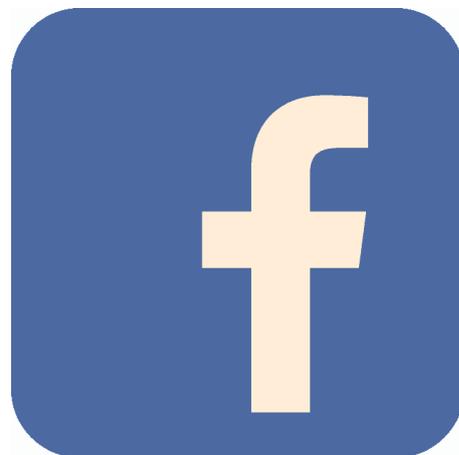


Massive publisher impacts from Facebook changes

The platform will now place a greater emphasis on user content over that of pages, meaning publishers will have reduced prominence in feeds.



The company says the new newsfeed is designed to “help people stay connected and bring us closer together with the people that matter”.

Facebook founder and chief executive Mark Zuckerberg has already acknowledged that this will have an impact on publishers.

“Now, I want to be clear: by making these changes, I expect the time people spend on Facebook and some measures of engagement will go down. But I also expect the time you do spend on Facebook will be more valuable,” he said.

“And if we do the right thing, I believe that will be good for our community and our business over the long term too.”

It is unclear whether Facebook consulted any publishers prior to the launch of the new algorithm.

“Our teams are briefing partners and will continue to have open communication with them. Going forward, our products and partnerships will focus on supporting publishers that help people form meaningful engagement around news,” said Facebook.

While making the online environment more competitive for user attention, Facebook’s PR team is still reaffirming the company’s commitment to news.

“We must partner more closely than ever with these high-quality news

organisations – not just the national names, but also local newsrooms, who are the cornerstones of informed communities,” said a Facebook spokesperson.

“The goal of newsfeed is to show people the stories that matter to them, so we rank stories based on how relevant we believe they are to each individual person.”

Because of this, the social media platform has said “articles from news publishers that spark meaningful conversations between people on important issues, video series that can create tight-knit communities, and live videos that can generate more interactions and comments between people than other video” will be prioritised.

Mr Zuckerberg may be optimistic about the plans but publishers seem to be apprehensive.

News Corp Australia said that while the opportunity to clean up the site was welcomed, it was interested in seeing how the roll out of the algorithm would work.

“While we welcome changes that reward quality and confront clickbait, it is too soon to say how these proposals will play out in the real world, so we intend to monitor the impact closely to determine their effects,” said a News Corp Australia spokesperson.

“We will also be looking for any signs that the weighting of news sites is politically motivated.

“In the meantime, we will continue to negotiate with Facebook on developing a subscription model that can help expand the audience for, and viability of, quality journalism.”

Fairfax Media declined to comment at this time.

The latest changes follow beta testing of the “Explore Feed” in six countries. The feed operates separate to the news feed and relegates all content from pages into its exclusive feed.

Publishers in Bolivia, Cambodia, Guatemala, Serbia, Slovakia, and Sri Lanka immediately saw the impact of the program, with Slovakian publications reporting

interactions through Facebook dropping four times over.

The social media giant says that the latest changes are not indicative of a global rollout of the beta testing

“We are listening to what people say about the experience in this test to understand if it’s an idea worth pursuing any further, but there is no current plan to roll out the Explore feed beyond the test countries,” said a Facebook spokesperson.