



About this article: Facebook uses an algorithm called EdgeRank to choose which status updates to display in your fans' news feeds. As a result, **84 percent of business page fans do not see the page's posts in their Facebook news feeds!** Kevin Ament provides the reader with three easy-to-implement tips that will increase the number of the agency's fans that see its posts. These tips are essential for agencies to employ to build their reach and engagement on Facebook. The article also provides some great tools for agencies to use to monitor the reach of their posts and to keep up with changes in Facebook's algorithm.

Building Engagement and Reach on Facebook

By Kevin Ament, Progressive Insurance

At Facebook's first-ever Marketing Conference in February 2012, the company released a startling number that quickly found its way into social media consultants' Twitter streams and new business pitch decks: *84 percent of business page fans do not see the page's posts in their Facebook news feeds.*

For agencies that are exploring social media's potential (and asking tough questions about ROI), this number is alarming. Why should resource-strapped agents put energy into creating Facebook content when so few of their hard-earned fans are seeing the final product?

It's a fair question, but before you shutter your Facebook page, you should understand what's behind this number, and what you can do about it. With a few simple changes to your posts, you'll be reaching more fans and building more engagement with minimal effort.

Why it happens

Just as Google uses an algorithm to pull the most relevant web content to the top of your search results list, Facebook uses an algorithm called EdgeRank to choose which status updates to display in your fans' news feeds. The more friends they have and business pages they "like," the more posts are competing for limited space. EdgeRank filters out all but the most relevant, and business page posts often don't make the cut.

So which posts does EdgeRank usher through, and how do you get your posts on the shortlist?

How it works

To outsmart the algorithm, it helps to understand it. That's easier than it sounds. Vendors will often use the following formula to send you scrambling for your checkbook:

$$\Sigma = U_e \times W_e \times D_e$$

Don't let the sigma scare you. Put simply, EdgeRank ranks your post based on three criteria:

1. The relationship between your page and the individual fan (Affinity)
2. The value of the individual post (Weight),
3. The timeliness of the individual post (Decay).

1. Affinity

The first criterion is an individual fan's relationship with your page. Fans who regularly engage with your posts by clicking, liking, sharing, or commenting have a stronger "affinity" than fans who have stopped engaging (or who never engaged) with your posts. Unfortunately, this penalizes Facebook fans who want to read your agency posts but don't actively engage with them. I'll share some tips for moving more of these passive readers into active fans later in this article.

2. Weight

The second criterion, weight, creates a unique value for each post based on how much and what type of engagement your fans have with it. As more of your fans click, like, comment and share your post, its weight and reach increase. Higher-value engagement includes sharing and commenting, but even likes and clicks boost post weight.

The type of post can significantly influence fan engagement. Third party website EdgeRank Checker [evaluates posts from more than 1,000 pages monthly](#) and has found that photos drive more engagement than any other post type, followed by video, links and text-only status updates.

3. Decay

The third factor, decay, is the most straightforward. Fans who are on Facebook during or shortly after you post are more likely to see your content. Fans who log in hours later have more (and more timely) content competing for their news feed, so there's a lower chance your posts will break through.

Together, these three factors determine which posts show up in an individual fan's news feed. So how can you use this information to create more impactful posts?

What you can do about it

Here are three simple tactics to help you reach more fans with your Facebook posts.

