TECHNICAL DOCUMENT

Use of Facebook for HIV prevention among men who have sex with men in the European Union/European Economic Area

An ECDC guide to effective use of digial platforms for HIV prevention

December 2017

ECDC TECHNICAL DOCUMENT

Use of Facebook for HIV prevention among men who have sex with men in the European Union/European Economic Area

An ECDC guide to effective use of digital platforms for HIV prevention

2. Facebook

With 1.23 billion active users[1], Facebook is one of the cheapest and most efficient platforms for HIV prevention, but it is also one of the most competitive. This means that having an understanding of how to best optimise content and target key MSM populations is crucial to the success of any organic or monetised Facebook campaign. This module outlines the opportunities Facebook provides for HIV prevention and explores the following areas:

- **Getting started**: how to begin setting up a successful Facebook campaign
- **Creating content**: how to create and optimise content for maximum success
- **Targeting**: how to effectively target key MSM populations
- **Budgeting**: what costs are associated with a campaign and how to distribute budget
- **Reporting**: measuring the success of a campaign and applying the experience to future work
- **Summary:** a brief checklist to consider before making your campaign live.

2a. Getting started

Facebook's Business Manager is the system that will allow you to create and manage your campaigns. This module will take you through each step of the process but it is advised that you familiarise yourself with Business Manager before proceeding. If you're creating your Business Manager account from scratch you can read advice on starting the account **here.**[2]

Once your Business Manager account is set up then it is time to create your first campaign, but before you get started it is important to understand exactly what you are trying to achieve. There are three different objective types outlined by Facebook and each requires a different plan of action.

- Awareness: designed to encourage engagement, promote key messages and increase knowledge. This can include boosting a post to generate conversations around sexual health or the service you provide, or encouraging users to become a fan of your page for future updates.
- Consideration: designed to raise awareness of the services you provide and encourage future action. This can include getting people to watch a promotional video or sending people to your website to view information or consider taking action.
- Conversion: designed to promote direct action (e.g. find a testing centre or order a postal test.) By setting up a pixel within your website Facebook will be able to track the number of people engaging with your services and use this to optimise your campaign to increase the number of conversions. You can learn more about creating a pixel **here**.[3]

Determining your core objective before beginning your campaign is vital as it will heavily influence the way you design and measure your campaign and the way Facebook distributes and optimises it. If one singular objective is not clear then consider multiple campaigns with their own individual objectives.

2b. Creating content

It is important to remember that any social media campaign you create will be directly competing for space in a person's timeline alongside updates from their family, friends, and other brands and organisations they love. For this reason, advertisements may look out of place and a softer approach is often necessary. The aim is to make your advert fit seamlessly into a person's timeline while simultaneously promoting your message.

The first step in creating an engaging piece of content is to decide what kind of content will best convey your message. There are four different types of content currently available on Facebook:

- **Text**: a simple text update with no embedded links, images, videos or graphics.
- **Image**: an image, usually accompanied by text and a link if applicable.[4]
- **Video**: a video, usually accompanied by text and a link if applicable.[5]
- **Link:** a clickable post, usually including an image and a call to action.[6]

---

[1] https://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2014/feb/04/facebook-in-numbers-statistics
[2] https://www.facebook.com/business/help/1428785834029669
[3] https://www.facebook.com/business/a/online-sales/conversion-tracking
[4] https://www.facebook.com/sockeundschuss/posts/1213424405335866
[5] https://www.facebook.com/sockeundschuss/videos/1218437971501176/
[6] https://www.facebook.com/sockeundschuss/posts/1201561646522142

Images are the most versatile type of content and are compatible with all of Facebook's different advert types and placements but it is still recommended that you experiment with video and links to see what your audience engage with most.

Creating engaging content

When creating content, your top priority should be to ensure that it is engaging. Before you send out your first post or advert it is worth considering the following:

- Be consistent: being consistent in the quality and types of posts you create will help to establish your brand voice and message and give your audience a clear understanding of your intentions and objectives and what to expect from you in future.
- Be brief: try to keep your posts between 100 and 250 characters to get more engagement. Shorter, succinct posts with a clear call to action are much better received.[7]
- Be timely: be reactive and create content related to breaking news and current events. Plan ahead to take advantage of relevant 'tent pole' occasions such as World AIDS Day, Sexual Health Week, National HIV Testing Week, and Valentine's Day.
- Utilise links: even if there is no direct call to action, always give your audience the option to get involved and find out more by including a relevant link to your own or a partner's website. Using a link shortener, such as goo.gl[8] or bit.ly[9] will keep your links short and tidy.
- Use engaging images and videos: invest the extra time and money into curating and creating high quality photos and videos. Higher quality content means higher engagement (see the case study for an example.)
- Create a two-way dialogue: social media is designed to encourage conversation. Make sure you are engaging your audience in conversation and responding to comments. If relevant, including a question in your content has been proven to massively increase engagement.
- Keep it simple: do not overwhelm your audience with too much information or multiple different calls to action. Keep it clear and make it as easy as possible for your audience to engage.

