ABOUT FACE

Thoughts on how brands can leverage
recent changes to Facebook Pages,
to better socialize their presence
and engage their Fans

A free white paper from

The latest version of this document can be downloaded at http://AboutFace.TheAdvanceGuard.com

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About Face: Introduction

In March 2009, Facebook changed their Page offering for brands and businesses, introducing enhanced design and functionality options that more closely echoed the format of personal profiles.

We believe this is a fundamental shift, going beyond just a new layout. It compels brands to now use the Facebook platform "socially."

Until now, many brand presences on Pages have featured fixed design and layout at the top, using either static graphic panels or flash animations. Most of these simply linked off-network. Facebook social activity – wall posts, discussion groups, photo and video albums – were pushed "below the fold."

This hierarchy led to featured content remaining isolated from the type of social activity that has led to the mass viral sharing of content amongst regular Facebook users. And while some companies began to join this conversation – engaging in dialog with their fans – their ability to interact was limited by their "brand voice" appearing only on their Page.

(more)

About Face: Introduction _{cont}

With this rollout, everything changes. A brand's actions are now shared across the network, finally allowing them to participate as members of the community rather than remaining passive spectators.

Gone are the fixed graphic areas (or rather – moved elsewhere, as we'll discuss), replaced by a lifestream of activity that regular Facebook users will recognize from their own profiles. This activity stream – now the main landing area for Fans – will also be shared across the network, appearing in newsfeeds on Fans' homepages.

This offers a unique opportunity for brands to engage consumers, providing viral hooks to recruit new Fans, and recurring opportunities for existing Fans to re-engage.   But to take advantage of this, brands MUST be social – creating content, sharing status updates, posting photos, hosting events and making regular contributions to the Community.

Its an exciting opportunity, both for Companies that already have Facebook Pages, and those that want to take the first step.

This white paper has been written to provide some high level ideas to get you started.

About Face: Who is this white paper for?

This is not a beginners guide to Facebook.

Instead, it's written as a primer to those already familiar with Facebook through personal profiles and the old style Pages. It addresses the new upgrades, and provides ideas and thought starters to help you create – or improve – your brand's presence.

Its not written – or endorsed – by Facebook.

We're a marketing consultancy, who work with a number of clients on their Facebook strategy and implementation, and who are passionate about the potential this platform offers to brands to socialize their presence and engage their Fans.

As such, this white paper is a work in progress.

But then again, isn't everything?

About Face: How this white paper is structured

While there are many ways to start thinking about the building blocks for Facebook Pages, we have structured this document to follow the sequence of tabs you will see when you visit a new Page.

We'll talk about some of the options for each Tab in turn, to help you make decisions on how to initially set them up, and how to make the most of what they have to offer.

We'll then focus on Facebook-created applications, and how to use them to enhance your Page activity.

Finally we'll cover options like setting landing URLs for non-Fans, and thoughts on using the new Status Update function.

Note: There is some differences in terminology being used by Facebook – Facebook Pages, Fan Pages and Public Profiles. In this document we use the term Pages (capitalized) but the terms are interchangeable. We may update this in a future version.

About Face: Is that a Navbar I see before me?

| Wall | Info | Photos | Video | Events | Boxes |

The new design schema allows up to **six** visible tabs across the top of your brand's profile (see above example). As such, we believe this can be seen as a main navigation bar for your Pages. You have some control over the order, naming and function of these Tabs. We'll cover each of these in more detail in the following pages, but as an overview:

- **Wall** – All Facebook members land on this Tab by default, which always appears first on the Navbar. Treat this as your home page and as a chronological "lifestream" acting as the primary focus for all Fans. .

- **Info** – This is the second mandatory tab that needs to be completed in full for maximum effect. Available options will depend on your industry category.

- **Boxes** – a freeform area that allows you to display custom text, graphic and animated areas, as well as boxes associated with custom applications.

(more)

| Wall | Info | Photos | Video | Events | Boxes |

- **Several more visible tabs** that you control. These could be filled with existing applications, such as **Photos**, **Videos**, **Events**, **Discussions** – or could be completely customized with your own original content by using the **FBML** application.

The exact number of Tabs available for customization will depend on whether you remove the **Boxes** Tab, but there could be up to **four** extra Tabs visible at any time.

