

Build an authentic brand image
on Facebook and get the best
value clicks on your ads



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I. Introduction

1. The complex yet rewarding world of Facebook ads

Facebook is arguably the best resource advertisers have ever had, and when used right, enables them to connect with their target audiences more directly than ever. The key to a good Facebook campaign is to balance consumers' expectations, with creativity and Facebook's ever-changing regulations.

Facebook's unique position as a free global platform exposes it to more criticism from authorities and individuals than traditional forms of advertising. This means that as laws and social customs change around the world, Facebook needs to adapt its policies to keep up with this scrutiny, and so in turn, must advertisers. This guide will help set your brand up for success on Facebook and other social media platforms.

2. How can you navigate Facebook campaigns successfully and efficiently?

Many brands successfully build up their image and consumer base using Facebook, Instagram and other social media platforms. However, many others are still finding their feet when it comes to how they can use Facebook ads to their full potential and get the best value leads and clicks.



"Successful brands use social media to connect with their audience. They make use of creative talents to create authentic, original campaigns that generate sustainable growth and don't rely on outdated or overused tactics."

Kirsten Ross
Digital Editor

In short, portraying your brand authentically will pay off in the short and long term and will help you get the best value leads. This guide will show you

- what authenticity means in the context of Facebook ads and
 - why consumers care about authenticity, creativity, and brand messaging on social media
- Brands are learning that it is not enough to just grab your target audience's attention. What is much more valuable is to have a positive lasting impact that honestly reflects your brand's values and services.

Short-term success is exciting, but the tricks you may use to get there at the expense of your brand's image could make for a shaky foundation if your goal is to build a trustworthy brand.

This guide will help marketers from any size of company to reassess their presence on Facebook in terms of future-proof compliance and brand authenticity, and how to maximise the value of this platform for your client or business.



We'd love to hear your feedback!

Jörg Hanser, Director of Business Development

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II. Advertising on social media

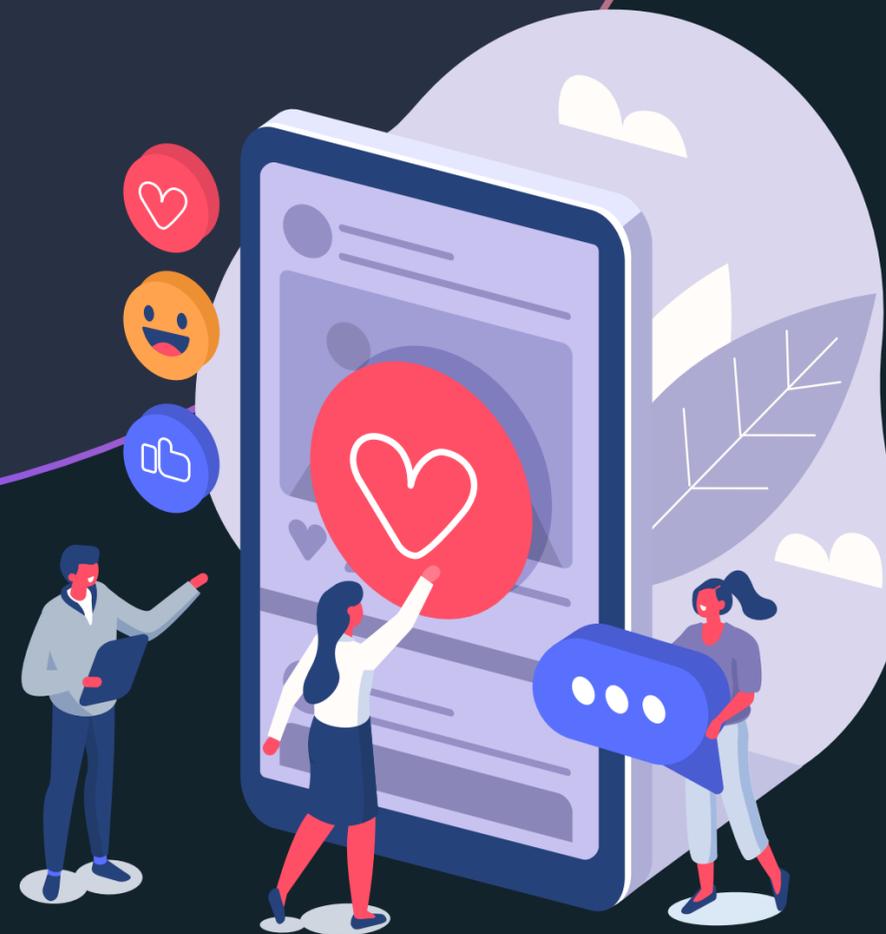
1. Facebook: popular, but not always easy to navigate

