

How to guide: Using Facebook Adverts

Introduction

2.5 million people use Facebook every month, and it's **the world's most cost-effective way of advertising digitally**. It can be an easy, cheap and effective way of recruiting new U3A members. Your budget can be as little as £20.

Even if you decide not to invest in a Facebook Ad, by going through the process you can see how many new members you might recruit in your area – because Facebook will tell you how many people there are, aged, say, 55-65 within a 10-mile radius of your u3a group.

This guide explains how to create Facebook Ads, and gives a case study from a u3a group that used them successfully.

You could literally write a book on why and how to promote something via Facebook, and many people have. But the best way of finding out what you can do is to search Facebook help, because **Facebook is constantly evolving**.

Types of Facebook ads: things to think about

Some types of Facebook ads work only on mobile – which may not be the best choice for the u3a target audience.

Adverts with movement attract MUCH more attention, so although image ads are Ok, video or slideshows ads attract ten times as much interest.

The easiest way to create a quick video is to film a clip of your team in action, using your phone. Make sure you hold your phone horizontally, not vertically, when filming. If you don't want to create video, create a slideshow from images. Slideshow ads use much less bandwidth than video so load well for people with slow internet connections.

When you create a Facebook ad, make the “call to action” simple and clear. Ideally, offer a succession or choice of options, e.g. either start with “send for more details” which is unthreatening, then follow that up with an invitation, or put both in one advert.

P.S. Make sure the ad's “on-brand”, i.e. use your u3a logo, new colours etc.

Planning your promotional campaign

STEP 1: Define what you want to achieve, quantify it if you can, be specific.

- e.g. Recruit at least 10 more u3a members - **OK**

The more specific you are, the easier it is to plan appropriate action. It makes it easier to think about your audience and what might appeal to them, e.g. if you have spaces in your gardening group, then you might focus your efforts on that and change your aim to

- Recruit at least 10 more members for our Gardening group – **BETTER**
(we can start a second group if we over-recruit)

STEP 2: Work out what your offer is: what makes it attractive?

Gardening Group offers:

- Cheap weekly meetings - £2/session
- Central location, easy to get to
- Garden visits
- Gardening talks
- Exchange plants; plant sales
- Is part of a local group (u3a) with more interest groups that you can join

– if you have related groups e.g. like a “Garden visits Group” or “National Trust Outings” then mention them – your advert needs to be as attractive as possible.

STEP 3: Who is your target audience? Age, location, interests

Age: 55-75? You need to define a range.

Location: within driving distance of OurTown – 10 miles? (you may need to know the nearby villages’ or suburbs’ names)

Interests (*think of all relevant words*):

gardening, garden, flowers, growing, vegetables, horticulture, composting, plants, planting, lawn, etc.

What might people write down on their Facebook profile as their interests? That’s how Facebook will identify your target audience.

They might give any of the above – so search on those keywords when you’re targeting your advert: Facebook lets you target people with relevant interests. And use them in your advert, e.g.

e.g. Interested in planting and growing fruit, flowers and veg? Visiting gardens? Do you have an allotment? Love plants? How about joining our gardening group?

Begin to create your advert

NOTE: You need to be a Facebook Admin to set up the ads. You’ll use **Facebook Ads Manager**, so if you get stuck, that’s the help to look for.

