the HANDIEST, DANDIEST guide to FACEBOOK for ECOMMERCE
The Handiest, Dandiest Guide to Facebook for Ecommerce

By Matt Winn

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The Handiest, Dandiest Guide to Facebook for Ecommerce

If you’ve been thinking about extending your online store to Facebook, it’s time to stop thinking and start doing. To make sure you’re making the most of Facebook for your ecommerce site, use this comprehensive guide.

So you’ve decided to use Facebook to help market your ecommerce site? Congratulations! You’re about to tap into a platform that’s perfect for making customer connections, growing your business, and yes, even selling products. Even if you’re already leveraging Facebook for ecommerce, now is a great opportunity to improve your efforts to better reach your business objectives.

But what’s all the hype about Facebook, anyway? Like it or not, Facebook has established itself as a legitimate tool for businesses, especially ecommerce sites.

Consider the following:

- As of October 2012, Facebook has one billion monthly active users (Facebook)
- The average Facebook user spent 400.2 minutes (more than 6 and a half hours) on the social networking site in June 2012 (comScore)
- In Q3 2012, marketers spent $1.09B on Facebook advertising (TechCrunch)
- 77% of B2C companies said they had acquired a customer through Facebook (Marketing Charts)

In other words, Facebook is popular for consumers and businesses alike, which is why it’s particularly important to stake your claim in the Facebook game. That’s what this guide is all about – helping you make the most of what Facebook has to offer your ecommerce site.

Whether you read the entire guide, or are just looking to dabble in specific sections, feel free to print this out, bookmark it and/or share it with your friends and colleagues.

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Let’s get started, shall we?
What can Facebook do for my online business?

There’s been a lot of talk about social commerce lately, and a lot of it revolves around Facebook. And while many of these conversations have been about making money and selling products directly on Facebook, at this point (at least in my opinion), the real ecommerce value for Facebook is to build connections with your audience.

Let’s take a step back and outline some of the benefits Facebook can offer to your budding ecommerce operations:

- **Customer service:** As more businesses jump on the Facebook bandwagon, more customers expect real-time customer service on this channel. While this may require a shift in how your current customer service operations take place, offering support via Facebook is a great way to show customers you care, while showing potential customers that you’re all ears.

- **Real-time feedback:** Once you start a dialogue with customers, you’ll soon receive lots of feedback about your products, services, support and more. Sometimes this can be difficult to take in, but at the end of the day, you’re learning valuable insights into how customers are interacting with your products, and more importantly, how you can improve your business.

- **Relationship building:** Relationships are at the core of social media, and relationships are what you should be building with your Facebook page. Most likely, those following you on Facebook are the most deeply invested in your brand, which provides you with an opportunity to make an emotional connection with your biggest advocates.

- **Low-cost marketing channel:** While it’s true that there’s no free lunch in marketing, Facebook is definitely a more economical marketing channel than alternatives like TV or print advertising. There may come a time where you begin using Facebook advertising in one way or another, but in its purest form, leveraging Facebook for marketing purposes requires more time than money.

- **Share unique content:** Your brand should be creating content in one form or another, whether it’s your latest blog post, a new video or even new product photos. Naturally, you’ll want to share this content with an interested audience, and Facebook is a great platform to do just that.

- **Cross-promote:** Keep in mind that your ultimate goal is to drive Facebook users back to your website, either now or in the future. Fortunately, this platform allows you to include links back to your site and other social properties, and you can also share various links or contests to help support other marketing initiatives that you have underway.

- **Positive word of mouth:** The big objective for your Facebook page is to create an atmosphere where your fans think highly of you – so much so that they sing your praises to their friends and family. Positive reviews from personal networks are known to be the most valuable form of recommendation, so fostering your community to share your story with their friends is of huge benefit to your online business.

- **Branding:** To form a truly solid brand, you need to have consistent messaging across all touch-points. This means that the story you tell should reinforce itself across each channel, including Facebook. Naturally, Facebook is a very visual platform, so you have a great opportunity to reinforce your brand with your cover photo, status updates, content shares and more.

