

How Like and Share Work Together

6 Best Practices for using Social Sharing to Drive Traffic from Social Networks

Wondering when to use the Facebook “Like” button on your site and when to use share? You’re not alone. Used together and in the right combination, “Like” and share are powerful tools for driving referral traffic from social networks, opening new communication channels with customers and prospects, and building relationships with your best advocates.

Driving referral traffic is the first significant benefit of social sharing, as shared activity, content and products are now pushed to the user’s network of friends, enabling them to discover what’s new and worthwhile with little effort. But sharing technologies have evolved significantly in the last several months, making social sharing a renewed area of focus for most companies. In this whitepaper you’ll learn the best practices for “Like” and share and how to put them to work for your business.

- 1. Create a balanced “Like” and share button strategy**
- 2. Enable sharing to multiple social networks**
- 3. Make sharing dynamic**
- 4. Use sharing to build relationships**
- 5. Optimize shared content for the feed and profile**
- 6. Track referral traffic from sharing activity**

Best Practice #1: Create a balanced “Like” and share button strategy

Rather than choose one or the other, sites who combine “Like” and share into the user experience see the greatest level of success in terms of driving referral traffic, building relationships and learning more about their customers and visitors. Why? Not only do “Like” and share have different strengths and different applications, they actually drive the most value when used in concert. Let’s drill into the specifics to illustrate.

“Like and Share drive the most value when used in concert”

The “Like” button has many benefits:

- When clicked, an item is published to the person’s Facebook feed, driving referral traffic to the website. If the user is already logged into Facebook, this is a one-click process.
- Liking adds data to the user’s profile on Facebook.¹
- Liking is an easy way for users to make a connection with the things for which they have affinity – just a single click user experience.
- Liking opens a new communication channel for the site which can subsequently publish news items to the feeds of Facebook users who have liked that item on their site.

Facebook recently released data on the value of a “Liker” which provides compelling reasons for engaging them: “People who click the Facebook Like button are more engaged, active and connected than the average Facebook user. The average “Liker” has 2.4x the amount of friends than that of a typical Facebook user. They are also more interested in exploring content they discover on Facebook -- they click on 5.3x more links to external sites than the typical Facebook user.”²

So where does the next generation of share functionality fit into this picture? Enabling share in addition to “Like” enhances both the overall user experience as well as the power of the “Like” button for the site:











- Sharing provides a way for people to express themselves and share with friends when “Like” (or “Recommend”, which is another form of the Like button) is not the appropriate sentiment. People typically “Like” things or “social objects³” but share activity. For example, if someone makes a comment on an article or reviews a product, they are more likely to want to share their point of view with friends rather than “Like” it. Liking adds data to the user’s profile on Facebook.
- When a Facebook user clicks the “Like” button, the website hosting the button does not get access to information about that user or about the Like. Adding sharing to the site effectively closes the data loop, as current social technologies - including Facebook’s Graph API - ask a person to connect with a website the first time he or she chooses to share something. Once a user connects, the site then can access that specific user’s “Like” data and apply it to their own site to personalize the user experience.

¹ For more on the open graph read [Social, Search & the Open Graph](http://info.gigya.com/OGWTDN.html) <http://info.gigya.com/OGWTDN.html>

² The Value of a Liker by Facebook + Media, 9/29/10 at 10:44am

³ Hugh MacLeod [Social Objects for Beginners](#)

When to Like or Share?

<p>Like - Objects</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">  likes Secretariat  likes the Kindle Wireless Reading Device  likes Mt. Rushmore  likes a post from TechCrunch  likes Levis Matchstick Jeans 	<p>Share - Actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">  bought tickets to: Secretariat  added the Kindle Wireless Reading Device to wishlist  booked a flight to Rapid City, SD  commented on TechCrunch post...  rated Levis Matchstick Jeans 5 out of 5 stars
---	--

Example of an effective application of both “Like” and Share:


Project Runway
on Facebook
Like 732,973

L'ORÉAL PARIS
GET THE LOOK:
FLAWLESS FINISH
Watch now in the L'Oréal Makeup Room. **PLAY**

