# Managing Your Facebook Community:

*Findings on Conversation Volume
by Day of Week, Hour and Minute*

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## Introduction

According to Alexa, the daily reach for the three months of August, September and October 2010 (to date) for Facebook reached ~35+% of the total Internet population. Facebook usage is estimated to be 55 minutes a day per user, but what 55 minutes of the day and what day of week are the estimated 35% of 500MM fans on Facebook?

If Facebook is the community for fans to engage with one another and become fans of other micro-communities, then how does a marketer optimize their Facebook community management practices to maximize the fan experience? How does a marketer know what to publish and when to engage with fans? The answers can provide marketers with a much better return on engagement (ROE) for Facebook publishing. Vitrue set out to find those answers through a series of white papers exploring effective Facebook publishing practices.

Our white paper, "The Anatomy of a Post", released on September 20, 2010, focused on publishing activity from a brand's perspective: when and what post type (video, text, image) garners higher interaction rates from their fans as measured by shares, likes and comments. The data revealed many interesting insights for effective Facebook publishing. The key takeaway; however, was that marketers should post "image" posts before noon EST weekdays for optimal post effectiveness. We theorize that this timing makes sense as it's before lunchtime on the east coast when many are checking Facebook, as well as when west coasters are starting their day. Aside from the timing, the data also showed that "image" posts were more effective over video and text, which provides an insightful takeaway.

This white paper, "Managing Your Facebook Community Findings on Conversation Volume", looks at the activity of just posts and comments (not shares and likes) that are made by brands and fans of brand pages. The lion share of the post and comment data is made by fans rather than brands, and it is a proxy for Facebook usage patterns. The resulting patterns by day of week and time of day supports our findings in the prior Vitrue white paper, as well as shows an interesting pattern that quite simply demonstrates the time zones and consumer behavior usage patterns during the traditional workweek on Facebook.

Analyzing volumes of data that is available via the Vitrue Publisher, part of our Social Relationship Management (SRM) Platform, we have identified some interesting information on when fans and brands are actually posting and commenting on brand posts on a daily, hourly and by minute basis.
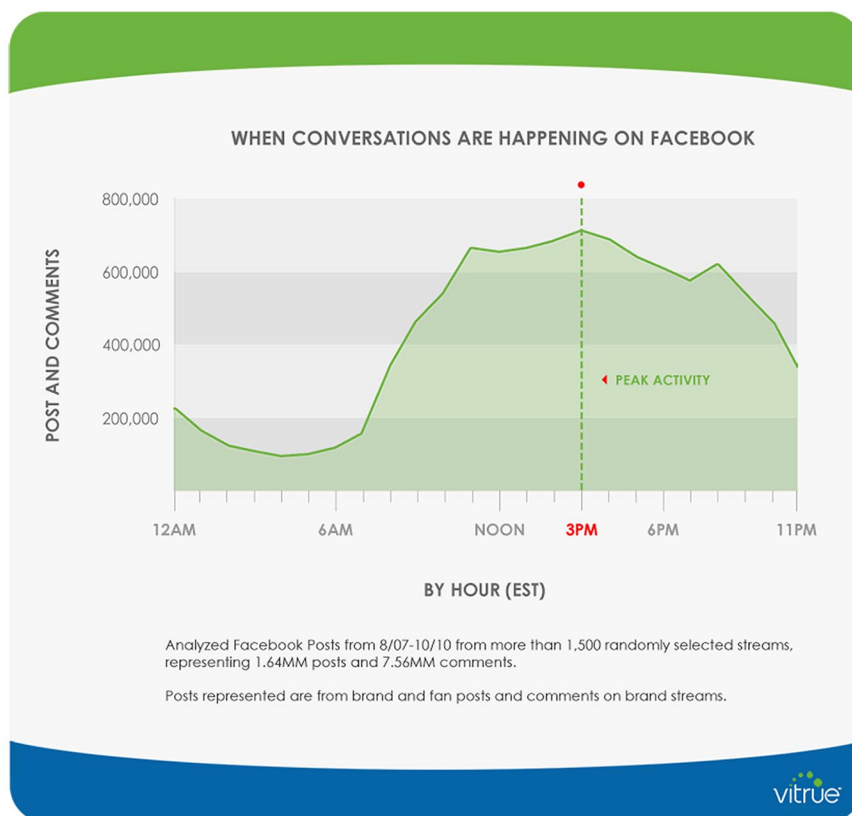
## Methodology

We analyzed Facebook posts from August 10, 2007 to October 10, 2010 from more than 1,500 selected brand streams representing 1.64MM posts and 7.56MM comments. The data analyzed was based on when a fan and a brand interacted with a post by time of hour, hour of day and day of week. The 24-hour data is based on the east coast time zone with approximately 95% of streams represented from the U.S. This data does not represent all Facebook posts made by a user, but actions made by brands and fans on a brand's posts.

Several findings we are releasing in this white paper stand out as indicators of Facebook usage, including the idea that today's proverbial water cooler is no longer offline at the office, but online at Facebook:

- Overall there is significant and continuous conversation volume throughout the day, starting at 8am EST to 5pm PST, with 3pm EST being the peak;

- All the days of the typical work week, Monday through Friday, share a very similar pattern of high volumes of conversation, with Wednesday being the peak; and

- Weekend activity is dramatically different with lower post activity from fans and brands on Sunday versus all other days.



