

<https://www.wordtracker.com/academy/social/facebook/edgerank-facebook-ranking#:~:text=EdgeRank%20is%20Facebook's%20algorithm%20that,posts%20made%20by%20a%20page>.

Wordtracker Academy

EdgeRank: Give your Facebook page the edge

Discover the science behind successful Facebook pages from Wordtracker the leading keyword research tool

Facebook, now a billion users strong, is a key marketing channels for many businesses. But beyond the fans, likes and posts, how does it actually work? How and why do your posts appear in your customer's news feeds? And how can you make sure they do?

There are several misconceptions regarding social media, but one of the biggest I hear on a regular basis is people saying "Whatever I post on my Facebook page will be seen by all my fans", or, "My page has lots of fans but why don't my posts get many views or likes?" The reason for this: EdgeRank.

EdgeRank is Facebook's algorithm that determines what content users are shown in their news feeds and also how high this is displayed. It's something that's at the heart of Facebook and affects not only what users' see of their friends' updates, but also the posts made by a page. This element is what we're interested in as digital marketers, and as such, forms the basis of this article.

Here comes the science bit

To help understand the notion of EdgeRank it's important to first look at 'Edges' – these are basically the things that happen on Facebook, including but not exclusively, status updates, comments, shares and likes.

Being an algorithm, there has to be some sort of equation involved, so here it is:

Rank = Affinity x Weight x Decay

Each Edge is made up of the sum three key factors that form it. These are Affinity, Weight and Decay. The higher each of these factors is, the higher the EdgeRank and the more people will see your content.

Looking at each factor in detail they are defined as:

Affinity – this is a measure of how ‘close’ the viewing user is to the Edge creator. If a user makes a number of interactions (likes, comments etc) with the Edges of a particular page then their affinity will be greater. This does seem to resonate in my own news feed, in that I tend to be seeing updates from pages that I have recently interacted with. Since I first created a Facebook account on 10 May 2007, I have apparently liked 197 pages, yet I know for sure I only ever see updates from a handful that I generally interact with and have interacted with recently.

Weight – each type of Edge (eg, photo, status update, question) is given a weighting. Publishing content of a heavier weight may increase the EdgeRank, which we’ll explore further below.

As well as content types, user actions can also carry weight – the general suggestion is that a comment has more weight than a like, as the action is more involved, it requires more effort. Another consideration related to this is ‘accumulation’. When a post gains a number of comments or likes, this can give it more weight, creating a positive cycle.

Decay – the factor based on how long ago the edge was created. Broadly speaking, the older the Edge the less value it has, therefore the less impact it has on EdgeRank. Facebook’s news feeds work in a way that can very quickly push down content, especially during peak times of posting, like in the evening.

EdgeRank’s effect

EdgeRank works by analyzing all of the Edges that the user is connected to before ranking each of the Edges according to the importance of these to the user. As a rule of thumb, the item with the highest EdgeRank will be placed at the top of the feed, although this is not always the case as Facebook seems to display some randomly as well, just to make things even harder to predict.

This 'randomness' is something that needs to be carefully considered when looking at EdgeRank. Sometimes Facebook does throw a 'curve-ball', by displaying some content that you don't expect to see in your news feed.

EdgeRank in action: weight

As mentioned above, when defining the factor of weight, there seems to be a general consensus from many within the industry that it's the type of post content that can have the biggest effect on EdgeRank.

I therefore took a look at some of the pages that I personally manage, to see whether there was any correlation with this at all. Taking two clients, I extracted their post content data from Facebook Insights for the period 1 March 2012 – 30 August 2012 and, using averages, looked at the following metrics:

- Lifetime Post Total Reach – the number of people who saw your page post (unique users).
- Lifetime Post Organic Reach – the number of people who saw your page post in the news feed or ticker, or on your page's wall (unique users).
- Lifetime Post Viral Reach – the number of people who saw your page post in a story from a friend (unique users).
- Lifetime Post Total Impressions – the number of impressions of your page post (total count).
- Lifetime Post Organic Impressions – the number of impressions of your post in the news feed or ticker or on your page's Wall (total count).

