



## **How to use Facebook to promote your Tourism Business**

Although there is movement in the social media space, Facebook remains the king. And, like any marketing tool, we need to keep up with the platform we're on and make it work as hard as it can.

Whether you are starting a new page or refreshing an existing page, it is good to take a step back at regular intervals, upscale your knowledge and make changes in order for you to get the best from your social media.

Remember that Facebook owns Instagram so much of the thinking behind any changes will also apply to Instagram.

### **Do a spring clean**

The first thing you need to do is spring clean your existing page. Go back into all your settings and double check that you are happy with each one. Facebook settings can change dramatically and you may not be aware of some of the new changes.

### **Have you set up your story?**

Facebook replaced its 'about' section with a story section. This is where you can add information about your business, links to your website and other social media and add images including a header.

### **Understanding what Facebook wants**

Facebook wants users to use the platform as a community. In a revised statement, Facebook stated that it had seen itself as the 'town square where people congregate to chat' and was now moving more towards a 'virtual living room space'! This signifies a move towards smaller groups within the Facebook platform.

So Facebook wants to use the platform as a community space. To do this it will determine what we see and what gets the most reach based on who uses their pages as a community.

This is where the algorithm comes in. In order for the Facebook algorithm to like you and to give you more reach for your posts, you need to follow the rules set down by the algorithm.

### **So what triggers the algorithm to like you?**

Positive triggers are commenting, sharing and reacting. Do these and you will get more reach.

On the flip side, passive or neutral reactions will not give you reach. ie. watching a video and not reacting, viewing a post but not liking or sharing, or hovering and not participating.

### **So how do you get Facebook to *love* you?**

You create a community.

Think about what a community does. It has conversations, it helps each other out, members chat and support each other, it holds community events.

So, you guessed it – now you need to create a community!

### **Three steps to creating an online community**

#### **1. Produce great content and be helpful**

Produce content that your ideal customer wants to read. This might be answers to questions, a review of places to visit, a list of what's on, where is best to eat, or where to go when it rains. There are thousands of ideas for content based on what your customers have already asked you.

Create a good mix of posts. If you are an accommodation provider, remember that visitors can see pictures of the accommodation itself on your website. Therefore, sharing content related to things to do, places to eat and see are going to be more helpful and engaging than repetitive images of the accommodation itself.

#### **2. Be consistent**

The algorithms are looking for what they call 'episodic content'. This means that you post regular content so an audience begins to relate to the timings and content of your posts.

Just like 'EastEnders' or 'Coronation Street' is aired at the same time every week and the News is broadcast at 10pm every evening, try to create content around a schedule that you can stick to.

These might be things to see and do each Wednesday at 8pm. Great places to eat published each Friday or special offers on the first Monday of every month.

Having some structure around how and when you post can make posting easier. It gives you a schedule in advance and a deadline to work to.

#### **3. Consider your social media as a community**

Treat your Facebook page like you're attending a local event.

Imagine if you went to a local coffee morning and a number of people chatted to you and your response was to ignore them! This is exactly the same as not replying to comments on your Facebook page. No comment should go unanswered. The best way to get great reach is to respond to the comment with another question so that you start a conversation. This is how you build community.

Remember that the strategies take time to build. A community doesn't happen overnight so you need to remain engaging and friendly and open.

Using different content types, such as video, can make a massive difference. Suddenly you're opening the door up into your world, giving visitors the chance to see what it would be like to stay with you or to use your services. How enticing!

### **What to look out for**

Facebook has two key areas that are beginning to gain traction:

1. **Facebook stories:** these are hugely popular on Instagram but have not yet taken off on Facebook. This will be worth considering in the future.
2. **Facebook groups:** Facebook is putting a lot of resource into developing groups further. It wants people to gather smaller communities around them. This may be an opportunity to reward existing customers by inviting them to join your Facebook group where exclusive offers are released for returning customers.

Whatever type of tourism business you have, the key is to keep your content and your page fresh and engaged. Keep up with the latest Facebook news and be prepared to look at other online marketing tools to keep your presence in front of the right audience.

Crucially don't put all your eggs in one Facebook basket!

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