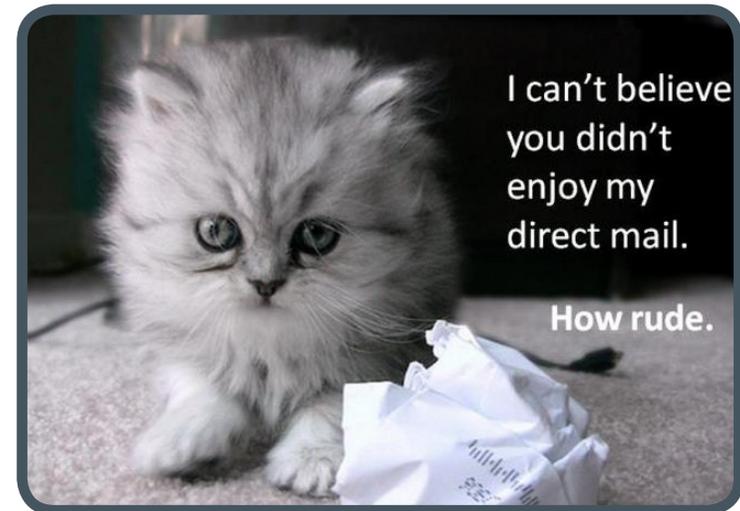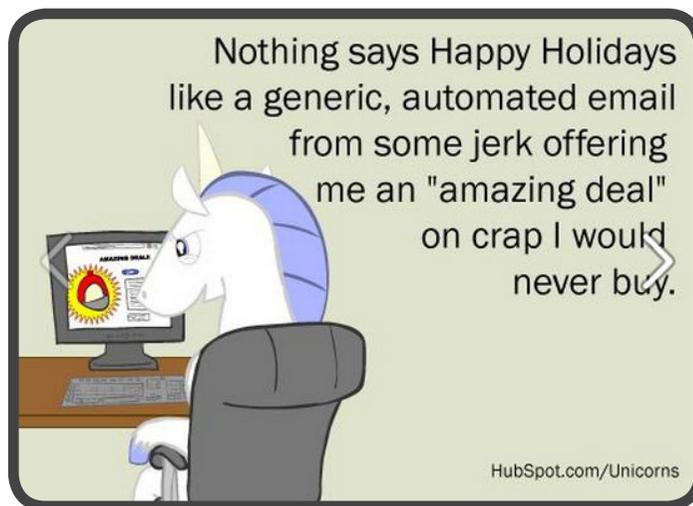
SPOTLIGHT YOUR EMPLOYEES

Putting your employees in the spotlight is an easy way to humanize your company. Snap a pic of your employees on the job, receiving an award, or spending time with each other, both in the office or at work events. Let your Fans know more about your employees -- from their title, to their hobbies or hidden talents. Ask employees about their favorite pastime, favorite movie, last book read, anything that highlights personality and your Fans can relate to.

HubSpot did this earlier in 2012 with our "HubSpotters in the Wild" campaign. We highlighted a different HubSpotter every week and saw a higher number of likes and shares. Turns out people like to see HubSpotters at work! Sharing images from holiday parties and other work events are other ways to show your fans your corporate culture. Fans like to feel a special connection to your brand, and inside views of your company is a great way to make them feel involved!

BE RESPONSIVE

Just as people expect great customer service from you in-store or on the phone, they look to your brand to do the same on Facebook. Believe it or not, 95% of brands do not respond to comments made by Facebook users on Facebook. By responding to comments and questions promptly on Facebook, you demonstrate your own high level of engagement and many of your fans will be pleased. Why wouldn't you take a minute to respond to your fans? It is an easy way to increase engagement and create lasting relationships. If fans bring up an issue with your comapny, try and respond to them quickly, in a polite manner. Address their issues publicly, but if a particular matter requires more personal help, have them email you or call you with their concerns.