There are several more benefits that can stem from a solid Facebook presence, but focusing on the ones listed above is a good framework to ensure that you’re on the right track in blending ecommerce and Facebook.
How do I build a Facebook Business Page?

Building a Facebook Business Page is pretty intuitive. The main tasks include choosing a classification, filling in your basic information, selecting an address for your page and uploading a cover photo and profile picture.

Here's a step by step version of how it works:

1. **Set up a personal account:** First, make sure that you have a personal account so you can tie your Business Page to that account. Your personal profile will be completely separate from your Business Page, but Facebook will use your profile to connect you as an admin to your company's Business Page.

2. **Choose the right category:** Next, choose the best category that represents your business. Most likely, your ecommerce site will select the “Brand or Product” or “Company, Organization or Institution” option. *(If you’re primarily a retail operation, go for “Local Business or Place.”)*

3. **Enter your name:** You’ll then be prompted to choose a category and enter your company/brand name. There are a multitude of categories to choose from, so browse through them carefully before making your decision. Finally, you’ll agree to Facebook’s terms and conditions.

4. **Add basic information:** Now that your Business Page exists, it’s time to start entering some information, namely three main things: your profile picture, “About” information and web address. Here’s what it looks like for my fake shop, Matt’s Awesome Bear Hats:

5. **Update your info and cover photo:** All right, now it’s time for the fun part, which is actually adding content to your page. As a heads up, Facebook is going to prompt you to start inviting people to your page, but hold off until you have something worth looking at – what’s the point of asking people to like your page if there’s nothing to see?
The main things you’ll want to focus on at this stage are:

1) updating your info and 2) adding a cover photo.
To enter your information, click the “Edit Page’ button in the top right, and select “Update Info.” It will take you to a page that looks like this, where you’ll fill in as much (well-written) info as you can:

Now it's time to add your cover photo, which is the main visual component of your page. Your cover photo should reflect your brand as well as possible, as this image will serve as the first impression for anyone visiting your page.

The proper size for a Facebook cover photo is 851 x 315 – try to make your image fit those exact dimensions for maximum impact. Also, note that your cover photo isn’t allowed to be a blatant advertisement, so avoid including any type of obvious promotions, coupons or sales pitches:

Now that your Facebook page is looking great, let’s talk about driving traffic to it.

6. Start adding content: As mentioned before, you’ll want to have some content already on your Facebook page before inviting users to like it. Here are some ideas to help you get started:

a. Status updates: Add a couple of text updates to your page, including a “welcome” message for when you begin inviting others to like your page.

b. Milestones: Take a trip down memory lane and add key company achievements to your page, such as when it first opened, any awards won, new product lines, etc.

c. Photos: This is Facebook, after all. You can add photos of some of your products, various culture shots of you and your team and even lifestyle shots that represent your brand well.

The main takeaway is to have a couple of things for users to see on your timeline when they come to your page, like this:
How do I attract more likes to my Facebook page?

Just because you build a Facebook page for your ecommerce site doesn't mean that anyone will actually come. Keep in mind that there are millions of Business Pages out there, so it’s up to you to share your Facebook presence with the world.

Ideally, you’ll want two approaches to attracting more likes, one that gives you a nice bump in the short-term, and another that provides consistent, long-term growth. To help you prepare for both, take a look at these ideas:

**Short-term growth tactics**

- **Use Facebook’s invite feature:** When you’re logged in as an admin, you’ll have an opportunity to invite Facebook friends from your personal profile to like your page. You can also invite any email contacts that are stored within Facebook. Additionally, if you have multiple admins, you can have them log in and invite their friends as well. To invite your friends, take a look at the bottom right-hand side of your admin panel.

