Facebook Graph Search

What it is and what it means for you

a Fanscape POV

2013 (c) Fanscape, All Rights Reserved

Overview

The recent introduction of Facebook's Graph Search, which is still in limited beta, essentially created an entire Facebook ecosystem whereby consumers can find people, places and things—and explore Facebook's vast data arsenal— in the same way they had previously only been able to probe via Google. The big difference is that for the most part, Google doesn't contain Facebook data. And that's *a lot* of data.

Graph Search transposes Facebook into a completely encapsulated "social graph" or online "habitat" that connects users via interests. As Facebook claims, users can search for things like "sushi restaurants that my friends have been to in Los Angeles," "hotels near the Eiffel Tower," or "TV shows my friends like" and expect to be rewarded with kindred connections.

More importantly, Graph Search also makes it easier for people to locate and discover more about your business. Not unlike Google search, the results returned are different for every user, and depend largely on how well you optimize your Facebook Page. Graph Search will no doubt give rise to an entire new specialized industry of search optimization professionals. In the meantime, there are immediate steps you can take to ensure that your business is recognized and elevated to the top of Facebook's search results.

First, it is imperative to know how Graph Search works. Per Facebook:

1. The search bar initially returns the top search suggestions, including people, Pages, apps, places, groups, and suggested searches. People can search for things like restaurants near them, hotels in places they want to travel to, photos posted by Pages they like, or games that their friends like to play.

2. These search suggestions take people to a unique results page. The results returned are based on multiple factors, including: information that has been shared by your business, and the connections of the person searching.

3. Facebook may also return search suggestions in the search bar which can trigger web searches. Web searches will display Bing results and Bing ads, similar to results on Bing.com.

4. Pages and apps can still use sponsored results, which appear to people whether or not they have Graph Search. Sponsored results, which have been globally available since August 2012, allow advertisers to place sponsored links in Facebook's search results.

While we expect a long and bumpy ride towards public acceptance and eventual embracement of Graph Search, it could prove to be a game changer. Thus it is important that you take the following three immediate steps to optimize your company's Facebook Page to provide Facebook's search algorithm with the proper data, in the proper place and in the proper format:

Introducing Graph Search
Q Photos of my friends in New York

1. The name, category, vanity URL, and the *about* section of your Facebook Page should be 100% completed, with relevant keywords (including those you use in your marketing materials and website SEO) related to the company sprinkled throughout the about section.

   WHY: The more relevant and accurate the information is that you put on your Facebook Page, the more likely it is that your page will show up in a search**.** Search results will be created by a combination of information created and shared by a business and personal connections of the person doing the search.

2. If you have a physical location or a local place Page, update your address to make sure you appear as a result when someone is searching for a specific location. If you have multiple locations, list as many cities as possible in the *about* section.

   WHY: Graph Search has geo-targeting built in—it knows where you live. Someone from Dallas searching for a grocery store will automatically be given local search results.

3. Make sure you focus on attracting the *right* fans to your Page. This is a throwback to the quality over quantity debate. Graph Search begs Pages to give fans a reason to interact with content on an ongoing basis, particularly via the "Like" and "Share" buttons. In fact, with Graph Search, "Likes" on posts are more important than ever.

