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Engagement & Interaction

A scientific approach to Facebook marketing.

Analyzing the top 20,000 Facebook Pages to find posting techniques that really work.

At recent conferences there has been much talk about best practices on Facebook. People have thrown around many pet theories about how to best engage Facebook Fan Pages. Being data nerds, we weren't comfortable just to accept these theories without data to back them up. So, we took a scientific approach to verify the commonly believed best practices and to find patterns in data to develop new best practices.

We developed a database of the top 20,000 Facebook Pages and their posts. For each analysis within this whitepaper, we analyzed between 10,000-250,000 Facebook posts. We sliced and diced the data in every way possible to find different ways in how interaction is created and how to replicate it. Our goal was to answer the questions that every Page Admin is asking with definitive answers from scientific analysis.

Questions

1. What is the best time to post?
2. How many times should I post per day?
3. What type of content elicits the most interaction?
4. Should I ask fans to Like and Comment on my posts?
5. Should I ask my fans questions?
6. How long should my status messages be?
7. How long do my posts last in the Newsfeed?

Short Answers

- a. Weekends and off-peak hours.
- b. As many times as you want.
- c. #1 Photos, #2 Statuses
- d. Yes! Asking to Like increases interaction 216%
- e. Questions don't increase interaction rate, but they do increase commenting rate. Make sure to ask fans to answer your questions with a comment.
- f. Lengthy Facebook status updates show higher interaction rates than shorter ones.
- g. 50% of clicks happen within 1 hour, 90% happen within 9 hours.

Definitions:

Interaction Rate: We took number of Likes and Comments for a post and divided it by the number of Page Likes at the time of publish. *Please note that this is our definition of interaction rate since it slightly differs from Facebook's definition which is (Likes + Comments)/Impressions.*

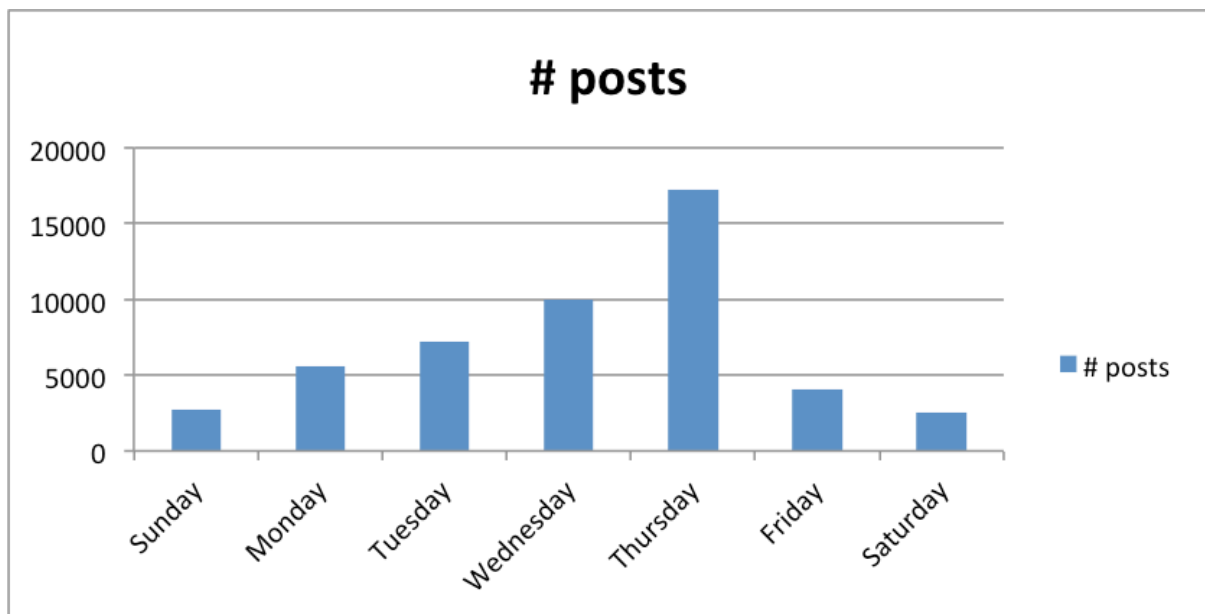
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Posting On Weekends And Off-peak Times Shows High Interaction

When is the best time to post?

In this article we looked at 50,000 posts from the top 14,000 pages on Facebook to see when page admins were posting. We wanted to find out the highest interaction day and time.

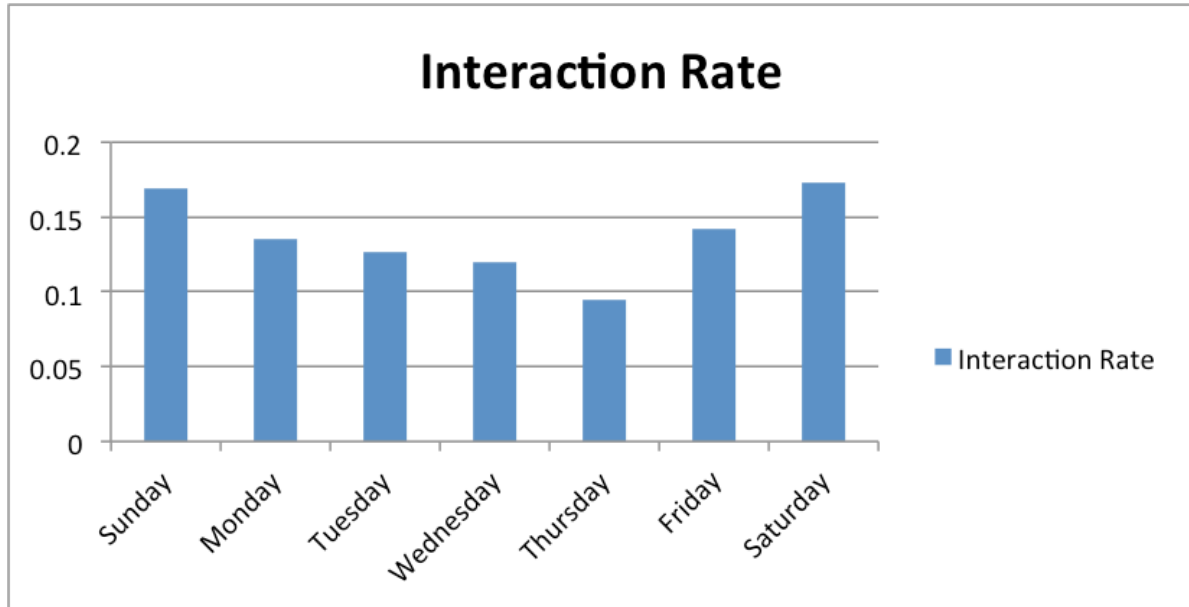
With this first graph we look at frequency:



Thursday shows the day with the highest number. The graph shows a 41% increase in posting from Wednesday to Thursday and an 85% increase from Saturday to Thursday. The lowest posting day is Saturday. We'll get into the conclusions one can make from this graph later in the blog post.

