

THE TECH BEAT | BY JAMES HARDING

Tools Against October

It's late. You lock your doors and close the blinds eager to leave the terrors of "Back to School" behind you. With a weary sigh, you switch off the lights and freeze as your gaze fixes on a strange, otherworldly glow coming from inside your office. You creep toward it, walking as silently as your exhausted feet can manage. Until, finally, your eyes focus on the source.

You've just received a Facebook notification. With a sheepish grin, you grab your cellphone and walk out of the room. But just as your finger reaches the power button, you see something horrifying.

It's midnight on Oct. 1. You feel a cold chill race down your spine as your mind floods with images of unpaid bills, empty stores and the deadly lull between rental season and the holidays.

How will your business survive?

If you've been following The Tech Beat, you've seen me discuss how a little creativity and a sense of humor can help your business limp through the profit-sucking void that most people call "October." Now, thanks to Facebook, small businesses have a new weapon to use against the indifferent horde.

BRING FACEBOOK TO LIFE

It's ALIVE! ... Or, rather, it's Facebook Live. And October is the perfect time for you to try it.

Learn the weapon. Facebook Live is a simple, live-streaming video feature built into the Facebook app on your smartphone. Simply open Facebook on your phone, click to your Facebook business page and click "Publish" (for iOS phones) or "Post" (for Android). Then select "Live Video" or "Go Live" and write a brief description of your soon-to-be-live video that will intrigue your Facebook fans and encourage them to watch. You can point the camera at your face or reverse it

and point it away from you. Do whatever makes sense for your video. Once you're ready, click to start recording.

Facebook Live videos are very different in "vibe" from YouTube videos. They are designed to be more interactive and "on the fly." They typically aren't as structured or "produced" as YouTube videos, and you can use them in a variety of creative ways without expensive equipment, software or staff. It's a good idea to acknowledge

your viewers, as you will see them join your session and even "like" or comment on your video. Encourage them to get involved with your videos and, then, to get into your store.

TIME TO EXPERIMENT

You might consider inviting your fans to join you "live" every night at 6 p.m. during the 13 Days of Halloween where they can vote for one of the three products that you're showcasing and watch in eager silence as you unleash unspeakable savings upon them. Or, maybe, you'd rather stream "not-quite-live" performances from your "Haunted Studios" and giggle with glee as your students subject innocent "Facebookers" to their terrifying talent.

Whatever your goals may be, you can use Facebook Live as a quick and easy tool that will not only bypass Facebook's mystical "post filter," but it will also grab your fans' attention and integrate flesh and blood humans into your hungry business's marketing plan.

With the right lever, a little electricity and the passion of a mad scientist, maybe you can bring your October to life this year — all without sacrificing your advertising budget. **MI**



Revive your October profits quickly and easily with Facebook Live

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