**WHEN CONVERSATIONS ARE HAPPENING ON FACEBOOK**

POST AND COMMENTS

800,000
600,000
400,000
200,000

◄ PEAK ACTIVITY

12AM    6AM    NOON    3PM    6PM    11PM

**BY HOUR (EST)**

Analyzed Facebook Posts from 8/07-10/10 from more than 1,500 randomly selected streams, representing 1.64MM posts and 7.56MM comments.

Posts represented are from brand and fan posts and comments on brand streams.

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Notice the time of day activity spikes: 3pm, 11am and 8pm EST, respectively. Our first white paper noted before noon as the best time for brands to publish an "image" post for optimal effectiveness. Yet this data points to 3pm EST as the highest posting volume for consumers and brands on Facebook Pages. What this potentially suggests is that when a brand publishes content in the morning(EST), and begins to garner community engagement with their fans, it builds throughout the day peaking when the west coast and other time zone activity peaks into the morning. The data is revealing how consumer activity follows both time zones and daily behavioral patterns throughout the traditional workweek (Monday through Friday).

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For example, marketers publish an "image" post before noon EST time and it garners actions from consumers both on the east coast before lunch and west coasters getting their day started. You are essentially "seeding" the message early into Facebook's ecosystem. At 3pm EST, activity is highest potentially because it's lunchtime on the west coast, mid-day break for east coast, as well kids getting home from school. All these factors push to a crescendo of activity, when consumers and brands across America are creating the most conversation volume with brands on Facebook. We believe, marketers need to engage in two-way conversations with their fans, respond to posts made by fans and respond to fans comments on your brands posts to develop a social connection with your fans. Use this window to ask a question, push a poll or survey that will hit the window when we know—across the time zones—you are reaching a larger, more engaged and active audience.

In this white paper you will find the following detailed charts and insights to support the above summary findings as well as these additional findings:
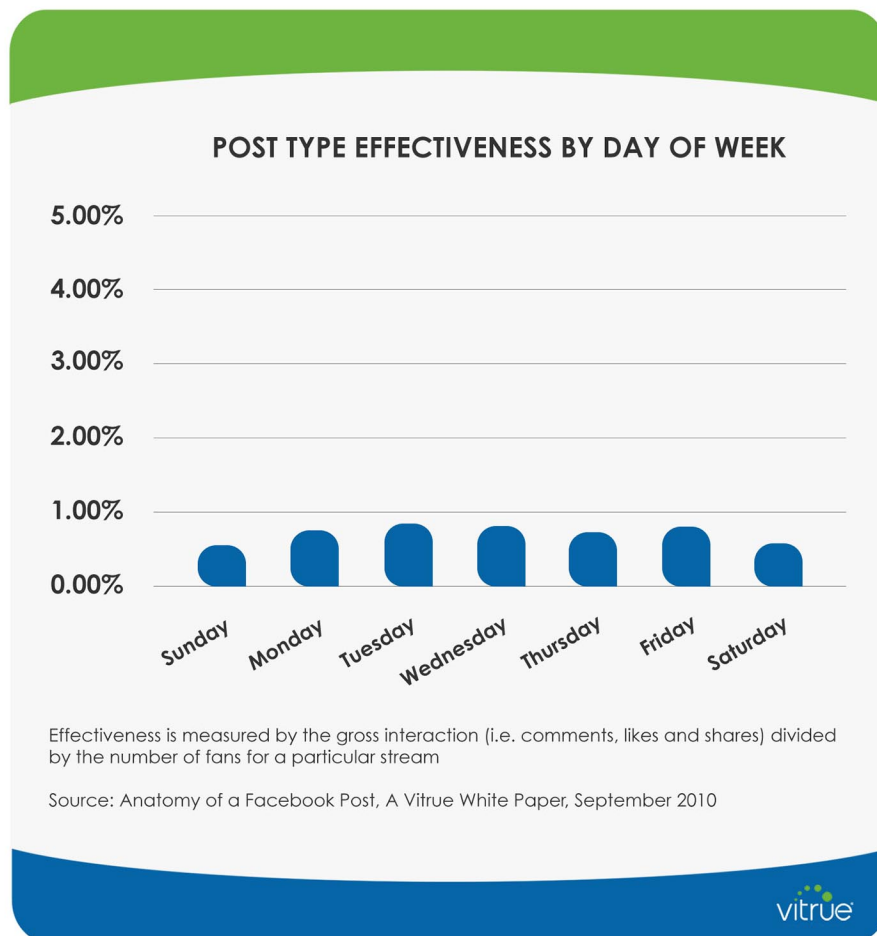
- A day of week summary of conversations;

- A summary view comparing conversation by day by hour;

