



The art of the ad

Jemma Edwards on creating Facebook ad copy that will reach and engage your target audience

In mid-January, Facebook announced yet another change to its algorithm. So what, you might say Facebook changes its algorithms all the time. What's so special about this time? Well this is a big change. Facebook has altered the news feed to give preference to posts shared between friends and family. Over the past couple of years, the number of people who see your organic posts has been reduced to around 30% of your full reach. This latest change will reduce it to around 1%–2%. Advertising on Facebook will not be affected, however.

What this means for your business is that you will now have to work harder if you want your posts to be seen organically on Facebook, i.e. without paying to reach people. With more than two billion active users, Facebook is not a social media platform that can be ignored, so how can you respond to this shift? Some people believe that this latest change is a direct result of the over-supply of low quality content that clogs up

people's newsfeeds, designed simply to drive engagement for brands.

Facebook has often stated that it is a social media platform and not a media organisation. Reading between the lines, this means that as long as you're creating content that provides value, is original and encourages meaningful conversations, your posts will continue to be shown. Now, however, managing a campaign of organic posts will require greater research and planning, and more time on spent on execution to have the same impact as before.

Posts announcing your latest treatments or the opening of a new clinic will get lower priority, being pushed to the back of the queue to make way for friends and family sharing moments. This change frightens some, whereas others see it as an opportunity to change their approach. One option you have is to start paying for advertising on Facebook and if that's something you're doing, or thinking

about doing, there is no better time to sharpen your skills and start creating copy designed to engage your audience and motivate them to take action.

DIRECT APPROACH

The most successful method is direct response advertising, which aims to elicit a specific, measurable response from the consumer, containing a call to action and the opportunity for immediate online feedback and interaction. It's in absolute contrast to most TV adverts, which are often highly creative but are designed primarily to raise long-term brand awareness. TV adverts for Coca-Cola or Guinness are good examples – often it's just imagery and a catchy song. You're not told the price of the product, ingredients it contains, who it's for, what it can do for you or even that you should buy it.

The more leftfield and creative the concept, the more successful a campaign is often deemed to have been and the more brand awareness it's thought to have raised. Direct response advertising, on the other hand, is less about creativity and more about following a simple process, along the lines of:

- This is your problem
- I have a solution to your problem
- This is how I prove that my solution works
- Buy that solution now.

The creativity that direct marketing does require relates to how you shape the advert. Storytelling and information giving are two of the most popular and successful methods. Storytelling works because it creates interest and seeks to engage the audience. Information giving works because it provides value straight away.

ROUTE TO SUCCESS

Although following a process may seem easier than developing a brand awareness campaign, it's not a simple task. The following tips should prove helpful if you're constructing direct response advertising copy.

Respect the reader: Don't try to be too clever or mislead, coerce or impress people. Speak to them on a level; be neither superior nor overly keen to gain approval.

Use the language your audience would use: Especially the opening statements. The first few lines really have to connect with people.

Don't be scared to be informal: It's not an essay writing competition. Communicate with your audience the way you would if you were speaking to them face-to-face and if that means using slang or colloquialisms, then do. It's more important to be understood than to be grammatically correct. However, don't get sloppy, be overfamiliar or put too much slang in.

Use everyone's favourite word – YOU: Why is this content important to them? Why should they read it? Why should

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they take action based on it? Talking too much about yourself will make people switch off – it's about them.

Focus on how your product can improve their life: Generally this will be about how you can save them time or money, or enhance an area of their life where they're looking to make a change.

Assess if the audience is warm or cold: Be conscious of how much your audience is likely to know about the problem you're looking to solve. If they have little awareness of it, you'll need to construct your copy in a way that allows them to quickly relate to the matter. >

SOCIAL MEDIA

Consider if you're addressing a previous or existing customer: If so, then it's important to recognise that relationship. Don't overindulge in it, however. You still need to get to your point quickly.

Keep the end result in mind: Build up a call to action and make it flow by following these steps: get their attention in the first couple of lines; build that interest; get them to make a decision; make it clear what action you want them to take, and include clear, unambiguous calls to action, such as "book a consultation", "call this number" or "visit this website".

Make sure it's an easy read: Everyone scans copy first, before launching into the full read. Use headlines and subheadings, like a newspaper article would, and even put in a P.S. at the end.

Remember that less is not necessarily more: In fact it's OK to write more than one page. People love stories, so give them a chance, as well as a reason, to get to know you.

Create a sense of urgency: The threat of scarcity or FOMO (fear of missing out) works. Deadlines dates and a focus on limited spaces are, for example, effective. Some adverts even have a countdown clock.

If you really want to go into detail about direct response marketing then David Ogilvy's (of Ogilvy & Mather) 1983 book *Ogilvy on Advertising* will give you the perspective of one of the world's most recognised experts on advertising.

RULES AND REGULATIONS

In addition to our own industry guidelines on what we can and cannot say when promoting our businesses, Facebook has some very comprehensive rules about what's permitted. Some of the most important ones are:

- Adverts must not contain "before" and "after" images, or images that feature unexpected or unlikely results
- Adverts must not imply or attempt to generate a negative self-perception in order to promote dietary, weight loss or other health-related products
- Adverts for health, fitness or weight loss products must be targeted at people aged 18 and over.

When online advertising first emerged, you could create any headline that would get people to click on it, even if it

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then took you to an entirely unconnected product or service. Today, Facebook will test your advert for relevance, accuracy and related landing page before it gets published. The following standards are taken directly from Facebook.

Relevance: All advert components, including any text, images or other media, must be relevant and appropriate to the product or service being offered and the audience viewing the advert.

Accuracy: Adverts must clearly represent the company, product, service or brand that is being advertised.

Related landing pages: The products and services promoted in an advert's text must match those promoted on the landing page, and the destination site must not offer or link to any prohibited product or service."

No one knows your business as well as you do, so although there are many reasons to outsource ad creation to a copywriter, your knowledge of your own business is a key reason to write your own adverts. Hopefully this feature will help with that. **AM**



Gemma Edwards is the owner of deliveringdemand.com, helping aesthetics professionals and cosmetic surgeons get more patients and grow their practice.