WHY EVERY BUSINESS

NEEDS TO
STOP OBSESSING
ABOUT

Facebook Likes

How to shift your focus to what really matters

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

If your Facebook Page's Like count has you feeling frustrated, we want to be the first to tell you not to worry. It's ironic, we know. Because for the last several years we have written extensively about using apps to increase Like count and promoted Like-gating – the practice of forcing users to Like a Page before giving them access to contests and other content – as a must-do tactic for Facebook Pages.

But Facebook has made many changes to its algorithm as of late, and those changes have caused us to reconsider. The bottom line: Likes don't matter as much as we all thought.

This statement might be a bit controversial, but we stand by it. In this eBook, we'll explain why and teach you how you can collect and use other Facebook data that is actually valuable.

CHAPTER 1

Forcing Users to Like Your Page – aka Like-Gating – Can Hurt Your Business

Like-gating your promotion app can be helpful if you want to drive new Page Likes, but there are a couple of things to consider.

The first issue is that users may decide to Unlike your brand's Page after the promotion is over. This is actually a fairly common phenomenon: When consumers were asked why they "unlike" brands on Facebook, 26 percent said they only Liked a company to take advantage of a one-time offer, according to an infographic from Get Satisfaction and Column Five.

The second thing to keep in mind is that the number of "genuine" Likes your Page gets — the number of people who Like your brand for more than just a contest — can be distorted by a Like-gated promotion.

The best approach if you want to get lots of promotion entries and shares is to "give-to-get." The give-to-get approach is simple: You **give** everyone (fans and non-fans) the chance to enter your promotion and access content — i.e., there is no Like-gating — and your business **gets** valuable information from your fans and people who are not yet your fans. This information could be email addresses or insights from a poll your users have to take in order to enter your promotion.

Gotta remember to unlike this when the promo is over.

You might be wondering, what's the big deal with Liking a Page? From our research, we've learned there are several reasons a person might not want to Like a brand's Page on Facebook. Here are a few of the most common:

- They don't want their friends to know they've Liked a certain business on Facebook. This might be because they're not familiar with the business and don't yet know whether they actually like it enough to go public.

- They don't know or aren't passionate enough about the brand to follow it online.

- The brand's online content hasn't given them reason enough to want to keep up with it.

Keeping these three things in mind, let us explain how, in the real world, Like-gating does not work for businesses.

Imagine you own a restaurant. Outside of your restaurant, there are two equal lines of people waiting to get in:

- **Line #1:** This line consists of people, mostly locals and regulars, who have been to your restaurant before and like your business.

- **Line #2:** This line consists of people, mostly from out of town, who have never been to your restaurant before. These folks discovered your business by reading a great review of your business online, via a friend's recommendation, or they saw an ad for your restaurant.

Now imagine you walk outside and tell the people in line #2 that they are not allowed into your restaurant until they go online and profess they like your eatery – an establishment they have yet to try, mind you. Sounds crazy, right? Because it is!

In the real world, no business owner in their right mind would turn away potential business or the opportunity to expose new people to their brand. Nor would they want to deliberately annoy potential customers. Online, however, is a different matter. Brands do this all the time when they implement Like-gating tactics on their Facebook Pages.

Reserving all your brand's best stuff for people who already know how awesome your business is, is wasteful and unproductive. **The alternative is much smarter:** Brands should be strategically sharing their awesome branded content with as many new people as possible. When a new person genuinely likes what your brand offers, they'll feel compelled to "Like" you – the action won't need forcing.

To recap the three big lessons from this chapter:

1. Don't ask potential customers of your "restaurant" to give you their online stamp of approval, e.g., to Like your Facebook Page, before they've even had the chance to try your "food."

2. Like-gating to drive new Page Likes is a backward concept. If one of your Facebook goals is to grow your business, keep your Page like an open invitation. This will allow new users to learn as much as they can about your brand, better enabling them to decide if they genuinely "Like" your brand or not.

3. You can encourage people to Like your brand's Page, but it's not a good practice to force it.

CHAPTER 2

Combating the Challenges of Like-Gating

In Chapter 1 we offered reasons that Like-gating is no longer a best practice. The main reasons to avoid Like-gating include the fact that users may decide to Unlike your Page after a promo is over and that the number of genuine Likes may be inaccurate. (Another issue is that Like-gating makes the mobile experience difficult; we'll address this in Chapter 3.)

