

PARTY TIME ON FACEBOOK

> Everyone loves a good event, but even the most well-planned event can flop if no one attends. Gone are the days when you sent out a paper invitation and waited for RSVPs. Events are now digital, and if you want party people in your store, you need to put out the word on social media.

Make a Plan

Facebook is the place to start for events. You can send tweets about events or post information and photos to Instagram, but Facebook is the only place where you can create an event page, invite people and advertise.

The first rule of event promotion: Give people plenty of notice. As soon as you set a date — ideally several weeks ahead of time — create the event page on Facebook. (More on that process soon.) If you still have small details to work out, note that in the event description. For now, you want to get customers to save the date and indicate their interest level; once they do so, they'll receive automatic updates on the event as you make changes, as well as reminders as the date nears. Use this planning time to map out any social posts, emails and live broadcasts.

Event Page

To set up a Facebook event page, go to your business page, click the three dots in the options below your cover photo, and choose "Create Event." (Do this from your business page so that you don't build an event from your personal profile.)

Your event page is going to need information and a graphic. Create this collateral ahead of time to make the process seamless. If you don't have a go-to design software, try Canva.com. It's free and lets you work from a template or create your own design. You can also choose your canvas size. The optimal dimensions for an event page cover are 1920 x 1080 px. Remember, this image will be displayed in several places and could be cropped differently in each placement, so play with the design to make sure it displays correctly in all variations. (Note: Unfortunately, you can't see how the image displays in

an ad beforehand, but you can always re-edit the image in Ads Manager so it displays nicely.)

Include the name of the event, date, time, location and description. Again, if you don't have all the details just write, "More details TBA!"

Now, invite attendees. While you can't automatically invite your page likes to the event, the event page will show up on your timeline. Invite your personal friends by clicking "Invite" below your cover photo. Add store employees as hosts in the event settings and encourage them to invite their friends.

Event Ad

Once your event is created, promote it with a Facebook event ad. Go to the Ads Manager, choose "Engagement" and then "Event Responses."

Ad photos should be 1920x1080 pixels and include minimal text. You are limited to how much copy goes into the ad: 25 characters for the headline, 30 characters for the link description and 90 characters for the ad text. You have the same targeting options for this ad as you do with any other, and can set a radius of how far users should be from your location in order to see your ad. (You don't want to invite people to the event who aren't local.) You can further break down the targeting by age, gender and other demographics.

I recommend setting a "lifetime budget" for event ads (a minimum of \$1 per day), which Facebook will spread throughout the length of your ad's run time.

Facebook Live Invite

Once your event page is ready and you've started promotions, it's time to stream an event invitation on Facebook Live.

Let people know the who, what, when, where, why and how of the event. Encourage them to RSVP on the event page and invite friends. Give them a behind-the-scenes look at event prep, from decorations to prizes you'll be giving away.

Don't forget: Once this video has streamed, you can promote it through Ads Manager. Doing this will help gain



PRETTY PICS

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additional views on the video and exposure for your business.

Additional Promotion

Once the foundation of your event is laid out, you'll need to keep it front-of-mind to your customers. Here are some ideas:

- Include a link to the event page in your newsletter.
- Create a dedicated email announcing the event.
- Create reminder emails about the event to go out a week before, a day before and a few hours before.
- Be sure to mention the event in your subsequent Facebook posts.
- Before the event begins, go live to show people that you're ready or go live during the event.
- Share photos after the event to get people excited for the next event.
- Share the event on your personal Facebook profile.
- Ask employees to share the event on their personal Facebook profile. 🦋

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