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The following graph shows interaction rates throughout the week:

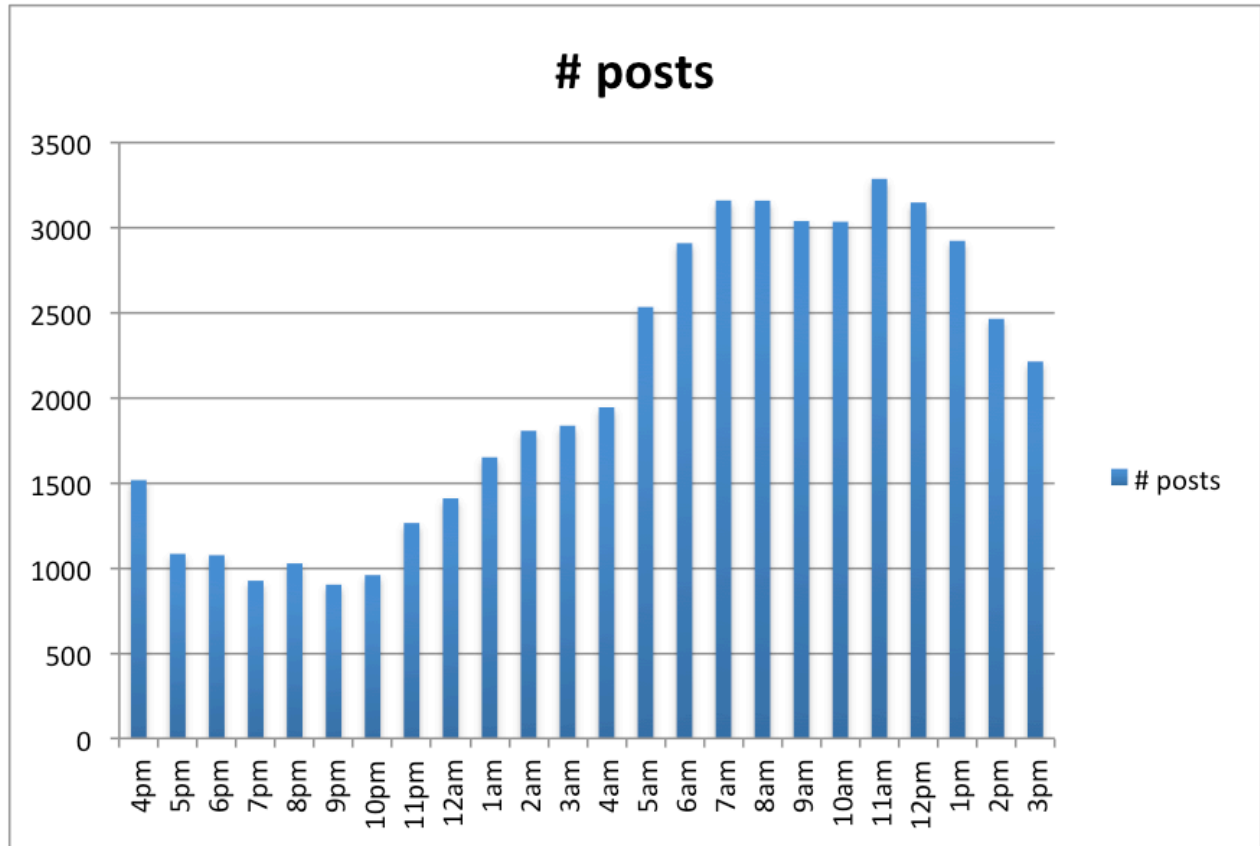


We see Saturday and Sunday have the highest interaction rate in the week with a lowest dip being on Thursday. This graph shows a 45% difference in interaction rate from Thursday to Saturday. What we noticed is the least amount of posts are on the days with highest interaction rates and vice versa. The higher the number of posts the lower interaction rate.

Posting on the weekends gets high interaction rates on Facebook.

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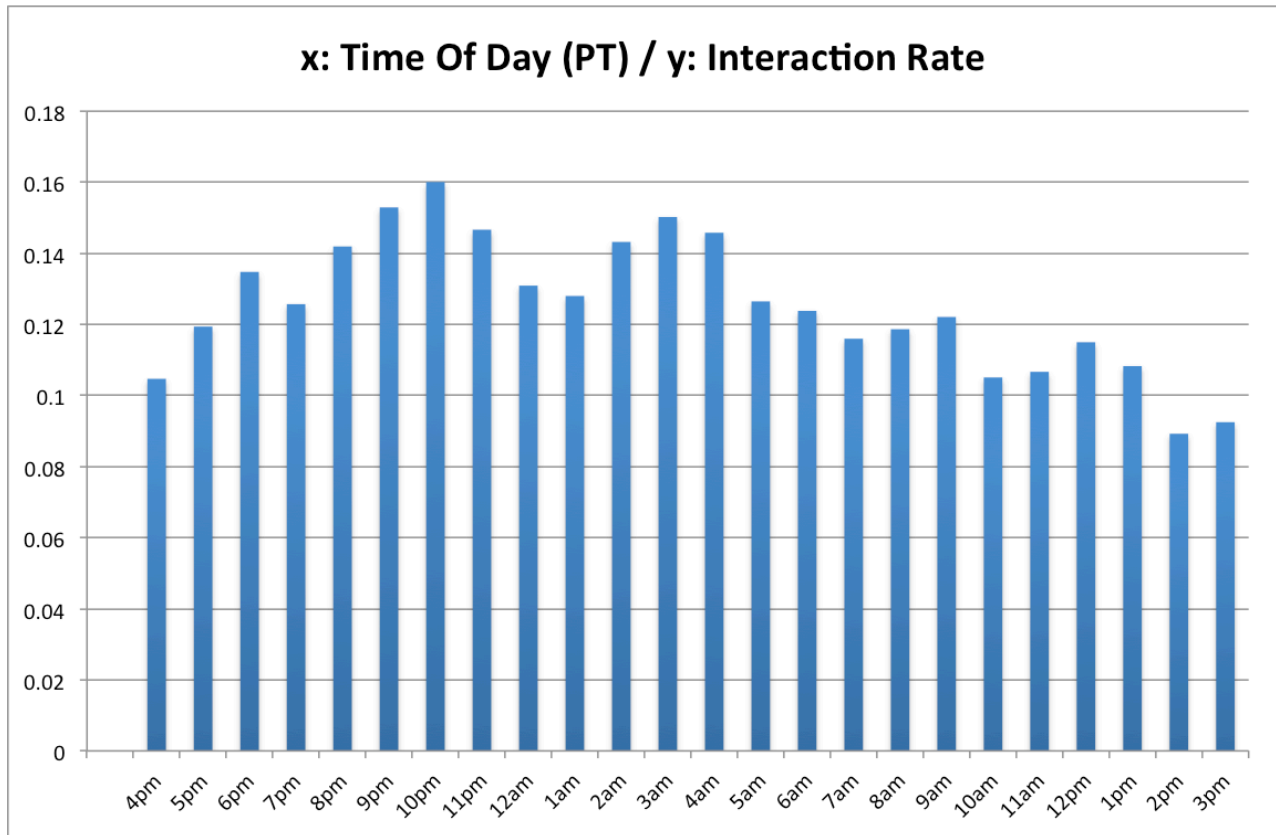
In the following graphs we look at time of day:



In this graph from 6am-1pm PST (9am-4pm EST) is the peak in which page admins are posting.