On February 4th, 2014, Facebook turned TEN years old! The social network has changed a lot since 2004. And if you're a Facebook marketer, your tactics and best practices for using the platform have (or should have) changed a lot, too.

Like-gating is a practice that has been around since the dawn of Facebook. Way back in the day, Facebook used to allow brands to Like-gate nearly their entire Page. Do you remember this (see image to the right)?

Like-gating is a relatively old practice that is no longer a best practice. These days there's a better option that combats all of the challenges associated with Like-gating: **action-gating**.

Action-gating is when you ask users to **do** something (like vote or share a piece of information about themselves) in order to **get** something (like an extra entry into a contest or access to a promotion) from your brand. It's the give-to-get concept that we're so fond of.

We've seen many major brands action-gate effectively, including Marc Jacobs, Candy Crush Saga, Wantlet, SheInside and Tough Timber. Here are examples:

1. **Marc Jacobs (luxury fashion brand):** During New York Fashion Week 2014, Marc Jacobs opened a pop-up store in SoHo called "The Daisy Marc Jacobs Tweet Shop." No money was exchanged in this store: Cashiers accepted "social currency" only. What is social currency? Basically, it's virtual cash. In this case, customers exchanged a post on Facebook, Instagram or Twitter – using the hashtag #MJDaisyChain – for a product sample.

   Takeaway: Action-gating can be used in many creative ways to earn your business far-reaching online impressions.

2. **Candy Crush Saga (online game):** In 2013, King.com employed a unique and successful advertising model for its uber popular game, Candy Crush Saga. The tactic integrated action-gating. Instead of disrupting the gaming experience with distracting banner ads, King served their users incentivized videos where a user got something in exchange (like extra lives and game boosts) for watching a video advertisement.

   The click-through rate on their ads was more than five percent and about 85 percent of the people who started watching the videos completed them – that was higher than the industry average, according to VentureBeat.

   Takeaway: *Action-gating can be used effectively to persuade users to opt-in or take part in an opportunity presented by a brand.*

3. **Wantlet (social commerce company):** In 2013, Wantlet attended the annual South by Southwest Interactive conference in Austin, Texas. They hosted a contest and gave attendees a chance to win an iPad2. The only catch: Attendees had to share their email address with Wantlet in order to be eligible to win. The winner's email address was chosen by a random draw.

   Takeaway: *Action-gating is most effective when you use it to collect valuable information like email addresses and/or other various forms of contact information.*

4. **SheInside (online retailer):** SheInside gives their website visitors the opportunity to receive 15-20 percent off their purchase if they sign up for their newsletter or Like their Facebook Page. Their offerings are displayed as a stagnant banner on the header of their website (as seen in the screenshot below). This a great example of incentive-based action-gating!

Takeaway: *Incentive-based action-gating works really well for online retailers primarily because shoppers who have intent to purchase are extremely motivated by discounts and deals.*
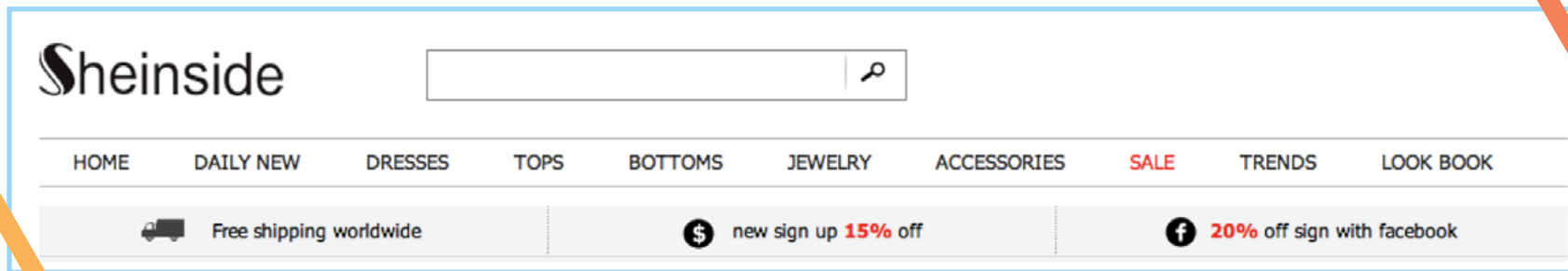
5. **Tough Timber (equine tack and supplies shop):** Tough Timber created an app for their Facebook giveaway. To enter Tough Timber's contest, app visitors must first vote on their favorite print blanket for a chance to win one before they hit store shelves. Once a person votes, a promotion form appears which allows the user to then submit their entry.