Each Tab has its own unique URL, so promotions and advertising – in fact, any link – can drive traffic to a specific Tab. This could be particularly useful for a sweepstakes, promoting an event, or featuring a specific piece of content. You can also define which Tab a non-Fan, or non-Facebook member will see by default.

Remember, content from **all** Tabs is now visible to non-Facebook members. This means your Facebook presence can act as a fully-hosted, highly-functional website to the outside world, with multiple sections.

Now let's look at our options each Tab in order ....

About Face: Another Tab in the Wall

The most dramatic change for Pages is that the **Wall** – a chronological stream of all activity across your Pages (including Fan Wall posts) – is now the default landing page for all incoming Fans, so its important to **plan a schedule for the release of content you will be creating and sharing**, to keep this area fresh and relevant.

If you want the focus of this default Tab to be solely on your own content – or if a high volume of Fan **Wall** posts pushes your own content off the page too quickly – consider changing the **Wall settings** to "Only Posts by Page" as a default. (see below screengrab). Fans who visit can then switch to see Fan posts too.

After changing this setting, **you will need to refresh your browser to see the change take effect.**

About Face: Another Tab in the Wall

Wall Info Photos Video Events Boxes

The Advance Guard is a fan of

See how **The New York Times** has implemented the Wall on their Fan Page

The Advance Guard is a fan of

See how **Barack Obama's** page utilizes the Wall

Deciding whether or not to limit to "Only Posts By Page" is an important one. If you plan on updating you content regularly, this may be your best option. For brands with less activity, defaulting to "Posts by Pages and Fans" will supplement this area with Fan-generated posts.

Remember, this "lifestream" of your brand is not just a landing zone. It's a timeline, with your most recent activity first. Little (or no) activity from your brand will be very apparent to visitors. Think like a blogger, not an advertiser – try to unfold stories over time, rather than blasting out messages. Later, we'll show you which applications are best suited for this task.

(Note: You can choose to expand comments automatically. If you do this, and later want to remove a specific comment from a photo or video, you can only do this on the media itself, not from the **Wall** page)

About Face: Getting Info

The Advance Guard
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See how **NPR** populate
their Info area with
extended text and links
back to their sites

Up until now, brands could (and did) minimize the **Info** section of their Page. Many reduced it to only a URL field and a "Founded in" sentence, to take up minimal space.

In the new design, **Info** has its own Tab, fixed a the #2 spot, and cannot be moved or deleted. This is precious real estate, so complete this section in as much detail as possible.

Depending on your industry category, the options for this section will change, but whatever they are, think beyond the standard boilerplate of information – make it as creative, interesting and friendly as you can. This can also be changed whenever you wish, so don't forget about it – keep it updated and relevant.

While you cannot style text in this area – or add images – you **can** expand some boxes with extended text paragraphs. URLs automatically hot link, so try to add links to all your brand presences – not just your websites, but YouTube, Flickr, Twitter, MySpace – anywhere your brand can also be found online.

About Face: Applications are your social tools

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Until now, a primary focus of Facebook Applications has been to provide Fans with the opportunity to install extra functionality on their own profiles, and – in doing so – create interactions that populate into their newsfeeds. This viral nature increases the exposure for the application (and any brand associated with it) and in return increases the number of people who install and begin using it.

But with the new opportunity for a brand to "socialize" – for its own actions to populate into Fans' newsfeeds in the same way the actions of their Friends do – Applications are a powerful way for Brands to extend their reach. Combined with the ability to assign Applications to custom Tabs, they form the toolset that can power your social presence. (Applications can be added to your page, edited and removed by clicking the "Edit Page" link directly below your brand's profile image.)

Developing or licensing custom Applications may be out of your core competency or budget range, but **Don't Panic**. Facebook itself already provides a range of free Applications that you probably already use on your personal profile, and which now give extra value to your brand's presence on their platform.

About Face: The Photos app – a powerful brand tool

Wall   Info   Photos   Video   Events   »

The Advance Guard
is a fan of

See how **aerie by american eagle** uses Photos to promote their clothing **and** Fan events

Facebook is the largest photo sharing platform in existence. All members – including brands – can upload and share photos and images. Facebook gives special prominence to **Photo** updates on the **Wall**, with large areas of the feed given over to image updates, so adding **Photos** to your Pages will reward you with high-impact news items.