Social media – and Facebook in particular – is well established as the farthest-reaching medium available to advertisers. But it's easy to forget that it is still a relatively new, fast-changing, and enigmatic landscape, which can often seem intimidating and confusing. The good news is that there are lots of talented social media professionals out there who can help advertisers build their Facebook audience.



"Social media offers not just one, but many channels where creativity and branding can coexist and, ideally, thrive. Advertisers should make the most of this format and approach it as an opportunity rather than a limitation."

Amanda Lakop
Designer/Illustrator





Are you ready to go or do you want some personalised advice before you get started? Tell us what you want to know: joerg.hanser@rheindigital.com

2. Social media ads facts: Why Facebook ads are a must

Globally, Facebook has the most comprehensive user base of any social media platform and covers just about every possible target demographic. Even younger audiences, although they may prefer or post more actively on other platforms, still make up a relatively large portion of Facebook's audience. As of 2021, 28.2% of global Facebook users were between 13-24 years old, a demographic commonly referred to as Gen Z. By comparison, only 23.1% of users were 45 or older. The platform's unique ability to target different audience segments based on their interests is extremely useful to advertisers. Across the board Facebook wins against its two closest competitors in the social media sphere in terms of paid reach, click-through rate (CTR) and cost per click (CPC).

Our tip:

Don't rely on organic reach. Facebook's organic reach hovers around 2.2% and is notoriously low compared to its sister site Instagram at 9.4% organic reach. Facebook users are well disposed to engaging with sponsored content on the platform, with the average user clicking on 12 ads per month.

Global social media act facts 2021-2022

	Facebook	Instagram	LinkedIn
Organic reach	2.20%	9.40%	5%
Paid reach	36.70%	22.60%	14%
CTR	3.06%	0.68%	0,52%
CPC (\$)	0.94	1.09	5.58

For advertisers, it is no longer a question of whether you should use Facebook ads, rather how to use them.



"Facebook is incredibly valuable when it comes to interacting with your audience directly. There is no other way getting so close to your audience. Regardless of whether you are B2C or B2B, you won't find a more direct means of communication with your audience than social media."

Jörn Thesen
Senior Digital Media Manager

3. The key to success: Test, test, test

Testing is the most important part of any social media campaign. User behaviours are notoriously unpredictable on Facebook. No one, not even the experts can tell you for sure what kind of ad set, or campaign will succeed *before* you have gone through the testing phase.

Any good Facebook ads professional will tell you that just about everything can and should be tested thoroughly before you find the right combination of imagery, copy and headlines for your campaign. Different formats can also be tested against one another. Video, for example, is becoming increasingly popular across social media platforms, but despite this, there is no guarantee that video ads will perform better than static ads.

Testing out a variety of formats and content is the only way to know for sure what best resonates with your audience.

The good news is that due to the fast-paced and highly flexible nature of Facebook, you can test multiple approaches and ad formats on a small portion of your target audience(s) in a relatively short space of time, before identifying the strategy that works for you. But even after audience testing, scaling your campaigns will result in attention and engagement that can bring unexpected issues to light. This is why, advertisers need to know exactly how Facebook's policy team operates, and what to look out for when brainstorming new ideas.



"A good campaign is one that is confident in its strategic aims and plays in to them. Campaigns will benefit from conducting audience research, implementing tracking and carrying out A/B testing."