- **Email your customer base:** One of the easiest ways to get a pop in Facebook Likes is to send an email to your current customers, asking them to join you on Facebook. This audience is most likely to like your page since they’ve already purchased from you. When sending this email, keep the message simple and to the point, directly linking (preferably a nice-looking graphic) to your Facebook page with a clear call-to-action for users to click the “Like” button.

- **Run a contest:** Everyone likes a good contest, and Facebook is a popular platform to run multiple types of promotions, including sweepstakes, photo contests and much, much more. Facebook contests (especially when you’re offering a good prize) are proven to attract new eyeballs to your page. Before you get started, search for various tools that can help build your contest. Some technologies even allow you to require entrants to like your page before they can enter. Naturally, we could talk about the nuances of Facebook contests for days, but two things to look out for are: 1) pay extra close attention to Facebook’s terms and conditions regarding contests and 2) keep in mind that several people that Like your page from a contest may not have a ton of interest in your business.

- **Leverage other social channels:** If you already have a solid presence on another channel, like Twitter or Pinterest, use those outlets to drive traffic back to your Facebook page. You can easily make announcements about any type of Facebook activities you’re launching, which is a quick and easy way to get more people over to your new page.
Long-term growth strategies

• **Facebook plug-ins:** Plug-ins are a great way to get Facebook likes from web pages outside of Facebook. There are several shapes and sizes to choose from, so do a simple web search for “Facebook plug-ins” and find the one of your choice. From there, you’ll need to add some basic code to whatever website you choose. For example, we have a plug-in both on our website and our blog:

![Facebook plug-in example]

• **Transactional emails:** Just think about the number of emails you send on a routine basis. Between order confirmation emails and shipping updates, you’re hitting customers in their inbox quite a bit. This is a perfect opportunity to attract attention to your Facebook page, simply by adding a call-to-action somewhere in the message (usually seen in the footer) that asks customers to like your page.

![Transactional email example]

• **Offer incentives:** There’s nothing wrong with offering a reward for joining your Facebook community. For example, you can provide an exclusive discount to anyone who likes your page during a certain time frame. To communicate the offer, place a call out on your ecommerce site or on any emails that you have scheduled.

![Offer incentives example]

• **Facebook advertising:** Facebook also offers a multitude of ways to advertise on their platform, many of which can be leveraged to attract more likes to your page. We’ll get into these in more depth later, but some of the most popular forms include promoted posts, sponsored stories and more “traditional” Facebook advertising.

As we continue to grow the size of our Facebook community, what the heck do you say to them? Keep reading to learn how to engage your audience through high-quality content, and gain a better understanding of Facebook’s algorithm, which determines whether your posts are actually seen by your fans or not.
Once I get fans, how do I keep them interested in my page?

Getting Likes to your page is just one piece of the puzzle, and quite frankly, it's not nearly as important as ensuring that fans are engaged with your Facebook content. Unfortunately, many business owners focus solely on increasing the size of their communities, whereas the real challenge (and fun) of Facebook marketing is fostering a vibrant, highly-involved user base.

Think of it this way: the top goal of your business is to increase sales, right? Facebook’s role in helping to reach this objective is to create positive word of mouth from your loyal fans. This positive word of mouth, in turn, leads to higher brand awareness, referrals and sales.

The only problem is this: in order to build this type of loyalty via Facebook, your fans need to see and interact with your content first. Unfortunately, your like count doesn't contribute toward this need. Why? Because Facebook has established an algorithm, called EdgeRank, which dictates exactly what content appears in users’ news feeds.

In other words, just because someone likes your page doesn’t mean that they’re actually seeing your posts.

If this comes as a surprise, you’re not alone. Once you understand EdgeRank, however, you’ll have a much clearer picture of how to boost the visibility of your Facebook content.

**EdgeRank demystified**

Before we get too deep into explaining EdgeRank, keep this idea in mind: approximately 95% of Facebook activities occur within users’ news feeds, not on specific profiles or pages. This means that having your updates appear in your fans’ news feeds is absolutely critical to keeping them interested in your Facebook content.

