

TECH BEAT | BY JAMES HARDING

Figuring Out Facebook

Did you know that most people never see the stuff you post on Facebook? It's true. In fact, less than 10 percent of your fans are actually seeing the content that you work so hard to create.

I first discovered this when I posted a photo album from a Halloween concert at my store, Gist Piano Center. With more than 150 student photos, I was certain the "Halloweekend" album would engage a large number of fans. Sadly, less than 40 people interacted with it. The following year, I turned our Facebook photo album into a costume contest. Parents voted by "liking" a student's photo and the student with the most "likes" in each city won a cauldron of candy and a \$50 "Gist Certificate." The results were enormous. More than 4,500 people participated in the contest, and I learned a valuable lesson about Facebook. If you want your posts to have an impact, you will have to first engage your Facebook fans. Create clever content that will entertain and educate them, and they will interact with you.



ENGAGE YOUR FANS

Arguably one of the most successful Facebookers is George Takei. Though he became a household name in the 1970s piloting the *Starship Enterprise*, Takei has built a second career in his later years as a comedic genius and social activist on Facebook. If you are wondering how he has achieved a fan base of more than 7.5 million people, it's because Takei wraps the majority of his posts in his own clever sense of humor. In short, because he makes people laugh, they flock to his page and consume whatever content he puts out — even when the content is focused on more serious social issues.

As the holidays approach, think of ways you can engage your Facebook fans using your own brand of entertainment. Why not post a series of "Christmas karaoke" videos with your teachers or best customers? Create a free Jib Jab video using photos of your staff and post it on your page. Why not hide a candy cane in your store and give your Facebook customers a \$5 gift card if they find it and post a photo of it? Find ways to make your Facebook fan page fun, and you'll develop a large and loyal following.

EDUCATE YOUR CUSTOMERS

Today's retailers have to create a market for their products by demonstrating how they will enhance customers' lives. That's why companies like Best Buy have chosen to fill their Facebook fan pages with how-to tips and videos. These posts establish Best Buy's authority; they build product demand by helping customers who have purchased from them. This approach fosters critical dialog between Best Buy and its customers.

Why not make Facebook a value-added service for your customers? Post a video about changing drumheads or guitar strings. Upload a how-to photo series demonstrating the best way to clean your new piano. Better yet — offer your customers a free how-to video of their choice when they use the Facebook check-in feature in your store.

Whatever your Facebook strategy, the key to success is regular conversation. Remember that Facebook is not like a newspaper ad. Your fans want to interact with you and that interactivity is what will spread your message — and your brand — around the Internet. Create loyal Facebook fans and they will promote your business for you. **MI**

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Increase your Facebook footprint by posting fun, engaging content on your store's page