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The following graph charts interaction rates in relation to hours in the day:



We see that the highest interaction rates are during 6:00pm-5:00am PST. The lowest posting rates are also during this time— as is visible in the chart preceding this one.

We've concluded that the higher amount of posting results in lower interaction rates. The reverse is also true: lower post rates result in higher interaction rates.

Posting in off-peak hours on Facebook increase interaction rates.

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High Post Frequency Shows High Interaction

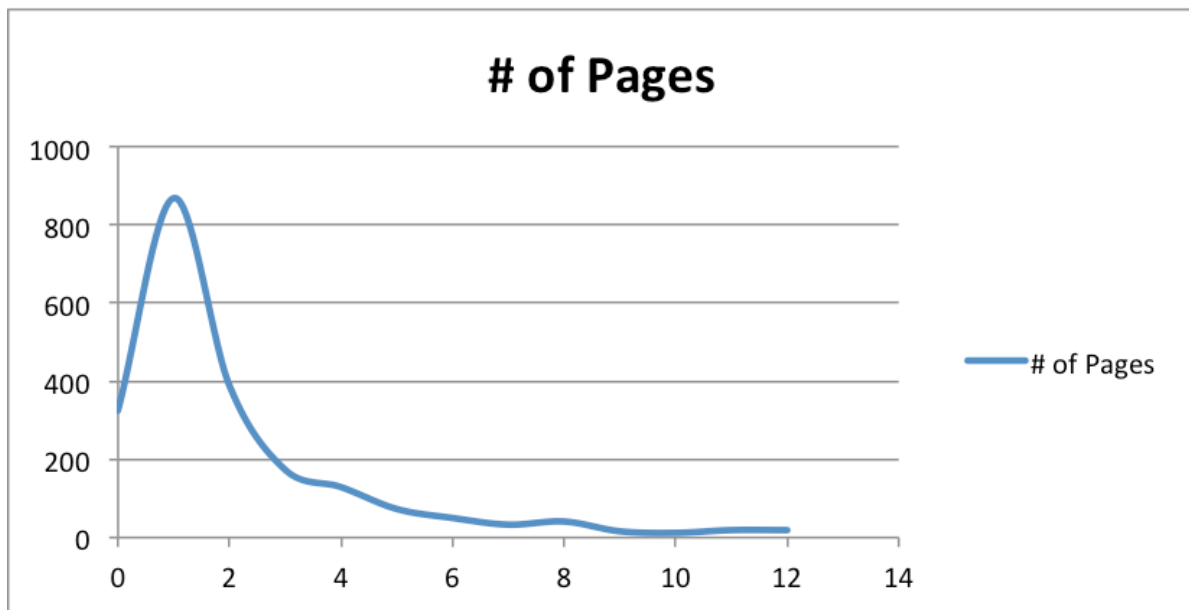
What is the optimal amount one should one post in one day?

In this post we look at Facebook page post frequency. Our sample set includes:

- 4,604 posts
- 2,144 pages
 - Minimum post frequency: 0 posts/day
 - Maximum post frequency: 12 posts/day

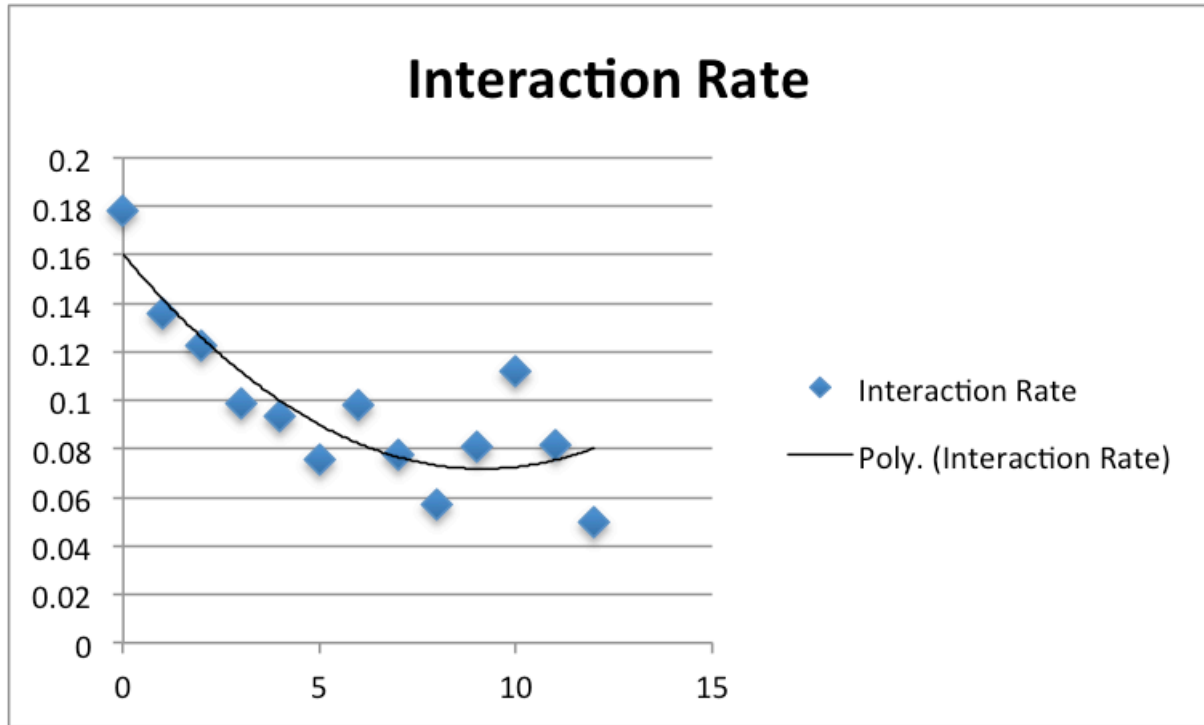
First we wanted to see how often page admins in our sample set were posting. We see that most admins are posting around 1 post per day.

