

whitepaper



# Ten Facebook Promotion Myths

*Busting common misconceptions  
about contests, sweepstakes and  
giveaways on Facebook*






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# Ten Facebook Promotion Myths

## Facebook promotions take many forms.

One brand will give away instant-print coupons behind a “like” gate. Another will reward random fans for posting on the brand’s wall. And still another will host a sweepstakes in a custom third-party application.

Can you guess which one of these is violating Facebook’s rules and is likely to see their page brought down?

Alas, Facebook resembles the wild west of social networking. And just as the lawless land of email marketing was tamed a decade ago, the ever-evolving Facebook platform is being settled by emerging best practices, updates to the user experience, and Facebook’s stringent promotion guidelines.

In this paper, we’ll put ten common misconceptions about Facebook promotions to the test!

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## About Bulbstorm

Bulbstorm Inc. provides social media technology which creates unparalleled engagement for brands by tapping into the power of fans’ ideas. The Bulbstorm® Engagement Platform™ allows companies to quickly and easily launch campaigns that are scalable, highly customizable and astoundingly engaging. The result is greater insight, awareness, advocacy, engagement and loyalty from consumers.

Bulbstorm technology and expertise power innovation on social networking sites, such as Facebook, and in custom communities built upon the patent-pending technologies fueling Bulbstorm.com’s growth. Founded in 2007, Bulbstorm.com is now one of the fastest growing social media solution providers in the world.

Learn more at [www.bulbstorm.com](http://www.bulbstorm.com).



## MYTH #1

# If I run a contest on Facebook, it'll go viral.

If an objective of your contest is to “go viral”, Facebook wants to stop you. Why? First, Facebook wants you to pay them to drive impressions and engagement through its advertising platform. Additionally, thanks to game publishers like Zynga (the makers of Farmville and Mafia Wars), viral tactics are now widely considered annoying by Facebook users. Facebook’s desire to make money while delivering an uncluttered user experience means the virality you seek isn’t likely to happen.

### Read all about it

An agency in New York ran a two-week promotion on behalf of a client seeking to help a dog shelter save puppies from being euthanized. Each time fans published a branded badge to their wall, the client donated money to animal shelters. After eight days, Facebook removed the page for violating Facebook promotion guidelines. Why? Incentivized sharing is a no-no as Facebook works to de-clutter the newsfeed in the wake of Zynga’s viral rise to prominence.

### THE MORAL OF THE STORY

**Facebook’s commitment to generating revenue takes precedence over your desire for free and exponential growth, no matter how utopian the cause. After all, it’s their platform and they’ll charge if they want to.**



## MYTH #2

# A consumer clicking my “like” button is engaging with my brand.

Engagement is all about passion and loyalty. A single click of the like button is not engagement – and neither is completion of a contact form. In fact, when was the last time you got so excited about giving away your personal information that you went home and told your significant other that you filled out a contact form to enter an online sweepstakes? You truly can engage and build affinity with consumers on Facebook. You accomplish this by providing access to exciting, exclusive content. You can give away thoughtful, on-brand, fan-only prizes. Give your fans a compelling reason to show you some “like” – and their time and attention after that.

### Read all about it

Social media blogger Jay Baer once said, “I have a deeper engagement with a can of beer than I do with the ‘like’ button.”\* Remember this when crafting your engagement strategy on Facebook. In under a minute, a Facebook user can click “like” and fill out a contact form before moving on to look at friends’ photos, stalk an ex, or upload videos of a recent Vegas boondoggle. How will you keep them coming back?

\* Social Media Club Phoenix meeting (January 14, 2010).  
“Facebook Deep Dive” panel moderated by Jay Baer (@JayBaer).

### THE MORAL OF THE STORY

**Make your brand worth spending time with and you’ll achieve the engagement you crave.**



## MYTH #3

# Of course my fans have photos of my product at the Grand Canyon!

In a perfect world, your fans would be so passionate they'd spend their free time taking photos, recording videos, and generating other content around your brand. Unfortunately, few brands ever achieve this level of reverence. The rest of us have to get creative. Your fans may not have a picture of your product at the Eiffel Tower, but they *do* have content to share ... if you make it easy for them. Ask for ideas or opinions and make the submission process simple. That's how you tap into the content engine that is your fan base.

