



Social Media Algorithms: What You Need to Know to Stay Savvy

You may have noticed when scrolling through your Facebook news feed that you may be missing updates from your friends, family, brands or favorite news outlets. Just like Twitter and Instagram, Facebook uses an algorithm to curate the content that appears in your feed. While the algorithm may be the reason you luckily miss the millionth cat picture from your second cousin, it also can make it harder for your brand to reach its intended audience. Sad but true: the average organic reach on Facebook is about 7 percent, which means even if you're posting twice a day, you might only be reaching one seventh of your audience. Not to fear – we've written this handy guide to ensure that you're able to navigate platform algorithms and reach your intended audiences.

Why? And which platforms?

Facebook has utilized an algorithm since 2009, so it's hard to remember a time without it. Facebook cites that "the goal of the News Feed is to deliver the right content to the right people at the right time so they don't miss the stories that are important to them." The News Feed responds to user signals like past interaction with posts, the number of likes, shares and comments a post receives from all users and from a particular user's friends, the likelihood of a user to have interacted with similar posts in the past and whether or not the post is being reported or hid across the platform.

Twitter's serves users with "the best tweets you may have missed" using an algorithm similar to Facebook's, but it is possible for users to opt out of the function.

And, in March of 2016, Instagram changed to an algorithm-based feed. It now orders users' feeds to show the moments they believe users will care about most.

What does this mean for my brand?

With an abundance of users and proliferation of posts, feeds are becoming overcrowded. The algorithm is the best way to cut down on the noise. In fact, every time a user visits Facebook News Feed, there are on average 1,500 potential stories from friends, people they follow and Pages for them to see. Likewise, Instagram's rapid growth in the past few years means that people on average miss 70 percent of the posts their feeds. What this means for your brand: Space in any news feed is prime real estate, and you're going to have to earn it.

What can your brand do to stay "top of feed"?

Simply put: Engagement matters. When users like, comment and repost/retweet, your brand is rewarded in the algorithm. Therefore, it's essential to understand who your followers are and know what they like. Luckily, most social media channels have built-in analytics that provide such insights.

Influencers and brand ambassadors may play a unique role on Instagram. In fact, it's estimated that influencer recommendations carry 22 times the weight of a recommendation from an average customer. On Twitter, the feed prioritizes content that receives above average engagement, which means brands producing engaging content are rewarded with additional organic reach. In Facebook's algorithm, link posts receive an organic reach nearly three times that of photo posts.

Additionally, keep an eye on your data. Identifying key times and days when posts seem to be most successful will allow you to maximize your reach. While it may seem counterintuitive, posting frequently isn't always the best bet. In fact, attempting to post the same ad or message frequently is more likely to result in users marking your content as spam, which is a major algorithm no-no.

In sum, the only true way to beat algorithms is to promote the posts most important to your brand to guarantee the broadest possible reach.