

THE ULTIMATE GUIDE FOR RUNNING — SUCCESSFUL FACEBOOK ADS

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THE FACEBOOK FORMULA FOR REALTORS

There's a science to Facebook marketing, after a significant amount of client and firm dollars spent on Facebook ads and analyzing the results there is a winning formula.

Those details include:

- using more than one photo in ads
- placing the target link high up in ad copy
- creating curiosity and engagement by leaving the address and price out of ad copy (if a listing-related post)
- crafting an informative, enticing description
- linking to a landing page that aligns with the ad and features a clear, bold call to action

THE KEY ELEMENTS REALTORS NEED TO PAY ATTENTION TO

- Setting proper goals
- Having a sophisticated lead follow-up system
- Picking the right audience size
- Targeting audience effectively
- Setting a proper budget
- Establishing a useful ad duration
- Designing ads effectively
- Placing ads in the best locations
- Placing links properly in ad copy
- Reviewing ad performance productively

CLICKS=LEADS

A Facebook ad without a goal is a boat adrift, lost at sea: leads may show up, but it will be an accident.

As most brokers and agents primarily need to fill their sales funnels, most should focus on generating leads and clicks with their Facebook marketing, not branding and awareness.

HAVE A LEAD FOLLOW UP SYSTEM IN PLACE

Generating leads and pumping them into a database without a smart, streamlined follow-up system is a waste.

An effective system features include:

- a sleek, fast website
- a simple, clear lead-capture page
- a sophisticated customer relationship management program that facilitates automated lead-routing and follow-up
- an effective drip-email marketing campaign

These elements increase conversion rates over the months-long (and sometimes years-long) journey from lead to buyer or seller client.

AUDIENCE SIZE

To generate leads and website visits from Facebook ads, especially a sustained number over a long period of time, marketers must target monthly audiences in the 40,000 to 60,000 range.

Of course, specific audience size depends on the particular makeup of an advertiser's market and lead goals, but the above numbers are a rough average. In short: leave high school behind, think college-sized audiences.

However, target audience size should vary depending on goals. Sometimes it makes sense to go narrow.

For example, if agents want all their current and former clients to see their new promo video, they should consider running the ad multiple times to a tighter audience.

Targeting

Facebook offers a staggering number of audience-targeting filters. Narrowing audience by geography and age is usually enough in most cases.

To generate real estate leads from a hyperlocal campaign (at about the neighborhood level), we recommend targeting ages 28 to 65 and leaving other filters untouched.

It's much better to go 10 percent too big than 10 percent too small. You don't want to wrangle a big fish with a too-small net.

GEOGRAPHY

We stress that ads perform best when advertisers split audiences up by region, whether that be neighborhoods in a city or areas of the country.

Facebook automatically directs ads to the audiences that give the most bang for the advertiser's buck, which can, paradoxically, leave consumers in some locales untouched if a large enough geographic range is chosen.

We learned this when running national Facebook ads. If we ran an ad to the whole country, it showed predominantly to users in just three states: California, Texas and Florida.

By spending the same amount of money, but targeting the ad to five smaller geographic regions the South, East, Midwest, Northeast and Canada -- the firm reached a wider, more diverse audience for the same money.

The same principle holds at the city level.

MATCH AUDIENCES TO CAMPAIGNS

This one's obvious, but important to note nonetheless.

If advertisers want to generate leads from a new five-bedroom, three-bathroom listing, they should target their Facebook ad to an older demographic, those who are more likely to have larger families.

On the flip side, if they want to shout about a new downtown loft listing, skew the ad targeting to a younger audience.

BUDGET

Advertisers need to spend money consistently over time to get Facebook marketing results. "Don't just dip your toe in the water."

We recommend spending between \$300 and \$500 per month (at least) on Facebook ads. This spend allows advertisers to spread ads relatively evenly throughout the month, about two each week.

Every market's different, but generally advertisers can expect to receive between 60 and 80 leads per month for monthly spends between \$500 to \$1,000 (assuming they follow the best practices outlined in this article.)

Given the high return on real estate leads that convert, and even turn into repeat business and referrals down the road, "you almost can't spend too much,"

DURATION

Ads that run from five to seven days usually perform best.

These short periods also help advertisers evaluate what's working and what's not. They can then double down on the winners and cut the losers.

AD PLACEMENT

Facebook advertisers can choose from among five locations for their ads: Desktop timeline, mobile timeline, right rail on desktop, Instagram and Facebook's ad network.

Ads in Facebook's timeline (both desktop and mobile) perform best, especially for real estate brokers and agents who should be looking for clicks and engagement.

AD DESIGN

Ad copy and images should communicate a crystal-clear message so that consumers get the point with just a glance. They also must be enticing, which stimulates clicks and leads.

It's important to use only high-quality images. Images will bring down a Facebook ad more than anything else.

If using copy on the image itself, don't cover more than 20 percent of it. Advertisers can, but Facebook charges more for these ads, and typically it's not worth it.

Advertisers should customize each ad's copy. Include a clear call to action, a compelling headline and a description. The description won't always show up by default, but it will increase an ad's performance.

ENTICE JUST ENOUGH

Provide enough valuable content to catch consumers' attention, but not so much that they have all they need and avoid clicking the link. Create allure.

Advertisers should provide enough detail, information and value to drive engagement -- rich description, number of beds and baths, amenities and photos -- but compel consumers to visit their site to login for more information.

Sometimes what's left out of the copy is more important than what's in it.

When posting a new listing, for example, use multiple high-quality images of the property and an enticing description, but leave out the address and price.

An alluring ad also generates comments, another great place for advertisers to pull in leads. Leads from the comment section account for 15 to 20 percent of the total generated from some ads.

MONITOR AD PERFORMANCE

Facebook marketing strategy should be a living one. In general, you should pour gasoline on the winners and cut the losers.

The ad performance dashboard offered by Facebook, Facebook Insights, provides tons of details, but users don't have to go overboard. Ads' "reach" and "engagement" are the key metrics advertisers should pay attention to. Reach represents the number of consumers' feeds the ad showed up in. Engagement measures the total number of actions the ad generated.

Advertisers can filter all the posts they ever paid to boost by reach and by engagement in Facebook Insights. In general, reach and engagement track with each other, so advertisers can select just one.

After filtering all the posts by reach, look at the top three or four. Assess what may have made them effective and do more ads with those elements. Look at the losers and pick out what may not be working, then avoid those features going forward.

To evaluate overall ROI from Facebook advertising, advertisers should look at their overall spend versus their growth. If you're growing, keep going.

STAY ON THE CUTTING EDGE

Brokers and agents should constantly try new things in their Facebook marketing and measure the results.

Sprinkle Pokemon around an ad's image or load up the copy with emojis. Advertisers may hit on something that resonates with their market.

The innovation itself is a win. "If performance doesn't dip, you're winning."

Elements of a winning Facebook marketing experiment:

- Don't change too many variables at one time
- Try different price points
- Run experiments for a couple months, with consistent ads at roughly two per week and stick to a firm monthly budget (don't go over)
- Use Facebook Insights to determine which ads have the most reach. Typically reach tracks with an ad's effectiveness at generating leads
- Find a winner and double down
- Cut the losers
- Never compare against others, compare internally
- Get a content calendar to map out ads and posts in advance