Case study: Socke & Schuss

'Socke Und Schuss' is a German sexual health campaign run by Aidshilfe NRW e.V. that uses two centralised characters to promote HIV prevention and awareness. The strong branding of the campaign is instantly recognisable and reached over 1 000 000 MSM in its first two years. The Facebook page includes a wealth of highly engaging images and videos[1] and capitalises on tent-pole events such as Eurovision[1] to draw in their target audience.[1]

---

[7] https://www.facebook.com/sockeundschuss/posts/1191277090883931
[8] https://goo.gl
[9] https://bitly.com

Consider your audience

Identifying the audience you are targeting is also extremely important when creating content. From choosing the models you use in your campaign to establishing a tone of voice, it is important to ensure that the content appeals to your target demographic. Pre-testing different campaign materials before launch is often advised and can help to determine which adverts will perform best.

Advert placements

Adverts placed in Facebook's Business Manager can appear in multiple places including Facebook itself (in the desktop feed, mobile feed, and right column), Instagram, and the Audience Network. Different marketing objectives work best with different placements, and Facebook recommends the following:

Brand awareness: Facebook[10] and Instagram[11]
Engagement: Facebook and Instagram
Video views: Facebook, Instagram and Audience Network[12]
Website referrals: Facebook and Audience Network
Conversions: Facebook and Audience Network.

Facebook also has a built-in 'Automatic Placements' feature that will optimise your placements in order to get the best results at the cheapest cost. It is recommended that you take advantage of this feature but it is important to ensure first that your content is optimised for each individual placement.

2c. Targeting

Targeted adverts are the key to any successful Facebook campaign. With effective targeting it is possible to make a lasting impact with even the smallest budget. Targeting options include location, age, gender, languages, interests, and connections. Being as specific as possible with the available targeting methods is crucial to the success of your campaign.

Demographic-based targeting

- Age: your call to action should be relevant to the age group you are targeting. Are some age groups more at risk in the areas you are targeting? Are some age groups more likely to engage with your call to action? Effectively narrowing your age group by relevance will increase the success of your campaign and lower your cost per conversion.
- Gender: Facebook's gender-based targeting is binary and does not allow transgender (trans)-based targeting. Using interest-based targeting is currently the only way to specifically target trans individuals.
- Languages: Consider including only those who speak the language your advert is written in.
- Connections: Consider excluding those who like your page if you are seeking a new audience, or target friends of people that like the page already.
- Location: Only include people in locations that can access your service, and consider exclusively targeting areas that are highly populated with MSM or that have the highest prevalence of HIV.

---

[10] https://www.facebook.com/
[11] https://www.instagram.com/
[12] https://www.facebook.com/business/news/audience-network

Interest-based targeting

Sexuality-based targeting is not always reliable and is no longer available in many areas. MSM can instead be identified through interest-based targeting. This will never be 100% accurate so some trial and error is always necessary to produce the best possible results. The table below gives some examples of MSM interests and how to target them.

Table 1. **Examples of MSM interests and how to target them**

Press & Media	Do target press and media in your area that specifically target MSM	Do not target more generic magazines that appeal to non-MSM individuals
Dating & Relationships	Do target pages of dating sites and apps that specifically cater for gay men	Do not target pages of dating sites and apps that appeal to a much wider audience
Gay Scene & Nightlife	Do target gay spaces and events such as Gay Pride, even if they are frequented by some non-MSM individuals	Do not target heterosexual venues even if they are also frequented by MSM
Adult	Do target the pages of adult websites that exclusively create gay porn	Do not target the pages of generic adult websites that also create straight content
Lifestyle	Do remember to include hobbies and activities that fall outside of the traditional gay scene	Do not target generic pages that appeal to both gay and straight people
Clothing & Fashion	Do target the pages of fetish and other brands that are exclusively marketed for MSM	Do not target generic brands that may appeal to both gay and straight men
TV & Film	Do target gay films and TV shows that revolve around gay characters, themes, and storylines	Do not target generic films and TV shows even if they include some gay characters, storylines or themes
Celebrities	Do exercise caution: targeting large celebrity pages may produce unexpected results	Do not target gay icons who also have a large heterosexual following: e.g. Lady Gaga