SEASON 8

- About
- Blogs
- Buzz Room
- Community
- Designers
- Designers Dish
- Designer Video Blogs
- Episodes
- Extended Judging
- Full Episodes
- Games
- Garnier Hair Studio
- Judges
- Judge Video Blogs
- L'Oréal Paris Makeup Room
- Photos
- Piperlime Accessories

Season 8, Episode 10: There's a Pattern Here

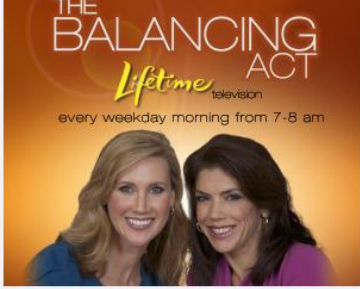


Mondo's Design < Prev 6 of 7 Next >

URL for this photo:
<http://www.mylifetime.com/shows/project-runway/season-8/rate-the-runway/episode-10#id=6>

Like 145 people like this. Be the first of your friends. Tweet 0

THE BALANCING ACT
Lifetime television
every weekday morning from 7-8 am



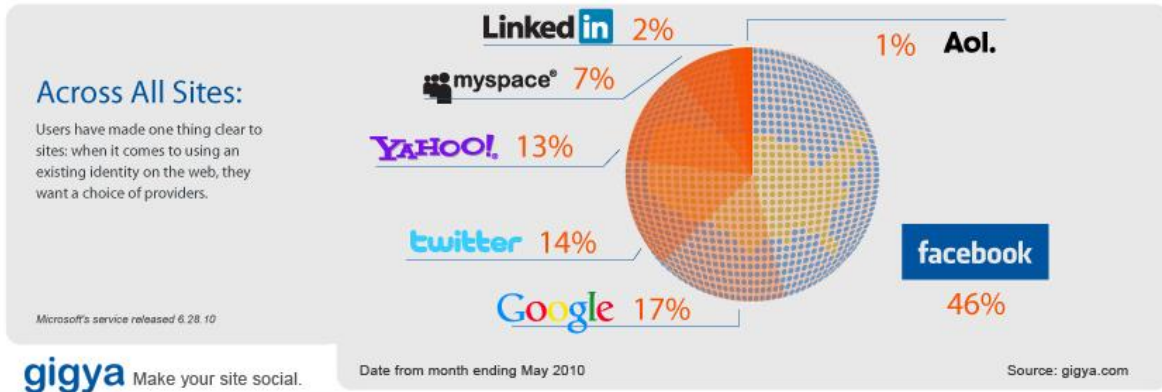
Front Side Back Fabric

Rate this design!
Hate it ★★★★★ Love it

Share Your Rating f t v s MORE

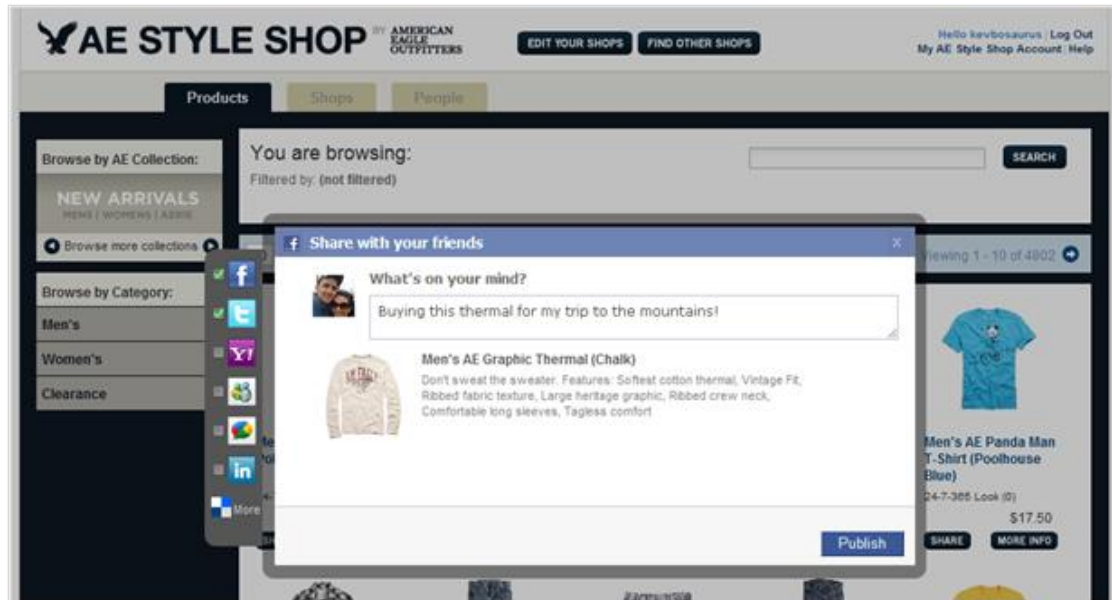
Best Practice #2: Enable sharing to multiple social networks