- Hourly break down of conversations; and

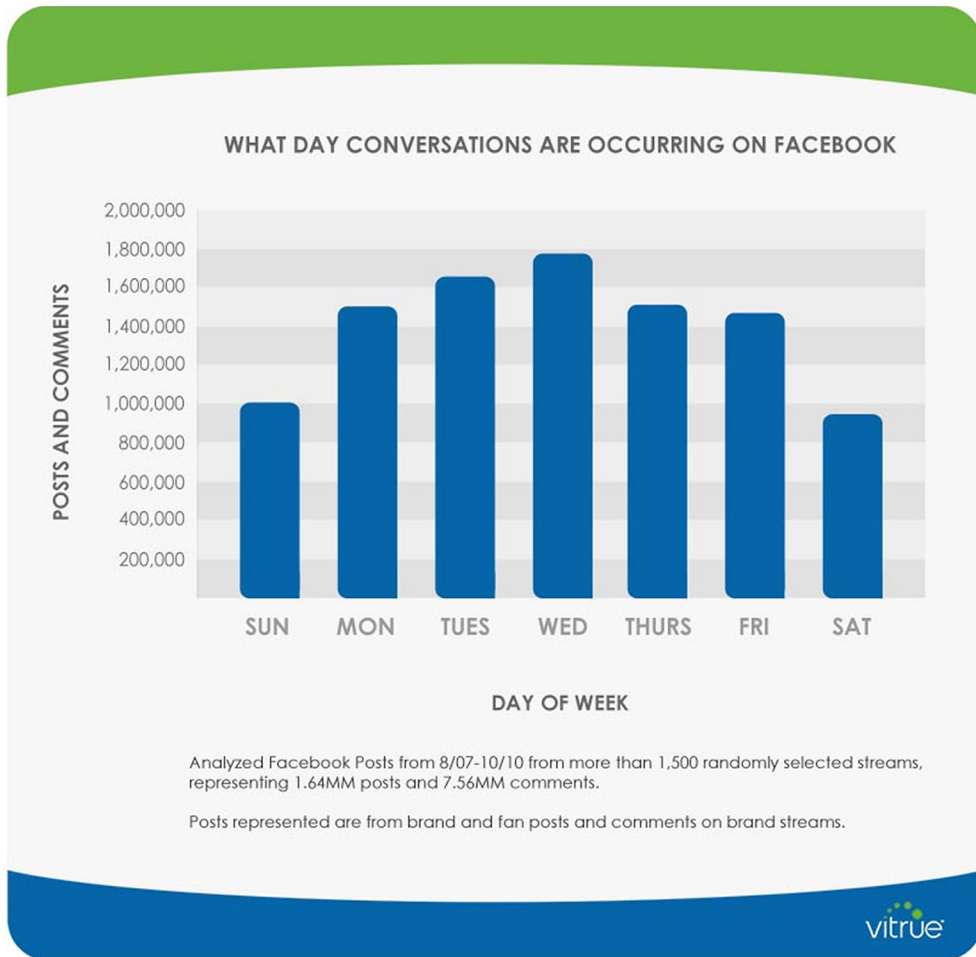- Posts and comments by minute of the hour.

**When are Fans on Facebook?**

Highest/Lowest Interaction Across the Days of the Week:

According to Nielsen (May 4, 2010), Facebook and Twitter have made the most significant gains in user activity since last year: 69% and 45% in the US, respectively across all social networks. This impressive growth highlights the gravitational pull Facebook has for its users to connect, share and communicate with their friends as well as brands and community pages.

Marketers are still learning what to say, when to publish messages and how to best manage their communities to optimize a two-way communication with their fans. A starting place is to understand when their fans are posting on Facebook. Let's start by referencing our prior white paper that illustrated the days of the week that brands would receive the most engagement on their posts, where engagement is defined as shares, likes and comments. Interestingly in this chart we see that Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday are overall more effective than Saturday or Sunday.

**POST TYPE EFFECTIVENESS BY DAY OF WEEK**

| | |
|---|---|
| 5.00% | |
| 4.00% | |
| 3.00% | |
| 2.00% | |
| 1.00% | |
| 0.00% | Sunday  Monday  Tuesday  Wednesday  Thursday  Friday  Saturday |

Effectiveness is measured by the gross interaction (i.e. comments, likes and shares) divided by the number of fans for a particular stream

Source: Anatomy of a Facebook Post, A Vitrue White Paper, September 2010

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## WHAT DAY CONVERSATIONS ARE OCCURRING ON FACEBOOK

POSTS AND COMMENTS

| | |
|---|---|
| 2,000,000 | |
| 1,800,000 | |
| 1,600,000 | |
| 1,400,000 | |
| 1,200,000 | |
| 1,000,000 | |
| 800,000 | |
| 600,000 | |
| 400,000 | |
| 200,000 | |

SUN    MON    TUES    WED    THURS    FRI    SAT

DAY OF WEEK

Analyzed Facebook Posts from 8/07-10/10 from more than 1,500 randomly selected streams, representing 1.64MM posts and 7.56MM comments.

