

INTRODUCTION

SUBSCRIBERS, FANS, & FOLLOWERS is an ongoing research series that sets aside theories, assumptions, and widely held beliefs to deliver new insights and actionable advice about consumers' cross-channel preferences and behaviors. These unique reports draw on the experience of real consumers as they interact with brands through Email, Facebook, and Twitter, collected through extensive research, focus groups, and online surveys.

To date, SUBSCRIBERS, FANS, & FOLLOWERS has explored why and how consumers engage—and disengage—with brands across the most popular interactive marketing channels: Email, Facebook, and Twitter. We've identified the unique characteristics of each channel and shared key strategies for building an effective, integrated marketing program. We've also analyzed the "mobile revolution" and how it's changing the landscape of interactive marketing.

In this report, we'll take a deep dive into Facebook's "I ike" feature, including:

- How consumers use "Like" within Facebook and on other sites
- What consumers expect after they "Like" a page on Facebook
- How marketers are "getting it right" and wrong – on Facebook

Perhaps most importantly, we'll explore whether marketers should be interpreting "Like" as permission to market to their fans, and provide actionable advice for deepening the customer relationship that begins with a simple "Like."

OVERVIEW: THE MEANING OF "LIKE"

Since the beginning of time, scholars and philosophers have searched for the meaning of life. And for well over a year now, marketers have similarly been trying to unlock the meaning of "Like."

But first things first. What exactly is a Facebook "Like?"

When ExactTarget first began the SUBSCRIBERS, FANS, & FOLLOWERS series in 2010, consumers could interact with brands on Facebook by becoming a "Fan." In April 2010, Facebook replaced its "Become a Fan" functionality with "Like." In rolling out this change, Facebook provided the following explanation:

Introducing the Like button

Starting today, people will be able to connect with your Page by clicking "Like" rather than "Become a Fan." We hope this action will feel much more lightweight, and that will increase the number of connections made across the site.

Although the terminology changed, the core functionality remained the same. Whether consumers were becoming fans or simply clicking "Like," the essential purpose was to establish a connection with the brand, and the connection was announced through a story in the consumer's News Feed. This change also brought greater consistency to the site, as consumers were already accustomed to using the "Like" button for status updates, links, and other content posted by their friends.





FAN VS. "LIKE"

The flip side of this "more lightweight," consistent terminology is increased ambiguity. Being a fan carries a certain implication of affinity, brand loyalty... maybe even a hint of devotion. It's hard to say the same thing about "Like."

In fact, according to a Mashable report at the time of the switch, people were clicking "Like" almost twice as many times each day as they were becoming fans—an indicator that "Like" was viewed as a less significant endorsement. Our own research in May 2011 also supports the idea that "Like" isn't quite the same as being a fan.

- Only 42% of active Facebook users agree that marketers should interpret "Like" to mean they are a fan or advocate of the company
- The other 58% are either indecisive (33%) or disagree with this statement (25%)

Ultimately, the usefulness of the Facebook "Like" will be measured in terms of both the quantity and the quality of the brand interactions it drives. Brands are undoubtedly connecting with a larger number of consumers on Facebook as a result of being "Liked," but the value, depth, and duration of those new relationships is questionable.

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DO YOU "LIKE" ME?

The first stirrings of young love are confusing, fragile, and completely unique to each individual. Some adolescent couples spend days—or even weeks—holding hands in the hallways and sneaking kisses in the coat room. Others are "boyfriend and girlfriend" in name only, enjoying the status that coupledom affords without any actual conversation or physical contact.

In much the same way, there is no universal understanding of "Like," because it depends entirely on the individual user and the context in which the "Like" button is used.

Overall, 93% of Facebook users (or approximately 60% of the US online population) engage in some form of "Like" behavior at least monthly.

The most common of these are related to posts by friends, followed by clicking the "Like" button on sites outside of Facebook. Use of "Like" is less frequent with regard to company pages or posts made by companies.

At the time this report was published (September 2011), Facebook is in the process of phasing out the "Share" feature. Our survey results indicate that use of the "Share" feature is relatively uncommon—although some people would rather "Share" stories related to politics or natural disasters (when "Like" seems inappropriate), they find little value in having a separate button for sharing when it's so easy to just copy and paste these items into a status update. Thus the loss of "Share" will likely pass without much notice.