- **15% post 0-1 posts/day**
- **40% post 1-2 posts/day**
- **18% post 2-3 posts/day**

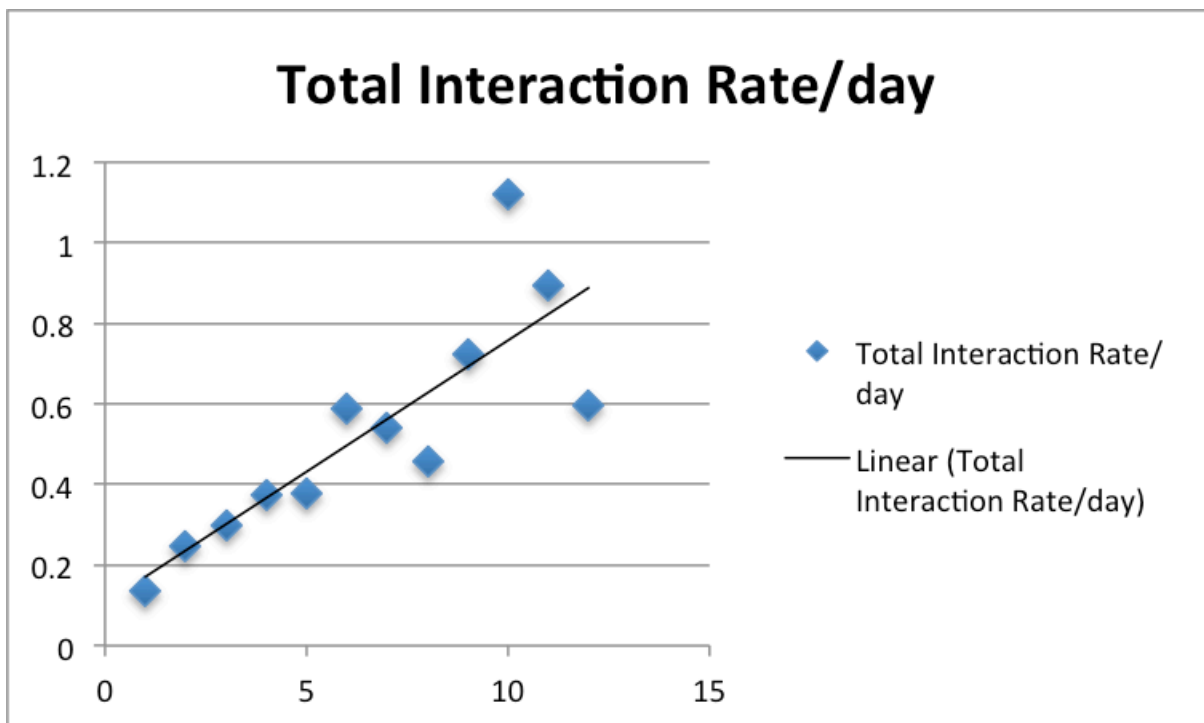


Next we look at how post frequency affects post interaction rate. We notice that with each posts made throughout the day, interaction rate drops for the each subsequent post. It should be noted that at 5 posts/day the interaction rate levels off. If one looks at the graph below, post frequencies ranging from 5-12 times per day have roughly the same interaction rate.

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Finally we look at how to optimize total interaction rate per day (avg. post interaction rate * # of posts/day). Interestingly, the following chart shows that the cumulative interaction rate of a day will continue to go up even as admins make up to 12 posts per day.



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Page admins trying to reach a larger percentage of their audience should post as much as they can to increase interaction.

The data tells us that Facebook page admins shouldn't be afraid of posting multiple times per day.

Facebook EdgeRank highly weights recency in posts, so if an admin doesn't post frequently their fans may never see their posts. Fans log in at different hours of the day. Frequent posting ensures that whenever a fan logs in to Facebook, fresh content will be available in their Newsfeed.

Will fans think frequent posting is spammy? From conversations with Facebook page admins, we've found that page unsubscribe rates go up moving from 1->2->3 posts/day, but will level off in higher frequencies. It is important to watch unsubscribe rates as you increase your post frequency and find the right balance between optimizing interaction and managing unsubscribe rate.

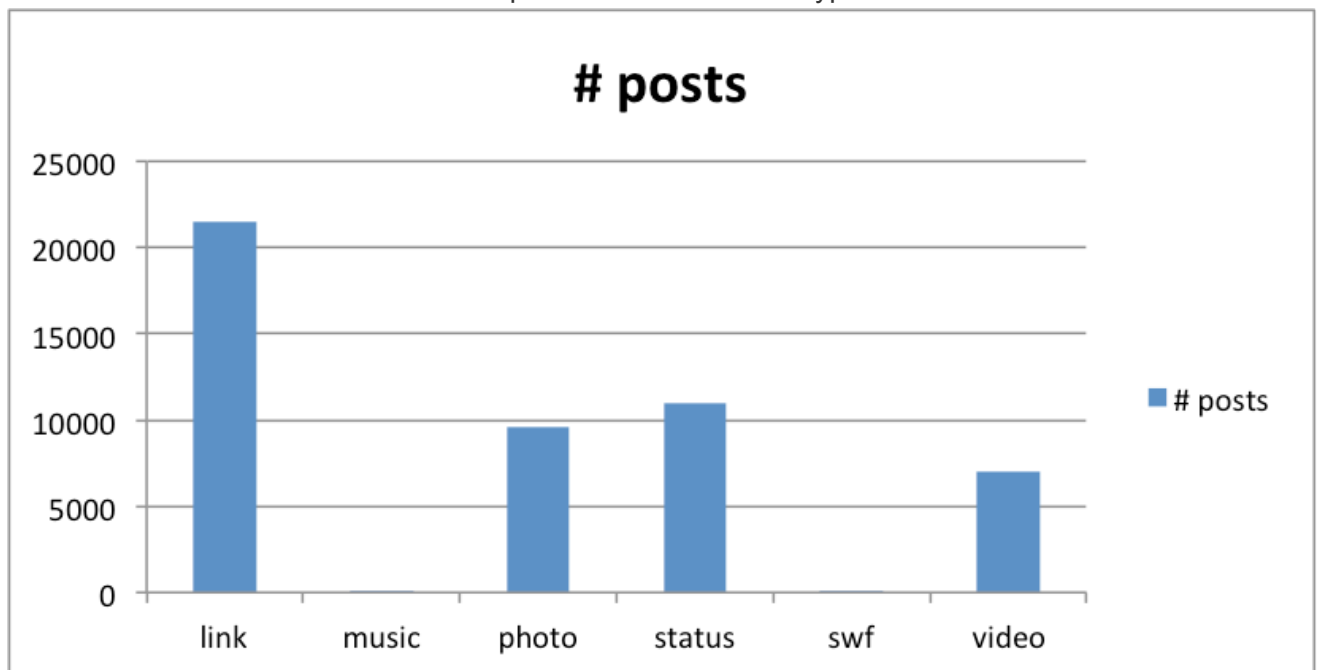
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Photos Generate 200% Higher Interaction Rate Than Links

You know what they say, “Content is king.” and while this maybe true. In this post we examine this notion in more depth to find out which type of content gets the most interaction on Facebook.

Our data comes from scraping the posts of the top 20,000 Facebook pages. Our sample size was 50,000 posts.