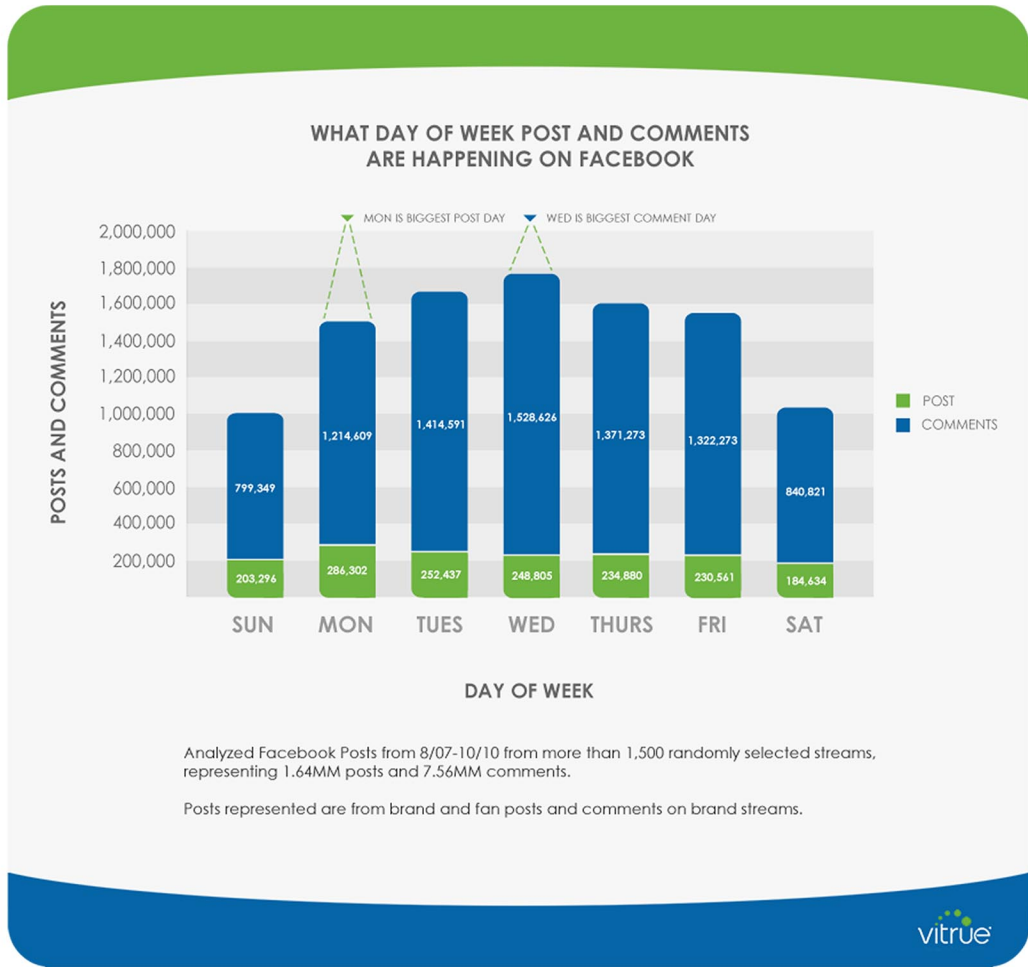Posts represented are from brand and fan posts and comments on brand streams.

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Our new data set, as illustrated in the chart above, outlines the days of the week by fan and brand measuring total conversation (posts and comments) volume with brand Pages.

We see the highest volume of conversation day is Wednesday, and the lowest volume is Sunday. Wednesday overall receives 77% more interactions than Sunday, but edges out Tuesday and Thursday by 7% and 11% more interactions respectively.

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To further evaluate this conversation volume, we broke down our analysis to show the difference between a post and a comment. In this classification it is important to note that a post or comment can be made by a brand or a fan of a brand. We learned that the highest posting day is Monday, with Wednesday being the 5th lowest posting day of the week. But the highest comment day is Wednesday, edging out Tuesday by 7% higher comments.



**WHAT DAY OF WEEK POST AND COMMENTS ARE HAPPENING ON FACEBOOK**

MON IS BIGGEST POST DAY     WED IS BIGGEST COMMENT DAY

POSTS AND COMMENTS

POST
COMMENTS

| | SUN | MON | TUES | WED | THURS | FRI | SAT |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Comments | 799,349 | 1,214,609 | 1,414,591 | 1,528,626 | 1,371,273 | 1,322,273 | 840,821 |
| Post | 203,296 | 286,302 | 252,437 | 248,805 | 234,880 | 230,561 | 184,634 |

**DAY OF WEEK**

Analyzed Facebook Posts from 8/07-10/10 from more than 1,500 randomly selected streams, representing 1.64MM posts and 7.56MM comments.

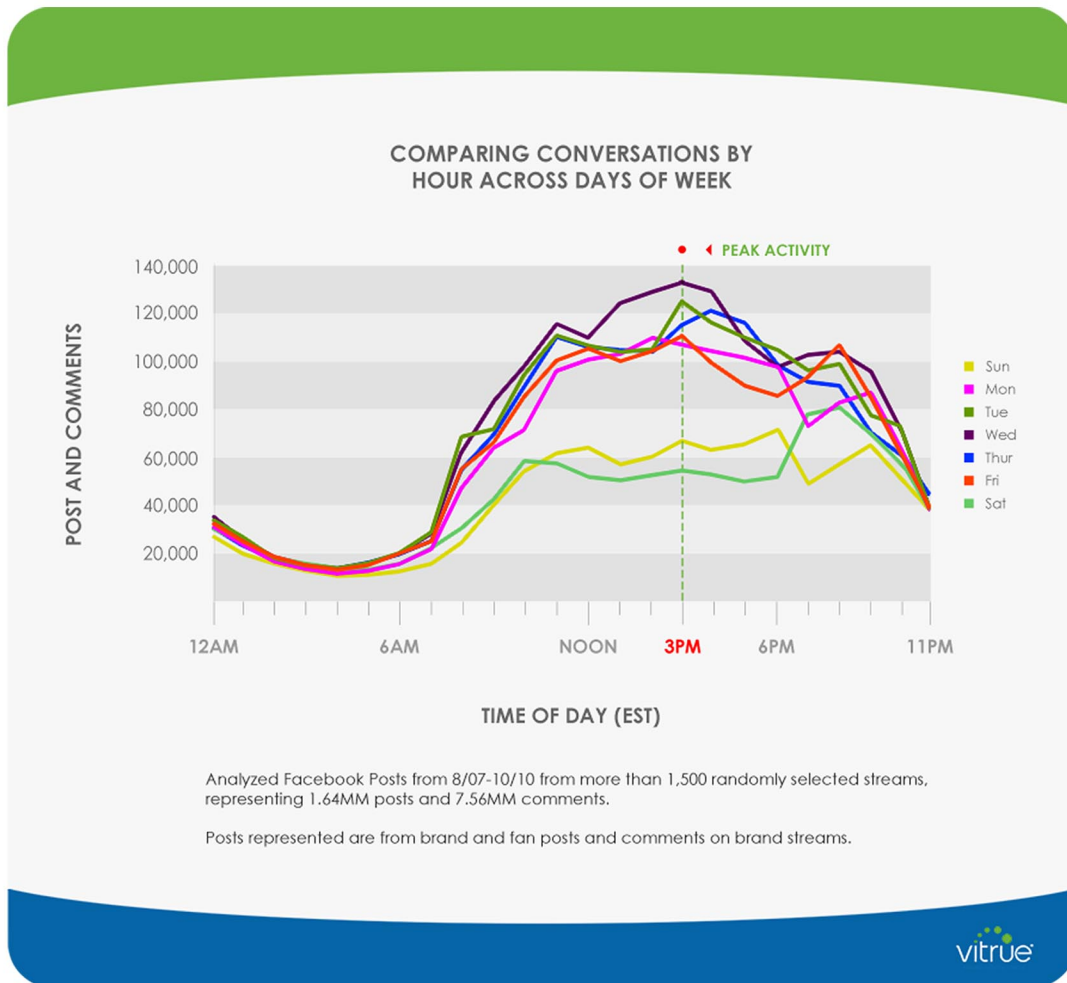Posts represented are from brand and fan posts and comments on brand streams.