In essence, Tough Timber's giveaway app is performing the same function as a (low-cost) focus group. Their focus group is of Facebook users who, all in their own way, are connected to or are familiar with the Tough Timber brand.

When an app is not Like-gated, an app's "focus group" (or the number of people they are engaging with through their app) tends to be much bigger than if they restricted the app to just people who have Liked their Page.

Takeaway: *Not Like-gating an app allows a larger number of people, outside of your business's fanbase to engage with your brand.*

6 Reasons Action-Gating is Better Than Like-Gating

If you're still not convinced you should replace Like-gating with action-gating, here are six points worth considering:
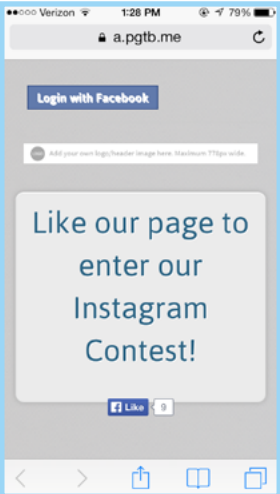
1. **Action-gating helps ensure a return on your brand's efforts.** Whether you're hosting a promotion, giveaway or event, action-gating allows you to gather and track the precise return on your brand's Facebook efforts.

2. **Action-gating helps your business break through the noise of Facebook.** If you use action-gating to build a newsletter or email list, you have a direct channel to your users. What's more, it's a channel that's away from Facebook which is an extremely competitive "news" marketplace.

3. **Action-gating does not distort your Page's number of genuine Likes.** Some users may decide to Unlike your brand's Page after the promotion is over. Again, 26 percent of consumers chose to revoke a Like on Facebook because they "only 'liked' the company to take advantage of a one-time offer," according to the companies Get Satisfaction and Column Five.

4. **Action-gating makes promotions and offers available to everyone.** In television advertising, a company wants as many people as possible to see their ads – the more exposure the better! This is why action-gating is favorable to Like-gating. It gets your company's message viewed by the most people possible.

5. **Your brand is able to use Facebook ads to promote your Facebook giveaway app to a new targeted network outside of your fanbase.** When a brand uses Facebook ads to promote a Like-gated app to new users, some users get frustrated and abandon the giveaway. They don't like being forced to Like a Page in order to enter a promotion or gain access to exclusive content.

6. **Action-gating doesn't hurt the mobile experience (Like-gating does).** Learn more in Chapter 3.

CHAPTER 3

The Danger of Like-Gating on Mobile

One of the most frustrating aspects of Like-gating is that Facebook requires prompts to be served to users who are trying to access a Like-gated app. Facebook claims their prompts are for security purposes, but the greatest downfall of this precautionary measure is that it negatively affects a user's mobile experience.
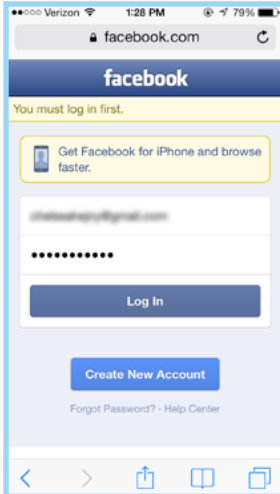
When mobile users click on the link (or Smart URL) of a Like-gated app, there are up to seven steps they have to go through before receiving access to the app's content. Here's a demonstration of what this multi-step process looks like:

STEPS 1-2
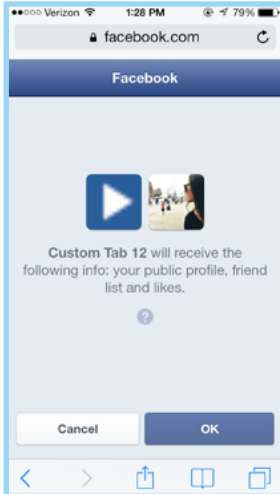
Press the "Login with Facebook" button and log in under your Facebook user account.