Annika Theil
Performance Marketing Campaign Manager



Interested in having an expert team plan your brand's social media strategy? Drop us a line at: joerg.hanser@rheindigital.com

4. Can you break Facebook's rules?

The short answer is no. The longer answer is it depends on how and why you plan to do it. It's not as straightforward as it may seem. Facebook compliance primarily means making sure your ads are in line with Facebook's guidelines. The problem is that Facebook's guidelines are always subject to change.

Most tech companies update their terms of service and regulations fairly regularly, but Facebook/ Meta is in a unique situation. The very same thing that makes it so attractive to advertisers – its unprecedentedly broad global reach – is also what makes it particularly prone to government scrutiny around the world. When a controversy arises, then Facebook may be pushed to change its regulations in terms of what advertisers are allowed to post.

"Nowadays, Facebook is constantly changing its regulations. This can be frustrating because it means you can never be sure if your ads are taken down. There are certain tips and tricks you can learn that are always useful to keep in mind, but it is usually difficult to predict."

Annika Theil

Performance Marketing Campaign Manager

Users' complaints

Future-proof Facebook ads sometimes even go beyond Facebook policy. Users can also report ads that they find offensive or inaccurate, which may also have a bad impact on your campaign if the company decides to act on such complaints. That means, making sure your ads are "Facebook compliant" is just as much about anticipating future needs and social implications as it is about complying to the current guidelines you find online.

"There was a big shift after the 2016 US election. Facebook became much more sensitive to any type of content that could be considered political. This meant that advertisers had ads removed from the platform if they just mentioned themes like LGBTQ+ pride, the climate crisis or BIPOC stories, even if the ads in themselves were not inherently political."*

Jörn Thesen

Senior Digital Media Manager

Facebook recently released a renewed pledge to limit how advertisers target users on the platform.

"Starting January 19, 2022 we will remove Detailed Targeting options that relate to topics people may perceive as sensitive, such as options referencing causes, organisations, or public figures that relate to health, race or ethnicity, political affiliation, religion, or sexual orientation."

Facebook (Meta), 2021

In practical terms, this means:

- Even if your ad is not inherently political, or offensive, advertisers have now lost access to thousands of targeting options.
- Even mentioning, as an example, the word "diabetes" or acknowledging an ethnic holiday or other special days such as international women's day, are not allowed under the new zero-tolerance approach.
- If you still manage to circumvent the system and make these kinds of posts anyway, the policy team is could still very likely catch up with you and immediately suspend your campaigns or even the account as a whole.

* Black, Indigenous, and People of Color

Anticipate changes

These kinds of harsh and sudden rule changes are exactly why just following current guidelines may not be enough. As a Facebook advertiser, you have to do your best to predict future trends and social expectations. It will help to futureproof your brands and campaigns, by not running the risk of having to restart your campaigns or rebuild your online audience because your ads or accounts keep getting removed.

Don't push the boundaries

While there are plenty of creative risks you can take safely on Facebook, trying to push the boundaries in terms of compliance is not a testing strategy that any experienced social media professional would recommend. Especially if one of your key aims is to build up a trustworthy and likeable long-term image. There are plenty of opportunities to build an impactful, long-lasting image for your brand.



"It is not smart to advertise in ways that don't reflect the values and standards of the world we live in today. Brands stay relevant by moving with the times, not by reflecting a version of society that may not exist anymore."

Amanda Lakop
Designer/Illustrator

III. Build a humble, authentic image that resonates

Advertising should not just be about checking your ad campaigns for false information – although that is definitely a vital first step. To resonate and have a lasting impact, advertising should be authentic.

Authentic campaigns should aim to reflect a brand's values and services sincerely and provide deliberate, accurate information about what that brand can offer consumers.

How can a brand portray itself “authentically” on social media?

✘ Don'ts

- Brainstorm creative ways to portray your brand
- Invest necessary resources to research your target audience properly, spend time studying your competitors and find out how they are approaching your target demographic
- Be prepared for the possibility that you will have to create a few, sometimes dozens of iterations of your ads before you find your feet

✔ Dos

- Rely on clichés, stereotypes or potentially offensive humour that could risk alienating a portion of your audience
- Promise standards that you cannot guarantee.
- Try to be something you are not – keep your tone consistent with the type of service you are offering and the audience you are trying to reach.

