



Facebook Graph Search: A Great Opportunity For Property Managers

Facebook has entered the world of search with a BANG (and a Bing)!

Facebook SEO. That just sounds intimidating, doesn't it?

Let's break it down and make it possible for your property to achieve Facebook Graph Search success!

Over one billion people like and comment on Facebook pages and updates – for an average of 3.2 billion times daily. Facebook states that their new Graph Search will make it easier for your property Facebook pages to be discovered by people who want to learn more about your businesses. Okay, but what exactly is Facebook Graph Search anyway?

Facebook Graph Search will soon be located at the top of every Facebook page and profile. A user simply types in what they are looking for – in plain English - and the search engine populates suggested searches. Once a user clicks on a suggested search, they are provided with a results page. These results are custom to that individual based on the network of friends that user has and their individual privacy settings. Please note: If your community ALWAYS wants to appear in relevant searches, regardless of friends and privacy settings, the option to create a sponsored ad result is available.

Consumers who followed a link to a retail site from Facebook spent an average of \$102.59
HubSpot

Facebook is not attempting to replace current search engines, but instead create a tool for people to search through the world in which their friends live. While Google rewards quality and consistency within their search algorithm, Facebook will reward consistent fan engagement within the Graph Search. The number of Likes, comments, shares, check-ins and recommendations a property has will play a significant role within the Graph Search algorithm. Friends, photos, PLACES, and interests are the four main areas of focus within Graph Search criteria.

Notice Places?

Your community is a “Place” on Facebook – or it should be! This is when having a profile for a property Facebook presence puts some communities at a disadvantage. To be considered a Facebook Place, a valid address must be present with the Facebook page settings.

Facebook Graph Search will use the public connections people make on Facebook with properties, businesses, interests, etc. and add an element of personalization to their search results. The strength of the fans relationships with their own friends will be another key factor in determining Graph Search results, as well as similar interests between fans. This is not as complicated as it seems. Look at some of the phrases below that people could use to find an apartment community within Facebook’s Graph Search results:



People: “Friends who live in an apartment in my hometown.”

Photos: “Photos of my friend’s apartments in Atlanta”

Places: “Apartments liked by my friends in Atlanta”

Music: “Friends who like the Atlanta Institute of Music and who live in Atlanta”

51% of people who “like” brands on Facebook say they’re likely to buy a product after “liking” them
Vocus

5 Keys to Make Your Community Page Searchable

Graph Search relies on the accuracy of the information provided for properties within the settings of each page. Making property Facebook pages searchable is critical for achieving visibility within Facebook Graph Search.

1. The name of a property page should be completely spelled out, eliminating abbreviations. For instance: ABC Apartments rather than ABC Apts.
2. The vanity url should make sense! Update a url by clicking -> Edit Page -> Update Info -> and locating the option to create a custom url.
3. Update the physical community address if it is incorrect or missing.
4. The about section is a golden opportunity that many apartment communities ignore. Include Facebook page descriptions that incorporate more than the amenities. One idea would be to use keywords and phrases similar to those properties use on their websites. With that said, the keywords used on Facebook will not work quite the same way as they do on Google, Yahoo, or Bing. Remember to use neighborhood phrases and points of interest, such as “Near the Atlanta Aquarium.”

5. Consider “liking” other local businesses and areas of interest from community Facebook pages, commenting and sharing a few of their updates. These connections create a web of invisible links that may work behind the scenes to drive Graph Search visibility.

Overcoming Social Graph Search Challenges

There are several challenges faced for apartment communities with Facebook pages. For instance, search results will rely on a combination of user activity and content shared by businesses; but what if there is little or no user activity? Additionally, many communities focus primarily on Foursquare and/or Yelp check-ins, thereby missing a valuable opportunity to generate fan activity on Facebook – which would significantly improve reach and increase visibility within social search results. Every person using Facebook Graph Search will view different results, which will make measurement another significant obstacle for marketers.