Client 'A' has a page with around 800 likes and here's a graph of all the above metrics:

This graph very clearly shows that photos provided the most reach and impressions across all of the metrics during this time. Looking at Lifetime Post Total Impressions, we can see that photographs got nearly double the amount when compared with other types of post. Therefore, we could surmise in this case that photos are twice as likely to be seen as other types of posts.

All of the other post types are fairly evenly spread, but the graph also shows that video performs well.

Client 'B' has a page with around 10,500 likes and the following interaction data:

Again, looking at the graph we can see that photos are leading the way in terms of response gained. In this instance, the difference isn't quite as marked, yet it is still a definitive result. This client has also used questions, which many people believe are given a higher weight than straight status updates. However, in this instance that belief is not necessarily reflected in their reach.

There are obviously some factors that come in to play that could have affected these results, such as time of day or day of week when this content was posted.

The actual post content could also have a potential effect on its reach. If a photo is particularly funny or shocking then it may naturally be shared more, receive more likes and comments and, as a result, have a greater reach.

However, as a snapshot, this analysis is still an indicator of the potential impact that different types of content have, with content items of more weight (ie, photos) performing better than those with less weight.

Gaining the edge on EdgeRank

As we know already, EdgeRank is an algorithm, and like any good algorithm (for example, Google's) we only know some of the factors that contribute to and influence it. This makes it far from easy to predict, so we can only really make suggestions that could help with the 'potential' EdgeRank.

Here are a few tips that may help you take advantage of this potential:

Post regularly. This is linked to the decay factor. By posting more regularly, your page is kept fresh. Plus, regular posting can help keep people engaged and they may even get into a habit of checking back to your page, rather than waiting to see something in their news feeds. A factor linked to this is 'Accumulation of Posting'. This is something that a number of my colleagues have noted with their page

management: if you post more regularly then you may see this have a residual effect on the overall impressions and reach levels of subsequent posts (see image below).

This is a look at one of our client's reach in Facebook Insights. The purple spots on the x axis represent every time they post something. And the number of people who see that post (Reach) is in blue.

You can see that the more they post, the greater their reach and the more they're talked about.

Post different types of content. This is linked to weight and backs up some of the findings above. A cocktail of post-types is a good way to keep fans engaged. One recommendation is to create a social media schedule, which details what you are going to post on which day.

Post at different times. There is a chance that the time of day, or the day of week when you post could have an effect on EdgeRank, so experiment with it.

Make the most of recent increases in fans. Often people will carry out some activity that gains them a substantial increase in page likes, but then they fail to follow it up with any posting. As a result, the potential EdgeRank disappears very quickly.

Measure your posts. Facebook has provided some pretty good analytics tools in the form of Facebook Insights that can help you see exactly which posts and type of posts perform better (in terms of impressions, reach and more). By checking this data regularly, you can tweak your posting and then measure again if this has an effect.

One spanner to throw into the whole mix is that Facebook gives users the ability to control what they see in their news feeds. By adjusting their settings, they can view Top Stories as opposed to Most Recent, hide a particular type of story or even hide updates from a page - the worst possible scenario for a page owner.

However, in most cases, users tend to leave their news feeds as they are, especially if they have lots of friends, page likes etc, as their feeds are continually refreshing. Why should they care about EdgeRank?

Summary

So why is EdgeRank important to us as page owners and marketers? Well, if any of you have to fight to justify time, resources and budget spent on Facebook activity then it's really important! Keeping an eye on what you post and what results these posts bring will help to ensure that your page gets the best possible chance of having success.

One final note is that it's worth heeding what Facebook itself offers as advice: "Posting regularly with engaging content gets more people to talk about your business with their friends. As a result, you end up reaching more people overall."

So there you have it. Post regularly, with content that inspires comments and likes, and make sure to include images and videos, and you'll see your posts, Edges, do better as result. That means more engagement from your Facebook fans and (probably) more visits to your site. Rather than just being something you do, Facebook can be a measurable marketing channel like any other.