Relying on old techniques may not be the reliable, safe choice you think it is

With less corporate-dominated and more creator-centric platforms like TikTok well and truly established in the mainstream, we are seeing a new level of accessibility and spontaneity in social media content. These days, consumers don't just like an authentic approach, they expect it and even tend to recognise advertisers' empty promises and sentiments for what they are.



“Try different approaches, always test different kinds of content and different ways of speaking to your customers. Don't rely on what's safe because that could be old news very soon. Aim to stay on top of your audience's mind.”

Annika Theil

Performance Marketing Campaign Manager

When in doubt, keep it simple

If you are unsure of where to start, one of the best – and easiest – ways to approach a new campaign is to be as down-to-earth as possible in your communication and imagine how potential consumers would react to hearing about your product or service for the first time. It's always better to strive to be authentic in your messaging, rather than risk alienating or offending your audience with potentially offensive or tone-deaf content.

IV. Authenticity is good for business

Creating a Facebook campaign takes time and resources. However, resources invested in making sure that your campaigns are honest, creative and informative will not be wasted. Doing research and testing campaigns on a low budget before scaling them will help to future proof them and make them more effective at communicating their message.

Our tip:

Doing research and testing your ads is the smartest way to use your time since it reduces the chances that you will have to restart your campaign from scratch in the short term.

Facebook gives businesses the most direct line of communication to their customers. For the first time ever, brands can engage with current and potential customers easily and instantly.



Professional advertisers and social media experts know that with such a direct line of communication, how you communicate your message can be just as important as the message itself, if not more so. Our social media know-how can help you reach your audience more effectively. Contact us!
joerg.hanser@rheindigital.com



“Even on social media, ads that are shocking for the sake of being shocking don’t tend to help brands achieve their goals – if the aim is to shock or intrigue your audience, there has to be a reason for doing so.”

Jörn Thesen
Senior Digital Media Manager

V. Case Studies: How brands take risks on social media

Let's look at three recent case studies on how three very well-known brands have approached risky subjects on social media. Each case holds clear lessons for experienced and aspiring social media marketers alike.

1. Adidas: making a statement, without your customers in mind

Adidas launched its new sports bra range with an image that showed 24 bare breasts with the hashtag #supportiseverything. The breasts were not sexualised but rather shown with imperfections and intended to represent real breasts belonging to 'real' women. The ad was live on Twitter and Instagram in February 2022 and attracted a huge amount of controversy online before being removed within 3 weeks.

For many, it was an empowering statement and an honest way of looking at how different body shapes demand different products, without sexualizing the body.

Digital strategy expert Lauren Higgs told the Irish Times: "To see a brand like Adidas lead the charge here is refreshing and gives hope to smaller brands that they can be true to their own values and promote their brand for the right reasons."

For others, it was a crass attempt to shock their audience and a blatant attempt to make headlines. And make headlines they did. Adidas' stock price hit a 12-month low in the week following the release of this campaign.

It's very important that marketers remember that there is often a huge disconnect between media experts and consumers' views. What experts may think is "revolutionary", consumers may see as inappropriate or "a step too far" – or vice versa. The campaign was heavily criticised on Twitter and Instagram for exploiting women's bodies by portraying them in an embarrassing way.

Key takeaways:

- With any out-there approach, you must be prepared to accept a certain level of criticism
- When taking risks like this, test your content on a lower budget first and be sure any imagery helps to embolden your message, not undermine it

Our advice to adidas would have been to explore other avenues for creativity that would more effectively help to make a statement empowering all women, without offending or alienating those who find this kind of imagery off-putting or in bad taste.

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To find out more about up-to-date and brand-safe creative solutions for social media write to us at: Joerg.Hanser@rheindigital.com

2. Dove: a far cry from “Love your Body”

If Adidas’ sports bra campaign caused controversy with an arguably misguided attempt to celebrate women’s bodies, then **Dove** sparked fury by pitting women against each other.

It would be a severe understatement to say this 2017 ad, posted to a variety of platforms including Facebook. The ad showed a black woman morphing into a white woman who then morphs into a latino woman. It doesn’t contain humour; it’s a misguided attempt to represent diversity. It features a black woman who uses Dove and transforms into a white woman.

