## Background

Facebook recently announced some major enhancements to its brand fan pages. Overall the changes fall into two areas: a) communication to/from the brand and b) general user-interface/page layout changes.  In general, the changes will make brand fan pages look and behave a lot more like the new user profile pages recently launched to great fanfare. The new brand page features can be activated today or at a later date. However, all brand fan pages will be switched to the new layout on a "forced" March 10 changeover.

## Details

The change to brand pages most affects how brands communicate via Facebook. For example, brands can now monitor comments and activities (e.g., liking) related to their brand on other pages, and then respond in real-time as well as tagging this activity for inclusion on the official brand fan page.  This is important as it means the brand can now "move around" Facebook and engage with users throughout the Facebook ecosystem.

Additional communication changes include the introduction of a 'blocklist' and profanity checklist system, which is great news for brands as both options offer more control of pages when moderators are not around.  Brands will also now be able to get email and on-site update notifications of new engagements with their page (such as new 'likes', comments etc).

Facebook has also introduced a new way for users to view brand page information on the wall (dubbed 'everyone' view) that shows the most popular content from the page first rather than chronologically posted updates/content.

Other changes further bring the brand fan pages in line with user profiles, e.g., tabs now move from the top to the left hand side and iFrames are available for use in tabs, which will allow for a lot more functionality and engaging content to be brought in from outside of the Facebook ecosystem.

Additional enhancements include having the 'photostrip' across the top of the page. Initially this was viewed a huge win as it could have been used for free banner advertising, but unfortunately Facebook will be randomizing the photos so this will be difficult for marketers to completely control.

## Implications

The largest implication is that brands can now "move around" Facebook as a brand rather than an individual, which brings opportunities as well as potential problems. More than ever a clear Facebook engagement matrix/scenario model is a must to define things like brand tonality, engagement rules, and restraint training.  However, overall the move should allow for a significant increase in organic 'likes', which will focus brands on increasing the quality of their posted content.

## Summary

The new fan pages represent a significant change in the way that brands can engage in the overall Facebook ecosystem. In particular, the ability for brands to communicate and engage beyond their fan pages represents a significant step-change to the way that a brand engages with other consumers. However, that same step-change also increases the need for marketers develop a reliable, intelligent engagement model to avoid potential problems erupting in an increasingly dynamic environment.