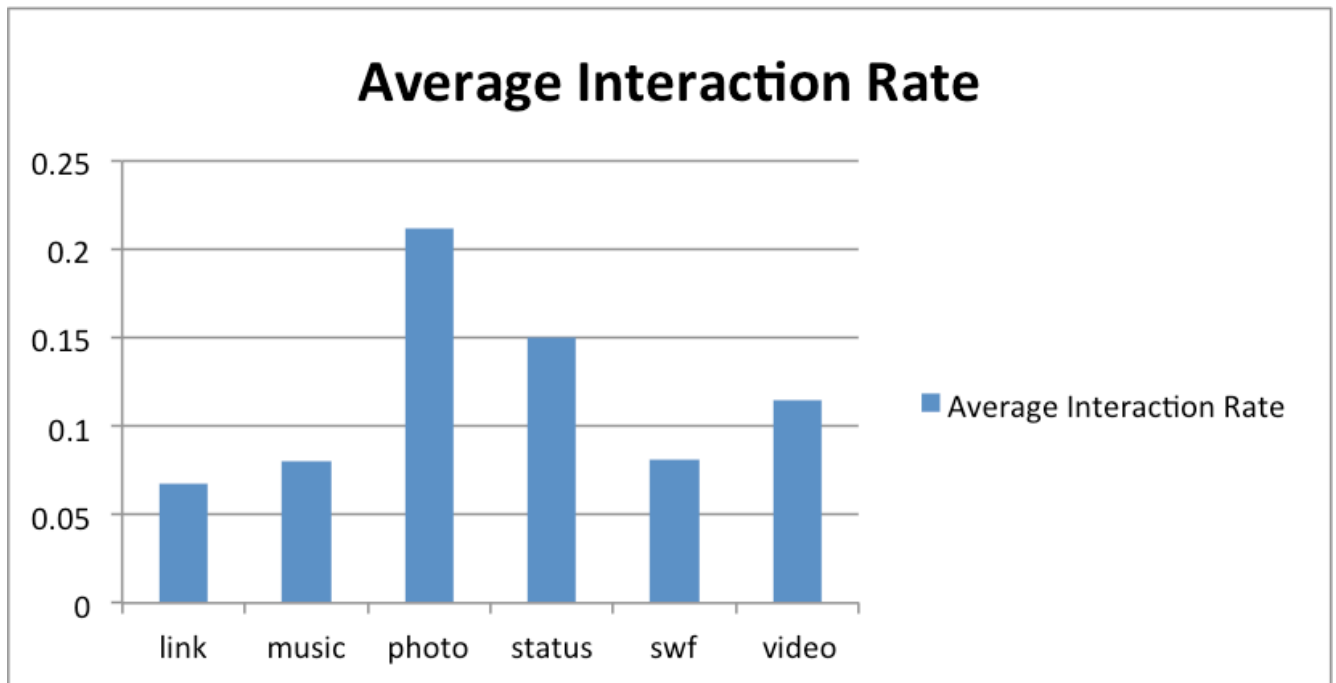
When we take a look at the number of posts for each content type we see:



- Music- 78
- SWF- 128
- Video- 7,018
- Photo- 9,594
- Status- 10,936
- Link- 21,527

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We found the average interaction rate for the six types of content. In the order of interaction rate from lowest to highest, they are:



- Link-0.07%
- Music-0.08%
- SWF-0.08%
- Video-0.11%
- Status-0.15%
- Photo-0.21%

Photos by far have the highest interaction rate, which is 200% higher than the lowest, links. Interesting to note, the second highest interaction rate comes from status messages.

Photos Generate 200% Higher Interaction Rate Than Links on Facebook

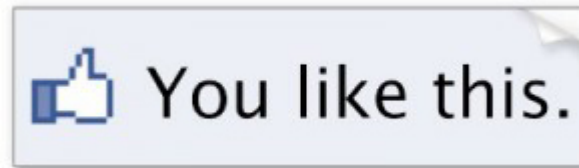
Takeaways

As we see here, links are most frequently posted but have the lowest interaction rate. While photos are posted less often, but have the highest interaction rate. It makes sense that photos generate the highest interaction rate as they draw the user in visually, are easily digestible and can elicit an emotional response quickly. Using photos can increase interaction rate with your Facebook fans.

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Asking Users To “Like” Gets 216% Higher Interaction Rate

“LIKE if you had a great 4th of July Weekend!”



“Did you have a great 4th of July Weekend? Tell us what you did in the comments!”

We see many Facebook Page admins asking their fans to “Like” posts and leave comments on posts. Does this elicit greater interaction rates from fans?

We analyzed 49,266 Page posts to compare interaction rates for posts containing “Like” calls to action, “comment” calls to action, and those without.

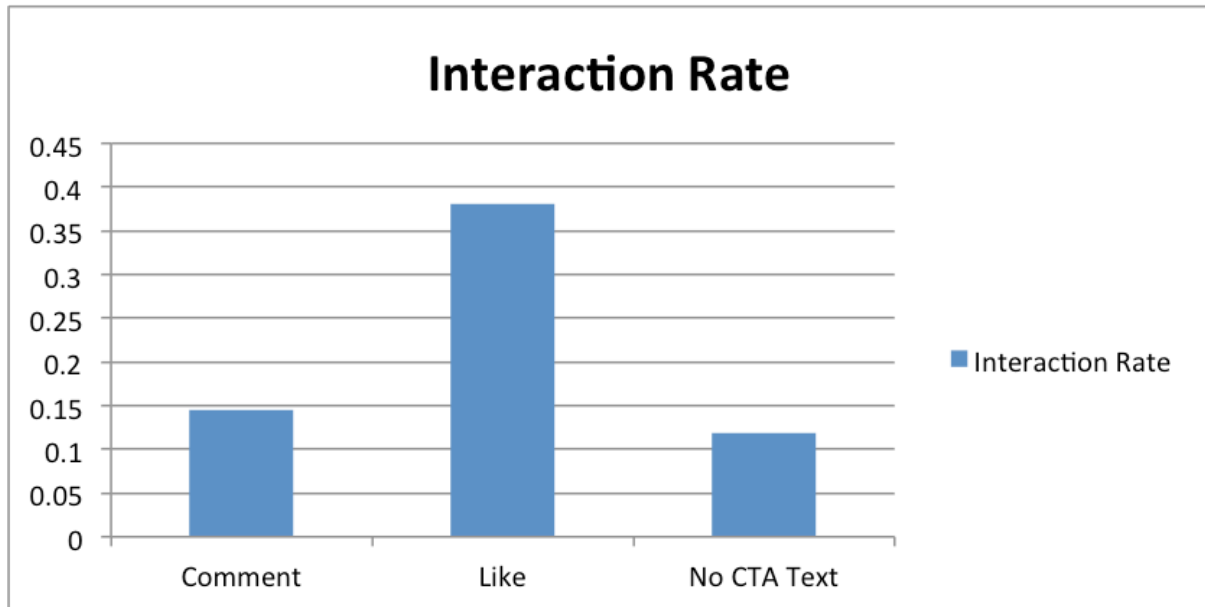
After splitting into the three groups, our sample size was:

- Contains “comment” – 292
- Contains “Like”- 361
- Doesn’t contain “comment” or “Like”- 48,613

People are posting statuses with “comment” and “Like” calls to action, but at low rates. Only 1.3% of status messages we analyzed had a call to action in it.

