

Just like any other social media opportunity for business there are good ways to approach Facebook, great ways to deal with it and some pretty poor strategies. So here's a brief breakdown from my experience marketing businesses on Facebook over the last 10 years or so.

Firstly it's useful to consider the two possible streams of likes from a business point of view.

(1) Like for your business page.

(2) Likes for individual articles or entries on your website.

Both play a part in the promotion of awareness of your business and the services you have to offer, but in very different ways. For this example let's pretend you run a guest house. Most small businesses have a good deal in common as far as the opportunities offered through Facebook are concerned.

(1) The number of likes on your Facebook page might initially appear to be crucial. When first starting in business you might not really want your potential customers to think that you only have 3 people who like what you do. But honesty is the primary principle here. Don't be tempted by the emails you'll get from India offering to sell you likes and don't try to persuade people to like your page with incentives. A business based in Lincoln which opened last Wednesday and has 4537 likes all from Mombasa looks slightly suspect. Was there a recent conference for Indian marketing specialists who all stayed 48 in a bed? Probably not. Similarly ? Like our page and the 750th person (or a random person when we reach that number) will receive £5000 in M&S vouchers, well it just looks tacky really.

Also to be considered is the background Facebook algorithm. If you have less than 100 likes

almost everybody who liked your page will see a good percentage of your page posts. If you have 1000 likes the number of people who see your posts will be reduced to a smaller percentage. Facebook after all in a commercial entity, they actually want you to have to pay for all the people who like your page to see your posts. The way around this is to get as many people as possible to share your posts. Again please don't post "Click like and share" for a free trip to Australia, we all know this is not going to happen. Make your posts interesting, varied and switch between text, pictures with supporting text and text with links. All are equally good, but you need to make your posts interesting so if they are read by somebody who might not actually be interested in what you have to offer today, they might at least be happy to share your post on to their friend who might be interested. If you have a number of employees it wouldn't be considered bad form to ask them to share your posts once in a while, but certainly not every post you make.

(2) Facebook likes from your site are slightly different. Presuming that your website has the ability for visitors to click like at the end of an article, the response and results from the avenue will be quite different. They are unlikely to instantly increase the number of likes your Facebook business page has, but they will greatly increase the coverage you receive through Facebook. Provided that the content of your website is interesting and relevant. This avenue is called Social Share and is a vital source of brand awareness for both large and small businesses. It is still open to abuse. Just because you think your latest weekend special offer is the best thing since a fried breakfast, don't be tempted to have everybody at the village cricket match in the morning share it. The whole point of social media is that it is transparent, your visitors will spot if the whole on Newark-On-Trent suddenly start liking your mid-week two for one offer...

At the end of the day your objective should be to bring new custom to your business and fresh sales from existing customers. Sometimes it's tempting to shout too loud, but in the long run social media is an endurance sport, not a sprint.

So:-

Good ? Be patient and honest

Great ? offer content both on Facebook and your website which has relevance and appeal

Bad ? Buying likes, enticing like and/or shares. You'll simply look untrustworthy.