These content tips will help build the links necessary for Facebook Graph Search visibility:

1. Run sponsored ads to increase relevant page likes, update shares, comments and likes. Facebook has taken a step back in time to when the number of page likes mattered. Keep in mind, if you purchase likes it will not improve your chances at Graph Search visibility, only display the results to those who may never visit your community.
2. Add and create searchable photos of each property:
 - a. Tag photos with your business name (@ABCApartments)
 - b. Describe the photo in useful, but not too many, search terms: “This photo was taken from the 12th floor common area. This is a picture of the Atlanta Aquarium nearby, just close enough to walk from our apartment homes.”
 - c. Add the location of your business (address) to each photo
 - d. Recommend users upload and tag photos on your pages
3. Encourage public check-ins at the community by residents, prospects, vendors, and employees (the more the merrier). When employees and vendors check-in, request that they occasionally share photos of the community or tag others.
4. Request recommendations from the happiest residents and most excited prospects - but don’t offer to buy them or reward the reviewer. One way to do this is in response to a compliment made by a resident. “Jimmy was fantastic! He fixed my thermostat and the heat was on in just a few minutes. Thank you so much!” - “Oh we’re so glad he could help! I’ll tell him you said so, and remember you are more than welcome to write him a recommendation on our Facebook page.”



5. When a property receives an excellent recommendation on a page, reply to the reviewer as promptly as possible. Remember to be conversational in tone. When at all possible, tag commenters within replies to generate conversation and strengthen the invisible web between the page and the fan's profile.

68% of consumers go to social networking sites to read product reviews
Nielson

What Should You Share?

Content that is shared, liked, and commented on by larger numbers of people are more likely to appear within Facebook Graph Search results. So, what should communities share? Well, the game has changed! The content communities share will define what may appear within Graph Search results about your community.

Did you know that YouTube lost six billion monthly views during the last half of 2012? Expect this trend to continue with the launch of Graph Search because the algorithm ignores links to other websites. For example, if a community page shares links (exclusively) to videos off-Facebook, it puts the page at a disadvantage - compared to competitor communities who upload their videos directly to Facebook and provide rich descriptions.

Images work the same way as videos; it is better for Facebook SEO to upload images directly to the page rather than share them from another source. In general, be aware of how much information shared is unique vs. shared from other pages. There is a delicate balance when creating content calendars. The share button is convenient, but not always appropriate. Prescheduling updates to post over a period of time is a real advantage for page admins; however, that option is not available for shared updates.



For Facebook, this is not a short-lived effort but rather a long-term investment in a game-changing social search engine, which combines natural language patterns with traditional Boolean search queries (like Google). The Facebook Graph Search algorithm is meant to display a combination of results from fans, friends-of-fans, and Bing. In the future, perhaps even third-party search criteria will be incorporated - think Pinterest, Spotify, Foursquare and Instagram.

Bing will still provide search results when a query does not include any of the four main search criteria (people, photos, places and interests). Bing ads will also display within Graph Search results. Sign up for Bing Webmaster Tools and consider adding Bing advertising to the portfolio marketing budget to ensure that all communities are visible within Bing search results.

It remains unclear how Facebook will monetize their new Graph Search or what benefits, if any, the new search function will bring to advertisers. When coupled with zip code ad targeting and offers, there are many marketing opportunities to be imagined. It is yet unknown how the Graph Search

will work within the Facebook mobile app. Searches generated by smartphones and tablets grew significantly in the last quarter of 2012 and if Facebook Graph Search is implemented for mobile, mobile search could grow exponentially.

Bottom Line: It's Worth Your Time

Making Facebook Graph Search work for Apartment Communities may take a little heavy lifting upfront, but the results may be well worth the time spent adjusting your Facebook strategy. Sign up for Beta Graph Search and investigate the opportunities for property marketing.

About the Author

Social media consultant Charity Zierten from Socially Engaged Marketing®, is regarded as a leading industry expert on utilizing social media strategies for the multifamily housing industry. Charity shares unique and innovative perspectives on the use of various social networking channels to reach residents and prospects during national and regional apartment industry events.

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