

# PRNews'

# DIGITAL PR GUIDEBOOK

- ▶ social media
- ▶ measurement
- ▶ reputation
- ▶ crisis management
- ▶ SEO
- ▶ video
- ▶ mobile PR
- ▶ media & influencer relations
- ▶ financial communications
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# Foreword

## Getting to the Boiling Point Of Social Media



You and I are probably friends on Facebook. We are linked in and traveling in the same Google circles. I follow you; you follow me; you tweet; I retweet your tweet. When you check in to a restaurant on Foursquare, I am there with you, can practically smell the coffee. If you play Word with Friends, you need to invite me to the game, because I'm there too if I'm not on Angry Birds.

If you're like me, you are overloaded with options on social media. We have more options to connect and engage (as in the scenario above) but we must make tougher decisions about where to spend our time and how to define friends, influencers, buyers, advocates and even "badvocates."

Personal becomes business and business gets personal – it's hard to disconnect from so many options, and even harder to connect in the right ways. With the right people. At the right times. And with the right messaging.

Which is why you might be reading our *PR News Digital PR Guidebook*, where we have collected the best ideas and tactics and tucked them into a pretty hefty book that will, in the end, lighten your load.

There was a time not too long ago when social media appeared to be the Holy Grail – a direct-to-stakeholder way of communicating, influencing and selling stuff. Anything that's too good to be true, you know, is indeed too good to be true. The digital landscape for communicators is vast and promising, but it's not easy to navigate without tripping every now and then or taking the wrong path. The people leading the way are the ones who understand Digital's potential and its limitations. Who understand that social media is not a strategy. It's ingrained in what we do as communicators, but the constitution is forever changing and morphing – and we all need to be OK with that.

You'll find tremendous insights from the contributors in this *PR News Digital PR Guidebook*. From how to master Facebook for your brand to how to tweet during a crisis, this guidebook will show you the way. From optimizing your press releases (yes, press releases are still important) to integrating mobile into your PR plan, this book will serve as your guide. We show you how to measure social media results in meaningful ways, with the added benefit of impressing your boss or clients.

Our *PR News* readers often ask us what their role is with video, and after reading this book you'll see how important it is to your communications plan not only because it's favored in the search algorithm but because investors and other stakeholders actually do watch your videos and make important decisions based on what they are seeing and hearing about your organization.

Not to forget e-mail as the "original social media," we directed some of our contributors to share what works and what's as good as spam when it comes to e-mail. There are *aha* moments in the book and necessary reminders, including using "10 cent words" sparingly in your tweets and not using all 140 characters when tweeting (the shorter the tweet, the more likely it gets shared).

Several of our guidebook contributors note the importance of being on top of all the latest technologies and changes. It's now a part of your job. But it doesn't mean that the people you are reaching are as tech-savvy as you. So don't throw an app down their throats if they aren't even on smartphones. Don't set up a Facebook page if they're more comfortable and active on LinkedIn.

Communicators now have an incredible opportunity to seize social media and capture the attention, emotions and allegiances of thousands if not millions of stakeholders. It's up to you what you're going to do with all these platforms at your disposal. A watched pot doesn't boil – so get out there (after you finish this guidebook) and do something! In this book, you'll learn (or relearn) that water boils at 212 degrees F, not at 210 degrees F or at 211 F – only at 212 F. This means you can capture 99% of the heat you need but if you don't have that one missing magic degree your pot of hot water will never boil. Here's to this PR News Digital Guidebook taking your social media initiatives to the next degree.

All the best in your Digital PR and beyond,

Diane Schwartz  
Senior Vice President and Group Publisher, *PR News*  
[@dianeschwartz](https://twitter.com/dianeschwartz)

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# Three Keys to Unlocking the Power of Facebook

By Susan Bean

Just a few short years ago, simply having a Facebook page could distinguish a brand as a cutting-edge early adopter of social media. Today, having a Facebook page is table stakes and one more check on a long list of communications and marketing “must haves.” E-mail list serve? Check. Web site? Check. Facebook page? Check. What they don’t often realize is that simply checking the box on Facebook by establishing a brand page, creating a conversation calendar or even buying Facebook advertising and running contests and programs barely scratches the surface of Facebook’s potential as a direct-to-consumer communications tool.

Unfortunately, the vast majority of brands use Facebook to communicate in the same way they always have: broadcasting a one-way message. Sure, they’re posting status updates and pushing out offers and announcements. And, yes, their fans are “liking” and commenting. But stunningly few brands actually go to the trouble of establishing the kind of two-way conversation that gives a brand Facebook page its real power. And even fewer brands manage their pages in a way that takes advantage of the way Facebook actually works.