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So it appears that most fans and brands are likely to begin their week with a higher posting frequency on Mondays than other days of the week to perhaps correspond to their weekend or Monday conversation starters. But that is not necessarily corresponding with when fans or brands are commenting on posts.

Key Takeaway: Fan engagement does not start and stop at the point of publishing a message on any given Tuesday, Wednesday or Friday, but occurs all week long when brands should connect to their fans via the comments throughout the entire cycle of conversation. Publish your message and then in a two-way conversation with your fans as they respond to your posts and/or post their own messages on your brand's news feed.
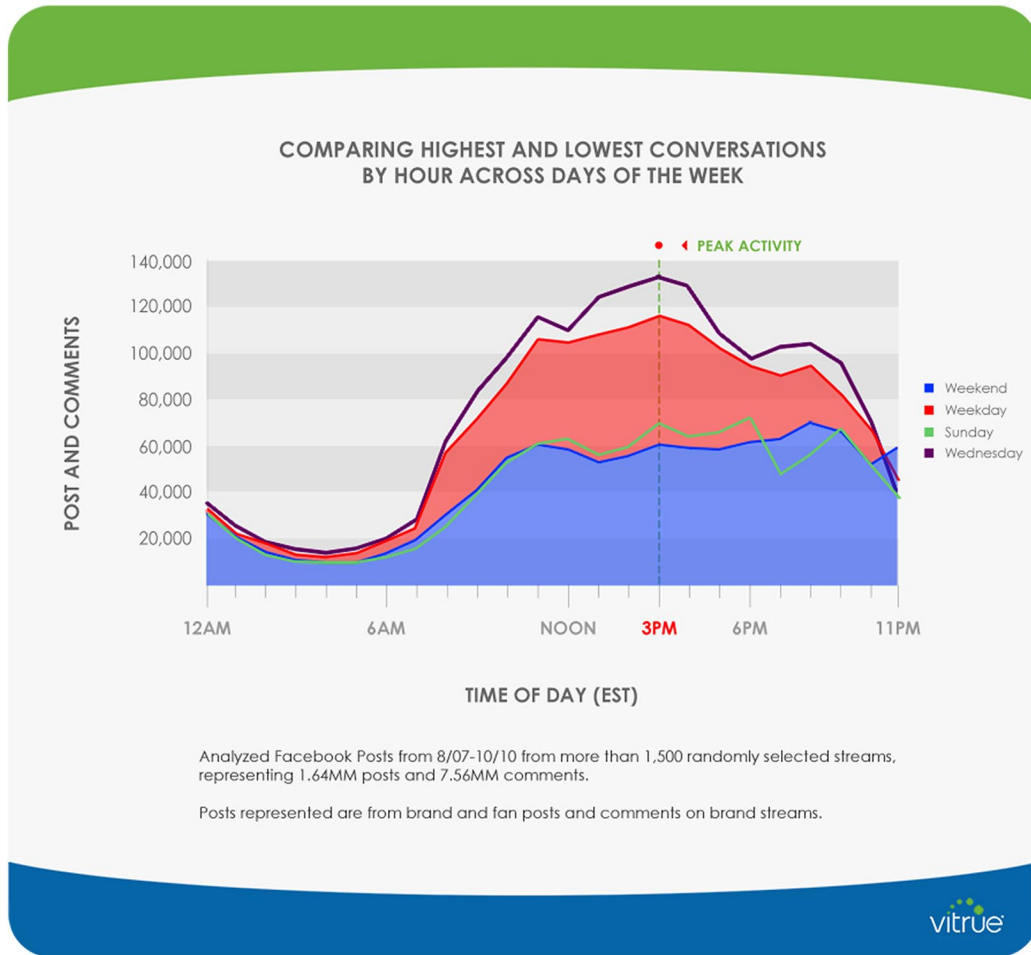
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## An Integrated View of Conversation Volume by Day and Hour

When breaking down the time spent on Facebook, as measured by total number of conversations, there are two interesting data sets.  First, we looked at Facebook conversations by day of week by hour of day. In this chart you will notice that the peak conversation by day of week is Wednesday and the peak time is 3pm EST.