Interest targeting can also be used to refine your audience even further. For example:

Transgender individuals: consider targeting trans-specific pages such as *Trans Pride.*
Ethnic minorities: consider targeting pages specific to ethnic minorities such as *Black Gay Pride.*
High-risk individuals: consider targeting sex clubs or other high-risk areas, such as *Circuit Festival.*
Different age groups: consider targeting or excluding age-based pages, such as *Gay Mature Dating.*
Affluence: consider targeting or excluding luxury purchases such as *European Gay Ski Week.*

2d. Budgeting and costs

Facebook was once a place where organic content[13] would thrive but as the marketplace has become more competitive the cost of advertising has increased and organic content has become much less viable as a method of advertising. Although it is possible to run a campaign without an advertising budget, to reach its full potential it is crucial to set aside a realistic budget and determine the best way to spend it.

Before determining your budget it is important to consider the following:

Overall budget: What is the absolute maximum amount you have to spend on Facebook advertising? Use this to determine your overall budget and as your spending benchmark.

---

[13] This is content that you do not promote via paid advertising

Advert sets: How many different campaigns are you going to be running and how do you want to distribute your budget among them in order to meet your targets?

Deliverables: What deliverables are you trying to achieve? Whether you are trying to drive conversions or promote engagement and brand awareness, ensure you know your core objectives in advance.

Duration: How long is your campaign going to run for? Is your campaign going to run over an extended period of time or is it intended to produce quick results within a short time frame?

Daily budget: Taking into account the budget you have available for each advert set and the duration of the campaign, how much do you have to spend on a daily basis?

Target: How many people do you want to reach/convert? This will allow you to calculate the maximum amount you want to spend per action achieved – Cost Per Action (CPA).

Table 2. **Budget breakdown example**

Overall budget: EUR 10 000	
HIV testing postal kits: EUR 7 000	**Condom awareness: EUR 3 000**
Deliverable: online orders	**Deliverable: post engagement**
Duration: 1 week	**Duration: 8 weeks**
Daily budget: EUR 1 000	**Daily budget: EUR 50~**
Target: 100 conversions per day	**Target: 500 people engaged per day**
Cost per action: EUR 10	**Cost per action: EUR 0.10~**

Once you have established your budget you can then use this to optimise your adverts and make sure they are performing and achieving the goals you have outlined. These should be monitored and adjusted on a daily basis to ensure the best results.

It is important to be realistic with your goals and sometimes it may be necessary to re-evaluate your budget and expectations if your adverts continue to underperform.

Performance

In order to understand your adverts and how they are performing, it is important to first understand the following three metrics:

- Impressions: the number of times your ads were displayed.
- Reach: the number of unique users your ads reached.
- Frequency: the average number of times your ad was served to each person.

You can adjust the frequency at which your adverts are presented by adjusting your audience size or your budget. A larger audience or lower budget will produce a lower frequency and a smaller audience or higher budget will produce a higher frequency.

The solution to keeping your adverts running at a low cost is to find the right frequency at which to present them. The more often a user sees your advert, the more likely they are to engage with it, but if you present your advert too often they are likely to become fatigued or annoyed by it. The only real way to determine the frequency that is right for your adverts and your audience is through experimentation, testing, and data analysis.

2e. Reporting

Reporting is an ongoing process when it comes to advertising on Facebook, and although adverts should be optimised and monitored on a daily basis, it is also important to produce more holistic reports to highlight any weaknesses in your strategy.

Some of the elements you should report upon include:

- Page growth: creating a hard-core base of page fans gives you a captive audience of people who will be much easier to convert. Fans should organically discover your page but fan acquisition adverts can also be created to attract new fans to your page.
- Reach: getting an idea of the number of people you are reaching gives you a benchmark for measuring the campaign's success. Comparing this to other marketing methods (i.e. other social media, press, outdoor) will help inform the amount of budget you attribute to Facebook.
- Engagement: monitoring the number of people you are engaging with will help determine the success and effectiveness of your content. Spikes in engagement may indicate examples of more relatable content and dips in engagement may indicate content that is underperforming.
- Engagement rate: this is the percentage of people reached that also engaged with your content. A low engagement rate could indicate a problem with your content or your targeting.
- Referrals and conversions: the number of people clicking through to your website and the number of people taking action on the site.
- Conversion rate: the percentage of those visiting your website who also took action.

