

MARKETING

## Facebook continues to unsettle advertisers by not prioritizing branded, publisher content

January 16, 2018



Soon, continues its trend of upsetting the status quo for advertisers . Image credit: Facebook

By DANNY PARISI

In yet another move sure to send Facebook's many brand and publishing partners into a panic, the social media behemoth has announced that it will no longer prioritize branded posts and publisher content in favor of users' friends and families.

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After a series of shakeups have left brand partners of Facebook feeling hung out to dry, the latest move seems the most difficult. While Facebook has admittedly had a problem with overloading users with ads, branded content and publisher media, the effect on brands' relationships with the social media platform will certainly be affected.

"There will be an increased pressure to develop and distribute content that matters to their audiences more storytelling and content of value," said Toni Box, group director of social and content at **PMX Agency**, New York. "There will be increased adoption of real-time video which lends to increased authenticity and value in the consumer's mind.

"No more avoiding the need to pay to play' on the channel; increased attention to relevance scores and overall user experience," she said. "Increased reliance on earned media and the power of peer influence not just user-generated campaigns but even thinking about the importance of how content is packaged and its impact on overall shareability."

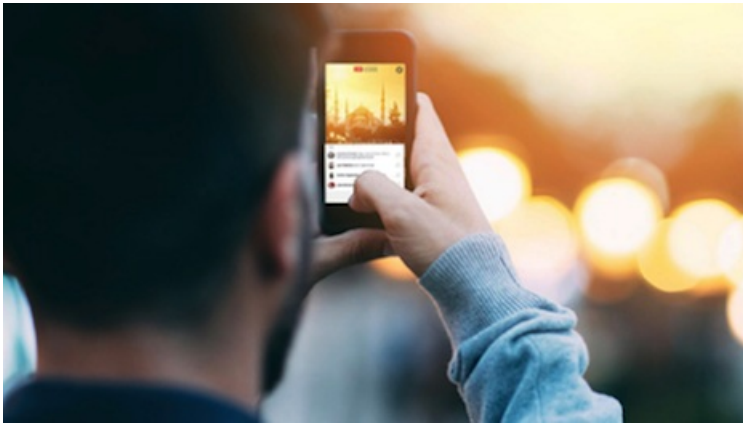
Ms. Box is not affiliated with Facebook, but agreed to comment. **Facebook** was reached for comment.

### News feed changes

In the past 10 years, Facebook has evolved from hip college trend to ubiquitous presence in consumers' lives.

But beyond just the social sphere, Facebook has also dominated the digital advertising world. Facebook and Google alone account for nearly a fifth of all ad spend on the entire Internet.

To say that publishers and brands have invested deeply in advertising on Facebook would be an understatement.



*Facebook has made a trend of abruptly changing the way its business partnerships work. Image credit: Facebook*

But lately, Facebook has faced pressure from critics who say that the platform has focused so heavily on monetizing itself that it has had a detrimental effect on users' ability to connect with other users, which is the stated goal of Facebook.

To that end, Facebook has announced that it is shifting the balance of the News Feed to deprioritize content from sponsored posts, publisher posts and other branded content in favor of more posts from a user's actual connections.

While welcome for users, this change has already sent a ripple through the digital advertising world. In an interview with the New York Times, Adam Mosseri, vice president of product management at Facebook, acknowledged that there would be "anxiety" about the changes and that Facebook had anticipated this.

#### Advertising shakeup

Facebook's stated intention behind the move is to make users feel better about using the app. Rather than being bombarded with ads and viral content, Facebook wants its users to spend more time interacting with each other, even if it means spending less time on the platform or losing out on ad money.

The platform has made a number of decisions recently that have made advertisers worry. For one, the platform discontinued its chatbot assistant, leaving its support for other branded chatbots in question.

Facebook has made considerable investments into the text-based artificial intelligence platform, encouraging many brands and retailers, including luxury players, to create their own chatbots and messenger programs using the social network. Now, in what looks to be a disquieting trend, Facebook is pulling support for its own chatbot assistant only a few months after it began testing ([see story](#)).

Before that, Facebook also cut off support for publishers making live video on the platform.



*Branded content such as La Mer's recent Facebook Live chat will be held back in favor of more social posts. Image*

*credit: La Mer*

Facebook had been bolstering its live video feature by paying millions of dollars to publishers to create Facebook Live video content, causing media companies to build entire teams around creating real-time video. As first reported by Digiday, publishers are saying that Facebook is not planning on renewing any contracts for such a deal in the future and that publishers will no longer receive money from Facebook to create live video on the platform ([see story](#)).

These changes, combined with Facebook's deprioritization of branded content, are calling into question how valuable it is for brands, particularly luxury brands, to continue investing into advertising on Facebook.

"I don't think anyone can say what the effect will be on paid social with confidence just yet, except that Facebook will only become increasingly insistent on advertisers' use of video and mobile first, quality creative experiences using its newer ad product," said Jesse Math, director of paid social at PMX Agency, New York.

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