### COMPARING CONVERSATIONS BY HOUR ACROSS DAYS OF WEEK



Analyzed Facebook Posts from 8/07-10/10 from more than 1,500 randomly selected streams, representing 1.64MM posts and 7.56MM comments.

Posts represented are from brand and fan posts and comments on brand streams.

The second view demonstrates the aggregate of weekday and weekend performance with the best and worst days highlighted.



**COMPARING HIGHEST AND LOWEST CONVERSATIONS
BY HOUR ACROSS DAYS OF THE WEEK**

● ◄ PEAK ACTIVITY

POST AND COMMENTS

140,000
120,000
100,000
80,000
60,000
40,000
20,000

12AM    6AM    NOON    3PM    6PM    11PM

■ Weekend
■ Weekday
■ Sunday
■ Wednesday

TIME OF DAY (EST)

Analyzed Facebook Posts from 8/07-10/10 from more than 1,500 randomly selected streams, representing 1.64MM posts and 7.56MM comments.

Posts represented are from brand and fan posts and comments on brand streams.

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Other data highlights:

- There are three main spikes in Facebook post activity: 11am, 3pm and 8pm EST during the workweek;

- The highest spike is at 3pm EST, which equates to noon/lunchtime PST;

- 11am EST is also 8am PST, so we see a spike at 11am EST when west coast is coming online in the morning; and

- 8pm EST post and commenting spike accounts for post-dinner time and 5pm PST checking in before people leave work.

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Correlating this to our prior study that showed posting in the morning was 65% more effective as measured by shares, likes and comments, this recent data indicates that Publishing in the earlier hours as people come online means that brands actually have a better chance of participating in two-way conversations with fans throughout a weekday time frame of 10-5pm.
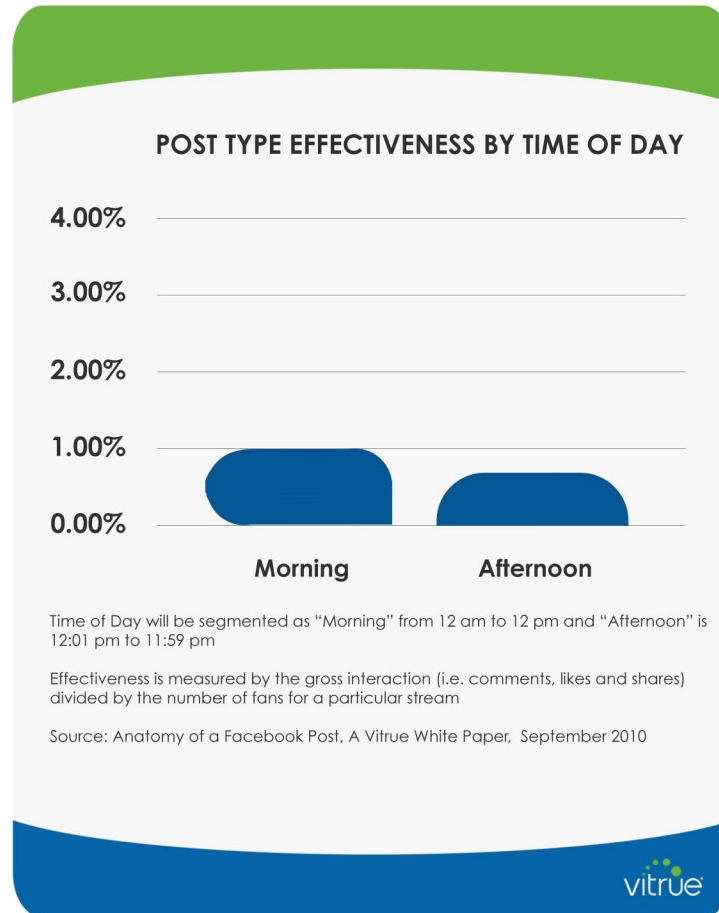
The lowest posting activity occurs on Sunday between 2am and 6am EST.  Accounting for time zone differences, that is a period of time when most of the U.S. population, marketers and fans alike, are asleep and not on Facebook.  In other words, marketers are also not posting during this time unless it was previously scheduled.  Even if we isolate the "sleeping" factor of 2am and 6am EST, it is evident that less interaction is occurring on Saturday and Sunday during the prime awake hours with the exception of a rise in interactions on Saturday between 7pm and 10pm that eventually mirrors the downward curve of Monday-Friday after 10pm.