   WHY: Facebook's algorithm, when given multiple choices for a search result, will list first the Page the consumer is more closely engaged with. Results are ranked according to how often the searcher interacts with a person or business; the rest are sorted by examining mutual friends, interests, etc. This is what Facebook calls "EdgeRank," which is composed of three factors: freshness (time decay), relevance (Edge weight), and closeness (affinity between user and Page). Graph Search is based on EdgeRank, which means you want more frequent posts that are relevant to your fans and that they will take action on (such as sharing, liking or commenting).
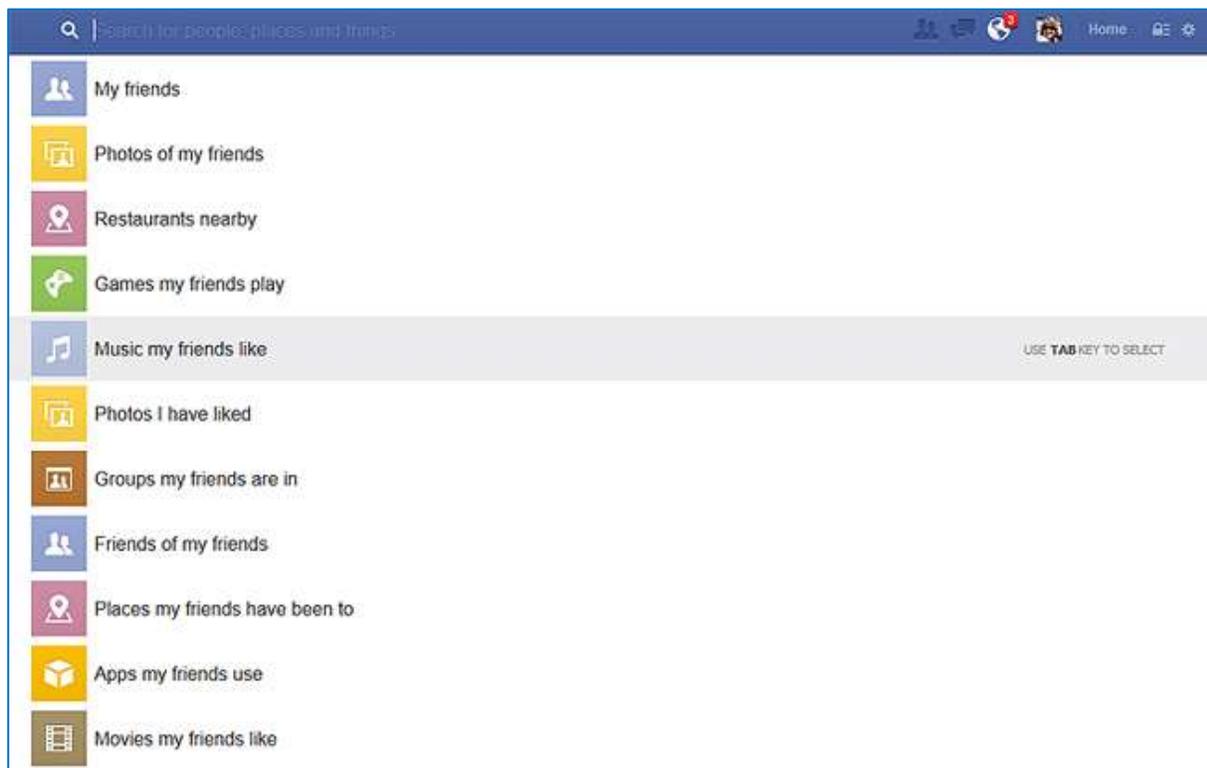
Other ways to optimize for Graph Search:

- Ask fans to add your Page to their interest lists (shows a connection to your page)
- Ask fans to receive notifications from your Page (shows interest in your page)
- When posting photos be sure to add proper keywords (NOT hashtags!) about the photo—think "What words will people search for?" when posting photos
- Always let Facebook pull the link in posts and always remember to delete your first link
- Edit the titles of each Facebook-pulled link in posts as well as the description

In Conclusion

With Graph Search, people who like a Facebook Page and interact with your content automatically act as your army of referral marketers. Making sure your fans engage with your Page is now more important than ever, and optimizing both the Page data and the posts themselves will help increase your likelihood of turning up in search results. In their Graph Search briefing, Facebook said, "You want a search tool that can help you get access to things people have shared with you." The value of engagement is now significantly higher because the algorithm for Graph Search will make the logical connections from public and friends' shares and likes. Optimizing your Page will help ensure your visibility as we enter into the brave new world of Facebook SEO.

About

Fanscape is a leading Social Media Marketing Agency with over fourteen years of experience helping clients reach and activate consumers and influencers to foster positive word-of-mouth sentiment about their products. Fanscape's online influencer marketing experts have in-depth understanding of niche audiences and consumer behaviors and are driven to increase our clients': brand identification, share-of-voice, and sales.

We provide highly measurable, earned media strategies for major corporations and leading entertainment, gaming, travel, automotive, retail, and consumer package goods companies. Our mission is to lead the field of Social Media Marketing, keep developing innovative and creative methods of inspiring word-of-mouth conversations, foster positive sentiment for our clients, provide detailed measurement and analysis, generate the highest Return on Investment (ROI) possible and to listen, educate and activate consumers. This results in forging trusted relationships between our clients and their customers.

For additional information, visit www.fanscape.com, our blog www.digitallyapproved.com and follow us on Facebook, Twitter, Google+, and LinkedIn.

Contact:
Larry Weintraub
CEO, Fanscape, Inc.
323.851.3267
LarryW@fanscape.com