The content that appears on your fans’ news feeds is determined by a Facebook algorithm, called EdgeRank. While no one is 100% sure how EdgeRank works, we do know that it largely depends on how much and how often individual fans interact with your content. For example, if a fan comments on your latest post, Facebook will recognize that your page is more important to that user than to someone who has never interacted with your content. This means that the higher your EdgeRank for a specific user, the more likely your content will appear in their news feed.

It’s also important to indicate that your EdgeRank differs for each member of your Facebook community. While you may have a very high score with someone who’s highly active on your page, you could have a starkly lower score with a fan who never interacts with your Facebook content. For some context, the entire reason Facebook introduced EdgeRank was to help remove clutter from its users’ news feeds and better bubble relevant content to the top.

So what does all this EdgeRank business mean, anyway? In a nutshell, a large community doesn’t contribute much to your objectives, unless that community is actually seeing your content. In other words, bigger doesn’t always mean better – quality trumps quantity.

**How to boost EdgeRank via engagement**

Boosting your EdgeRank within each member of your community is all about increasing their engagement with your page. This means that you need to provide high-quality posts that offer value to your community, whether it’s through education or entertainment.

But before we discuss actual strategies to boost engagement, it’s also important to know that Facebook awards higher EdgeRank scores depending on the type of engagement. The more involved the user action, the more higher the EdgeRank. Here’s how the comparison works:

- **Comments** (higher engagement)
- **Likes** (lower engagement)
- **Clicks**

### Comments

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- **Comments** (higher engagement)
- **Likes** (lower engagement)
- **Clicks**
Once I get fans, how do I keep them interested in my page?

Think of it this way: leaving a comment takes more effort than just liking a post, and liking a post is more significant than just clicking into your post. The more effort the user puts into interacting with your content, the more relevant Facebook deems your page to that user.

Okay, now that we have that out of the way, let’s talk about EdgeRank-boosting content. Try these ideas out for size – each is proven to help increase engagement:

- **Encourage fans to leave comments.** When it comes to EdgeRank, comments outweigh likes and clicks, which means that you should facilitate more fan comments. One great way to do this is to ask simple questions like, “What’s your favorite thing to do with our product?” or provide fill-in-the-blank content such as, “If I were to win $1 million, the first thing I’d do is ______.”

- **Post more pictures and videos.** Pictures and videos are inclined to appear in your fans’ news feeds due to their interactive nature. For an extra boost, add a call to action that encourages users to click on the photo and add comments of their own. One fun idea is to ask fans to create a caption for the image, enticing them to do so by offering a reward to the winner.

- **Give the people what they want.** The main reasons why customers follow you on social media are to receive discounts and learn exclusive information about your brand. While I don’t recommend blasting fans with discounts every day, it’s a good idea to provide sneak previews and behind the scenes glimpses into what happens inside company walls.

- **Run contests and other interactive campaigns.** One of the best ways to boost engagement in a flash is to launch a contest that encourages fans to upload photos or write essays. From there, you can encourage entrants to share their content in an attempt to gather votes – this is a perfect way to attract new eyeballs to your Facebook page while engaging current fans.

- **Post updates at the right time:** While most Facebook content is posted during standard business hours, experiment with different days and times to see when your content is best received. For example, many business pages see increased reach early Monday mornings and late Friday afternoons, while others see a nice peak outside of business hours.

- **Include specific CTAs on each post:** If increased engagement leads to increased reach, encourage more content interaction by providing specific calls to action within each of your Facebook updates. You can do so by explicitly asking users to like or comment on a post, or leave it more open-ended by asking them a question or encouraging them to fill in the blank.

If you continue to grow your Facebook channel while keeping a focus on maintaining high engagement, you’re well on your way to a healthy presence that contributes to your overall business goals. But as you become more sophisticated with Facebook marketing, you’ll want to start venturing into more advanced techniques, which may include Facebook advertising.
What are my options in terms of Facebook Advertising?