The Facebook algorithm rewards brands that relate to their “likes” the way friends relate to friends on the platform. This is exactly the opposite of the way that push media works. The result is that the vast majority of brand Facebook pages and updates are

**The vast majority of brands use Facebook to communicate in the same way they always have: broadcasting a one-way message.**

reaching only a tiny portion of their fans. The good news is that PR people have the perfect skill set and experience to help reverse this trend by using the following three techniques to turn Facebook into an effective direct-to-consumer channel:

## **1. Treat Facebook Like Earned Media**

The first key to unlocking the power of Facebook is to remember that, at its heart, social media is earned media. No one forces a consumer to go to a Facebook page or open a post, and you cannot pay for the impressions you get on Facebook. You have to earn them by creating interesting and valuable content. Why? Because a Facebook page isn’t advertising that supports programming the way TV ads support TV shows. Instead, it is programming that people can choose to tune into or ignore. The most effective pages are run by people who understand that they are publishers attracting an audience, not advertisers pushing out a message.

PR people naturally excel at this sort of “publishing,” as earned media is our business. We interest media in covering our story by creating a larger story that consumers will

be interested in and the brand can be part of instead of pushing out brand messages in media that can't be avoided. The same applies in social media. Nobody wants to go to a page that is a non-stop advertisement. Instead, you create content that keeps them coming back on their own by making them look forward to seeing your posts in their newsfeeds because you give them interesting, funny or useful information—the exact same principle that keeps viewers coming back to a TV show or buying a magazine. You earn an audience by informing and entertaining is members.

## 2. Engage in Real Conversations

Also remember that social media is all about sharing, interaction and engagement. Engaging consumers in conversations makes a persuasive case for a brand and often results in brand loyalty. This is another skill uniquely suited to PR people who have been having ongoing conversations with reporters before social media even existed and for whom dialogue that naturally includes brand messaging is second nature.

The challenge with reporters is to get them to accurately convey your point of view and include your messaging. With Facebook, we can essentially bypass the media filter and achieve 100% message by speaking directly with consumers every time we post. Think of the brands that have hundreds of thousands or even millions of fans—think of all of those hand raisers who have signed up to have that brand's posts appear in their newsfeeds. By engaging in conversations with those fans, answering their questions, referring them to links that give them more information and even explaining to angry ones why the company took an unpopular position, we have the opportunity to directly persuade our audience and arm them with messages they can carry far beyond the Facebook wall.

## Four Ways to Juice the Facebook Algorithm

1. **Likes:** Ask users to like your page. This is the simplest way to put some viral momentum behind your posts and increase impressions.
2. **Comments:** Create posts that ask a question and encourage users to comment.
3. **User-Initiated Posts:** Encourage users to navigate to the wall and create their own posts. Users who demonstrate interest this way are much more likely to see your page in their newsfeeds.
4. **Photos and Videos:** Videos and pictures that are shared from your page are more likely to appear in the newsfeeds of your fans' friends.

## 3. Understand Facebook's Inner Workings

Like any media platform, the real value of a Facebook page is in the size of its potential audience. Perhaps the biggest misconception regarding social media today is the widely held belief that the number of fans a page has is the size of its audience. Not true. In fact, the posts of most brand Facebook pages are virtually hidden from 80% of their fans. That's right! Regardless of how much advertising you pump into your page or how much you invest in apps, videos and contests, on average, only 20% of fans ever see a brand's posts. And when these fans actually add to a brand's wall, they are only talking to a tiny portion of the people they could be reaching.

The right question is not "How many fans do you have?" but "How many fans do you reach when you post?"

This is where the true value of two-way conversation comes in. If people don't engage with your page by liking, commenting and posting, very few of your "fans" will actually see what you post because engage-

ment is the engine that fuels Facebook impressions and optimizes its algorithm.

Here's how it works: Facebook essentially protects users from content they're not interested in by filtering through the Top News default setting on a user's home page. For example, you'll see your friend Bob's posts more often than your Aunt Mildred's when you show that you're interested in him by commenting on his posts, writing on his wall and "liking" his pictures. The same holds true for brand pages. If brands never really engage their fans by getting them to comment, "like" or share posts, that brand's posts will eventually stop appearing in a fan's Top News feed.

The result is that brands with high levels of engagement, thousands of "likes" and hundreds of comments per post get pushed up in the Top News queue so that nearly all their fans will see those brands' post. Meanwhile, posts from pages with a low level of engagement get hidden. This is the mysterious Facebook algorithm at work, and nothing juices the algorithm like having an engaged community in a spirited conversation with the brand and with each other.

All of this talk about conversation, interaction and engagement may sound like idealistic social media orthodoxy, but it actually makes good business sense. In the world of social media, all of that new age openness and transparency is actually what produces old-fashioned ROI. The irony is that major brands are spending millions of dollars building apps, running contests and creating Facebook e-commerce tabs that may or may not provide an actual value to the brand, while the most fundamental social media activity—having a conversation with consumers—is still what produces the best results.

What is needed is a profound shift in the way brands approach social properties from a paid- to earned-media model that respects and understands what the platform was created to do and how it works. And no group has a greater stake or is more qualified to lead this change than the public relations professional for whom operating in the world of earned media is second nature. **PRN**

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