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Next we calculated the average interaction rates for the three categories of posts.



- Contains "comment" – 0.14%
- Contains "Like"- 0.38%
- Doesn't contain "comment" or "Like"- 0.11%

Not surprising we see call to action posts asking users to "Comment" and "Like" have a higher interaction rate when compared to normal text statuses posted ([not including photos, links, video, etc.](#)) What is notable is how much interaction is increased by asking users to "Like".

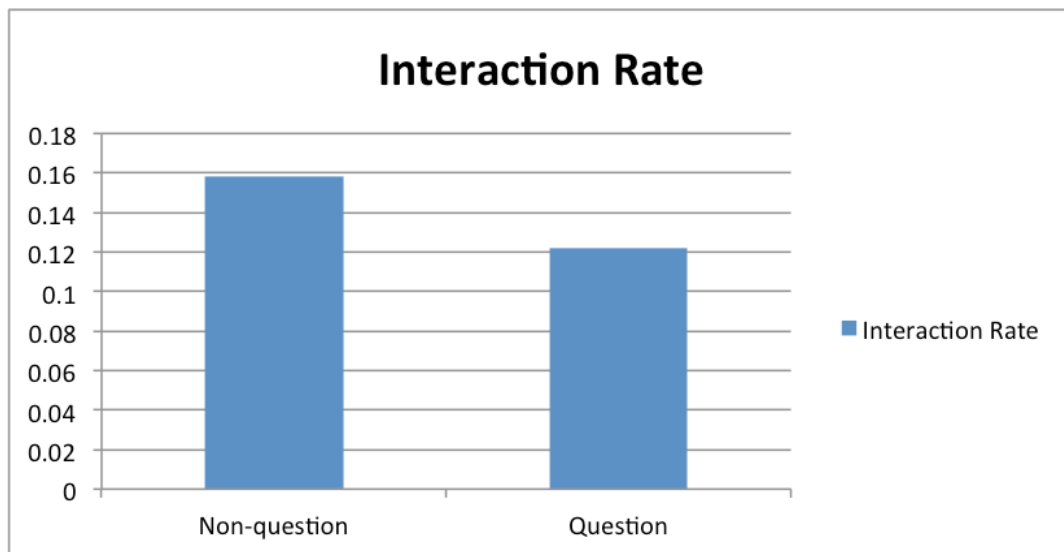
Asking users to "Like" gets an average of 216% increase in interaction rate

So for Facebook page admins, using a "Like" call to action is definitely an effective way significantly boost your interaction rate.

Facebook Pages: Asking Questions Doesn't Increase Interaction Rate

At recent conferences, the buzz has been that asking questions and being conversational improves your Facebook pages' comments and likes, or, interaction rate. We define the interaction rate as the sum of the number of likes and comments for a post divided by the number of page likes, at the time of publishing.

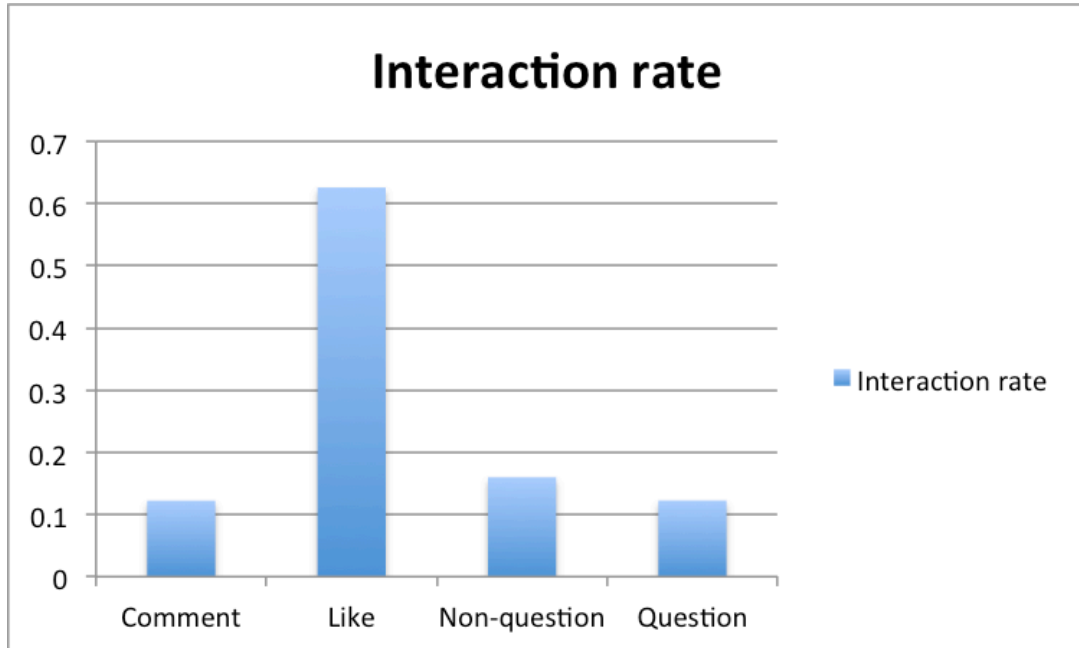
In this post we will analyze whether questions improve the interaction rate. We looked at 10,000+ status message posts. We divided them into those that contained the question mark (2,608), and those without (8,329). This is our first finding:



Question posts get 23% lower than non-question posts.

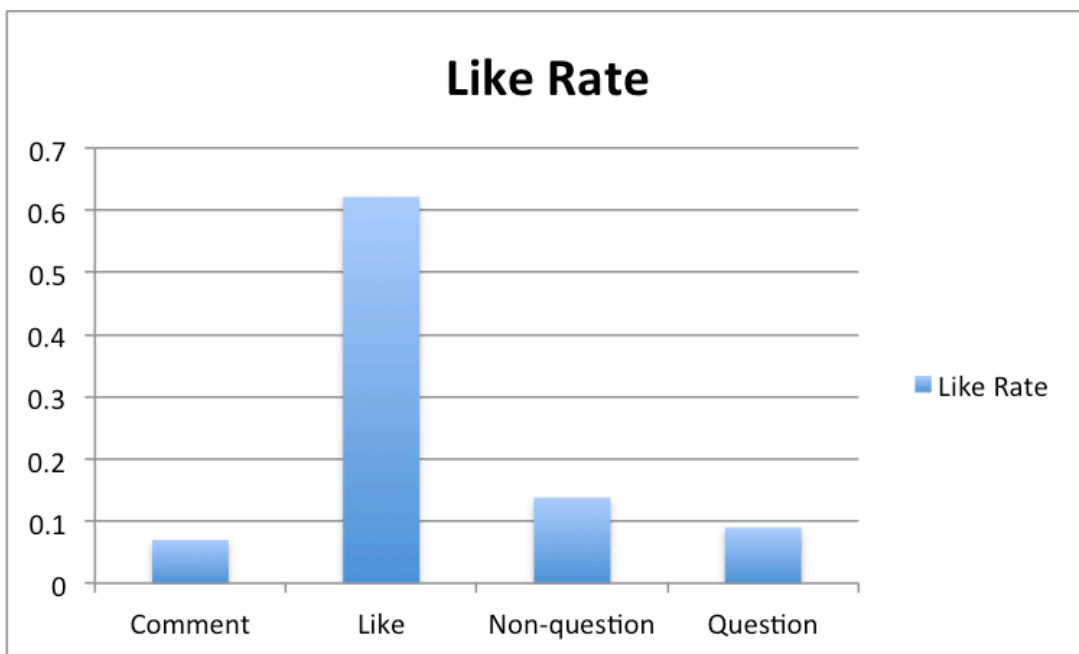
We were surprised to see that asking users questions don't get a higher interaction rate. So, we examined this further, by separating out the call to action (CTA) posts-- those posts with "Like" and "Comment" in them. We thought perhaps CTA posts were lifting the rate of the non-question posts.