STEP 3

Press "OK" on Facebook's first allow prompt. (Businesses do not have any control over the wording of this Facebook allow prompt.)
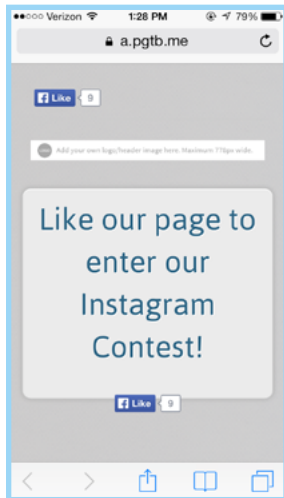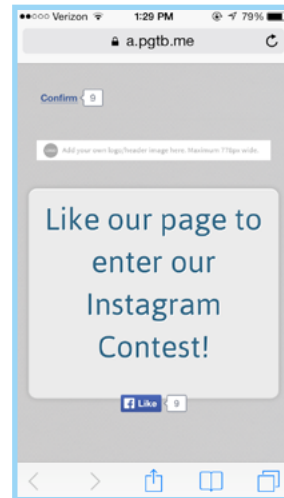
STEP 4

Like the Page by clicking the blue "Like" button. (The "Like" button shown in this example was automatically inserted with ShortStack's Like Button Widget.)

STEP 5

Press "Confirm" to confirm that you want to Like the Page – this is a security process required by Facebook.

STEP 6

Press "Like" to confirm for the second time that you want to Like the Page – this is another security process required by Facebook.
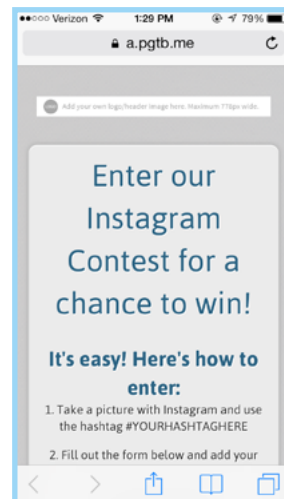
STEP 7

Finally, the mobile user is given access to the app and may use the app as it is intended.

Because Like-gates on mobile apps are complicated and can be confusing to the end user, a better option is to disable mobile Like-gating or to not Like-gate your app at all.

To disable mobile Like-gating on your ShortStack-built app, visit your app in the Designer, click on "Settings," and check the "Disable Mobile Fan Gating" box.

If you have more questions about ShortStack's mobile capabilities, check out this comprehensive help document. You'll learn about Smart URLs – ShortStack's workaround to Facebook's mobile app limitations – and how to customize your users' mobile app experience.

As a third-party app provider, we wish we had the power to streamline the mobile app experience; unfortunately, Facebook does not allow this. The best option for brands that want to gain value from their apps and also want their users to have the optimum mobile experience is to simply eliminate Like-gates and implement a form of action-gating.

CHAPTER 4

Creating Awesome Action-Gated Apps to Collect Valuable Data

We've talked a lot about why we love action-gating and now it's time we explain how your business can implement action-gating.

Creating an action-gated app is simple with ShortStack. We have a feature called the Action Widget which allows users to create "if this happens, then do that" scenarios on apps. It does this by providing a list of all the events that the widgets on your app can initiate and allows you to set up actions users can take when these occur.

The best way to learn about our Action Widget is to watch this short video tutorial about it.

A control widget executes an action on a target widget. For example, when you set a widget to Starts Hidden, it becomes a target widget and stays hidden until a user performs the required action in the control widget. An example of this action would be clicking a link in the Links Widget or submitting a form in the Promotion Widget or Custom Form Widget.
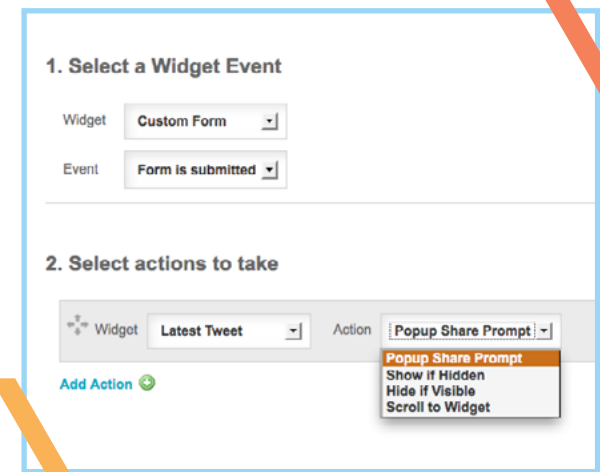
Widget Events are triggered when something happens in a widget. Not all widgets have events, and not all interactions have events associated with them, but we've tried to cover the basics. Here's a short list of widgets and the events they create:

WIDGET NAME	EVENTS
Custom Form Widget	Form is submitted; Form has an error
Friend Invite Widget	Friend is invited
Gift Widget	Gift is sent
Like Widget	Is Liked *
MailChimp Newsletter Widget	Form is submitted; Form has an error
Promotion Widget	Form is submitted; Form has an error
RSS Widget	Feed is updated **
Voting Widget	Vote is received; Entries are loaded **
Video Widget	Video is played; Videos are loaded **; Video is changed

* Only works when the Like Widget is configured not to reload the page when clicked – for details, see the Like Widget's Advanced Options section.

** Feed items are loaded when pagination is used on certain widgets as well as when the data is refreshed.

Examples of Actions

Actions are the different ways you can configure widgets on your app to respond to the chosen event. The most common widget actions are shown in the table below. Note that not every widget has every action available to it.

ACTION	DESCRIPTION
Show if Hidden	If the widget is set as "Starts Hidden" visibility, or has been hidden by some other method, attempt to show the widget. This cannot be used to show "Fan only" widgets to non-fans.
Hide if Visible	If the widget is visible, attempt to hide it.
Popup Share Prompt	If the widget has sharing configured, attempt to show the share prompt in a popup.
Popup Widget	If the widget is configured to display in a popup, attempt to display the popup. This is sometimes best used along with the "Scroll to Widget" action.
Scroll to Widget	Attempts to scroll the browser to the specified widget. Note that the widget must be visible before you can scroll to it.

This is not a full list, as some widgets have more specific actions that can be taken.

Special Considerations

The list of available events and actions shown in the Action Widget depends on the widgets that you've already placed on your app. It's best to configure the Action Widget after you've placed your other widgets.

For more advanced configurations, the order of the actions can make a difference. For example, consider a situation where an Image Widget is set to **Starts Hidden**. The Action Widget can be configured to both **show** the Image Widget and **scroll to** the Image Widget, but if the Action Widget attempts to scroll to the Image Widget before it has been shown, the browser may not scroll to the expected location.

ShortStack's Action-Gated Templates

Together, ShortStack's Action Widget and Starts Hidden feature allow you to make any kind of app you want to build action-gated. But let's say you don't want to start from scratch building your app. No problem! ShortStack has a handful of easy-to-use action-gated templates to cut the time you spend building your app in half. Check them out:

- Tweet to Download eBook template: Use this template to promote your eBook, whitepaper or downloadable resource on Twitter.

- Poll to Enter template: Use this template to incentivize users to take your poll.

- Subscribe to Receive a Coupon template: Use this template to motivate your Facebook fans to subscribe to your newsletter.

- Vote to Enter Sweepstakes template: Use this template to encourage people to fill out your survey for a chance to win something from your brand.

- Pin and Win template: Use this template to inspire your Facebook followers to create user generated content on Pinterest for a chance to win something from your brand.

Questions about our Action Widget?
You can always reach one of our team members at theteam@shortstacklab.com

Using Your Action-Gated App to Collect Valuable Data

If Facebook Likes don't matter as much as you might think, what *does* matter? **Data**. Facebook is one of the best social platforms for collecting user/fan data. A Like count can stroke an ego, but a stacked email list can bring in leads and conversions!

Data collection tips:

- Analyze your data to find opportunities to fine-tune your business. For example, if you action-gated your app based on a product survey, use the insights you received to make product design or product marketing adjustments.

- Use action-gated apps to gather users' contact information, like email addresses, quickly. Here are a couple savvy ways your business can use the email addresses you gather:

  1. **To get in touch with your highest quality Facebook connections off of the platform.** This provides your brand with another channel to notify users who have opted in about special offers and other news about your business.