N=626 active Facebook users who say they have "Liked" at least one brand

"Sometimes it's like saying to your friends, 'I'm hip, I like cool companies.' Sometimes I 'Like' companies to get news about new product releases. A while ago, I 'Liked' Apple iTunes because they gave out free music. So discounts are also a big deal." —Antoinette (Female, age 43)

THE MEANING OF "LIKE"

FOR FRIENDS

"Like" has many different meanings and can be used in different ways. The meaning of "Like" is highly dependent on the context in which the "Like button appears. Our survey respondents told us that, with regard to posts by their friends, "Like" is a quick way to express approval for a specific piece of content (status, picture, etc.)—it's casual and doesn't require any real thought or consideration.

"It's only a vague way to communicate how I feel. If I have something important to say, I write an actual comment." —Jeremy (Male, age 24)

THE MEANING OF "LIKE"

FOR COMPANIES/BRANDS

"Like" becomes more complicated when it's applied to brands. According to our research, the consumer's age is a significant factor in determining what "Like" means in this context.

Younger consumers (aged 15-24) tend to use "Like" for purposes of self-expression and public endorsement of a brand. They consider it a worthwhile bonus when they receive coupons or deals from the company as a result of their "Like," but accessing these deals is not their primary motivation for "Liking" companies.

Consumers aged 25 and up are more likely to expect something of value in exchange for their "Like." These individuals are less interested in general company chit-chat, and are quick to "Unlike" companies that do not follow up with discounts, relevant product information, or exclusive offers—kind of like breaking up with someone right after a disappointing Valentine's Day.

THE MEANING OF "LIKE"

OUTSIDE OF FACEBOOK

Interpreting the meaning of a "Like" on content outside of Facebook can be a major challenge for marketers. Consumers tend to view this as a way of bookmarking content and sharing information with friends—not a form of consent for marketing.

"Sometimes I 'Like' these things so I can refer back to them and alert my friends about them." —Bryan (Male, age 36)



WHO LIKES "LIKE?"

Facebook users are clearly divided into two camps: those who "Like" company pages and those who don't. In total, 45% of Facebook users say they "Like" companies at least once a month, while 35% say they never "Like" company pages on Facebook (although they may use "Like" for other purposes, such as friends' status updates).

Our research shows that, among US Facebook users who have "Liked" at least one brand, the average number of companies/brands they "Like" is 14. According to Facebook's own statistics, the average user is connected to 80 community pages, groups, and events. (This discrepancy is explained by the fact that Facebook's statistic includes more than just company pages.)

NUMBER OF COMPANIES "LIKED" ON FACEBOOK, BY AGE





I "LIKE" YOU...SO NOW WHAT?

Consumers expressed a wide variety of expectations when asked what should happen after clicking the "Like" button. But the most common responses were, predictably, related to exclusive content, discounts, and company updates.

People who "Like" a lot of brands (11 or more) are much more likely to expect some type of reward for their "Like." They are more driven by the prospect of exclusive content, sales, and events (70% vs. 53% for those who like 10 or fewer brands), and by the possibility of discounts or promotions (69% vs. 53% for those who like 10 or fewer brands).

Frequent brand-likers also express a greater expectation of having the company's name appear in their profile, sharing brand information with friends, and interacting with the brand. Clearly, these individuals—your core Facebook "influencers"—have a strong interest in sharing information and helping others find deals.

"I expect to be given advance notice of upcoming deals, or an 'insiders' deal on products or services that the normal public will not receive."

—Leif (Male, age 23)

EXPECTATIONS AFTER "LIKING" A COMPANY ON FACEBOOK

I expect to gain access to exclusive content, events, or sales 58% I expect to receive discounts or promotions through Facebook 58% I expect to receive updates about the company, person, or organization in my Newsfeed I expect the company to be able to post updates, photos, or video to my Newsfeed **FACEBOOK USERS AGED 18-26** 38% I expect to share with friends, family, and/or coworkers I expect the name of the company, brand, or 37% organization to show up on my profile I do not expect anything to happen 37% I expect the company to send me more relevant content based on the information in my public profile (e.g., age) I expect to interact with page owner 28% (e.g., brand, personality, etc.) I expect the company to be able to access information 27% in my public profile (e.g., age, gender, interests, etc.) I expect the company to contact me through other 24% channels (e.g. email, postal mail, Twitter, etc.)

EXPECTATIONS OF WHAT SHOULD HAPPEN FOLLOWING A "LIKE" ALSO VARY BY AGE.

have the lowest expectations of receiving something in exchange

is mainly a form of public selfexpression and brand advocacy.