While the majority of Facebook’s functionality is free of charge, there are lots of paid opportunities available to help grow your base, promote your content and even advertise your ecommerce site. These ideas are the foundation of Facebook advertising.

While there are more options available, these are the three most popular advertising avenues:

Traditional Facebook ads

The best-known form of Facebook advertising is loosely termed as “traditional Facebook ads,” namely because they’re the oldest form of advertising on Facebook. Furthermore, they take the form of a more traditional advertising model that you’d see in paid search, where you have an ad appear on the platform and you’re charged for either clicks or impressions. This option is particularly useful if you’re trying to use Facebook ads to drive traffic directly to your ecommerce site.

To get started with this type of advertising, when you’re logged in as an admin to your Facebook page, select “Build Audience” in the top right and click, “Create An Ad.”

On the following page, select the “See Advanced Options” button:

Then, create your ad by selecting its type, entering your text, choosing a landing view and uploading an image. When creating your ad, remember that your headline is limited to 90 characters, the ad text is only 90 characters and your photo should be 100x72. You can see the preview of your ad before publishing:
Next, you'll see a place where you can also sign up for Sponsored Stories, so you'll need to decide whether or not you want to go for that option now, or you can simply click "Remove" and work with that later. At that point, you'll be prompted to "Choose Your Audience," where you can target by location, age/gender, interests and connections. Here’s an example for Matt’s Awesome Bear Hats:

Sample Ad

Matt’s Awesome Bear Hats offers the finest in faux headgear for any grizzly enthusiast.

Then, it’s time to decide on your campaign type. You'll need to name your campaign, set a budget and decide on how your campaign is optimized. I’ve decided to optimize my campaign for clicks, which many advertisers opt to do.

Your last step is to place your order, enter payment information, and track performance.
Sponsored stories

As Facebook notes, “Sponsored stories are messages coming from friends about them engaging with your page, app or event that a business, organization or individual has paid to highlight so there’s a better chance people see them.” In other words, sponsored stories allow you to pay for any engagement from fans on your page to appear to friends in their personal network.

Fortunately, setting this up is easy, and takes place in the same place where you set up your traditional ads. All you have to do is select what stories you want to show, and then proceed to place your order:

![Sponsored Stories](image)

Promoted posts

Beyond advertising your Facebook page or ecommerce site, it’s often a good idea to promote your content, especially when you have something important to say. This is where promoted posts come into play. Promoted posts is an advertising option that allows you to turn any post into an ad that appears at the top of fans’ news feeds. Leveraging promoted posts helps boost the likelihood that your fans will see your updates, as will their friends. Setting these up are also fairly easy, and can be highly effective when leveraging best practices for promoted posts.

You can create promoted posts in the “create ad” section, but it’s often easier to do so directly from your timeline. To get started, first create your post as you normally would. If you want to further target your post to specific locations, interests, etc., you can do so by clicking the compass icon.

![Promoted Posts](image)

Next, upon clicking “Promote Post,” you’ll decide on your audience and budget. Note that the higher your desired reach, the more you’ll need to pay:

![Promote Post](image)

Just like before, you’ll need to enter any payment information (if none is already on file) and your ad will be launched. As with any form of advertising, pay close attention to performance by utilizing the reporting tools available in Facebook’s Ads Manager.

Of course, all of this effort to boost your Facebook presence is great, but how can you gauge success without measuring performance? Let’s move on to discuss some basic Facebook metrics and what you can learn from Facebook Insights.
How do I measure the success of my Facebook efforts?

While it’s true that every blind squirrel eventually finds an acorn, it’s much better to rely on solid metrics to help discover success in Facebook marketing. Facebook itself provides a large quantity of data to sift through, so before you dive in, think back to your main Facebook objectives, then tie data that measures the performance of those objectives. For example, if the main goal of your Facebook page is to distribute content, you’ll want to take a look at engagement levels, such as number of comments, virality, etc.

