

You're a news editor, and you don't even know it

By [Garret Brent](#)

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How to get the most out of your Facebook news feed

“Our goal is to build the perfect personalised newspaper for every person in the world. We’re trying to personalise it and show you the stuff that’s going to be the most interesting to you.” - Mark Zuckerberg, CEO, Facebook.

Every time you hit like, click open a link, hover over a post for a while, etc., Facebook is gathering data about what you want to see on your news feed. Facebook’s algorithms dictate what users see when they log in. Not many people understand how these algorithms work, and how they can be influenced to show them what they want to see. Facebook wants to be the first place you go to get your news. Here’s how to get the right content for you.

Mechanics of the Facebook news feed

The list of things that Facebook tracks about your behaviour on the platform is extensive. The list is based on how you engage with a piece(s) of content, and measurement of your engagement gets quite intricate (e.g. when you flip a video to landscape mode, Facebook takes that as a sign of deeper engagement). Your actions in relation to the behaviour of others in your network are also tracked. Pieces of content, your friend connections, and posts by the brand pages you like are all given relevancy scores based on the previously mentioned list of engagement measures. This relevancy score determines how likely you are to see more of that type of content, more of a particular friend’s posts, or more of a brand.



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If you’re liking and loving all the cute kitten and funny meme posts you come across; spend a good amount of time hovering over a certain friend’s post; and always engage with a particular type of brand (e.g. beauty brands), this is likely to be the majority of what you will end up seeing on your feed.

Be your own content editor

Facebook has come under scrutiny for the potential bias it has the ability to practice against certain types of content. The fear is that Facebook has the power to screen content that, though it doesn’t break any actual rules, doesn’t fit in with a prevailing way of thought. The social media company claims that its algorithms make content selection unbiased, but the algorithms were still designed by people.

If you feel like you're not seeing the types of things that you want to on Facebook, or that your news feed is clogged up with too many Fail Army-type posts, you can change that. It's easy to be your own content editor on Facebook, rather than just being dictated to by an algorithm.

The first step is to clear out your interests, favourites, and groups sections on your profile of all those old bands, brands, and clubs you liked when you first got Facebook and start fresh with the things you like now. These interests are a significant tell for Facebook on what you want to see.

Next, click on the settings list icon in the top right corner of your Facebook in a browser, or in settings on the mobile app, and go to 'News Feed Preferences'. Here, you can dig deep into what and who you want to see. Select which friends and pages you want to see first in your news feed; unfollow people that you don't want to see; and find pages that you're interested in.

The third step is to be conscious of how you behave on Facebook. Your behaviour is being tracked in order to give you what you want. But when you've already shown the algorithm that you like cute kittens (even though you would like to see more news stories) it continues to present you with cute kittens. It becomes a little difficult to get out of the loop.

Facebook is the number one most used platform in South Africa according to World Wide Worx. We get a lot of our daily information from the platform we spend much of our time engaging with. These steps will help to ensure you see what you want to by working with the algorithm that wants to give you a personalised experience.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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