

Do you have the edge on the new Facebook EdgeRank update?

 By [Amy Johnson](#)

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EdgeRank has become a household term for Facebook marketers, primarily because this algorithm determines which posts appear in the prime marketing real estate of users' news feeds. In much the same vein as Google search, Facebook is always looking to optimise and update its algorithm.

However, the latest update, announced on 21 September 2012, has negative implications for organic posts and will ensure that cash-injected promoted posts receive far more exposure in users' news feeds. Is this good news for marketers? Maybe.

Facebook's business model

Although Facebook offers free use of the platform to businesses and marketers, the social networking giant's business model centres on advertising revenue. This new EdgeRank update will naturally support Facebook's business model, by encouraging marketers to pay for promoted posts and offers if they want to achieve maximum reach and exposure for their branded messages. Facebook only recently became a public company, which has caused many to ask questions about its revenue opportunities and potential for growth.

Monetisation is clearly a priority.

Reactions to the EdgeRank update have been mixed, with some embracing the change and others flinging accusations of hypocrisy at Facebook. Essentially, marketers fall into one of the following two camps:

- **In favour:** Facebook's new algorithm has been punted as a method to improve the quality of content found on the platform by reducing the amount of spam. Those in favour of the update are pleased with the prospect that Facebook will charge brands less for promoted posts that receive high engagement levels. Ultimately, those in the pro-EdgeRank-update camp don't feel that the asking fee of US\$5 or more for a promoted post is too much in exchange for guaranteed exposure.
- **Opposing:** Those in opposition to the change see it as a significant step in the wrong direction and have even pointed out a certain level of hypocrisy in the social networking giant's previous "organically social" ethos. The argument against the

new Facebook EdgeRank update pokes holes in Facebook's long-held claims that they value real relationships between brands and their fans. Previously, the primary criteria for a post's reach and virality was the level of organic engagement it received, but now brands may have to pay if they hope to achieve the same results.

Brand Reach already taking a knock

Brands that closely monitor their Facebook Insights dashboard would have already seen their reach take a bit of a dip after the change came into effect. According to the well-known algorithm analyser, EdgeRank Checker, their analysis of pages before and after the EdgeRank announcement showed a 6.5% drop in reach and a whopping 45% drop in viral reach per post per fan.

Can you still maintain an edge on EdgeRank?

Now that you know that the reach of organic posts will decrease, it is essential to pay attention to your content posting strategy to secure optimum engagement. The following tips are worth implementing:

- **Practise self-restraint and be selective:** A sure-fire way to make fans search for the "unlike" button and to lose your edge on EdgeRank is to post incessantly on your Facebook page. As tempting as it may be to reach out to your audience throughout the day, rather be selective in your choices. Aim for no more than two posts per day, and bear in mind that visual and audio content always receives higher engagement levels. If you have important text that you would like to post, try to find a corresponding image or video that conveys your message well.
- **Watch the time:** Arbitrarily posting content at all hours of the day or night is a gamble; you win some, you lose some. However, in the game of Facebook marketing, there's no need to gamble. After testing different timing strategies, analyse your Facebook Insights and pinpoint the days and times that your audience is interacting with your content most. Use this as a framework for deciding when you should make posts.
- **Dig into your pockets:** Since promoted posts essentially allow you to crack the EdgeRank algorithm, so to speak, you should consider allocating a budget for a certain amount of posts per month. Be sure to think strategically about the messages that you would like to receive guaranteed exposure. If your target audience is on Facebook, this may very well be a worthwhile pursuit.

As platforms continue to innovate and evolve, marketers need to frequently tweak and adjust their overall and platform-specific strategies. With a solid foundation and the attitude of a lifelong learner, you can position yourself for success. Staying up to date with changes in the industry is one of the most challenging elements in this field. But, if you stay ahead of the game, you can maintain your edge - not just on Facebook's EdgeRank - but on your competitors too.

To learn more about effective social media marketing techniques, consider the online University of Cape Town Social Media course run by GetSmarter, which starts on 3 December 2012. For more, go to www.getsmarter.co.za, contact Roxy on tel +27 (0) 21 447 7565 or email roxy@getsmarter.co.za.

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