Dove was accused of racism but the campaign was not intended to be ‘overtly racist.’ Dove was trying to be inclusive. If the order of transition had been white, hispanic, black, I doubt there would have been a problem. The line is that fine.

The initial controversy lasted for weeks online and sparked a PR nightmare for Dove, who had to remove the ad from all platforms and issue an official apology. Business Insider reported that the idea came from industry heads determined to come up with something new and “to make ads less stereotypical”.

Key takeaways:

- Sometimes images and simple ideas can be more powerful than well thought-out and high- concept videos or graphics
- Angering Facebook or posting overtly offensive content can come at the cost of losing your accounts and followers in the blink of an eye.

3. Signal: a quick – yet bold – way to lose your account

Facebook is known for many things, but a self-deprecating sense of humour is not one of them.

This is a lesson that the privacy-focused messaging app **Signal** learned the hard way with its first – and last – Facebook ad campaign in 2021. The campaign presented a series of images which were intended to criticise Facebook for spying on users' data and messages.

The images show plain text which supposedly explains why users are seeing the ad. Text containing personal information is highlighted, alluding to how pervasively Facebook/Meta collects information from your private conversations to use for advertising purposes.

So, how did this go down at Zuckerberg HQ? Signal's founder said it best in a tweet: "Signal tried to use Instagram ads to display the data Facebook collects about you and sells access to. Facebook wasn't into the idea, and shut down our account instead."

With such a simple creative technique, Signal – literally – highlighted Facebook's problematic history of data collection while simultaneously promising their target audience privacy and data security. The memorable statement resulted in Facebook's swift decision to remove the whole campaign and to ban Signal from advertising on their platform entirely.

This is a rare example of the negative side effects of being too honest, and a reminder that Facebook can and will remove your campaign or even the whole account if you cross them.

Key takeaways:

- New ideas don't have to be the polar opposite of existing strategies to be successful; sometimes even slight updates to old campaigns are all you need to breathe new life into a campaign
- Blatantly betraying your brand's message or image on social media could result in instantly alienating your customers, both potential and existing.

VI. Maximise your campaign's future-proofing, authenticity and potential for success

A good social media campaign doesn't overlook the brand or product to grab attention at any cost; instead, it creatively merges the brand and its voice with the message to create a whole.

Social media ads: a checklist for compliance, creativity and authentic brand policy

This checklist is a good general starting point for social media campaign. But remember: Facebook and similar platforms can be very unpredictable. **There is no one-size-fits-all solution for Facebook ads.**



Create and set guidelines – then stick to them

There should be clearly defined responsibilities for compliance with and further development of the guidelines.



Be specific and clear

Try to avoid including information that could be misinterpreted or misunderstood, as it could lead to false expectations from your customers and have a negative impact on your brand's image.



Avoid looking for loopholes

Generally speaking on Facebook, today's loophole is tomorrow's non-compliance issue.. Most of the time, it is not worth risking losing your campaigns, accounts and all the time and energy that was put into them. Facebook's policy team work fast to catch borderline non-compliance and there is always a risk that if they don't find it, then users will report it.



Test every idea you have - as long as it won't damage your brand's image

Facebook is unpredictable and people don't always engage with content that you think should succeed. If you don't test enough you may miss out on a profitable angle you had no idea would work.



Remember who you are speaking to

Your customers are generally more likely to engage with your ads if they feel like they are being addressed directly. Make sure you do your research and know who your customers are before you get started.



Use your resources creatively

The voice you choose is important and it should reflect your products or services accurately, but this doesn't rule out creativity. In fact, by pushing your brand or client to stay away from clichéd and overused formats, you will actually unlock a new level of creativity. There are many talented professionals in this area that you can speak to about your campaigns.

Working with experienced professionals can help you find your feet and set up a campaign that is tailored to your goals and needs.

If you'd like to find out more about how to market your brand on Facebook without compromising your brand's image, get in touch with our creative team of digital marketing experts.



Ready to maximise your brand's potential on social media?

Jörg Hanser, Director Business Development

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Credits

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