

Lets talk Facebook

First, I'm not recommending to any of my companies that we leave facebook. I am recommending that we de-emphasize pushing consumers or partners to like us on FB and focus on building up our followings across all existing social media platforms and to evaluate those that we feel can grow a material following. In the past we put FB first, twitter second. FB has been moved to the bottom of a longer list.

At the core of the issues I have with FB is how FB thinks about itself .

This is from [their page on Newsfeed, Engagement and Promoted Posts](#) : “In this way, we can keep news feed an engaging service where people come to get the information that is most interesting to them.” FB believes that their news feed is an engaging information source. They seem to really, really want to make sure that you get the information that is most engaging to you. **I honestly didn't know this.**

This has to be a good thing, right ? What could possibly be wrong with wanting to improve engagement ? What could possibly be wrong with optimizing their news and information feeds ? IMHO, everything. **Defining engagement by clicks, likes, shares, unlikes and reporting works for Google's search engine, I don't believe it works for a social network.**

People go to Google Search with every intention of leaving it. They want to “engage, click and leave”. On the exact opposite side of the spectrum, people go to FB with the expectation that it is very likely they will stay on FB for an extended period of time. In fact we spend more than 26 minutes per day on FB. [As this study said](#), FB is an alternative to boredom. FB is far more like TV than it is Google Search

FB is what it is. **Its a time waster.** That's not to say we don't engage, we do. We click, share and comment because it's mindless and easy. But for some reason **FB doesn't seem to want to accept that it's best purpose in life is as a huge time suck** platform that we use to keep up with friends, interests and stuff. I think that they are over thinking what their network is all about .

Being a time suck that people enjoy is a good thing. There is a comfort in turning on the TV and having it work without any thought required. It's easy. It is the best 5 hour on average per day alternative to boredom.

There is a comfort in going on FB and seeing what pictures pop up from friends or from pages you have liked. FB is not something you have to rush through. All those pictures and posts are not going anywhere. FB is easy. In particular it's a great alternative to boredom when you are stuck somewhere and all you have is your phone. Actually it's a life saver. Head down on FB beats the hell out of that awkward feeling that you may have to at least acknowledge and possibly talk to the person next to you. Put another way, **IMHO, FB really risks screwing up something that is special in our lives as a time waster by thinking they have to make it more engaging and efficient.**

Who really appreciates that some posts rise to the top of their newsfeed because some folks they used to work with and are still friends with shared a baby picture ? Not only do I not like it, I like even less the obligation I feel to like the picture so I don't seem like some grump.

I dont want to know about where you are in Wizard of Oz (currently navigating Edgerank up my top stories feed). Our FB networks have grown so big and unfriending someone is so much more difficult than it should be, that we just don't do it. Hence, our news feed is not so pure . The math may be efficient but the result is not.

So how does this relate to brands and sponsored post ? In a perfect FB world every post enters the friends/like/subscriber's timeline. If they log in and want to spend the time searching their timeline they see it, if not , not. FB users go on FB looking to kill time. Why not let them ?

From a brands perspective not having to try to fall within the parameters of the algorithm (Edgerank) allows us to post fun things, tidbits, information, anything knowing that there is at least a chance those who have a connection with us can see it and knowing that we won't reduce our chances of the algorithm showing our post.

We should know better than an algorithm what those who like us actually like. It may well be that it's a passive relationship. Maybe they just want to see the scores at the end of every quarter in a Mavs game ? Maybe they want to know what show is playing right now on AXS TV ? No one expects them to like, comment or share any of this. It's just an information source. And can i just say that its really weird when Mavs end of quarter scores show up out of order. Thats how smart the algorithm is.

It's not like pages have carte blanche to assault people with posts. People know their own tolerance for what they consider to be spam better than any algorithm does. It is incumbent upon the brand not to abuse the relationship and cause the person to unlike us. **Doesn't FB realize that is far easier for a user to opt-out of a feed by unliking a brand/person/page that has done a poor job of communication than it is to mess with all the account settings or for them to try to tweak their algorithm all the time to try to guess what people want ?**

Again, FB is over complicating a simple issue. A user can govern his/her newsfeed far better by hitting unlike than an algorithm like EdgeRank ever can.

But this over-complication via algorithm and not knowing why people use their site (**feel free to say right here that of course FB knows how people use their site better than I do.**) creates a financial problem for brands. By trying to be an incredibly efficient information delivery source, they confine our ability to organically reach most of our followers to using Sponsored Posts. They also significantly increase our costs because if we create a post that doesn't engage our followers to the level the algorithm expects it to, it can impact our ability to be seen in the future. Talk about pressure. Put up a post , but be sure that Edgerank doesn't think it sucks.

Then of course there is the money. As many have written before me, sponsored posts can get expensive. If you post many times a day, that can get incredibly expensive.

So why would brands who cant afford the algorithmic presentation risk or the financial cost want to continue to drive their user interaction by investing in FB if there are alternatives ?

FB's has a couple of other serious issues that impact their desire to be a source for "information that is most interesting to them". Because FB has become such a store of personal information, we have become very protective of our profiles. I don't know the percentage of individuals posts on FB that are available to the general public, but it can't be very high. We show our posts and see the posts only of our extended network. While that network may get you close to Kevin Bacon, it's not going to let you use FB as a primary information source .

Why? **Because you can't gain the value of all those posts outside of your network. They are closed off to you.** Yes you can search on Bing which actually does a good job of integrating your own social network, but it still doesn't take you out to the rest of the social world and all the insights and information that it has to offer like Twitter , Tumblr and specialized sites do. **Some of the best sources of current information are searches on Twitter, Tumblr and Instagram (the irony), and of course relevant websites.**

If you want to see what every one is saying about the election, you have to go outside of FB. So by default you are not going to use your newsfeed as a primary source of information. It's more like the township newspaper . You get the basic local stuff and updates , but it can't be a comprehensive source.

The same applies to the real time social universe. There could be 120 people talking about a topic that they have not yet liked or for which there has not been a topic yet created and you would have no way to know the conversation was going on or how to reach the people if you did. This is exactly why Twitter has trending topics that are becoming more and more granular by the day.

So back to sponsored posts and algorithms. I'm not against sponsored posts per se. I'm against sponsored posts being the primary, if not the only way to reach most of the people my companies have built a connection with on FB.

Take away EdgeRank so we all have a fair chance to reach those who like us with Sponsored Posts being a way to improve our odds, great. I'm all for it. That is like any other medium.

I also think that FB is making a big mistake by trying to play games with their original mission of connecting the world. FB is a fascinating destination that is an amazing alternative to boredom which excels in its SIMPLICITY. One of the threats in any business is that you outsmart yourself. FB has to be careful of just that.