  2. **For retargeted advertising.** Use Facebook's advertising platform or a third-party retargeting company like AdRoll or Perfect Audience to create promotional messages that reach people who are most receptive to or interested in what your brand has to say.

CHAPTER 5

3 Facebook Metrics That Are Way More Important Than Your Like Count

Okay, so we know that up to this point we've been down on Facebook Likes, but that doesn't mean we're down on Facebook!

Facebook is still the online social platform that provides businesses with the most free marketing tools. In fact, one of Facebook's most valuable free features is their analytics tool, "Page Insights." A business can learn a lot about its fans and customers through the data Facebook provides.

Page Likes ❯
8.5k Total Page Likes
⏶.8% from last week
256 New Page Likes — This Week — Last Week
⏶3%
Fri Sat Sun Mon Tue Wed Thu

Post Reach ❯
234k Total Reach
⏶.25% from last week
189.4K Post Reach — This Week — Last Week
⏶35%
Fri Sat Sun Mon Tue Wed Thu

Engagement ❯
3.2k People Engaged
⏶.18% from last week
256 Likes
205 Comments
135 Shares
Post Clicks
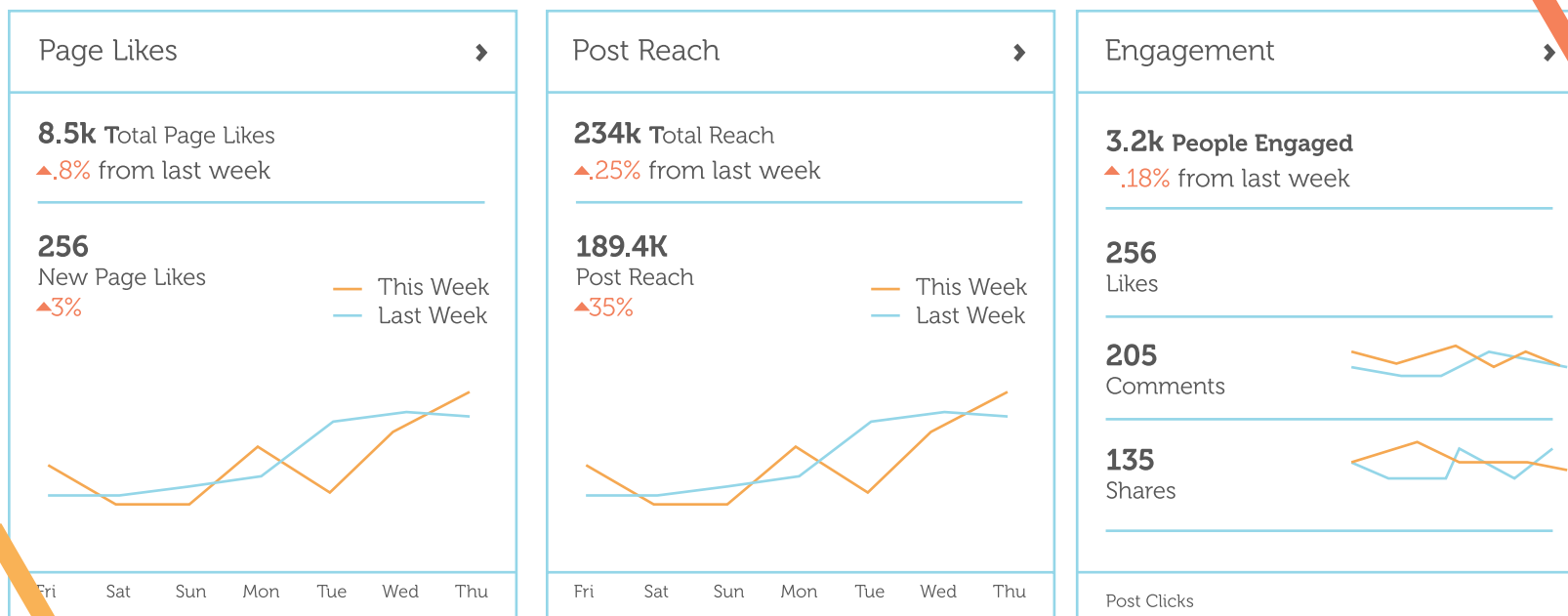
There are three other Facebook metrics, besides a Page's Like count, that provide businesses with lots of useful information:

1. People Engaged

The "People Engaged" metric, which you'll find in Page Insight's "Overview" and "People" tabs, is the unique number of people who have Liked, commented on, or shared your posts or engaged with your Page in the past 28 days.