Key takeaway: Marketers should optimize their community management to follow their morning posts during the workweek.  Despite the 24x7 nature of the Facebook medium, messaging is really optimized by engagement through the news feed Monday-Friday 9am to 8pm EST with key times being 11am, 3pm and 8pm EST.
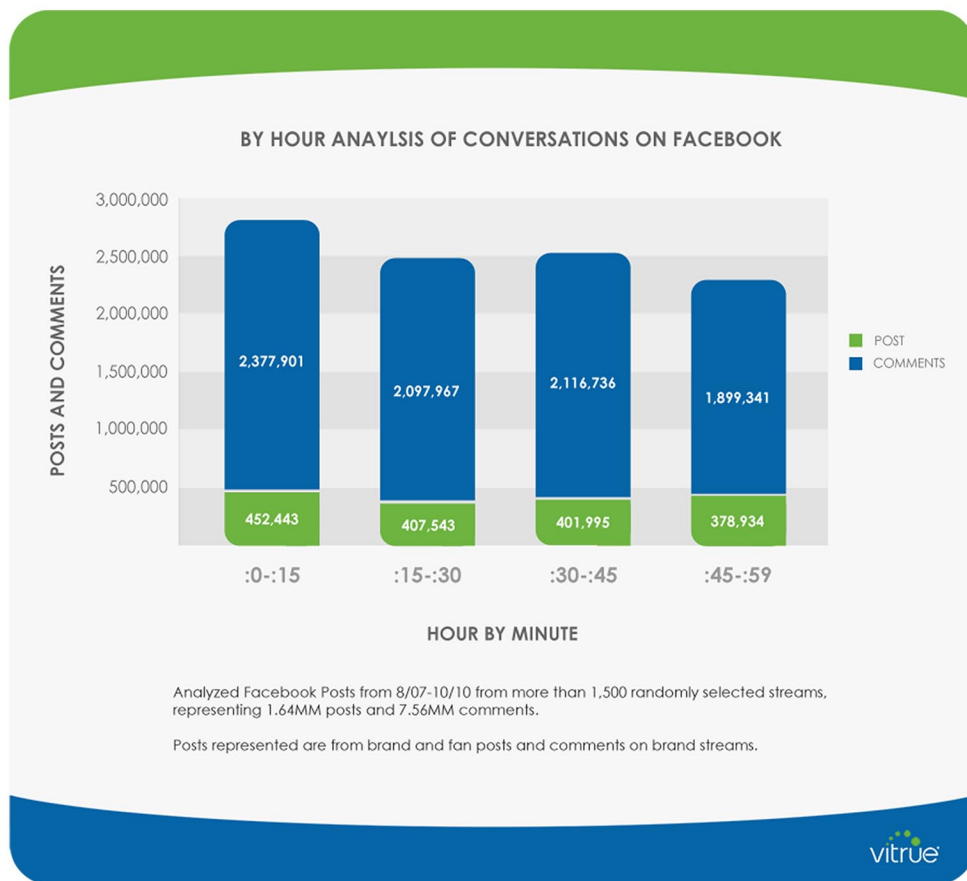
## Fan Interactions by Minute

In our previous white paper we looked at when a brand's posts were most effective in terms of time of day. We found that overall posts made in the morning were more effective by 39.7%.

**POST TYPE EFFECTIVENESS BY TIME OF DAY**

| | Morning | Afternoon |
|---|---|---|
| | ~0.9% | ~0.6% |

Time of Day will be segmented as "Morning" from 12 am to 12 pm and "Afternoon" is 12:01 pm to 11:59 pm

Effectiveness is measured by the gross interaction (i.e. comments, likes and shares) divided by the number of fans for a particular stream

Source: Anatomy of a Facebook Post, A Vitrue White Paper, September 2010

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As brands publish their content into the Facebook ecosystem posts made in the morning are presented throughout the day and can be further fueled by communtiy managers continuing to comment on their fans' comments and unique posts as the conversation volume rises throughout the day. (One important note, there are unknowns in the composition of Facebook's algorithm which impact the surfacing of news in users' live feeds versus news feeds which must be considered.)
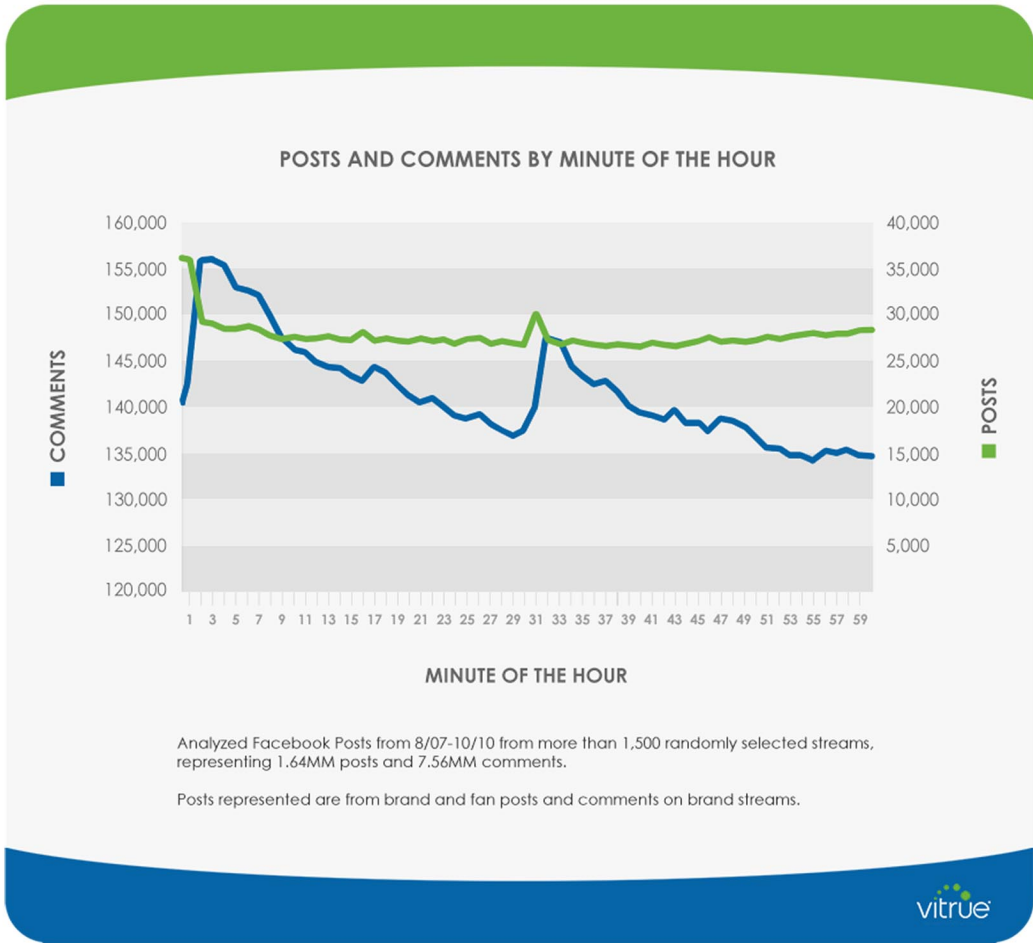
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In our new data, as illustrated in the chart below, we have taken a more detailed view of activity by minute of the hour. We see the strongest part of an hour is from :0-:15 minutes, or the top of the hour, and that also corresponds with the most number of posts. The second highest post interaction is the beginning of the second half of the hour (or the :30-:45 minute window). There is 24% more activity in the top of the hour than in the bottom of the hour and 12% better than the middle of the hour.