### Read all about it

Intel was looking for ideas on the home phone of tomorrow. Rather than rely solely on internal R&D, Intel leveraged the Bulbstorm® Engagement Platform™ to tap into its fan base on Facebook. When asked simple questions such as how they'd use the phone and what apps they'd want, Intel fans offered up more than **5,000** unique ideas for the product supported by photos, drawings and videos. Intel was hoping to achieve **200**. Plus, the best ideas surfaced to the top thanks to over 110,000 user votes. Not bad for an eight-week campaign!

### THE MORAL OF THE STORY

**The key to great user-generated content is asking your biggest fans for their ideas.**



## MYTH #4

# The bigger the prize, the bigger the event.

Whether you have thousands or hundreds of thousands to invest in a contest, be sure to set aside plenty for advertising. In fact, you're better off investing in broader awareness than a bigger grand prize. If you've been to a sporting event with a t-shirt toss lately, you know that people are interested in winning anything (and will dive over small children to get it). For maximum impact in prize selection, focus on perceived value (rather than something with a dollar sign attached) and ensure the prize is aligned with your brand.

### Read all about it

Tornados, a brand of rotisserie-grilled taquitos, held a contest asking fans to submit photos of the vehicle they'd like wrapped like the Tornados stockcar. The grand prize? A temporary vehicle wrap and gas money to reach a meeting with the Tornados racing team in Daytona. The cost? Next to nothing for a major consumer packaged goods brand. The contest yielded 2,500 submissions and over 200,000 votes and comments. Plus, the winner drove her wrapped vehicle from Minnesota to Florida, resulting in priceless media exposure for the brand despite modest investment in prizes.

### THE MORAL OF THE STORY

**Prizes with high  
*perceived value*  
and strong brand  
alignment let  
you spend more  
on advertising.**



## MYTH #5

# One prize is enough and it shall be an iPad.

Asking fans to jump through hoops for a chance to win a prize without a meaningful connection to your brand is simply ineffective. Fans know the odds of winning are low. Why should they click your ad, like your page and provide their contact info? Increase participation and optimize your ad spend by offering “everyone plays, everyone wins” prizing mechanics. Some simple options are instant-print coupons or e-commerce discount codes. Ring the bell. Earn a pellet. If you give away instant rewards for participation, consumers will be happy to oblige.

### Read all about it

We’d love to know how many brands have given away iPads on Facebook. (If you’re keeping score at home, please let us know). Of course, the vast majority of brands handing out these – or other non-aligned prizes – have no logical reason to do so. They’re merely attracting technophiles, not their true audience. Unless you’re an iOS developer or a manufacturer of iPad cases, stick with prizes that connect your target consumer back to your brand.

### THE MORAL OF THE STORY

**The only brand benefiting from iPad giveaways is Apple®. Align prizing with *your* brand and make sure everyone walks away a winner!**



## MYTH #6

# Trolls will overwhelm my contest and fan page.

Many brands are still understandably sensitive about giving consumers an online voice. People will be people online as in real life. They'll share negative opinions, post profanity and otherwise run amok. Have no fear. Prepare for increased traffic and activity by outlining a content moderation plan in advance of a promotion. Facebook's own moderation tools help with page management, and a good partner will account for content moderation within your promotion app. Remember, never buy a third-party application that does not facilitate community moderation of user content via simple "report abuse" links.

### Read all about it

For every one person who posts inappropriate content, there are dozens who are benevolently engaging with your brand. Community management blogger Patrick O'Keefe (aka, iFroggy) said, "Yes, some people will treat you badly when you have to remove their content or their post for some reason. Yes, some people will be exceptionally mean to you and disrespectful. Yes, those people will dominate your memory at times because they are so extreme and can be downright nasty. But, no, they are not all there is – they are not the majority. The majority is a usually silent bunch of people who simply enjoys participating in the environment that you have managed." \*

\* Managing Communities (May 26, 2011). "Community and Forum Managers: Not Everyone Thinks You're Hitler" by Patrick O'Keefe (@iFroggy).