AMONG THOSE AGED 27-34. expectations are somewhat higher. the opportunity to receive updates and savings.

FACEBOOK USERS AGED 35-51

they want something relevant and valuable, whether it's information or discounts. Moreover, individuals in this age bracket don't hesitate to "Unlike" a brand if it doesn't live up to their expectations.

DOES "LIKE" EQUAL PERMISSION?

If so many consumers expect to receive discounts and exclusive content when they "Like" a brand, then "Like" must be the same as permission to market, right?

Wrong.

In fact, 39% of Facebook users who "Like" at least one brand say that marketers should **never** interpret their "Like" as permission to post marketing messages that would appear in their News Feed. The majority of these consumers think that it's "sometimes" okay to receive marketing messages after they "Like" a company. And while that's not exactly the clear answer you were hoping for, what *is* clear is that it's important not to read too much into a "Like."

Marketers must walk a fine line with this issue. Facebook users understand that they're giving some form of permission with their "Like," as many of them expect to see brand-related posts in their News Feed. But for some, that's as far as they intend for the relationship to go. They aren't looking for highly-targeted, hard sell marketing messages, and they don't want their "Like" to be taken too seriously. Deals are one thing—since they benefit the consumer without asking anything of them—but heavy-handed marketing tactics are inconsistent with the use of "Like" as a casual expression of general approval.



"'Liking' a brand is too casual an action for marketers to assume that I have enough interest to justify accessing my personal information. If they want that information, they should ask for it another way." —Jason (Male, age 25)

From a broader CRM perspective, our research shows that accessing personal information through Facebook is viewed as inappropriate by the majority of consumers—and that there's a great deal of confusion about what information is actually available to marketers.

In reality, demographic information about Facebook fans (age, gender, location) is only available to marketers in the aggregate—no individual information can be accessed without the consumer's permission, typically though a custom Facebook app. But consumers are understandably protective of their personal information on Facebook. Marketers need to respect this caution and avoid any activity that gives the impression of violating privacy.

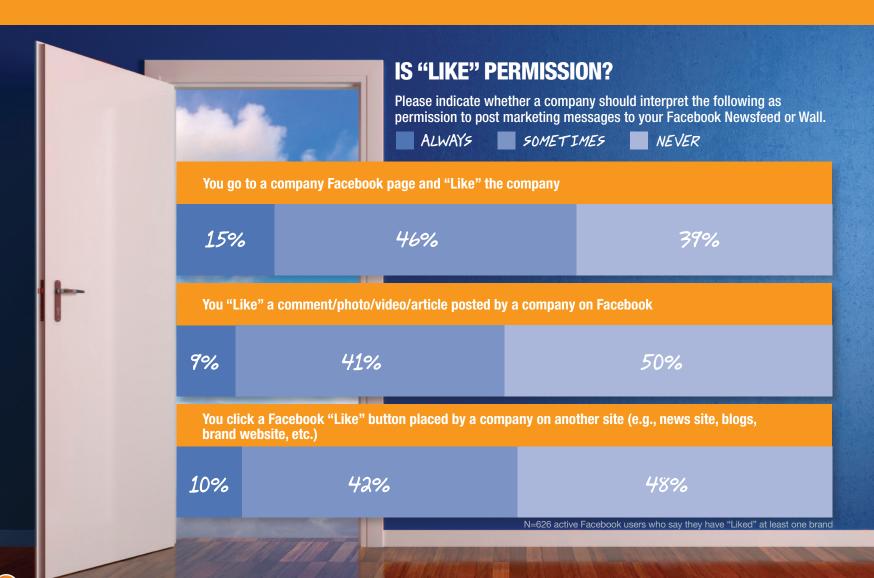
Overall, 56% of our survey respondents indicated that marketers should not access even public profile information after they "Like" a company on Facebook—but attitudes vary with age.

- Facebook users aged 25-34 are most comfortable with allowing marketers to access their public profile information, but even they are largely against the practice. Only 24% believe marketers should access their information, compared to 47% who think they shouldn't. (The remaining 29% are undecided.)
- Users aged 45 and older are strenuously opposed, with 70% saying marketers should not access their public profile information, and only 10% raising no objection.

In short, "Like" is a form of permission, but it's a permission that's extremely passive and limited in scope. People are clearly uncomfortable with the idea of having marketers access information in their profile—and they're even more uncomfortable with marketers accessing information related to their friends and family members. Marketers who do so risk alienating the very customers whose business they're trying to attract.

