When the sun rose this morning,
Didn’t have no insights on my page,
Yes, when I got up this morning,
Didn’t see no insights on my page,
Despite five thousand friends and fans,
No one took the time to engage!

You’ve heard the tune by now. Facebook has these mysterious things called ‘algorithms’ and they’re wreaking havoc on Facebook page metrics.

They’re mathematical. They’re complicated inventions. They peer into the habits and preferences of Facebook users and they are slashing Facebook page insights we once knew and relied upon into little, unimpressive pieces.

Not too long ago, a local business person shared with me that he wasn’t putting that much money, energy or time in a traditional website. Facebook was meeting practically every need for free. “It’s the greatest thing since sliced bread,” he remarked. Maybe then, but this is now. Those bread and butter days are gone!

If you’ve managed a page long enough to build up a respectable following measured in “likes” you’ve likely seen your reach and your engagement plummet. If you have 1,000 page likes, do not assume those same thousand will see your status update. Chances are they aren’t seeing what you are sending out.
As Bryan Del Monte writes in his social media strategy website *Brand Media Studio*, “Surprise! You didn’t think you had a legitimate right to those people – did you?”

**People who like your page are not subscribers!** Stop worrying about the number of page likes you have. It is irrelevant. The metric that counts is the number of people engaged with your content. A page with 1,000 likes can have a post with single digit metrics. A page with a 125 likes can boast engagement metrics in the tens of thousands. How is that possible?

This screenshot comes from the same page with 857 likes. Note a 19K reach and a 2.3K engagement from ONE post. It doesn’t always happen like this, you can see by what surrounds it, but it can if the content resonates with your audience. Experiment. Learn from what works and what doesn’t. Screenshot taken from the same non-profit page co-managed by author.

In Facebook terms, engagement is when a person does something – interacts on some level – with your post, photo or status update. Reach is the potential for them to engage. There are three ways individuals engage with your content. Any of the three will help earn your page the potential for exponential sharing and new audience exposure. In order of importance, from low to high, they can:

1. Like your content. That is, giving your post that cute little “Thumbs Up!” **Weakest.**
2. Make a comment. Anything. You don’t even have to type “Way to Go!” Acronyms count – **WTG! Not bad.**
3. Share your content, thus exposing your organization on their timeline and to their friends. **The best. Your goal!**

When they do all three, you’ve hit the Facebook engagement trifecta. Facebook’s algorithms recognize engagement. Here’s how the process was explained to me in novice terms.

Facebook measures and tracks your behavior on their site and beyond. When you see a page post come through your News Feed and you just smile, and think to yourself, “Oh that’s nice,” but move on, Facebook will detect that you did not engage – like, comment or share – and therefore it
may decide *for you* that you really aren’t interested in content from that page in your feed. If you want to keep in touch with the page, you can do that yourself, but chances are, Facebook will not continue to clog up your feed with that page’s posts. They will filter that content out of your News Feed.

Many page administrators have watched with dismay, the downward spiral of their stats. Proud to have worked so hard to build that base, they are now, as Del Monte so brilliantly allegorized it, being asked to “pay to play.” But it is all legal. Facebook has pulled the rug out from under page owners. Scratch that. We never owned our page. We were just guests. The rug was in Facebook’s home. It is their platform.

Why is Facebook doing this? Some have argued that the move makes managing the sheer volume of processing 829 million users’ feeds each day a lot easier. Others will offer, with some validity, that Facebook has found a way to monetize. Oh you want ALL of your fans to see your content? Why then you have to pay. Facebook maintains that they want the social media experience to mean something and be relevant to you and those who you connect with via social media. If your content is original and meaningful it should be compelling or engaging on its own merit. They want us to be social and conversational. They also want to track how we interact and behave so they can sell our data profiles to advertisers.

If you are fortunate to have the budget for artists, designers, and full-time social media managers, you have a heads up to produce original and creative content.

For administrators of small businesses or non-profits, no such budget luxuries exist. We are learning through trial and error and by studying those in our industry who appear to be doing it correctly. We also voraciously consume the wisdom and advice of social media strategists or gurus, who as a whole, are very generous in providing the top 5, 7 or 10 things you need to do on Facebook. Search for “Facebook Engagement Tips” online and you’ll get tons of great advice and tips of the trade best practice lists.