### THE MORAL OF THE STORY

**A thoughtful moderation plan and a good promotions app will keep the trolls at bay.**



## MYTH #7

# I have to get Facebook approval to run a contest.

Not long ago, you had to ask Facebook to approve your promotion's official rules in advance of launch. To ask approval, you had to have an account executive. To have an account executive, you had to spend \$10,000 on Facebook ads. After about six months of uneven enforcement, the policy was reversed. To run a contest today, all you have to do is comply by Facebook's promotion guidelines. Toe the line, and you're good to go. Run afoul of the guidelines, and your page could be shut down by Facebook at a moment's notice.

### Read all about it

Just because Facebook no longer requires pre-approval of promotions doesn't mean no one's watching and waiting for you to slip up. Facebook accepts reports of violations, and no one watches your page more closely than your competitors. They'd love nothing more than to see your campaign fail. So, follow the guidelines and don't give Brand X a reason to tattle.

### THE MORAL OF THE STORY

**You don't need Facebook's permission, but you do need to play by their rules.**



**MYTH #8**

## If Facebook doesn't need to see them, then I don't need rules.

The legal ramifications of running a contest or sweepstakes – on Facebook or elsewhere – are extremely complicated, especially when prizing is involved. There's prize bonding, alternate forms of entry, specific state-by-state regulations, winner verification and tax documents just to name a few. Not surprisingly, many brands won't launch a promotion without thorough legal review by their corporate counsel. The legal waters must be deftly navigated before your campaign goes live.

### **Read all about it**

You can avoid trouble with Facebook by simply following its rules. But fail to seek out or follow through on sound legal counsel, and you could find yourself in a tough spot with government regulators or with litigious consumers. So, ask your legal team and partner with proven builders of Facebook promotion applications to mitigate risk. Or, as they say in *The Social Network*, you better be ready to "lawyer up".

### **THE MORAL OF THE STORY**

**Seek legal counsel before your promotion, or you may have to seek it after.**



## MYTH #9

# Forget the rules! I'll just run a contest on my wall.

Facebook's promotion guidelines state that you cannot run a contest or sweepstakes using its native functionality. That means you can't randomly award concert tickets to someone who likes your wall post. And you can't run a photo contest in your page's albums. Facebook wants these promotions run on third-party apps. How real is the risk of being tossed? Social media blogger Mari Smith said, "Though many Facebook users are either unaware of the rules or choose to ignore them, I personally feel it's not worth the risk to administer a promotion of any kind that doesn't adhere to Facebook's rules." \*

\* Social Media Examiner (December 21, 2010). "Top 75 Apps for Enhancing Your Facebook Page" by Mari Smith (@MariSmith).

### Read all about it

Scandinavian Airlines ran a promotion where it provided nine photos of travel destinations. Fans could add their own likeness to the photo and then use it as their primary Facebook profile image. The contest rewarded the most creative use of the photo with a free trip to the destination they selected. Harmless enough, right? Not for Facebook. The promotion was removed for exploiting Facebook functionality – in this case photo albums – for a contest.

### THE MORAL OF THE STORY

**Your wall is no place to run a Facebook promotion! Use a third-party app or risk the consequences.**



**MYTH #10**

## I can't afford a third-party app that looks the way I want.

A custom-built contest app can take more than four months to create and can cost upwards of \$100,000 (and sometimes upwards of \$250,000 depending on level of sophistication). A \$500 sweepstakes widget lacks the customizability, robust moderation, custom prizing and comprehensive reporting functionality that a sophisticated brand requires. Thankfully, you don't have to be held hostage by a custom-app developer and you don't have to settle for substandard sweepstakes widgets to run a successful promotion.

### **Read all about it**

The Bulbstorm® Engagement Platform™ enables brands and agencies to quickly and dependably deploy customized social campaigns that drive consumer engagement beyond the "like" button. How far beyond? Fans of Intel, 3M, Kraft, the WWE and more have averaged over six minutes and 18 page views per-fan per-visit in our campaigns. With built-in content moderation, user management, campaign reporting and prize fulfillment tracking, Bulbstorm offers an affordable, reliable alternative to built-from-scratch apps while delivering features and capabilities a \$500 widget can't touch.

### **THE MORAL OF THE STORY**

**When it comes to apps, you have choices. Choose a proven, full-featured solution that won't drain your budget.**

Ideas. Fans. Passion.



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