The Marketer's Ultimate Guide to Mastering Facebook's New Features

Tickers, Timelines, Highlighted Stories and more

Like

Timeline

Highlighted Stories

Ticker

Subscriptions

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It's no longer a question of whether or not Facebook is a viable marketing platform. After all, Facebook attracts more users than any other social media platform – 800 million currently. Moreover, Facebook users are on the site more than 4 times per week on average and nearly 50% of users are on it at least once per day.[1]

It's now a matter of how well you as a marketer take advantage of Facebook to connect and engage with your target audience.

Facebook started unveiling changes in September 2011 and will continue rolling them out through the end of 2011. In this guide, we cover these updates:

- Timeline
- Ticker
- Subscriptions
- Highlighted Stories
- People Talking About This rating
- Fan updates

By reading this guide, you'll understand the impact of the latest Facebook facelift – and how you can use these changes to your advantage. Read on for tips and insights you can apply today for maximum effect.

What We'll Cover:

- Timeline
- Ticker
- Subscriptions
- Top Stories
- People Talking About This rating
- Fan updates

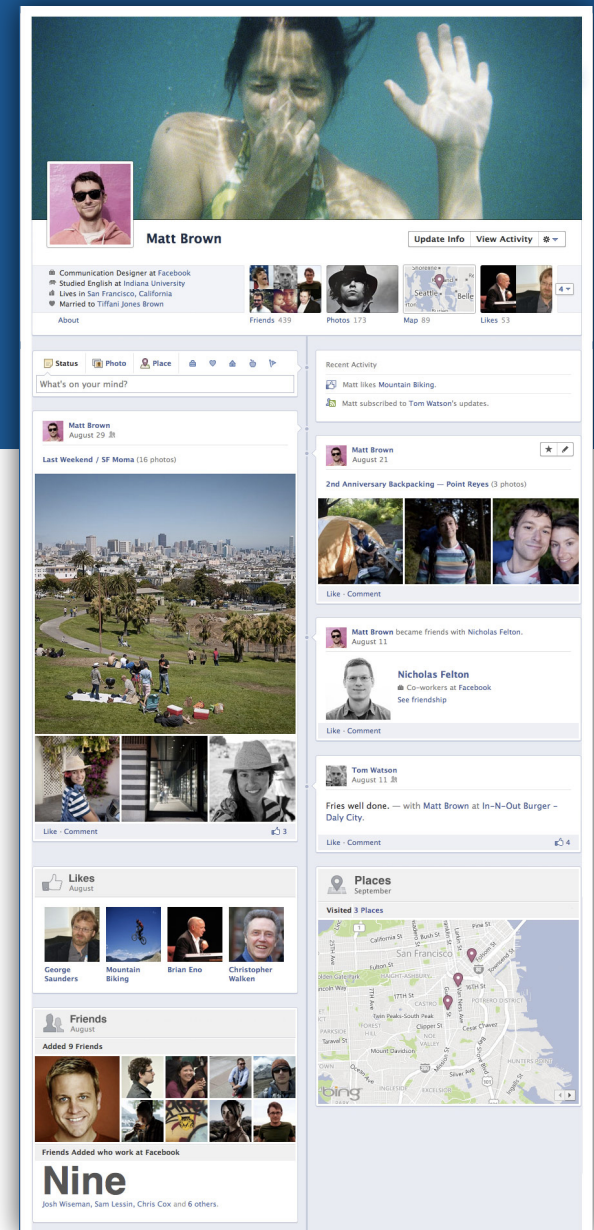# Coming Soon: Your Life Story

The Scoop – What it Is:

The Facebook timeline – a reimagining of the personal profile – is a "scrapbook" of the biggest moments in users' lives, including maps of where they've been, pictures, comments, applications, and more (see graphic). Note that while many suspect Facebook plans to apply the timeline formatting to pages, the feature is currently limited to personal profiles.

When the new timeline is formally launched, Facebook users will be viewing information in a new way. Interactions, comments on Fan pages (both the good and the bad), and "Likes" will all appear prominently in the timeline. In addition, "Likes" will also be featured in a box at the top of the page.
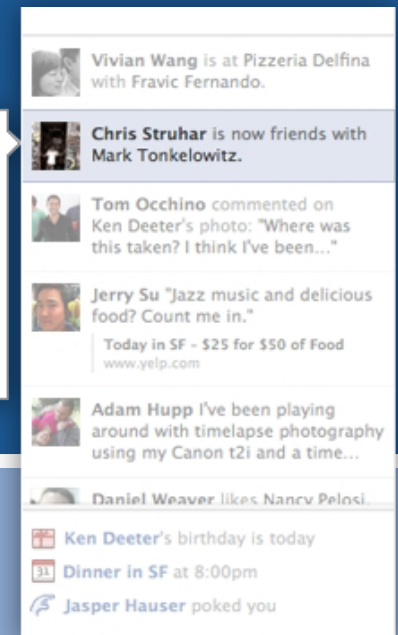
Why it Matters:

When users visit their timelines, they'll more easily remember if they commented on your Fan page or interacted with your brand or content. For example, imagine your Fan page features a photo or video. Anyone who shares these with friends would see that "memory" captured in his or her timeline, including any related comments from friends.

