

Facebook Update – Fortune 100

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In 2009, I took a random sample of 33 of the Fortune 100 companies and investigated how they were using Facebook.com. The report on that survey is here (<http://www.online-pr.com/Holding/Are%2520Corps%2520Using%2520Facebook.pdf>). The survey found that while 73 percent of the companies had a presence on the site, most were from fans or employees. Recently, I took a second random sample of 35 Fortune 100 companies and investigated again how they are using Facebook. The new survey showed 66 percent of the Fortune 100 represented with their own sites. However, corporate use of Facebook varies from sophisticated to rudimentary.

This time rather than looking at the number of fans for each site, which had large variance, we looked at what each corporate Facebook site offered to users. Here too, variance from one corporation to another was large. Consumer brands are the most developed in what they offer. BtoB and financial services are the least developed or not present. Usage in the sample ranged from Microsoft, with 13 product pages to Goldman Sachs and ExxonMobil, which had no presence. A total of 51 percent of corporations had separate fan pages as well. In the 2009 study, we noted that companies risked brand confusion with the multiple presences of fan pages and use of logos on Facebook. In the 2011 sample, the confusion declined somewhat but was still there.

A typical corporate Facebook page has the following default tabs for pages:

- **Wall:** This page allows the corporation and visitors to post public messages, photos, links to web sites, etc.
- **Info:** This page provides information about the corporation.
- **Photos:** This page is used for photos posted by the corporation or users.
- **Notes and Discussions:** (Some times Notes Only and/or Discussions only.) This page is similar to an online bulletin board and allows communications from the company and/or users. It appears to be less developed than the Wall. It was also used for offering company communications, such as brochures.
- **Video:** This page is for posting videos.

Corporations used other tabs as well – some proprietary to the corporation and some not, such as an “events” tab lists local happenings. Sometimes default tabs are subordinated on the corporate page under a tab marked with a double

arrow (>>). Clicking this tab drops down the subordinated tabs. This study examined how the corporation used the various pages and features in Facebook.

- **Wall posting:** A total of 51 percent of corporations in the sample actively posted on the Facebook Wall. Oddly enough, one of the most developed sites – Coca-Cola – does not appear to use the Wall for company messages. Corporate Wall postings ranged from marketing messages to consumer responses with marketing messages dominating. Communication seemed to be largely one-way rather than interactive.
- **Info:** Only 49 percent of corporations in the sample posted information about themselves. Several posted lists of company web sites where Facebook users could find out more about them. Some posted only information about the product featured on the Facebook page. These were marketing-driven pages that had little relationship to the corporation itself.
- **Promotion:** A total of 31 percent of corporations offered a proprietary promotion or multiple promotions pages usually under their own tabs. These were primarily retailers like Target and Sears Holdings.
- **Video:** Thirty-four percent of the corporate sample offered video of some kind. Offerings ranged from ads, links to YouTube to instructional videos. Surprisingly, home improvement retailer, Lowe's, did not, although one would think videos would make sense for a company that teaches Do it Yourself.
- **Notes and Discussions:** A total of 40 percent of the companies used the notes and discussions page(s) on Facebook. These ranged from marketing messages to forums for individuals to air concerns and complaints.
- **Photos:** A total of 49 percent offered photos. These varied from a large number of marketing images to photos posted by users. Some photo sections were elaborate and some rudimentary with only one or two pictures represented.
- **Blogs/rss:** Just 9 percent offered blogs or links to blogs on their site. There seems to be little integration with these forms of social media.
- **Other:** Developed sites offered a range of extras from event listings to polls to gift cards, games, downloads and support for customers. Microsoft and Target appeared to be leaders in this regard. Two sites were focused on jobs and careers with little other information – Fannie Mae and Tyson Foods. Fannie Mae also featured a second site for homeowners who face foreclosure.

Target

Since Target Corporation was one of the best-developed sites in the sample, it may benefit PR practitioners to know more about how Target uses Facebook. At the time of writing, Target had 3.7 million fans for its page and was actively engaged in relationship building. However, that was dwarfed by Coca-Cola which claimed 21.9 million fans.

