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A Brief Overview of Facebook's Timeline Design and Guide

Timeline Overview

Timeline replaces Facebook's profiles. The page has space for a large image at the top and two columns (instead of one column in previous versions) for photos, links, your posts and posts from friends, your updates, and many other things. It's like an album of your life, full of all the information you want to display. You have more control over it than before. You can choose which posts or photos to highlight or move around in your timeline by month or year. You can go back as far as you want in your life, back to your birth if you want to. You are the architect.

When it comes to your business, timeline can tell your story through information, pictures, videos, and updates. People interested in your business or expertise can obtain a well-rounded picture through the events and information you choose to include. Here's some information about implementing Timeline that you should know. Here are some of the things you can do with timeline…lots of these are new things that you couldn't do before:

- Add a cover
- Edit your basic info
- Jump to the past
- View your activity log
- See highlights from each month
- Star stories you want to highlight
- Add life events
- Update your status
- View and add photos
- Share your app activity
- Using and combining these things successfully will keep your readers coming back

Cover Shots

Previously in Facebook you could only show the printed name of your page. With Timeline you can develop an image that welcomes people to your page and represents your brand. The cover shot is 851 pixels wide by 315 pixels long. Unfortunately, you can't use this space as a giant billboard to advertise your product! It would be nice, but Facebook has some explicit rules about what you can and can't do.

Here are some things not to do:

- Don't include price or purchase information such as 50% off
- Don't include contact information like a web address, email, or mailing address
- Don't include references to Facebook user interface elements like Like or Share
- Don't include calls to action like "Get it here now"

What you can do is include suggestions that subtly point viewers where you want them to go.

Profile Photos

Your profile photo appears at the top of the page and overlaps your cover shot. It used to be a rectangular photo, but with Timeline it is a square image at least 180 by 180 pixels. This is your thumbnail when interacting with Facebook so it should be something that easily connects to you and your brand.

Landing Pages Replaced by Apps

The old landing pages which were visible immediately don't exist anymore in Timeline. Instead, everything is now managed through apps. You can still create custom content, but you do it all with apps. So, once you've attracted your viewers' attention with your cover and your profile photo, you can start to point them toward the apps and custom pages you've set up. Apps are you tools now for managing everything: content, subscribers, promotions, etc. Every timeline business page automatically has a photos app and a Like count. Along with that you can install up to 12 other applications.

Managing Your Apps

You can choose the apps you want, you can remove apps, and you can have custom apps built. You can also rearrange all the apps except for the one that holds your pages photos. This one will always display your photos according to the last one you uploaded. Apart from that with the click of a pencil at the top right of the image, you can edit and rearrange all the apps. These images can also subtly direct views toward the like button as well. You can also include explicit marketing messages here as long as they relate to the app.
Here are some apps that will help you connect your business pages to Twitter, YouTube, and your blog.
Twitter for Pages - https://apps.facebook.com/tbits-twitter/
YouTube for Pages – https://apps.facebook.com/involver_appjgeph/
Networked Blogs - https://apps.facebook.com/blognetworks/

Types of Timeline Content

Some types of content have changed in Timeline and some have not. But you as content manager have more control over the content and more options.

Status Updates and Posts
In Timeline status updates take up half the page. You have the ability to change this to the entire width of the page if you want by clicking the star at the top of the post. This is an attention grabber as well as more appropriate for long posts or large photos or videos. You can also hide individual posts, rearrange them on the page, delete them, or pin them.

Pinned Posts
Pinning is a new feature in Timeline. Pinning allows you to keep one post at the top of your content stream for up to seven days. After seven days it will expire, and you can move it anytime you want to before the seven days are up. This gives you great flexibility in sharing news, offers, or business developments. A pinned post always appears with a yellow flag and in the top left area of the page's timeline Pinning is a way to highlight what you want your viewers to see first.

Questions and Polls
You still have the ability to ask questions and administer polls. Polls work as a way for you to obtain knowledge and also to increase your exposure. Whenever you ask a question or a series of questions, the poll and the question will be placed into the news feed. This will be seen by the friends of the person who answered the poll, thus enlarging your circle of viewers.

Milestones
Milestones in Timeline represent all the significant dates of your business. They can include descriptions, images, and links that can link back to pertinent posts or other information. Milestones can tell the story you want to tell, whether it's a product launch or the history of your company

Admin Panel

The admin panel is a new feature with Timeline. It is an overview of your page's activity and a place where you can respond to people using your page and quickly see how your page is performing. Non-admins who visit your page won't see the admin panel. It's only available to your page's admins.
Here are some of the things you can do from the admin panel:

- View notifications
- Respond to messages
- View your page insights
- Access your activity log to curate content on your page.

Access the panel by clicking "Show" in the upper right- hand corner of your page, and close the panel by clicking "Hide."

Messages

Another feature new to Facebook with Timeline is the Message feature, which allows fans to send you a message on your page. You have the ability to activate or remove these messages. Here people can exchange messages, chats, emails, and mobile texts. This messaging ability strengthens the bond between you or your brand and your fans.

The last time I heard a statistic for Facebook traffic, 26% of all (all!) traffic on the internet was on Facebook. That's pretty staggering, for sure. Another thing that's pretty clear is that Timeline is here to stay. So, even if you're accustomed to working with the old Facebook, if you learn to work with all the features that Timeline has to offer, you very likely will see great results in your business.