Want to activate the timeline while it's still in beta? Check out these step-by-step instructions.

A Ticker Tape of Activities

Mark Tonkelowitz
- Engineering Manager at Facebook
- Studied Computer Science at Harvard
- Lives in Mountain View, California

+1 Add as Friend

48 mutual friends

Vivian Wang is at Pizzeria Delfina with Fravic Fernando.

Chris Struhar is now friends with Mark Tonkelowitz.

Tom Occhino commented on Ken Deeter's photo: "Where was this taken? I think I've been…"

Jerry Su "Jazz music and delicious food? Count me in."
Today in SF - $25 for $50 of Food
www.yelp.com

Adam Hupp I've been playing around with timelapse photography using my Canon t2i and a time…

Daniel Weaver likes Nancy Pelosi.

Ken Deeter's birthday is today

Dinner in SF at 8:00pm

Jasper Hauser poked you

The Scoop – What it Is:

The Facebook ticker streams a live feed of friends' activities – including interactions with a Fan page or application – in the right-hand column of every user's News Feed page. For example, you may have noticed that you can now see what music your friends are listening to in real time. You owe thanks to the Spotify-Facebook integration for these ticker streams.

Users can even interact with the ticker without leaving the News Feed page simply by clicking an item in the stream. For example, if someone sees friends "Liking" a Fan page or application, the user can also "Like" it directly through the ticker. In fact, users can seamlessly add well-liked applications to their timelines.

Why it Matters:

While applications that tend to bombard people with incessant messages (think Farmville and Family Tree) often get filtered out by advanced users, other applications are more discriminate in how often they trigger messages. As a result, they are less likely to be filtered out by users. Facebook applications are often set to automatically push a message to the ticker so friends see when someone they know has entered a sweepstakes, answered a quiz, or taken a personality test, for example. This offers you a key way to reach a larger network of people.

Whether you build your own application or use one such as SnapApp, consider playing on the word "Like" (see sidebar) so users can indicate a meaningful response to your application. Also, find out how Facebook will push your application to the ticker. And determine what is recommended for the default privacy setting.

Can I Verb This?

The Facebook "Like" has quickly taken hold as a simple way to share one's affinity for comments, applications, and activities. Now marketers have more flexibility when it comes to offering Facebook users options for describing their interactions with brands and applications.

👍 Like

What's In a Name?

Instead of limiting users to saying they "liked" a quiz or application, you could give them the option of saying they "took" your quiz or "entered" your sweepstakes.

3 Subscribe for Personal Interactions
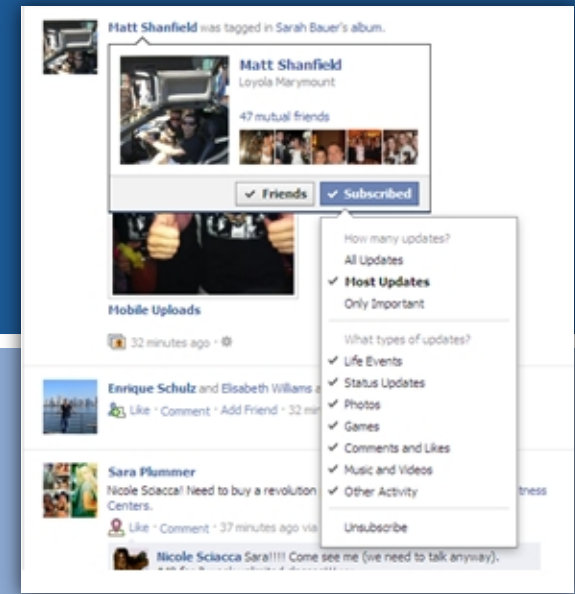

The Scoop – What it Is:
Subscriptions let users see other people's public posts in their News Feed without having to friend them. To use this feature, Facebook users automatically subscribe to follow all of their friends, as well as all other people who have turned on the subscribe feature.

When users post on Facebook, they share their posts with all subscribers by selecting "public." That means everything those people post publicly will appear in the subscriber's News Feed. While the average Facebook user will likely not turn on subscriptions, those who want to follow brands or celebrities will probably opt to do so.