- **The Wall:** Target appears to post daily on the Wall. Its messages are market-driven but shaded to relationship building. Here is a typical recent message, “So much laundry... so little time: Guess how many loads of wash an average family does in a year? We’ll respond in the comments below. And if you need to stock up on detergent, check out the Great Save Event:<http://spr.ly/6037uFFh> It is noteworthy that at the time of writing that Target had 649 comments for that one posting. Comments to its postings typically range into the hundreds. This was unusually high for the sample of companies surveyed.
- **Info:** Under the Info tab, Target provided a company overview and mission with rules of the road for using the site. The copy was clearly written and succinct. Target provided links to the company web page as well as to a user agreement for the Facebook site.
- **MyTargetWeekly.** This proprietary tab features promotional items for the week offered by a local Target store. The page seeks to collect information from the user’s personal Facebook page to configure promotions accurately to the nearest Target location. It also seeks to post to the user’s Facebook page.
- **Photos:** At the time of writing Target offered 31 photo albums of pictures featuring its circular red logo. There were 1,412 photos from fans. Photos were marketing driven and appeared to come from Target advertising campaigns.
- **FitFinder:** This proprietary tab is devoted to helping users find pants with a proper fit. It links directly to Target’s online purchasing.
- **Merona:** This proprietary tab is devoted to providing personal advice on style. It is an interactive page that walks users through style choices and arrives at a personal look. It has direct links to Target’s online shopping
- **Club Wedd:** This proprietary tab is a bridal registry page.
- **Videos:** At the time of writing Target offered 88 videos on the video page with many appearing to be company advertisements. There were 91 videos posted on the page by fans.

- **Discussions:** This page appears to be devoted to kudos and complaints from customers and postings from Target employees. Target's customer service arm doesn't appear to be active on the page.
- **Polls:** Target offers, as do other sites, mini-polls that are at best frivolous. It is noteworthy that the polls are not featured on the main site but part of the subordinated tabs.
- **Target Daily Deal:** This proprietary page is a sign-up site for daily e-mailed deals.
- **Events:** This site list store events and was not updated at the time of the survey.

The Target site is retail-driven but it makes an effort to build relationships with customers. It is curious that Target customer service seems to be absent on the discussion page, whereas other corporations make use of the page to help solve customer problems. Overall, Target sets a standard for a consumer Facebook page.

Survey conclusions

There are several conclusions to be drawn from this survey.

- Facebook is still a developing medium for corporations although they are paying more attention to it than was evident in the previous survey. As a medium, Facebook is still relatively new, and it takes time for corporate communications to understand and exploit it. Two years hence, it is likely that more corporations will have their own proprietary Facebook pages with defined PR/marketing strategies.
- Facebook is not for everyone. Some companies have no need for Facebook because their businesses do not interface with consumers, and they do not need Facebook for recruiting. Any strategy for using Facebook should make sense based on a corporation's targeted audiences. A firm such as Goldman Sachs has little need to relate to Facebook's estimated 600 million users nor is there a compelling public relations reason for the firm to do so.
- Some companies have marketing PR strategies for Facebook that they are implementing more or less well. More sophisticated users of Facebook clearly have communications goals in mind. However, implementation is uneven and updating more so. Facebook requires resource time and content development. It doesn't stand on its own without refreshing content to entice users back. It is likely that corporations have recognized this, but not all are willing to devote the

resources necessary to make a Facebook page a primary communications medium.

- The number of sophisticated Facebook users among corporations is still small. This provides an opportunity for development that PR practitioners might seriously consider. Consumer-oriented corporations, particularly, can develop Facebook into a good medium for marketing and relationship building. While most, if not all, consumer-oriented companies are present on Facebook now, there is room for improvement in how they exploit the medium. Facebook can integrate several elements of a marketing organization in its structure. Planning should account for these elements from relationship building through promotion, advice, customer service and more. It will take careful planning to blend them, but where it has been done, such as with Target, it appears to work well.

Table available under separate pdf.

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