To this end, "Like" does not equate to permission for one-to-one marketing, as articulated years ago by Seth Godin. Instead, it represents consent to receive broadcast marketing messages, while leaving the door open (or at least unlocked) for taking the relationship further. Marketers need to focus on ways to engage their community of fans and seek permission to communicate with them through other channels.

"I think I am giving them permission to market to me by "Liking" a company, in that their posts will appear in my News Feed. But I'm not giving them permission to email me, or post on my Wall, or post on my friends' Walls." —Judi (Female, age 31)



CROSS-CHANNEL ENGAGEMENT DRIVES STELLAR RESULTS FOR NASA

From 1981 to 2001, NASA's space shuttle program captured the imagination of a nation. Spanning 30 years and 135 missions, the program concluded with the final mission of the space shuttle Atlantis in July 2011.

In the months leading up to the final shuttle mission, anticipation and public interest were gaining momentum. In order to more fully engage this growing audience, NASA decided to launch a broad-scale social media campaign.

Using ExactTarget SocialPages™ and CoTweet Enterprise social media management platform, NASA successfully translated attention from the final shuttle mission into a larger, more engaged audience—with the potential for ongoing conversation beyond the shuttle's final landing and ultimate retirement.



SUCCESS STORY: "IMAGE OF THE DAY"

While NASA already had a well-established following on Twitter, the final shuttle mission presented a unique opportunity to drive deeper engagement on Facebook. NASA's social media team wanted to create a compelling daily "event" on Facebook, with the goal of drawing visitors back to its page on a regular basis and building a stickier brand experience.

In collaboration with ExactTarget, NASA utilized SocialPages to create a new "Image of the Day" tab on their Facebook page. Content on this tab is autopopulated using photos and captions from an already-popular RSS feed on the agency's website. Fans have a strong incentive for repeat visits, as the image and caption are automatically refreshed each day.

Fans who "Like" NASA's Facebook page receive "Image of the Day" updates in their News Feed. Powered by ExactTarget's CoTweet RSS Publisher, these daily posts include a link to the updated content. "Image of the Day" links are also posted to the @NASA Twitter feed, giving fans the ability to choose how they'd like to interact with NASA.

As a result of this campaign, NASA has seen sustained growth in Facebook engagement and interaction:

- Active users per month increased from 300,960 to 364,000 (up 21%)
- Impressions per day increased from 1,377,000 to 1,984,000 (up 44%)
- Interactions ("Likes," comments, etc.) per day increased from 2,700 to 4,300 (up 59%)

"Before this campaign, our most compelling content was only available to users who visited NASA's website," says Stephanie Schierholz, NASA's social media manager. "Using ExactTarget SocialPages and CoTweet, we now can drive that information through our Facebook page and Twitter feed with minimal work and maximum effectiveness."

CONNECT WITH NASA:



http://www.facebook.com/NASA



@NASA

WHY NOT "LIKE?"

As mentioned previously, fully 35% of Facebook users report that they never "Like" company pages. And even those who do "Like" brands exercise caution when clicking the "Like" button.



REASONS FOR NOT "LIKING" COMPANIES ON FACEBOOK

I don't want to be bombarded with messages or advertisements

I don't want to give any companies access to my profile information

31%

I don't want to push things into friends' News Feeds

29%

I don't want companies to contact me through Facebook

23%

I don't see the benefit of it

I don't want to impose my views or interests on my friends

8% I'm indifferent — I haven't found a company worth "Liking"

I don't understand what it means to "Like" a company on Facebook

N=626 active Facebook users who say they have 'Liked" at least one brand

CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS

According to our research, 12% of these Facebook users avoid the "Like" button either because they don't understand what it means or because they haven't found a company worth "Liking." That leaves 88% of users who understand what "Like" means and have affinity for one or more companies, but consciously choose not to use the "Like" button.

One reason for this conscientious objection is consumers' ongoing love/ hate relationship with brands on Facebook. (As reported in SUBSCRIBERS, FANS, & FOLLOWERS #8, 51% of consumers want to see marketing posts on Facebook after "Liking" a company, while 40% don't want to see marketing posts.)

Many people don't want messages from companies clogging up their Facebook News Feed-essentially "commoditizing" friendship, and turning personal relationships into economic relationships. They find this idea distasteful and prefer to use Facebook as a way to connect with family and friends.

Another sentiment that was expressed frequently: consumers are uncomfortable with the idea of marketers accessing information about their friends-or even who their friends are. Fully 62% of people in our survey group believe that information about friends should be off limits.