Why it Matters:
Most marketers and high-profile public figures will want to turn on the subscribe button. While it's another channel to update in addition to the Fan page, the subscribe channel can offer an avenue for more personal interactions. To extract maximum value from this channel, think about offering exclusive content.

Note that though you can block people from subscribing, you'll want to carefully monitor your personal Profile page and moderate the comments that appear on your public updates. After all, they'll be seen by a much wider audience!

Get A Snapshot

A Facebook hover feature let's you see a snapshot of information about users who appear in your feed, or about your subscription options (see graphic).

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# Can You Top This Story?

The Scoop – What it Is:

In addition to recent stories (i.e., the stream of stories from all of a user's friends and pages that he or she likes), Facebook now displays what it considers "highlighted stories" at the top of each user's News Feed. Facebook determines what stories it feels a user will find most interesting based on factors including the user's relationship to the person who posted a story, and how many comments and Likes a story receives.

Users can also influence what is – or isn't – considered a highlighted story by clicking the tab in the left corner of a post and marking or unmarking the story. This will prompt Facebook to display more – or fewer – stories of that type at the top of the user's News Feed.

Why it Matters:

While the number of overall impressions per story might decline as a result of this feature, the idea is to prompt more sharing of stories. In fact, analytics provider EdgeRank Checker has found that the News Feed favors compelling posts[2]. As of November 9, 2011 users have the option of listing recent stories or highlighted stories first. This is in response to negative feedback Facebook users have over the suggestions made by Facebook's algorithm. But, the fact remains, Facebook is shifting to empower what it considers "high-quality" interactions.

The goal for you as a marketer is to help users post interesting and engaging posts that get chosen as Highlighted Stories. It could be well worth your effort. Consider that in August 2011, 16% of Cosmopolitan Magazine's web traffic came from Facebook, per ComScore[3].
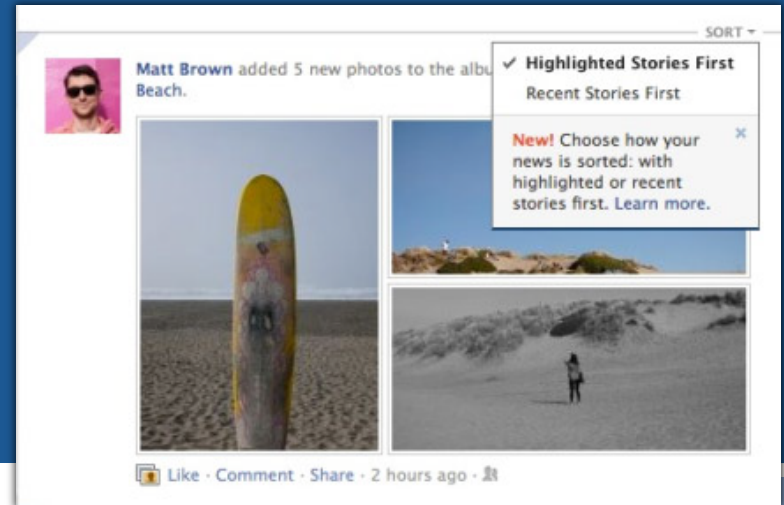
Give Users a Taste

SnapApp supports "In News Feed Answering." For example, your application could allow users to see and answer the first question of a quiz in the News Feed before taking them to the full quiz. Plus, instead of copying and pasting a link to your application, you can post your application to your Fan wall directly from within SnapApp.

SORT ▾
✓ Highlighted Stories First
Recent Stories First

New! Choose how your news is sorted: with highlighted or recent stories first. Learn more.

Matt Brown added 5 new photos to the album Beach.

Like · Comment · Share · 2 hours ago ·

Keep in mind that users don't have to Like your page to interact with and influence its ranking. In other words, if a user's friend posts something from a Fan page, the user can comment on it, Like it, and share it without becoming a fan of the page. That means you want to provide engaging content that people will share and comment on. (You can also turn your Fan page into a Place page, so users can leave recommendations; just remember that you need to approve any comments to your Place page before they'll display.)

Fortunately, as a marketer you no longer need to worry about text limits on posts, as Facebook now allows up to 5,000 characters. While shorter is still sweeter, you are free to write complete thoughts, and even break up your status updates into paragraphs to make your posts more readable. In fact, longer posts will consume more space in your fans' News Feeds. However, users may find it annoying if you take up too much real estate, so use this device sparingly (also note that after a certain length, posts get truncated anyway).

Looking for Inspiration?
Check out the Facebook pages produced by FOLIO: magazine and Coca-Cola (the world's largest beverage company has won awards for its page).

