



SOCIAL MEDIA TIP OF THE MONTH

THIS MONTH: FACEBOOK APPS



Facebook is still the hottest ticket in social media, despite the recent IPO troubles, and especially for consumers. But once you've built a fan base, leveraging them to reap dividends in terms of ROI and, even more so, revenue, is a tricky business. One of the most reliable methods involves creating and leveraging internal Facebook apps. The API is available for any code-wise programmer to use, but there are some tricky bits to get in line. To help you see why and how to leverage one of Facebook's most powerful tools, EM this month brings you insights into some of what you need to know to get started, and be successful, thanks to Matt Handy of Boston-based Brand Networks. He leads the social-local-mobile practice and Social PIX team for the developer agency, which is a leading Facebook Preferred Marketing Developer. He's got the experience and the chops to give us the intel you need thanks to years of social marketing experience, both with Social PIX and before that, with PUMA. He can be found online on Facebook at [facebook.com/matthandy](https://www.facebook.com/matthandy) and on Twitter @Mhandy13.

A one-off is a waste. This is becoming conventional wisdom for any and all event strategies and tactics, but it really shows with the Facebook app. A one-off custom app development from idea to execution is time consuming, in that it can take months, and is über expensive. Not kidding, folks. You can blink and spend half a million on a new app, Handy says. Yeah. So make sure you build something reusable, across all of your events moving forward.

Think visually. Facebook as a platform is all about the story, and the timeline. And those stories are best told visually, as in via pictures and video. Text is all well and good, of course, but most consumers are not going to take time to read anything of enough length to get them invested. But they will readily flip through a photo gallery or watch a short video, so make sure you give the people what they want. And remember, you're telling a story about your brand and your events, so single photos aren't going to cut it. You want your app to take the raw content you and your fans put in and craft that material into a com-

In this monthly series, EM brings you tips and tricks from pros and experts who've been eating social media marketing for breakfast. So eat up, and check us out on Twitter @eventmarketer and Facebook.com/eventmarketer for more.

elling story that will be shared, re-posted and talked about forever.

Stability is a must-have. So yes, as we told you, any good developer can handle the coding to build you a quick and dirty app that will probably do what you need. But, there's a big fat "but." Facebook has a ton of rules and regulations for developers embedded into the terms and conditions, and not everyone out there knows how to operate within the system and at the same time make a piece of software run flawlessly in every situation. That's why Facebook has instituted the Preferred Marketing Developer program. Those few developer shops that earn the PMD designation have passed Facebook's internal review process and are certified to know how to make your needs fit the app you want, and make sure that app will work. If you want to gamble with your time and money to have an app rejected once you submit it, feel free to spin the wheel. Otherwise, look for a PMD.

Don't hide under a bushel. Make sure your app works *within* the newsfeed. Most users of Facebook don't look beyond their own feeds, and they almost never visit your brand's page directly. Instead

they watch their own feed for your updates. So make sure your app is posting to the feed, where they can see it, or else no one outside of your event will even see the posts. And that's no way to go viral.

Work smart, not hard. OK. You know you can build a custom app from the ground up, and that you should make sure it tells a visual story about your brand via photo galleries or video. And you know it will be expensive and long-term if you do. Why not take the easy way, however? Many developers and online tools give you an option to work from an established base app that you can customize to your needs. Handy says this method will save you a ton of time and money and get you the same, or better, results.

Timing matters. This one is simple: make sure your app posts right away. The faster consumers see their photos or videos online, the more likely they are to pass it along, repost it, and give their friends a chance to do the same. How and when a bit of content is shared is important.

Your approach to deploying an app matters, and when your event goes viral thanks to your app execution strategy, you'll see how much. **EM**
—Kenny B.