Why "People Engaged" is important: A whopping 93 percent of B2B marketers use content marketing, according to the Content Marketing Institute and Marketing Profs' fourth annual content marketing report. With so many businesses investing in content marketing, a business's Facebook Page often becomes a main hub for sharing content.

If your business Page's "People Engaged" metric is low, it might be a sign the content you're sharing isn't resonating well with your fanbase or that the language and timing of your posts are no longer effective at driving post engagement. Either way, you need to make changes.

How to improve this metric: The only way to learn what works for your audience is to test. Start testing fresh calls to action (CTAs), alternating long and short posts, sharing posts with and without an image, etc. Don't just post willy-nilly. Create a plan in advance: This Ninja-Style Facebook Management PDF is full of good ideas. After a few days, check Insights to see what's working. The more testing you do, the better you will understand your fanbase and the type of content/posts they react to best.

Company Name
Date and Location

TIP: Here's a great little tip that relates to our business. Sign up to get more great tips here: **http://www.website.com**

Like • Comment • Share

25 people like this.

Write a comment...

Jimmy Beans Thanks for the great tip! I'm all signed up to receive more, I'll share with friends, too!

Like • Reply • 10 Likes

Company Name Thanks, Jimmy! We appreciate the love!

View more comments

023 people saw this   Boost Post

2. Total Reach

Total Reach is the number of people (fans and non-fans) who saw any activity from your Page including posts, posts by other people, Page Like ads, mentions, and check-ins. This metric can be found in the "Overview" section of the Page Insights dashboard.

Why Total Reach is important: Do you remember a couple of months ago when folks were up in arms about Facebook's most recent algorithm change? They were angry because the update affected the reach of their posts.

Reach matters a lot for one big (obvious) reason: If Facebook doesn't feature your brand's posts in the News Feed, the engagement with your posts will take a nose dive. No eyeballs, no engagement – it's as simple as that.

How to improve this metric: There's one easy way to fix Total Reach. But it's going to cost you. Yes, we're talking about Facebook ads. While the "pay to play" mentality can be frustrating for many people, especially small business owners with limited budgets, it's becoming almost mandatory if you want your brand's content to be seen. Thankfully, Facebook advertising is relatively cost effective and even businesses with the smallest of budgets – as little as $1 a day – can afford to invest.

3. External Referrers

External Referrers refers to the number of times people came to your Page from a website other than Facebook. You can find this information at the bottom of the "Visits" tab in Page Insights.

Why External Referrers is important: Knowing the sources of your Timeline's traffic gives your business great insight into which external sites are most effective at attracting new and genuine Facebook fans.

For instance, ShortStack's company's blog, Socially Stacked, drives a lot of readers to our Facebook Page. This tells us that a good number of our blog readers are most likely converting into new Facebook fans.

How to improve this metric: There's no need to really "improve" External Referrers, but it is helpful to keep an eye on its changes.

Conclusion

One element that affects the three previously discussed metrics is the quality of your Page's Likes. You may have read the article in Mashable's "Is the Facebook Like Dead for Marketers?" This article made its rounds on the internet and presumably sparked many debates (it definitely did in our office!).

The post shed light on the fact that the majority of Pages have Like counts containing many "fake" Likes – many of them come from so-called click farms. And as most marketers know, fake Likes are useless. In fact, they end up compromising a Page's metrics that actually matter, like engagement and reach.

The big lesson here (and for this entire eBook): **Stress less about Likes!**

A page with 1,000 *genuine* fans is far more valuable to your business than a Page with 10,000 fans, a portion of which are fake. Ask yourself: "Why is my business on Facebook?" You should be there in order to build stronger relationships with your customers and promote transparency within your business. It's not just a popularity contest.

Want to learn more about how to create action-gated apps? Here are three things you can do now:

Get started for **Free** with ShortStack.

Sign up for one of ShortStack's Free Weekly Webinars.

Request a demo with our guy
Adam: adam@shortstacklab.com