5 Give Users Something to Talk About
"People Talking About This" rating

The Scoop – What it Is:
Hand in hand with the increased emphasis on sharing is the ability to view posts about a brand or Fan page within the Page Insights tool. While the tool does not measure whether conversations are positive or negative in nature, it does measure quantity of Likes, comments, shares, questions answered, polls, check-ins, and any other activity initiated by a user.

Why it Matters:
It should come as no surprise that compelling posts yield a higher People Talking About This rating. So how can you encourage posts to go viral? By giving people something interesting to talk about, such as the ability to take a quiz and share the results, or enter a sweepstakes and encourage their friends to do the same.
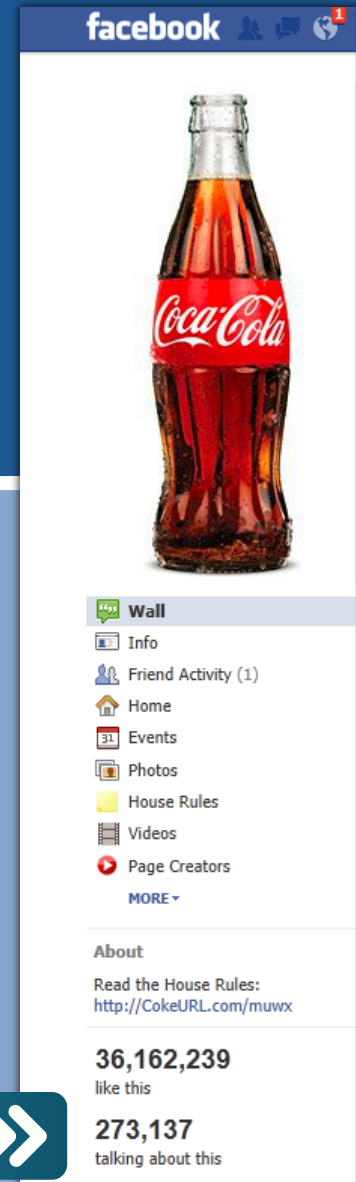
Stay High in the Ratings
While it's always a good idea to moderate comments on your Fan page, be sure to pay special attention since your response could impact your Talking About This rating. If someone responds or asks a question, be sure to answer promptly.

Page Changes to Watch for...

While the latest page layout changes only affect personal profiles at this point, many suspect the timeline feature will come to pages. If the rumors are true, this will make a huge visual impact to Facebook. With the timeline comes more options for branding. For example, the cover image spans the entire width of the timeline, offering prime real estate for branding.

As of now, you can no longer send updates to your fans. Until Facebook comes up with a replacement, you need to give fans a reason to seek you out. Offer engaging and interactive content and applications that get them talking about your company, brand, or client and eager to share their experiences with others on Facebook.
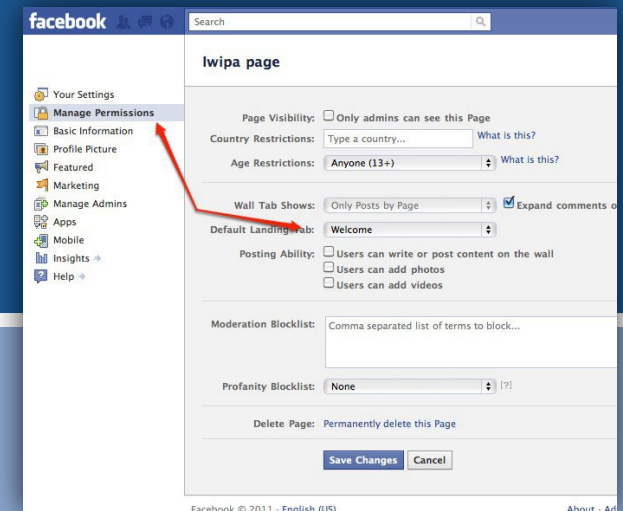
Set Your Default Page

Offer Something Memorable
Set quizzes, surveys, and sweepstakes to your Facebook tab and set the tab as the default landing page as shown here.

Marketers, Grab Some Face(book) Time!

When it comes to the latest Facebook updates, the same best practices still apply: compelling and targeted content is the best way to get your devoted fans to engage and respond, and to get other users commenting and sharing.

Check out this video to see some of these Facebook updates in action – and explore ways that other companies are using SnapApp to build a loyal and engaged following of Facebook fans.

If you'd like to learn more, visit www.SnapApp.com or call us at 855-SNAP-APP today.

Video Tour of F8 Changes at info.snapapp.com/Facebooks_Newest_Features.html

About SnapApp
SnapApp is a comprehensive marketing platform that facilitates high-value audience interactions through the creation and distribution of interactive content aimed at educating, challenging, entertaining and rewarding visitors. With the SnapApp platform, you create engaging quiz apps that can be shared across the web, social and mobile, giving your audience more reasons to visit, engage and spend time on your site.

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