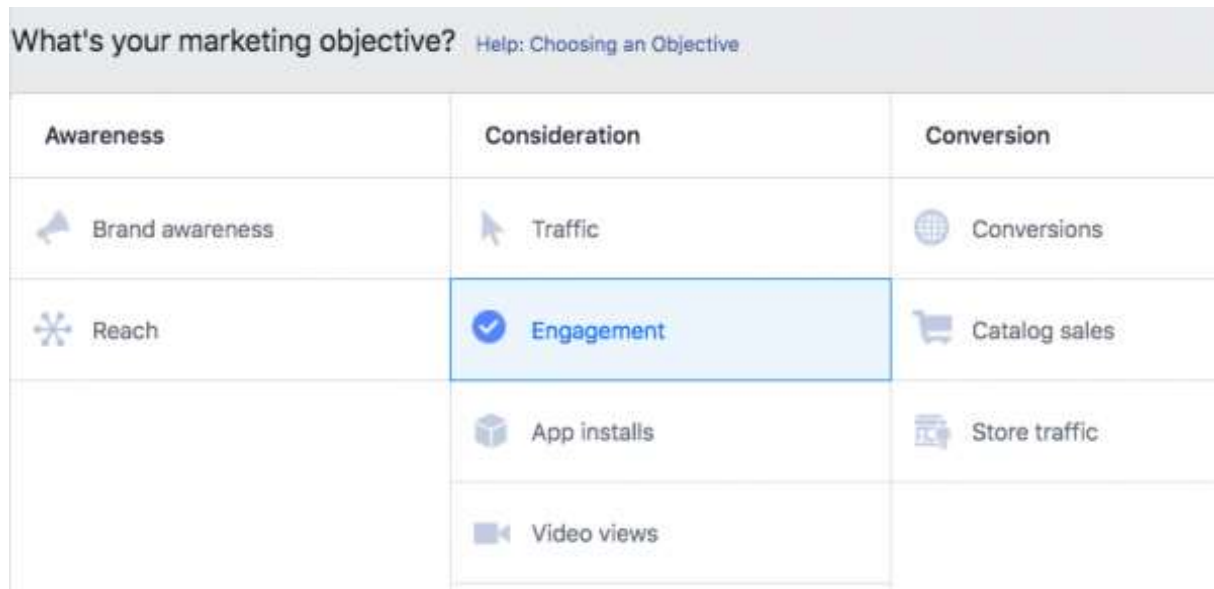
Find “**Manage Ads**” in the drop-down menu on your Facebook account.

Where that is varies according to how your page or group is set up, so look around.

Follow the menu on the left side of the Ads Manager page: choose the **Campaigns** tab, then click **Create**.

Choose a campaign objective for your advert, e.g. the **Engagements** objective.

There are others, such as increase the number of visits to your page/group (**Traffic**) but try engagement first: if you don't like that, go back to this page and select an alternative marketing objective. Facebook offers you Help at this point in choosing an objective.



1. Name your campaign

Scroll down to name your Facebook ad campaign.

Do not set up an A/B split test. Select **event responses**.

2. Set up your ad account

Enter your country, preferred currency, and time zone, then click **Continue**.

3. Target your audience

At the top of this screen, name your ad campaign, and choose which Page to promote.

You'll be asked to target your audience and see how many people you identify.

Targeting is a blunt tool: many Facebook accounts are dormant, yet your ad will still be sent to them if they meet your criteria.

From 1000 people you might get a 5% response, i.e. from 50, then maybe 15 will follow through. Be realistic about the response you expect. It's likely to be 2%-5% of the total.

Start by selecting your target location, age, gender, and language. As you make your selections, look at the audience size indicator on the right of the screen, which shows your potential reach.

See "Detailed targeting": this field enables you to include or exclude people based on their interests. You can get really specific - you could choose to target people who're interested in gardening but exclude people interested in garden design for example.

The more targeted your offer, the more likely it is to succeed. “Join our u3a gardening club” is a more targeted offer than “join our u3a” for example, as you can then target exactly the kind of people whose interests match what that group offers.

See “Connections”: You can keep it simple and leave this out!