"I definitely do not want to share my friends list with companies. That is infringing on my friends, who have nothing to say about it. Most of the time I will deny access and 'Unlike' them immediately." — Bethany (Female, age 41)



Some Facebook users are simply uncomfortable with the idea of endorsing brands to their friends. They don't believe Facebook is a place to impose their personal preferences and beliefs on others. According to a recent comScore report, "The Power of Like," Facebook users spend more time on their News Feed than anywhere else on the site. Sensitive to the fact that their Facebook "Likes" will be shared through the News Feed, some users are hesitant to "Like" brands and push content on their friends.

This is a major philosophical difference between people who don't "Like" any brands and those who "Like" a lot of brands—as mentioned earlier, those who "Like" 11 or more brands tend to view their sharing as a service to family and friends.

Given the strong protective instincts expressed in our focus groups, marketers should be cautious about assuming that friends of their fans are "fans by association." A misstep in this area could lead to negative brand impressions and "Unlikes," rather than an expansion of your fan base.



PRIVACY PROTECTORS

Lack of clarity around how marketers use personal information prompts many people to keep their private information private—and this includes avoiding "Likes" on Facebook. In fact 62% of consumers say they know little or nothing about how information like age, gender, interests, and location are used by companies, services, and websites.

Additionally, 73% of consumers say they exercise some degree of caution about what they share about themselves online because they don't know how that information will be used by companies.

"I'm a little embarrassed to admit that I'm pretty unaware about how my personal info is used... lassume that bigger, well-known brands have measures in place to protect my information. I'm more leery of smaller, less-known brands. The same goes for brands I 'Like' on Facebook." — Nicole (Female, age 29)

73% of consumers say they exercise some degree of caution about what they share about themselves online.

WINNERS AND LOSERS IN...



In the game of "Like," the rules are complicated. Consumers make up the rules as they go along—and they're subject to change without notice. The winners of the game are companies that successfully learn to play by the rules.

So what can marketers do to land in the winners' circle?



SET THE RIGHT EXPECTATIONS... AND DELIVER ON THEM

Marketers can win the game of "Like" by making it clear what the consumer will receive as a result of their connection through Facebook, and then following through on that promise. This includes letting people know whether they can expect coupons, deals, giveaways, and updates. This is further supported by Nielsen Norman Group usability studies, which reveal that many users don't leverage social sharing tools because they don't know what to expect when they use them. Providing clarity and context are critical in driving "Likes."

"I 'Like' a lot of different brands, and if they're all constantly posting then it's overwhelming." —Aaron, 23, Houston, TX



STAY IN TOUCH, BUT DON'T OVER-COMMUNICATE

Facebook users want brands to post engaging content, but marketers can become losers in the game of "Like" by posting too frequently, as your audience may start ignoring your posts or "Unlike" your brand. Consumers generally tell us that posting more than once a day becomes annoying. It's also important to post messages that are broad enough to engage a general audience, as hyper-targeted posts will miss the mark with large segments of your fans.



REWARD FANS FOR THEIR LOYALTY

Want to win the game of "Like?" Make your fans feel like winners! People who make the effort to "Like" your brand want to feel they're special and that you value them more than the average consumer. They want to be set apart as members of your exclusive "club," with access to VIP deals and insider information.

"Give me information about sales and events that are not broadcast to the general public. It makes me feel special and endears me to the brand." —Sue (Female, age 26)

REWARD AND YOUR FAME



KEEP YOUR PROMISES

DON'T OVER-POST

GET PERMISSION!

TWO-WAY STREET



KEEP IT LIGHT!

Be a winner in the game of "Like" by letting your fans play, too! Engage your audience and encourage them to interact with your brand by posing questions or asking for feedback. According to an April 2011 report by Buddy Media, brands can increase engagement by 15% by using posts that end in a question. Posts that ask fans to fill-in-the-blank are also a great way to boost interaction.

RESPECT SOCIAL MEDIA AS A

post on their Wall. They blow it when they do nothing but post."

"Brands get it right when they open a twoway communication by allowing people to

Remember-it's only a game! Facebook is a place where users go primarily for social interactions with family and friends. To fit into this casual, highly social environment, brands have to keep it fun and entertaining-an idea that we explored in SUBSCRIBERS, FANS, &

FOLLOWERS #5, Facebook X-Factors.