There is no limit to the number of photos or photo albums (groups of photos) you can create, so don't hold back. Consider using Facebook as an image bank for product shots, posters, advertising and – especially – event photography that shows other Facebook fans.

Choosing album covers is a very important choice, as they will become the central image in the timeline both on your **Wall** and in Fan's newsfeeds. Any photo in an album can be chosen as an album cover and you can swap this at any time in the future.

Of all content, you will probably find that photos get the most comments and interaction from Fans, all of which are transmitted across the network virally. So a content strategy that focuses on creating photos for any and all occasions will reap dividends.

About Face: TAG, you're it!

Tagging allows you (or others if enabled) to identify Facebook members by name in **Photos** and **Videos**. This is as simple as clicking on a Friend's face and then typing in their name.

This can be especially useful, for when someone is tagged, they are notified of the action, and the tagged item appears in their newsfeed for all their Friends to see. From this point on, when someone clicks on the "View Videos of" or "Photos of" on someone's profile, any content they are tagged in will appear (any member has the ability to untag themselves if they wish).

And as their friends view the videos and photos, they can comment and share them as well. Each comment also sends an update to newsfeeds and continues the spread and exposure for this content.

Whenever possible, offer Facebook friendship with people you are taking photos of at events, and ask if you can tag them (and – hey – it's good to make friends). Also allow Fans the ability to tag photos of themselves, so they can fill in the missing names that you may not have. Enabling your Fans and converting them to brand ambassadors in this way can increase reach exponentially.
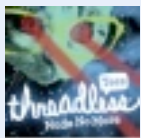
About Face: Videos

The Advance Guard
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See how **Target** is
sharing previously created
video

The Advance Guard
is a fan of

See how **Threadless**
create customized video
messages for Facebook
Fans

Video has always been a powerful medium for marketers, and Facebook's **Video** application provides the ability to upload 16:9 High Definition clips in multiple formats, up to 1GB in size, and up to 20 minutes time limit.

You will find the size and quality of video on Facebook to rival other online services, with the added benefits that we discussed with **Photos** – social sharing, tagging, high–impact newsfeed population, and commenting. Additionally, as the original uploader of a video, Facebook allows you (and only you) to embed these videos elsewhere on the web.

However, if you decide to use YouTube.com as your publisher database for brand videos, you can still populate them into you feed. Using the **Links** application (explained in the following pages), you can link directly to a clip, which will automatically embed a playable option in your feed, as well as transmitting that action to your Fans.

This "embed" facility for video works for most of the major community video sites, including Vimeo and Viddler (in fact, any service Facebook has "whitelisted")

About Face: Managing Events

THE ADVANCE GUARD

Wall | Info | Photos | Video | **Events** | »

The Advance Guard
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verizon

See how **Verizon** use
Events to inform Fans of
their sponsorship
schedule

The Advance Guard
is a fan of

See how **Livestrong**
keeps fans notified about
events happening around
the country

One major success in the virtual community of Facebook has been helping
to enable real-world meetups between Fans with the **Events** Application.
With the Page redesign, this capability becomes even more important,
allowing brands to announce events on their **Wall** and across the network.

All **Events** created on Facebook can display attendees, show photos and
videos, and even host its own discussion area. All this activity creates viral
pollination, as each attending RSVP from a fan will enter into their newsfeed,
spreading awareness for the event to their friends.

(Make sure you follow up any event with a photo album or video. Don't
forget to Tag everyone in the photos that you know personally as well.)

Get creative with what you consider an "Event." This could be a party,
concert or new store opening, but it could also be any call to action. Many
brands recently have turned watching the premier of a television show,
buying an album or entering a sweepstakes into an Event.

About Face: Discussions and Reviews

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The Advance Guard
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See how **Starbucks** has
designated a Tab to a Fan
Discussion Group

The Advance Guard
is a fan of

See how **Ben & Jerry's**
showcase Fan reviews on
their Pages

One application that most are probably already familiar with is **Discussions**, the Facebook–provided message board application.

Once this is installed on your Page, anyone can start a new discussion topic, respond to a question or join an already active conversation.   If you install this Application on your Page it is important that you are not only a spectator, but also an active participant. This is a great chance for Fans to talk directly to the brand they love, and for the brand to respond.