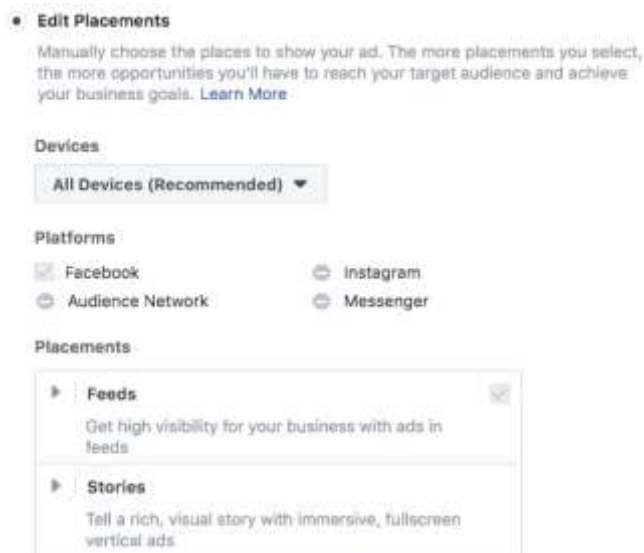
This area lets you target or exclude people who have an existing connection to your Facebook Page, or an event that you managed.

You’ll end up with a list. You may think it’s too big! If so, play with the location & age group: make it 5 miles radius, not 10, etc. Bear in mind you need big numbers.

4. Place your Facebook advert

“Placements” are where you want your digital ad to run – Facebook itself, Instagram etc. The Facebook automatic Ads Manager groups placements by how people react to your adverts. To maximise your budget select **automatic placements** in Ads Manager.

If you want to personally decide where to place your ad, go to [Facebook help](#)¹ which will give up-to-date information on all your options.



5. Set your budget and schedule

Facebook is great at maximising your investment and controlling spend for you. You can set a budget and Facebook will keep you to it. You can adjust it daily if you want to.

BUT bear in mind that Facebook charges your account each time an ad is **delivered** to an account, not necessarily looked at. Some of the accounts may be dormant.

Keep an eye on your ad as it's running: if it's not getting the results you'd like, you may want to edit it or upload a new ad.

¹ This link goes to the Facebook Help on **How to set an ad budget**, but all the Help is helpful!

6. Create your advert.

You can use an existing ad (select "use existing post") but let's assume this will be a brand new-one: make it visually appealing and clear.

It must have a photo or slideshow; maybe a video clip, although, because images and slideshows use less bandwidth, they load faster.

The image size limit is about 12MB, although video can be 2GB.

Video should be MP4 or MOV. Images should be about 1200x628 pixels, with little or no overlaid text – it slows the download. Aspect ratio is widescreen.

Test your advert before you post it: show it to people, ask them to criticise it so that it can be improved. Would they respond to it? Why not?

Facebook offers several options to help you create your advert. First, choose a format.

1. **Carousel:** Create an advert with 2 or more scrollable images or videos
2. **Single image:** Create up to 6 variations of your advert using 1 image
3. **Single video:** Create an advert with one video
4. **Slideshow:** Create a looping video advert with up to 10 images
5. **Canvas:** Combines images and videos

Once you've chosen your format, add your content. Give people several options for their response, or plan to contact them more than once. Make the offer easy, clear and interesting. Don't just invite them to a meeting – that might be daunting. You could -

- Invite them to a meeting **AND** say
- **Contact us for more details AND**
(give a personal email ideally with a photo)
- **Click below to see what the gardening group's been up to AND**
(link to video, photos or website)
- **Click to see what's coming up in Gardening Group (link to events list)**

7. Final Step: PLACE YOUR ORDER

Once your ad is ready, submit it by clicking "Place Order" at the bottom right of the page. You'll get a confirmation email from Facebook once it's live.

Monitor it – you should have some recipients that you KNOW, who can give feedback. You may be one of them yourself.

If you're not getting results, experiment – edit your ad or replace it.

Results should begin to arrive within 3 days. Think about timing: was that a factor? There are best times to post an advert: try what works best for you.