To drive the most referral traffic, enable your users to share to multiple social channels. Not only do people want choice when it comes to connecting and sharing, but many social channels have feeds and are quite effective at driving referral traffic. Facebook is clearly an important option, but the data below illustrates why providing multiple options matters when it comes to applying second-generation social technologies.



You can also help maximize referral traffic by enabling your site visitors to share to multiple social channels simultaneously, as New York Daily News and American Eagle Outfitters do in the examples below:





In some cases, users prefer to share to individuals rather than everyone in their social graph. Adding email capability though the share button can provide a better user experience. Below is an example of how Fox News allows users to email an article with the share button.









Best Practice #3: Make Sharing Dynamic

There are two primary ways to make sharing an active, dynamic and more social experience for your website. The first is to build sharing into key activity flows where appropriate so that it becomes a natural extension of the user experience. For example, when someone takes a poll, completes a quiz, makes a comment or rates an item, it is natural to add the option to share as the final step in the process. You can also create a frictionless user experience by giving your users the option to “always share this type of activity” or “never share this activity” as YouTube has done effectively with video sharing. The YouTube user dashboard is shown below:

Activity Sharing

[Save Changes](#)

▼ **Activity Sharing**
Your activity feed is the actions that you take on YouTube like favoriting, rating, or uploading a video.

What activities do I share?	Where do I share my activities?
Include these actions in my feed:	Automatically post my activities to:
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Like a video	 Facebook - Connect accounts
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Comment on a video	 Twitter - Connect accounts
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Subscribe to a channel	 Reader - Connect accounts
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Favorite a video	 Buzz - Connect accounts
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Upload a video	 Orkut - Connect accounts
	 MySpace - Connect accounts

In addition to showing up in your Recent Activity box, YouTube also makes any selected actions available to other websites and social networks via the YouTube API, along with any information publicly visible on your channel (your favorites, uploaded videos, subscriptions, friends, locations, etc.)

[Save Changes](#)

“Build sharing into key activity flows while giving users full control”

The second way to use sharing to create a dynamic site experience is to publish sharing activity to an on-site activity feed. In this example, Fox Sports brings a sense of activity and community to their Super Bowl Commercials page by publishing the shares and key actions of their users from all social platforms to a site-specific feed.

The screenshot displays a video player interface. The main video shows a light-colored dog lying on a dark surface. The player includes a 'FOX SPORTS' logo in the top right corner. On the left side, there are buttons for 'INFO', 'EMBED', 'SHARE', and 'EMAIL'. On the right side, there are 'VOTE' buttons for 'GOOD' (thumbs up) and 'BAD' (thumbs down), along with a 'RATING' bar showing 96%. Below the video player, there are two sections: 'ALL VIDEOS' and 'ACTIVITY'. The 'ALL VIDEOS' section is sorted by 'MOST VIEWS' and displays four video thumbnails with their respective titles and ratings: 'Bridgestone: Karma' (97%), 'Volkswagen Passat: Young Vader' (96%), 'Volkswagen: Black Beetle' (94%), and 'Cars.com: Go First' (91%). The 'ACTIVITY' section shows recent user activity on Foxsports.com, including posts from Robin Wallace, Dylan Saunders, David Madden, and Alex Ogeka.