POST AT OPTIMAL TIMES

If a post falls in the Facebook forrest and no one is around to see it, does it make an impact? No. Take your type of business and your audience demographic into consideration when planning the timing for your Facebook posts. If your audience is most likely online searching for your product in the evening, will a post at 10am generate a lot of likes, comments and shares? Probably not. Because so much content is posted on Facebook each day, you want your posts to be more relevant to your audience when you post them, not eight hours later. B2B companies may see more engagement during business hours. You may also see higher engagement during lunch time, and close to close time, as people tend to look for entertainment. Retail businesses may see an increase in engagement on weekends when people have down time to do some online shopping. Do some research and learn when your audience is online, both the hours of the day and days of the week.
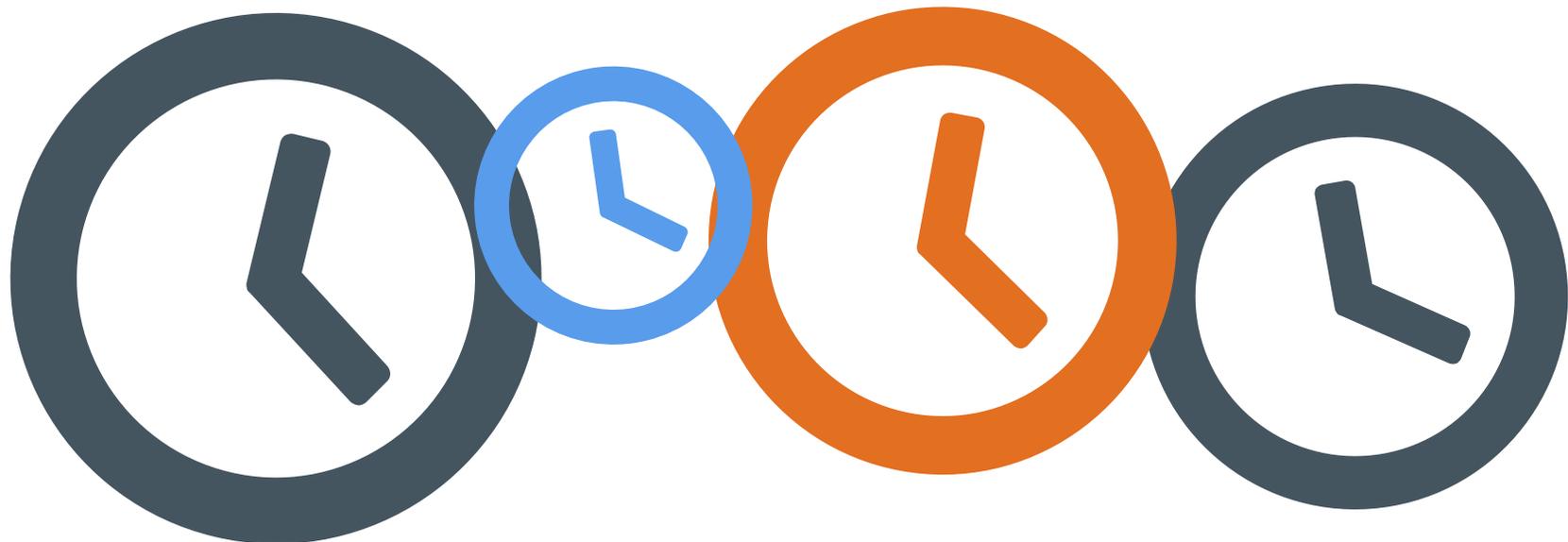
CONSIDER FREQUENCY

Post new and relevant content on Facebook to keep people interested. The average half-life of a Facebook post is about three hours (although it varies to an extent by brand). Because of this, it is a good practice to post more than once a day to get the most engagement out of your posts. When your post is still part of the news feed or is a highlighted story still receiving a steady flow of engagement, it's considered "alive."

Edgerank Checker Pro analyzes the lifespan of posts on an hourly basis so you can tell whether your most recent post is still alive. And, it gives you the average lifespan of your posts so you can plan accordingly.

DISCUSS CURRENT EVENTS

Stay involved in the current conversations. If a holiday is around the corner, odds are your fans are involved and talking about. Post an image of something you are thankful for on Thanksgiving, or a romantic image on Valentines day. Your fans are more likely to share something if it is relevant and entertaining.

This doesn't stop at holidays. If something big is happening on the news, incorporate it into your marketing campaigns. After a tragedy, post your condolences. Not only does this get your fans involved, it gives your brand a human face, making fans feel more connected to your brand.

ASK QUESTIONS

Try asking a question on your Facebook page so that your Fans are inclined to answer questions. Here are some tips for asking questions:

- Questions that ask "WHERE," "WHEN," or "SHOULD" are more successful at engaging Fans than asking "why" -- which seems to generate the lowest amount of Likes or comments.