1. Use more photos

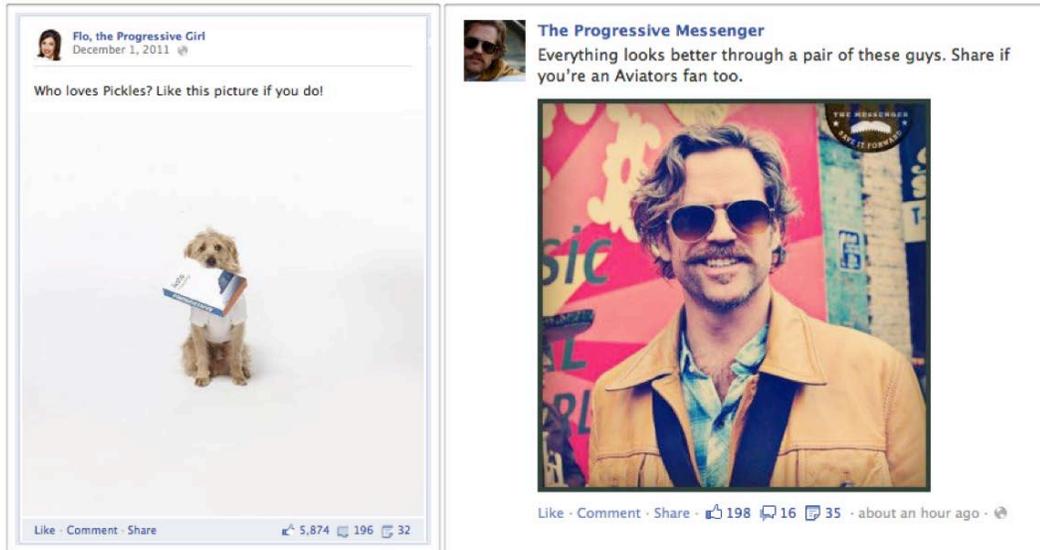
The most common problem I see on active agency Facebook pages is an over-reliance on text-only status updates. Posting more photos is an easy* way to increase engagement and post weight. Photos grab audience attention and, given their size in the news feed, block out competing posts on the screen. Consider these two posts that use the same text. Which would you be more likely to read, "like" and share with your friends?



*One important caveat: pulling pictures from Google Images to use with your status updates is easy, but many of the images are copyrighted. To avoid potential legal exposure, consider creating an account with an inexpensive stock photography website like [Shutterstock](#) (you can purchase a quality pic for as little as 24 cents), or take your own pics and use a free app like Instagram to create a polished and consistent look for your pictures.

2. Ask for likes and shares

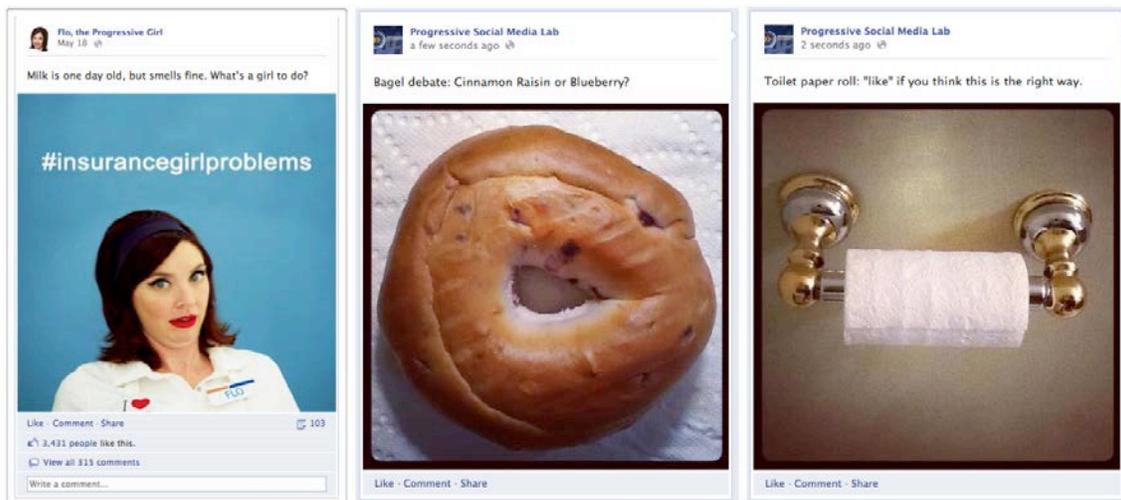
A 2011 study from Momentus Media analyzing nearly 50,000 status updates found that directly asking fans for a "like" increased post engagement by 216 percent! Yet only 1.3 percent of posts include this specific call to action. We've seen this best practice dramatically increase engagement on our consumer Facebook pages.



3. Be provocative

Posting on topics that people disagree on can drive up engagement, and every like, comment and share increases affinity and post weight. Religion and polarizing political topics remain danger areas, but asking for fan opinions on texting legislation, driving age minimums or limits, car seat age and weight guidelines, or product preferences (Harley or Honda: which has the superior engineering?) can generate strong opinions on either side. Even sillier questions that tap into strongly held opinions can have the desired effect.