Table 3. **Simple reporting example**

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Growth	1 000 ▲	2 000 ▲	1 500 ▼	1 200 ▼
Reach	1 000 000 ▲	2 000 000 ▲	800 000 ▼	3 000 000 ▲
Engagement	30 000 ▲	50 000 ▲	25 000 ▼	100 000 ▲
Engagement rate	3% ▲	2.5% ▼	3.13% ▲	3.33% ▲
Referrals	5 000 ▲	10 000 ▲	8 000 ▼	15 000 ▲
Conversions	500 ▲	900 ▲	1 000 ▲	2 000 ▲
Conversion rate	10% ▲	9% ▼	12.5% ▲	13.33% ▲

Q1: All figures are positive and the campaign is performing well.

Q2: The massive increase in reach has resulted in lower engagement and conversion rates. Optimising your targeting and content would improve this figure in the next quarter.

Q3: Engagement and conversion rates are up but other elements of the campaign are underperforming. Optimise your targeting and budget to increase your reach in the next quarter.

Q4: The overall campaign is performing well but page growth is down. Consider allocating some additional budget to page fan acquisition to improve these figures in the next quarter.

2f. Summary

Before starting your Facebook campaign, you should do the following:

1. Choose your campaign objective and outline your goals

2. Create a selection of highly engaging content that is suitable for your target audience

3. Select the best places for your adverts to appear

4. Create at least one target group based on both demographic and interest-based targeting

5. Allocate a budget and distribution plan and outline achievable realistic targets

6. Set holistic goals to measure the overall success of your campaign and determine a plan to measure and act upon your ongoing progress, successes and failures.

Once you have completed these tasks you are ready to start your first campaign. The success of any campaign will always depend on a certain degree of trial and error so remember to follow your campaign through every stage and be prepared to optimise and make changes as you go.

Helpful tools

- A guide to getting started with Facebook's Business Manager can be found here.[14]

- For images to be approved by Facebook for advertising purposes they need to contain no more than 20% text. A tool is available to check your images before making them live here.[15]

- Accessibility tools such as closed captions for video are available to make your content more inclusive. You can find out more about accessibility options here.[16]

- There are certain barriers when talking about gender, sexuality, sex, and sexual health. In order for adverts to be approved they must conform to Facebook's advert policy.[17]

- Free tools such as Survey Monkey[18] can be used to pre-test campaign materials before they go live.

- Information on creating a pixel for conversion tracking can be found here.[19]

- Google's URL Builder[20], goo.gl[21] and bit.ly[22] can be used to create shortened tracking links.

---

[14] https://www.facebook.com/business/help/1428785834029669
[15] https://www.facebook.com/ads/tools/text_overlay
[16] https://www.facebook.com/help/141636465971794/
[17] https://www.facebook.com/policies/ads
[18] http://www.surveymonkey.com/
[19] https://www.facebook.com/business/a/online-sales/conversion-tracking
[20] https://support.google.com/analytics/answer/1033867?hl=en
[21] https://goo.gl
[22] https://bitly.com

References

Social Media & The Health System
https://www.thepermanentejournal.org/issues/445-social-media-and-the-health-system.html

The Top 5 Social Media Trends That Will Dominate 2016
https://www.emarsys.com/en/resources/blog/top-5-social-media-predictions-2017/

Social Media Trends 2016
http://www.huffingtonpost.com/layla-revis/social-media-trends-2016_b_8914190.html

5 Lessons From The Ways Charities Use Social Media
https://www.technology-trust.org/5-lessons-charity-social-media/

Guardian: How Charities Can Make Better Use of Social Media
https://www.theguardian.com/voluntary-sector-network/2013/feb/28/charities-social-media

Best Practices For The New Age of Social Advertising
https://socialmediaexplorer.com/content-sections/tools-and-tips/best-practices-for-the-new-age-of-social-advertising/

The 7 Hidden Factors of the Most Effective Social Media Ads
https://blog.bufferapp.com/social-media-ads-strategies

Best Practices For Advertising in Social Media
http://www.smartinsights.com/internet-advertising/internet-advertising-targeting/advertising-social-media/

ECDC is committed to ensuring the transparency and independence of its work

HOW TO OBTAIN EU PUBLICATIONS

Free publications:

- one copy:
  via EU Bookshop (http://bookshop.europa.eu);

- more than one copy or posters/maps:
  from the European Union's representations (http://ec.europa.eu/represent_en.htm);
  from the delegations in non-EU countries (http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/index_en.htm);
  by contacting the Europe Direct service (http://europa.eu/europedirect/index_en.htm) or
  calling 00 800 6 7 8 9 10 11 (freephone number from anywhere in the EU) (*).

  (*) The information given is free, as are most calls (though some operators, phone boxes or hotels may charge you).

Priced publications:

- via EU Bookshop (http://bookshop.europa.eu).

Publications Office