As an additional bonus, if you are an administrator of your Page and comment on your own Discussion board, your posts will show up as belonging to the brand – not your personal profile – and populate that way onto the **Wall.**
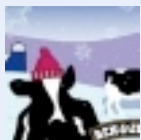
Another application to consider installing is **Reviews**, especially if you have a brand that creates a range of products or package goods. Positive reviews written by Fans can provide strong motivation for trial and purchase. As with **Discussions**, Fan **Reviews** populate into their newsfeeds for their friends to read, extending the reach of conversation.

About Face: Using Static FBML to create custom Tabs

Wall | Info | Discussions | **Portfolio** | Boxes

The Advance Guard
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See how **Facebook** use
a custom Tab to promote
Resources

The Advance Guard
is a fan of

See how **Late Night
with Jimmy Fallon**
uses a Tab to recruit fans
to other NBC Pages

The **Static FBML** application is already in use on many Pages as a way of creating custom areas of content. FBML shares many similarities to the HTML you may be using to create web pages. These **Static FBML** boxes previously formed the main way brands customized the old pages.

Static FBML is still a powerful application, because although it provides none of the social activity that powers the other applications we've discussed, it provides one major capability for the new layout: an FBML box can be added as a custom Tab, and stretch the entire width of the Page (760px) .

This makes FMBL ideal for content that is not time sensitive, and has no social interactivity, but contains information that's still important to your brand.   This could include: physical address and contact details; a set of case studies or product range; biographies or even a makeshift store front. On The Advance Guard's Fan page, we use it to display our client **Portfolio**.

But don't be deceived by this flexibility – the real power of Facebook is in social interaction. Whenever possible, always use social applications to communicate updates, not **Static FBML** boxes.

About Face: Thinking inside the Boxes

The Advance Guard
is a fan of

Red Bull

See how **Red Bull** uses
Boxes to display
promotions, polls, music,
games and more

The Advance Guard
is a fan of

See how **XBox** uses
Boxes for multiple
promotions

You can think of **Boxes** as the "scrapbook" or "bulletin board" of your Page. It's not an application, but an area where modules of FBML content (or Flash movies) appear as you create them, as well as displays from other third party applications you may have installed.

If after creating an FBML box, you do not want them here (if – for example you prefer to create custom tabs as already described or place it in a sidebar), you must delete them individually from the **Boxes** area.

Boxes can also be used to display forms through FBML coding. If you have a CGI script already installed on another web server, consider placing the form interface here. For example: subscribe to an email newsletter; submit a job application form; enter a competition. (The same would be true of a custom tab created with a single FBML box.)

Up to 10 FMBL boxes can be added here in a series of wide (380px) or narrow (200px) columns. These can be rearranged by dragging and dropping from the Boxes Tab directly (but can only be edited from the "Edit Page" link.)

About Face: Notes and Links

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See how **CNN** displays
Notes on a Tab to feature
Facebook-specific topics

Another way to populate the Facebook platform – both on your **Wall** and in newsfeeds of your Fans – is to create **Notes** and to post **Links**.

The **Notes** Application provides a freeform area that can contain text, links and graphics. While design capabilities are limited (similar to that of an RSS feed), **Notes** are ideal places to announce a sweepstakes or Sale, write Facebook-specific posts, or issue a special notice or press release.   The **Notes application** can also be set to import stories from an external RSS feed, so if you have a blog, linking **Notes** to your feed will automatically populate posts onto your Page as they are published.

The **Links** application provides the ability to add URL bookmarks – the closest we have to Del.icio.us for Pages (Third party Del.icio.us applications currently don't play well with Pages). This could be a blogroll of friendly sites, links to news or press releases, or just to sites of interest.

Depending on your level of activity with these apps, you may decide not to include them in the **Wall**/**Info** sidebar or on the **Boxes** tab of your page, but you should still install them, and use them as a way to populate stories and URLs onto the **Wall**.

About Face: Location, location, location… what goes where?

When you started reading this white paper, you may have thought "What am I going to put on all those Tabs?" Now you may be thinking "How do I fit all these Applications onto my Page?"

