Has Timeline Increased Engagement on Facebook?

Contributed by eMarketer
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Most brands who have been participating in Timeline are seeing early success

While the average Facebook user may still not have made the switch to the social networkâ€™s new Timeline format, as of March 30, 2012, all brand pages were required to do so, and some brands have been seeing increased engagement as a result.

Social media measurement company Simply Measured looked at 15 brand pages that were early adopters of the Timeline format and found that average engagement on brand posts (i.e., comments and â€œlikesâ€•) rose 46% in the three weeks after the switch compared to the three weeks before. Prior to the Timeline introduction, the 15 brand pages saw an average of 1,672 points of engagement per post, rising to 2,441 after switching to Timeline.

However, when Simply Measured looked at individual brands, several companies, including Old Spice, Target, AT&T and Ford, saw less engagement with brand posts, which is in line with March data from Wildfire Interactive. The social media marketing software company looked at 43 brand pages, also in the three weeks before and after the Timeline introduction, and found that brands with more â€œlikesâ€• overall were often negatively affected by Timeline.

According to Wildfire Interactive, for brands with less than 1 million â€œlikes,â€• comments per brand post grew 40% and â€œlil per post rose 60.3%. The â€œPeople Talking About Thisâ€• metric also increased, up 67.4%.

For brands with between 1 million and 10 million fans, comments per brand post dipped 17.43%, while â€œlikesâ€• per post and â€œPeople Talking About Thisâ€• both increased, by 13.56% and 28.58%, respectively. For brands with more than 10 million fans, all metrics declined, with â€œPeople Talking About Thisâ€• down 13.72%, comments down 16.72% and â€œlikesâ€• down 11.57%.

Even more recently, in April, EdgeRank Checker, a Facebook analytics tool, released its own analysis of Facebook pages before and after their switch to Timeline, looking at 3,500 pages that both had and had not converted to Timeline. Of those pages that had converted to Timeline, 41% saw increased engagement and fans, while 38% of those pages that had not converted also saw increased engagement and fans, suggesting no substantive difference.

â€œA vast majority of all engagement takes place within the News Feedâ€¦[and] Timeline has no direct impact on content within the News Feed,â€• the company said in a blog post about the findings. EdgeRank Checker attributed the changes in fans and engagement to the buzz and media coverage surrounding Facebook and, in particular, the switch to Timeline.

It is a bit too early to determine exactly how Timeline will affect brand outreach on Facebook going forward. For now, it seems users are still participating and engaging on Facebook and are curious about the new format when it comes to brand pages. But whether or not Timeline can maintain their curiosity will be an ongoing question.

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