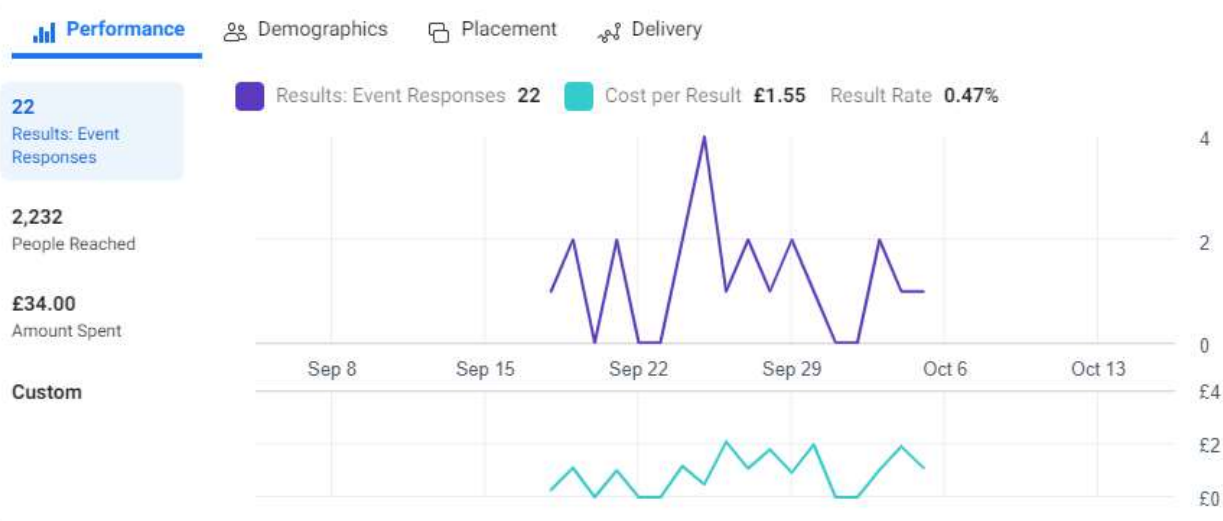
CASE STUDY: Using Facebook Ads

In 2018, Sherburn and Villages u3a was celebrating its 10th anniversary, a landmark we wanted to share with the community, and so in good u3a tradition we set up a working party to think about what to do and how to do it.

We always have an open day in October but that year decided to go for a bigger better open day on a Sunday where we could welcome anyone and everyone no matter how old they were and no matter whether they were working or not – to get the message about the u3a across to the whole community. We showcased our groups, had workshops & entertainment: everyone is a potential member.

We'd never used Facebook ads before but the pricing made it worth investigating. Some of the best features are the ways in which you can see exactly what you are getting for your money, who is seeing your ads and what response you are getting. It's also quite intuitive. As you create an event or a post, you see a little box saying "boost event" or "boost post" and if you click through, all options become available.

The reports are clear too: you can see exactly how much you're spending and who's seeing your ad. Here's one of the charts that showed us what we got for our money:



As you can see, the demographics showed that the majority of people seeing the ad were over 50, although it was our intention to get the message out to everyone, and **at £34 to reach 2,232 people we were happy with the result.**

After the event we were simply delighted with the attendance and the general success of the day. It was very gratifying then to see that our membership shot up and surprisingly for us, took us into the top reporting u3as for new members in 2019.

It can't be said that Facebook ads were the only the key to our success, but they certainly were a part of it. We asked everyone how they had heard of us at our event. One lady said she had seen it everywhere, and that was great! We think we blitzed the area so that one way or another, the message got out. We marshalled the troops and got out there posting leaflets through letterboxes and handing them out at local events,

putting up posters and hanging banners. These are all things which require a great deal of person power. Facebook ads, by comparison, are easy and take very little effort and of course you can do it from your armchair.

All you need a Facebook page and a budget and a few minutes and away you go.

We all know that the number of Facebook users is growing: in August 2020 Facebook reported 43.54 million people used the service in the UK and a huge proportion of those people fall into the bracket we would like to come along and join us.

So why not investigate and give it a go as part of your recruitment campaign?

Margaret Fiddes

Sherburn and Villages u3a

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