"I really like ABC Company, not only because they have coupons fairly often, but because they don't post too often and when they do, it's usually something funny or light-hearted."

—Bethany (Female, age 41)



DON'T ASSUME PERMISSION

As we've already discussed, failing to understand the limited permission implied by a "Like" is the surest way to be a loser in the game of "Like." Appropriate marketing means respecting consumers' personal information as privateeven if you get access to that information by default when the consumer "Likes" your brand. Early feedback on the impressive privacy restrictions built into the new Google+ social network demonstrates just how important this issue is to consumers.

"Companies have to realize that it's just as easy to 'Unlike' as it is to 'Like,' so if they don't approach the customer tactfully in their marketing, they may scare them off or lose their business for good." -Michael (Male, age 20)



SHOULD MARKETERS OFFER INCENTIVES TO "LIKE?"

A recent blog post by Jay Baer of Convince & Convert (www.convinceandconvert.com) explores the potential misappropriation of social media efforts when companies buy their "Likes."

The post describes how a national restaurant chain recently increased their Facebook fan base from 66,000 to more than 100,000 in a single day—a seemingly impressive feat, until you realize that this promotion had a potential cost of \$10 million! The "fine print" of this success story is that each of the restaurant's one million eClub subscribers was promised a \$10 gift card if 100,000 total "Likes" were tallied within the specified timeframe.

Since these individuals were clearly already fans of the restaurant—as existing eClub members—does this promotion actually demonstrate the power of social media? And more importantly, do "Likes" gained through incentive marketing have the same value as organic "Likes?" Given the relative ease of clicking "Like"—and "Unlike"—the chances of buying quality "Likes" are pretty slim.

Perhaps more importantly, tactics like this—and there are many examples—may be bad for both Facebook and its users. If people know their friends' "Likes" are given in exchange for some reward, they're less likely to be taken as honest expressions of brand loyalty.

Rather than offering incentives with some monetary value, marketers should consider tactics that leverage common interests to unite and expand their fan base. One great example of this is Clarisonic's recent campaign with "Look Good...Feel Better," a non-profit organization for people battling cancer. By adding a charitable component to their efforts, Clarisonic not only increased page views and "Like" activity, they also experienced heightened brand engagement long after the campaign ended!

"Rather than offering incentives with some monetary value, marketers should consider tactics that leverage common interests to unite and expand their fan community."

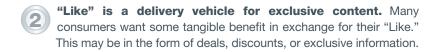




CONCLUSION

"Like" is deceptively simple and infinitely complex, with subtle variations in meaning that are highly dependent on context and the individual user.







"Like" is light-hearted. Time and again, consumers told us that brands shouldn't read too much into a "Like." It's casual and fun—and users expect casual, fun posts in return.

This last point is perhaps the most important take-away in this report. As a public declaration of brand affinity, "Like" is relatively lightweight. And by modifying their functionality, Facebook made this even less of an endorsement than being a fan.

Marketers should realize that "Like" is just the beginning of their relationship with a consumer—not the end goal. Thanks to Facebook's EdgeRank algorithm, "Likes" alone won't guarantee you a spot in the News Feed. The initial "Like" must be followed by engaging content and two-way conversations, or your brand is essentially invisible to the user on Facebook. Use your Facebook page as an opportunity to capture email addresses, not just "Likes." Ongoing engagement across channels is key to identifying your true fans and prioritizing them above those who merely "Like" you.

From there, it's important to take your engagement beyond Facebook. Expanding your communications to other, more personal, one-to-one channels (like email) is a critical step to building a deeper relationship—but only with permission! Crossing those lines without permission is likely to scare people off.

Getting real value out of your Facebook "Likes" is a complicated, but worthwhile, piece of the cross-channel marketing puzzle.

GIVE CONSUMERS EVEN MORE REASON TO "LIKE" YOU!

Wouldn't it be great if your company's Facebook page could have the same branded, creative look-and-feel as your website? With ExactTarget SocialPages™, it can!

ExactTarget SocialPages allows for a fully branded Facebook experience, using our Sites functionality to create "social landing pages." Create custom tabs on your company's Facebook page, host opt-in forms for your company newsletter, or display corporate blog posts with real-time updates. You can even spice up your Facebook page with videos, graphics, or other assets.

The possibilities are endless! If you can put it on a website using HTML, you can now put it on your Facebook page with ExactTarget SocialPages.

Want to see ExactTarget SocialPages in action? Check out the ExactTarget Facebook profile at www.facebook.com/exacttarget.

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