**Here’s are some ways to beat the algorithm blues**:  

1. Define your audience, if you can. Specifically target them. If your demographic is broad, then anything goes. What pages do people in your target audience like? Pay attention to how these pages use language.  
3. Vary your content. A photo one day, a video the next, an internal link, an external link, an inspirational quote or perhaps even a funny comic.  
4. Groups of happy smiling people are extremely sharable. Get your volunteers or staff together for a group photo and thank them online for all they do for your organization. Tag them if you can. If they’re on Facebook, they’re going to share the heck out of photo and tag each other, all making your content shareable.  
5. Know the difference between push and pull. Pushing is talking about what you are doing, what event is coming up, what is on sale, what you did, what is happening in your world. Balance that with pulling. Pulling is asking people what they think and feel. Are you being curious about what is going on in their world?  
   1. I.D. this photo! What do you think this is? What do you like better, A or B?
2. Caption this. Fill in blank. My best experience with XYZ was ________.
6. Adopt a couple of widely-used trends. Throwback Thursday is a day when people post their dreadful 1970s high school photo, a picture of their business when it first started, a wedding or dating photo. Ask people to guess the year. Audiences love this.
7. Do NOT ask people to like or share your posts. Facebook will actually penalize you for that. If you have to ask, your content can't be that good.
8. Give credit and tag sources if you are using other people's images, e.g., infographics
9. Use Facebook as your page. In the upper right corner of your taskbar, you can change your identity to your page. Once you do this, you can navigate as your page to other pages, just as you would as an individual. Your page can like other pages, and should. Your page can make comments. Has your local paper reported on a story about you or your industry or interest? Comment on their story. Like and share other page's posts. Your engagement with them will pay off for you.
0. Reply to comments posted on your page. Negative comments should never be ignored and only deleted if there are expletives or if they contain obvious spam. Brands build credibility by responding well to online complaints. Have a plan for how to address a customer with a dissatisfied experience. In the comments, tell them you are sorry for their experience and ask that they message you where you can converse about the particulars in private.
1. Never-ever link your Twitter to your Facebook or the other way around. It is considered lazy social media management. While hashtags are used occasionally in Facebook, they are not very common.
2. Tag businesses (other pages) in your posts when applicable. “We were so pleased to co-sponsor this event with @other page name. The crowd was amazing and everyone had a great time!”
3. Think about themes. One ag-government page recently focused on the artwork of their staff. They had a large work-force, and each day they featured a painting, sculpture or craft someone at work had done. It had nothing to do with their page topic. They were simply celebrating some of their artistic staff. Think of ways you might introduce the people of your organization. Tell their story. In doing so you are sharing that your employees or volunteers mean something. It fosters an emotional connection with your audience.
4. Use high quality photos. Make sure you get photo releases, especially for minors.
5. Don’t over-rely on Facebook. Investigate other social media platforms such as Twitter, and reassess the freshness, effectiveness and Search Engine Optimization of your main website.
6. Lastly, there may indeed be a rationale for paying to play. In a new page I manage with 500 or so likes, I shared an important free workshop of interest to the public. The reach was a disappointing 79. Out of 500, only 79 saw it! Very frustrating! I experimented by paying $5 for a 24-hour period, to boost the post to a target ZIP Code. The reach climbed to 1400+. Good reasons exist to consider post boosting, for the obvious reason that you can’t get that kind of advertising power, that inexpensively, anywhere else. It kills me to give Facebook money, but I chalked up the $5 to research. If surgically applied, boosting might be a good strategy for those on a tight budget.

Recently, in my University of Delaware Social Media Strategies Certificate class, we were asked to assess well-known brands on each of their Facebook and Twitter accounts. It was a great exercise to evaluate what techniques might work for a client’s social media presence:
○ Who is the audience they are trying to attract?
○ Are they using any special campaigns? (Usually indicated with a hashtag that you will see repeated).
○ What is their voice? First person, third person, informal, serious, quirky?
○ How often do they post?
○ How does their content vary?
○ What works? Look for number of likes, comments and shares on different posts. How do they differ?
○ Do they engage in the comment section?
○ How does their approach differ on Twitter?

*With special thanks to the University of Delaware Social Media Marketing Strategy Certificate Program (author is currently enrolled, Fall 2014). Look for our class hashtag on Twitter #SMstrategy14.

thoughts on “Beating those Facebook algorithm blues!”

1. *said:booser2014*

   November 5, 2014 at 5:30 pm

   Reblogged this on cox95.

   ☞ Like
   Liked by you

   [REPLY]

   [Edit Comment]

   o *said:Michele Walfred*

   November 28, 2014 at 1:08 pm

   Thank you!

   ☞ Like
   Like

   [REPLY]

   [Edit Comment]

2. *said:* Roxann Souci (@roxannsouci)

**November 5, 2014 at 7:54 pm**

This is the first time I stumbled across your blog, Michele. What a gem of a find! You are so entertaining to read! You also packed your article with terrific information and creative suggestions. You are the first person who has made it possible for me to put “Facebook” and “Smile” in the same sentence for a long time!

Please keep this blog going after your class is over. I would love to be a regular reader. I am sure my social media buddies will feel the same way. I plan to introduce you to them as soon as I say thank you, again, for writing such an engaging and informative article.

You have a new fan.

⊙ Like

Like

**REPLY**

[Edit Comment]

⊙ *said:* Michele Walfred

**November 5, 2014 at 8:35 pm**

Thank you so much! I appreciate your feedback! I enjoy sharing things I learn so may indeed keep this up afterward! Thanks again!

⊙ Like

Like

**REPLY**

[Edit Comment]

3. *said:* Roxann Souci

**November 6, 2014 at 12:06 am**

This is the first time I stumbled across your blog, Michele. What a gem of a find! You are so entertaining to read! You also packed your article with terrific information and creative suggestions. You are the first person who has made it possible for me to put “Facebook” and “Smile” in the same sentence for a long time!

Please keep this blog going after your class is over. I would love to be a regular reader. I am sure my social media buddies will feel the same way. I plan to introduce you to them as soon as I say thank you, again, for writing such an engaging and informative article.
You have a new fan.

Like
Like

REPLY

[Edit Comment]

4. *said:* Monica Ramos

**November 6, 2014 at 2:58 am**

Great post! I have an ebook on the top 25 fb tips for small business owners and almost all of these are on my list. I found your writing style easy to read. So glad I found your blog. #1, 5, and 10 are my favorite, but the whole list is great. Thanks for sharing.

Like
Like

REPLY

[Edit Comment]

5. Pingback: More on Facebook algorithms | Socially Yours.

Edit

6. Pingback: Spend some dollars and make sense! | Socially Yours.

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7. Pingback: Let’s get engaged! | Socially Yours.

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10. Pingback: I read the news today, oh boy | Socially Yours.

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