## BY HOUR ANAYLSIS OF CONVERSATIONS ON FACEBOOK

POSTS AND COMMENTS

| Hour by Minute | Comments | Post |
|---|---|---|
| :0-:15 | 2,377,901 | 452,443 |
| :15-:30 | 2,097,967 | 407,543 |
| :30-:45 | 2,116,736 | 401,995 |
| :45-:59 | 1,899,341 | 378,934 |

HOUR BY MINUTE

Analyzed Facebook Posts from 8/07-10/10 from more than 1,500 randomly selected streams, representing 1.64MM posts and 7.56MM comments.

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There are a few interesting theories associated with this data set:

- Since we know these conversations are happening during the workday, people are potentially starting and finishing activities, such as activity, meetings, phone calls and projects at the top and ½ hour increments;

- There are a greater volume of posts at the top of the hour, driving more interaction with the news feed by fans; and

- The last segment of an hour (i.e. :45-:59 window), people are potentially engaged and occupied in a task or activity other than Facebook.

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If we view this data in a slightly different way we see posts and comments by minute across the hour of a day. While there is a spike in posts at the top of the hour, there is a fairly consistent volume of posts throughout the hour.  However, there is a dramatic drop off in the activity or engagement with these messages beyond the first three minutes of posting activity and the :31-:33 minute of an hour. Fans ability to interact with the messages, Facebook real time updating of messages into the news feed and potentially other factors like unique publishing IDs to prevent message grouping, might all be contributing factors to this clustering at the top and middle of the hour.



**POSTS AND COMMENTS BY MINUTE OF THE HOUR**

MINUTE OF THE HOUR

Analyzed Facebook Posts from 8/07-10/10 from more than 1,500 randomly selected streams, representing 1.64MM posts and 7.56MM comments.

Posts represented are from brand and fan posts and comments on brand streams.

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## Summary

The goal behind our series of white papers is to apply real-world analytics to determine the most effective Facebook publishing practices for marketers. We hope our research helps marketers increase their Facebook marketing "ROE" (return on engagement). We strongly believe that Facebook is viewed as a strategic and analytical medium. With Facebook topping 500MM fans and growing daily, we need data to analyze and determine precise windows to most effectively engage and reach consumers. Vitrue manages more than 2,000 Facebook Pages, over 300 million fans, and moderate over 5 million comments and 700,000 posts. We will continue to monitor and explore the data to consistently provide marketers with real-world insights to better plan and execute Facebook publishing strategies.

We'll keep the data and insights coming to help to continue to push the social media marketing industry forward.

## About Vitrue

Vitrue is the leading provider of social media publishing software focused on providing solutions for optimal social media communications across the vast social web. Anchored by its industry-leading Vitrue SRM (Social Relationship Management) Platform, Vitrue works with marketers of all sizes, from global brands to local businesses, as well as agencies large and small, to deliver a comprehensive solution to manage, measure and maximize value across Facebook, Twitter and other social environments. The Vitrue SRM Platform's four main components—Vitrue Tabs, Vitrue Publisher, Vitrue Apps and Vitrue Mobile—deliver powerful creative, publishing, applications, measurement and mobile tools in a web-based interface. The Vitrue SRM is currently being used by global brands such as McDonald's, Best Buy, Kellogg Company, AMC Theatres, Project (RED) and 3M, to name a few.

Vitrue has been at the forefront of social media in terms of innovating, developing and intellectually leading the way. We want to use our platform knowledge and best practices to aggressively drive social media forward and continually strive for ways to help shape this ever-changing, ever-growing medium. We are committed to moving the industry forward and will continue to provide our findings to help shape discourse and debate.

Headquartered in Atlanta with offices in New York, Chicago, Cincinnati and San Francisco, Vitrue is a Facebook "Preferred Developer Consultant" and has received numerous industry accolades including the Red Herring Global 100 and OnMedia 100. For more information, visit www.vitrue.com.

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