Facebook also provides a handy metrics tool, called Facebook Insights, that helps you track the performance of your Business Page. Before we take a closer look into that tool, let’s define a few key metrics:

**Likes:** Pretty self-explanatory, but this is the amount of people who have Liked your Business page. Likes is a direct indication of your community size.

**People Talking About This (PTAT):** This metric indicates the number of unique users who have “created a story” about your page in the past seven days. Users create a story when they engage with your content, such as liking your page, posting on your time line, liking/commenting/sharing a post, mentioning your page, etc. PTAT is a direct indication of the level of engagement users have with your page.

**Reach:** Reach is defined as “the number of unique people who have seen any content associated with your page.” The most popular reach metric in Facebook Insights is Weekly Total Reach, but you can also see the reach of each individual post. Your reach indicates how far your content is spreading.

**Virality:** Facebook defines virality as “the percentage of people who have created a story from your Page post out of the total number of unique people who have seen it.” Essentially, virality is another engagement metric that helps you understand which posts are receiving the most engagement, and therefore receiving additional reach.

There are also several metrics outside of Facebook Insights that help gauge how your Facebook presence impacts your ecommerce site. Many of these can be found within Google Analytics, such as number of referral visits from Facebook and even attributable sales. Be sure to incorporate those when gaging overall Facebook performance – at the end of the day, we’re still looking to attract sales.

**Facebook Insights**

Now that we have a basic understanding of some key metrics, let’s take a look into the Facebook Insights tool, which can be accessed directly from your Admin Dashboard. It’s important to note that you must have 30 people like your Page before receiving access to insights about your activity.

Once you click into Facebook Insights, you’ll be presented with your overview dashboard. This shows high level metrics, such as your total likes, PTAT, reach, etc. Even more, you can see how performance with these metrics has been trending:
If you scroll down the overview dashboard, you can see the performance of individual posts from a reach, virality and PTAT perspective. The default view is in descending chronological order, but you can filter them however you like. This section is particularly helpful in identifying what type of content resonates best with your audience. For example, if you see that images have the highest reach and virality, you should start incorporating more photos into your updates. On the other hand, if polls and status update perform well, you can adjust accordingly.

Using the tabs at the top, you can then look deeper into how you’re performing in the area of likes, reach and “talking about this.” Scroll through each tab to see key demographic data, such as age and location, along with how people are interacting with your page, like which tabs are most popular, and which third-party websites are sending the most traffic to your Facebook page.

Keep in mind that the data you see in Facebook Insights is within a specific time range, so to measure long-term performance, it’s best to export your data periodically so it’s easier to compile. You can do so by using the export tool, directly in Insights:

![Export Insights Data](image)

The best way to learn about Insights is to dig around until you become comfortable with the interface and the vernacular they use. But looking at the data isn’t enough. You need to apply the insights you receive to make strategic decisions on your Facebook activity. In other words, don’t just sit and stare at the data – absorb the information and use it to make a difference.

**Conclusion**

Facebook is a powerful tool for ecommerce. Not only does it help expand your presence, but it can make a big impact on how you interact with current and prospective customers. The platform also has a strong influence on your reputation, and serves as a fantastic medium to reinforce your branding.

Before you dive into Facebook marketing, set your objectives and lay out a strategy that helps you achieve those goals. Don’t just get onto Facebook because “everyone else is doing it.” Instead, enter this social arena with your game face on, and make Facebook work for you.

If you liked this handy dandy Facebook guide, please share it with your networks – hope you enjoyed it!

**Happy selling!**
Open a successful online store

Volusion gives you everything you need to build, manage and grow a successful online business. Whether you’re an ecommerce novice or seasoned online seller, you’ll receive the ultimate set of business tools, including your own fully-hosted website, effective marketing tools, user-friendly web design and much more. Over 40,000 customers trust Volusion to power their online business, leveraging a full suite of customer support offerings, including free 24x7 customer support and educational resources to help their online presence flourish.

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Receive the help you deserve. Our team of friendly ecommerce experts is here to answer your questions at every hour.

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