The sidebar and every Tab are valuable real estate. You have 3 or 4 custom tabs (depending on your implementation of **Wall** and **Boxes**), 10 empty slots on the **Boxes** Tab and up to 4 sidebar boxes that appear on the **Wall** and **Info** pages. Carefully consider what goes where and whether you display an Application at all.

For most of the applications we have mentioned, their activity goes onto your **Wall whether you have assigned has a visible box for it on your profile or not**. So you may decide to use an Application but NOT give it on-screen placement.

One strategy for optimization could be that the more you use an app, the less permanent real estate it requires. If you use **Links** to post a "Link of the Day", it'll probably have a constant presence on your **Wall**, so it won't need a Sidebar box. Similarly, if you will be uploading photos regularly, you may not need to include **Photos** as a custom tab or sidebar item.

About Face: Turning Visitors into Fans

With the additional viral information being pushed into Fans' newsfeeds, Facebook is telling brands to expect traffic to their Pages to increase. (Anecdotally, we can confirm that this is already happening). These will be people new to your Page and, in some cases, new to your brand. People are much more likely to investigate a product or service they may not know about after seeing their friends interacting with it on a regular basis.
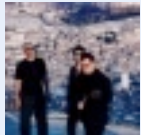
Luckily, you have the option to define a different Tab to the **Wall** as the default landing place for non-Fans and non-Facebook members. This gives you an opportunity to tell visitors why it would be beneficial to them to opt-in and become a Fan.

Develop a strategy as to exactly **why** someone should become a Fan. Perhaps they will receive special offers and be the first to know about local events. Make it very clear what they will get out of this relationship. After all, they know what **you** are getting out of it.

About Face: Status Updates or Spam Updates?

Write something...

Share

One of the most iconic features of Facebook profiles – the **Status Update** – has now been given to brands, allowing them to post Updates which could appear on all their Fans' home pages. It's a powerful tool to broadcast short relevant messages, such as a time–sensitive alert.

But to quote Stan Lee – "With great power comes great responsibility." Brands tread a fine line between participating in their Fans online lives, and intruding in them, and nowhere will this be more apparent than on Facebook. Your Fan base is a valuable asset – and every perceived "spam status update" may provoke Fans to remove themselves. Watch your **Insights** carefully for this and adjust accordingly.

Also remember that Fans have the ability to comment on a status update, so try using them as conversation starters, asking targeted questions. Consider using them to praise Fan activity as they upload a great review or a photo from an event, to publicly thank the fan and to point to the content.

About Face: Final Thoughts

This white paper has been written to offer **immediate help** to those intrigued by some of the latest design changes of Facebook Pages. As such, it is not meant as a comprehensive guide to setting up your Facebook presence, or an in-depth strategy for social marketing and the challenges and benefits of utilizing Facebook as a platform.

We could equally have included any of the following important considerations when expanding your brand's Facebook presence:

- Brand Voice – who speaks for your Company in the new social marketplace, and with what authority?

- Strategies for reacting to both positive and negative sentiment on your Facebook Page.

- Growing a Fan base by creating compelling and interactive content.

- Soliciting and monitoring fan-generated content, discussions, photos, videos and reviews.

(more)

About Face: Final Thoughts cont

- Using Facebook Social and Engagement ads to target potential fans.

- Allocating resources to Facebook community development, and determining ROI on that investment.

Remember most of all: social marketing – especially on Facebook – is the art of **interacting with people** and **contributing to a Community** rather than just broadcasting promotional messages. This, more than any design or functionality strategy, is the key to growing a successful Fanbase of enthusiastic and engaged consumers.

About Face: This is the final page

This white paper is licensed under Creative Commons – Non Commercial – Attribution – No Derivatives.   We encourage you to blog, podcast, present and share it with anyone you believe would appreciate it.   All data shared is publicly known as of March 2009 and is likely to change quickly and often. This should be viewed as a living document that will updated in the future as new information becomes available, and as we discover new ways to leverage the Facebook platform.

The Advance Guard is a new media consultancy that creates radical marketing programs using disruptive technologies, community platforms and social media. Our clients include American Eagle Outfitters, Verizon FiOS, The Coca Cola Company, HBO, and Warner Brothers. If you need help embracing Facebook Pages or any other emerging communications platform, you can find us on Facebook at:

http://facebook.theadvanceguard.com

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