- Asking for feedback (such as "Tell us how you feel about") on your products and services will prompt Fans to express themselves, something which by now, you know, Facebook users love to do.
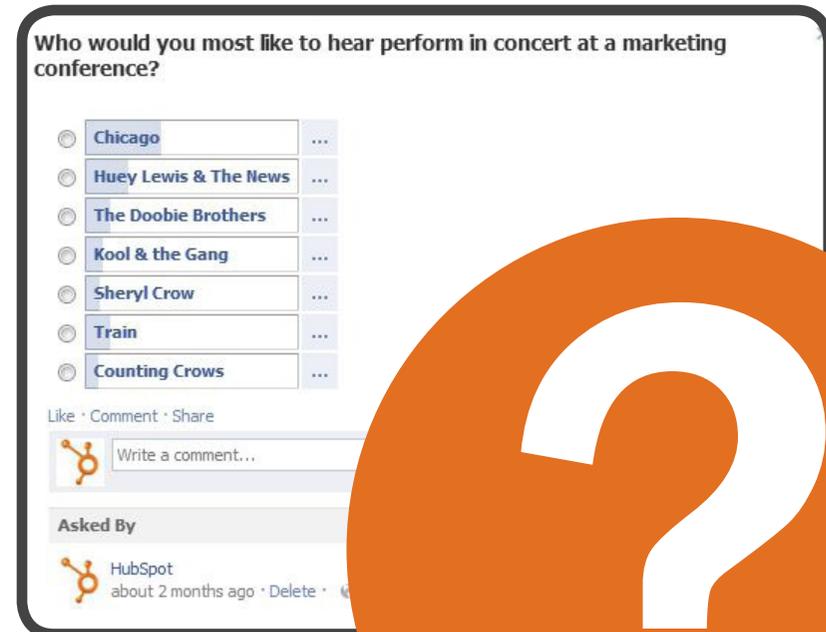
KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

Know as much as you possibly can about your audience. The more you know about your audience, the more effectively you can develop content tailored to their likes. Use everything you've learned about your customers offline and online to gain an understanding of who they are and what they're interested in. Are they male or female, young or old (or both)? Are they price-sensitive or fashion-conscious? Do they come in based on need or instinct?

What problems does your audience need solved and how can your goods and services solve them? Build your personas using your inbound marketing metrics to help create compelling content. The more you can relate to your customers, the more engaged the audience will be. At HubSpot, we know our audience is a high percentage of marketers, so memes like the one to the right is highly relatable.

MIX IT UP

Mix up the type of content you post on your Facebook page. Go from humorous one day to heartfelt the next.

The more variety you have in your Facebook posts, the more entertaining your page will be.

POST IDEAS

~ Photos of happy customers

~ Case studies

~ Photos of employees

~ Humorous jokes and images

~ Poll your audience for fun or research

~ Ask fans to fill in the caption of a photo

~ Post new product tips

~ Run a contest

INVITE SUBSCRIBERS

Facebook logos are so ubiquitous they are easily over-looked -- even if the logo is clearly on your website with the words "follow us!"

People are busy. You didn't ask them to Like your brand and so it didn't occur to them to do it. People may be aware that you're on Facebook but since you haven't asked or provided an incentive for them to engage with you there they simply haven't. Provide an incentive; it doesn't have to be expensive to be valuable.

PIN POSTS

You can increase engagement of specific posts by pinning those posts. Pinning a post places it front-and-center (well, actually, top and left) of your timeline for seven days (or until you unpin it). It's the first post people will see, and comes with a little orange flag on the right side of the post to draw attention to it. Pinning a post is easy. Use this tactic sparingly to gain attention for your best posts, the ones you know your audience engages most with, or the ones you want the most people to interact with.

If you want your Fans to be more engaged with your brand on Facebook, the answer is clear: Be more engaging. You need to be the social media equivalent of the life of the party. Tell funny stories, get personal, be personable, catch their eye with something visually appealing.

Be as engaged with your Fans as you want them to be engaged with you. Ask questions, take an interest in what people have to tell you, share good news, promote a worthy cause and ask your friends to help you in the endeavor.

Getting more engagement on Facebook isn't rocket science. But it is marketing science. Put the social in your social media and use your inbound marketing expertise and analytics to make it all work better.

USE FACEBOOK TO GENERATE LEADS

Use Facebook to generate leads and customers. HubSpot's software allows you to track social media progress and return on investment.

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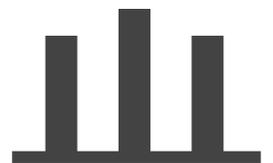
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