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In the graph above, the non-question interaction rate is still higher than the question rate, despite splitting out the CTA posts.

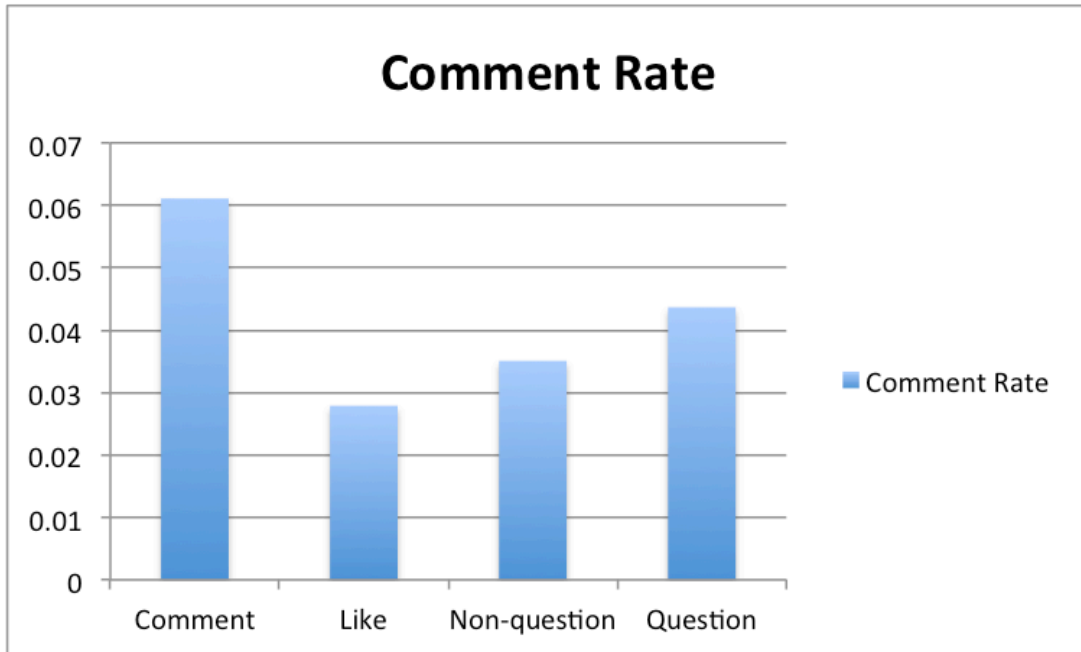
For our next analysis, instead of comparing the posts against interaction rate, we chose the Like Rate. Perhaps question posts are improving the like rate? If we tease apart the interaction rate, will we find any surprises? The like rate is the number of likes the post got, over page likes. These are the results:



Obviously, the like rate is the highest when asking users to "like". For the other categories, questions are still in the bottom rates.

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Our last analysis looks at the comment rate, which is the number of post comments, per post, over page likes. This is where we found some interesting data.



Again, somewhat logically, the comment rate is up when asking users to comment. Finally, though, the question category inched up past the non-question rate.

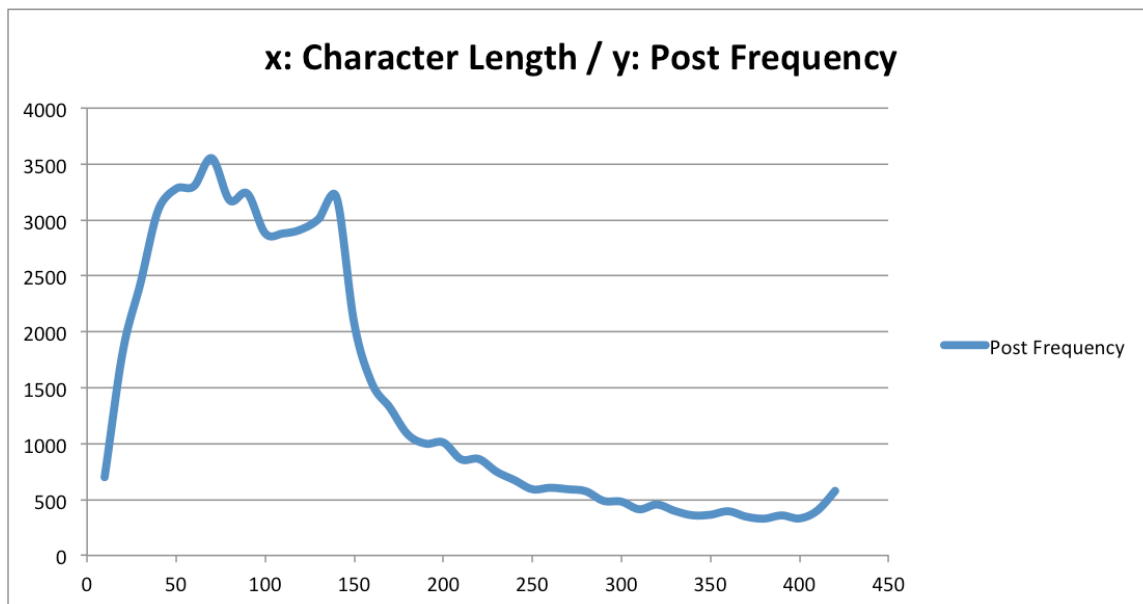
Facebook page admins looking to get the highest comment rate should be directly asking for comments from users. But, asking questions also helps.

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Lengthy Facebook Status Updates Show Higher Interaction Rates

In this post we look at the length of status messages on Facebook. We wanted to find out how the length of status messages effects user interaction. We looked at 700,000 Facebook posts and pulled 60,000 status updates.