Best Practice #4: Use sharing to build relationships

As we touched on in best practice #1, today's sharing technologies are based on the concept of first establishing a relationship between the user and the site, wherein the user connects their social identity to the website via an explicit permission or authentication step. This is an enormous win for both the site and marketers, because it establishes the foundation for a relationship. Most people associate authentication with registration or log-in, but the process can be woven into a variety of social activities, from sharing to community features, creating far more opportunities for any site to make that connection. This is an enormous win for marketers, as a connected user typically comes with rich social network profile data, including a pre-validated email address and that user's "Likes" across the web that can help the business personalize the site experience and communicate with that person more effectively.

The “Like” button also provides an opportunity to build relationships. While the site does not have information on any individual user, the entity that was “Liked” can publish relevant activity to the Likers as a group. For example, a children’s apparel retailer could promote an end of season sale to “Likers” of its winter coats. A publisher could publish pieces by op-ed writers to people who Like a particular op-ed piece.

“Image counts when it comes to driving referral traffic – no matter what the content”

Best Practice #5: Optimize shared content for the feed and user profile

While some content may be intrinsically more interesting than others, one thing is certain: presentation counts when it comes to driving referral traffic. Optimizing all the elements of what is published to a user’s feed is important for both “Likes” and shares.

There are two different “Like” button implementations, and while the iFrame version is easier to implement, the XFBML version gives you more opportunity to optimize. “The XFBML dynamically re-sizes its height according to whether there are profile pictures to display, gives you the ability (through the Javascript library) to listen for Like events so that you know in real time when a user clicks the “Like” button, and it always gives the user the ability to add an optional comment to the “Like.” If users do add a comment, the story published back to Facebook is given more prominence⁴.”

Prominence on Facebook means it’s more likely that the Facebook algorithm will actually display a “Like” to people in the user’s network, or to more people in their network, so taking the time to use the XFBML version and enable commenting is highly worthwhile. Optimizing “Likes” for the feed also involves adding Open Graph tags with information that Facebook can pull when someone clicks the “Like” button. To optimize for the feed, in addition to information that categorizes each item within the Open Graph, sites should also be sure to specify the image and text that will show in the feed item:

⁴ <http://developers.facebook.com/docs/reference/plugins/like>



Shared items should similarly be optimized for maximum exposure. One of the advantages of the latest generation of sharing technologies is that you have full control over the image and hyperlinks that appear at the bottom of the feed item. In this example, the item published includes a photo that supports the content and a link at the bottom that specifically drives more people to the original site to take the poll:



Best Practice #6: Track referral traffic from sharing activity

Capturing referral traffic data is a key part of optimizing your site for social referral traffic, not unlike how web analytics is applied for search engine optimization. If you are working with a social technology vendor, they should at a minimum provide consolidated cross-network analytics, and ideally more granular and actionable detail. Online businesses should track and act on three key areas:

Area 1: The % of shares and referral traffic coming from each of the social networks. Including a shortened URL with each shared item enables tracking at this level. Key metrics include:

- Monthly and yearly growth in traffic referred by social networks.
- Referral traffic by users sharing content from the website, as differentiated from marketing efforts originating on social sites.
- Number of referral clicks per shared item and by referring social site

Area 2: The specific site content and activities that drive the highest volume of sharing activity. Ask vendors if they are able to track sharing and referral traffic by content ID so that you can determine where to focus your efforts on both dynamic sharing activities and content development.

Area 3: Key Influencers. When sharing is tied to authentication, you should be able to track which of your customers or visitors are sharing the most, which are driving the most referral traffic, and even which are driving sales. Businesses can then engage these key influencers with special offers, elite status, and by providing even more opportunities to spread the word.

“Referral traffic analysis is not unlike how web analytics is applied for SEO”

Gigya: Make Your Site Social

We welcome the opportunity to speak with you about why our deep experience, results-based approach, and unparalleled technology have made Gigya the leading platform for making sites social.

To learn how Gigya can help your site implement help scale word-of-mouth and drive traffic from social networks and other social channels, please visit our website: www.gigya.com or call us at 650.353.7230.