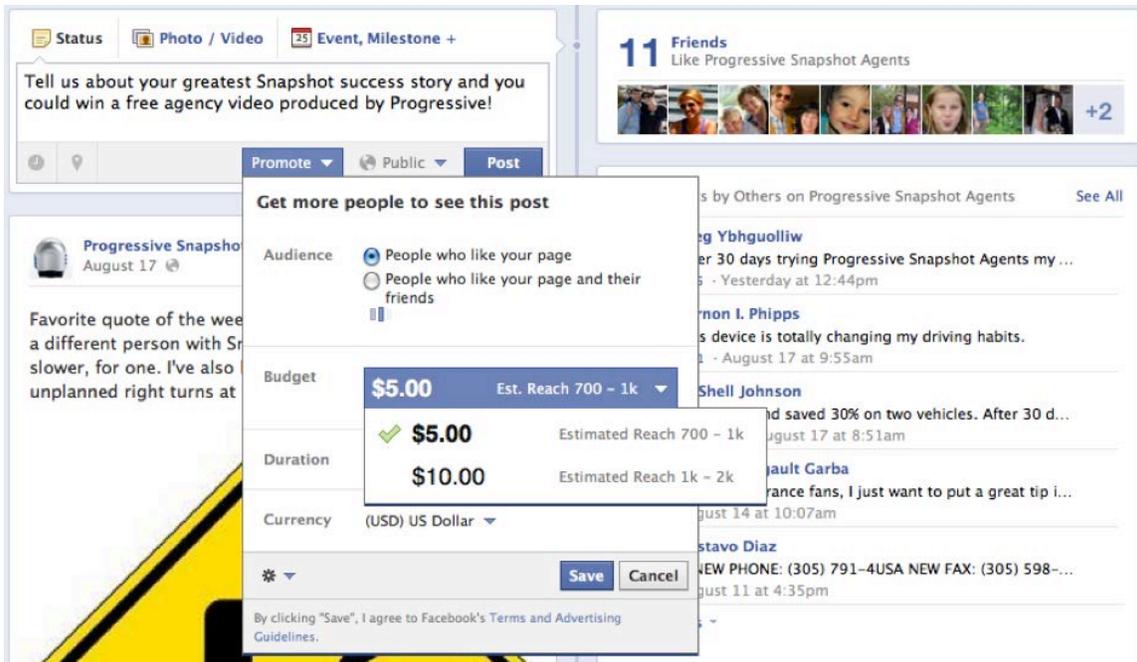
For example:



Use these three tips together to see the greatest gains in engagement and post reach, and be sure to track how fans are responding. Your Facebook page administrators can see real-time reach data at the bottom of every post:

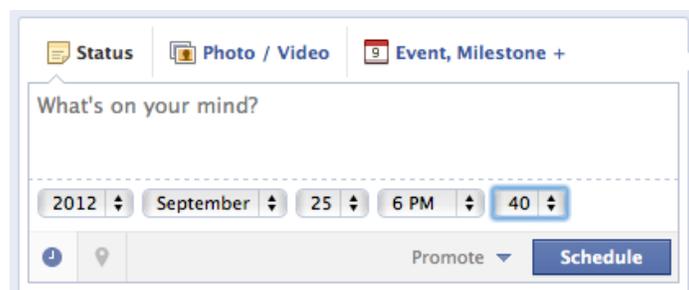


Facebook Insights has helpful dashboards so you can track your progress and refine your strategy. If you're not seeing traction (particularly if you've had an idle page for months, have a new strategy and want to give your page a jump start) you can ensure all of your fans have an opportunity to see your post in their feed by using the "promote" tool. For a small fee, Facebook will add the post to a larger percentage of your fans' news feeds, up to 100 percent.



Keeping up with EdgeRank

Sites like EdgeRank Checker [report regularly](#) on any changes in the algorithm and provide additional tips on how and when to post for greatest engagement (Wednesday and weekends are the current leaders. You can even use the post scheduler feature on the bottom left of the status update window to schedule updates to post when you're out of the office.)



With a little planning and a few best practices, you should see your Facebook engagement and reach rise over time. That's the first step to achieving your goals, whether they're acquisition, retention, public relations or a mix. Once you understand how to engage more of the fans you've already earned, take another step forward by learning to use the additional Facebook tools, like [tagging and question](#), to extend your reach further, to the hundreds and thousands of prospects in your fans' social networks.

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