First we determine how often Facebook page admins are posting with relation to the character length of the post. This is what we saw:

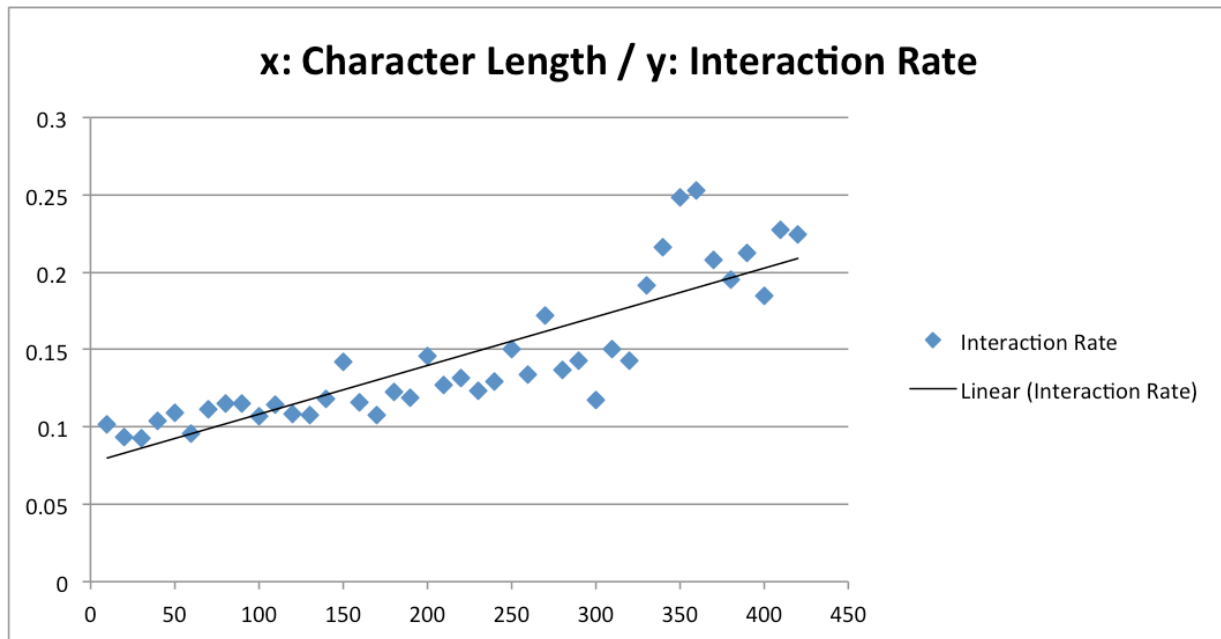


As we can see in the graph above, posts from about 40 to 140 characters are most common (with a peak at 60 characters). After 140 characters the graph falls sharply. There are no posts past 420 (Facebook character limit).

Why do posts drastically drop off at 140? One reason we believe is Twitter. By staying within 140 character limit, page admins posting to both Facebook and Twitter can insure their posts are compatible on both social media platforms. There is higher post rate for shorter rather than longer character posts. 140 character or less status updates have a high post rate. 140-420 character status updates have a lower post rate.

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In the next graph we look at character length in relation to interaction rate:



On average it shows that interaction rate continues to go up with the length of the status message. Don't be afraid to share longer stories with your fans. Longer messages can give them a chance to connect.

Posting longer Facebook status updates shows higher interaction than shorter ones.

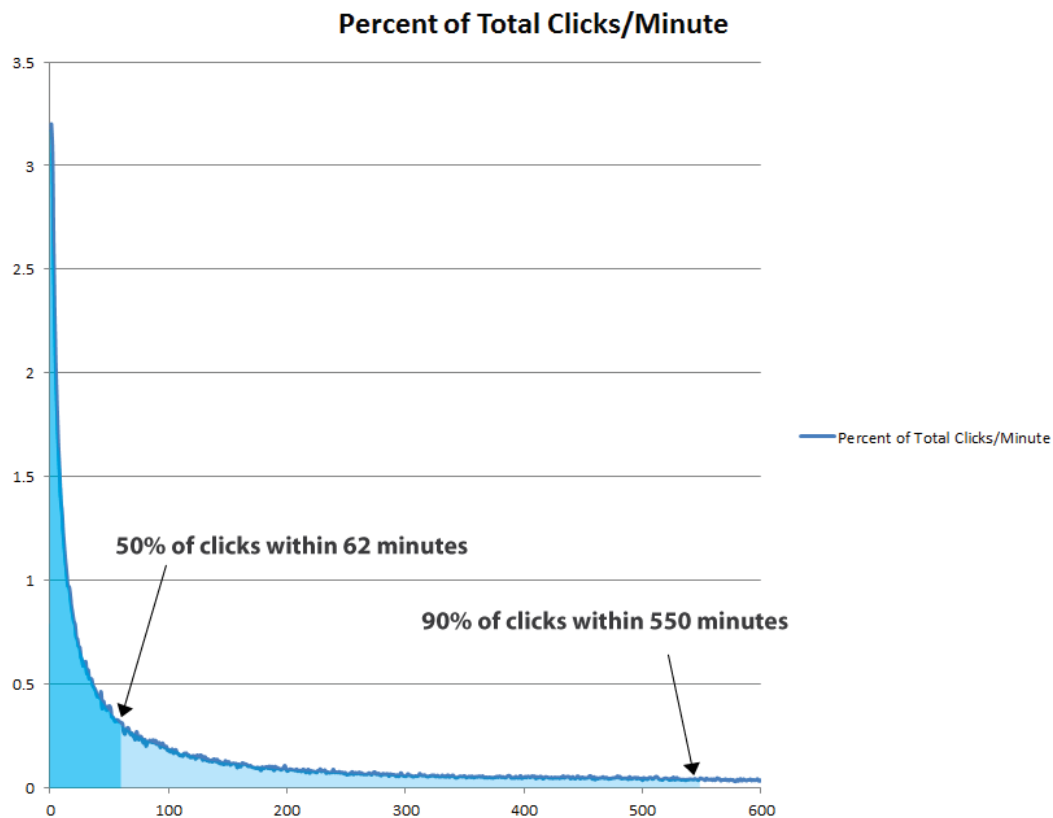
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50% Of Clicks Happen Within 1 Hour Of Posting

How long do users interact with a Facebook post after it has been posted?

We looked at over 250,000 clicks on Facebook posts to better understand the life of a post. To see how a post fared over time, we found the percentage of total clicks that occur within each minute after posting.

This is what we saw:



The two times to note from the graph:

- 1 hour (62 minutes)
- 9 hours (550 minutes)

As we can see the graph initially drops steeply and within the first hour 50% of clicks have been clicked. At the 2 hour mark we begin to see the curve of the graph begins to slowly taper off. We see that 90% of the clicks happen within nine hours of posting.

In one hour 50% of the users who will engage with a Facebook post will have done so.

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About Momentus Media

At Momentus Media we strive to help brands build the most viral marketing campaigns on the Facebook platform. A product of the Facebook Fund in 2009, Momentus Media has been responsible for over 90 million viral Facebook app installs. We are specialists in virality, and we work with brands to make their message most sharable and spreadable. We offer social application design, development and strategy consulting.

Facebook page admins looking for ways to increase Facebook engagement and reach please contact us: <http://momentusmedia.com/publisher/index.php/momentus/contactus>