

What the Facebook fracas can teach us about marketing

As you have no doubt read elsewhere, Facebook keeps changing privacy settings. It has created marketing partnerships with other sites, that now have access to your preferences and can customize their offerings to you. And just yesterday Facebook unilaterally decided that only Facebook Fan Pages with more than 10,000 fans can have customized landing pages, only to apparently back down today.

All these changes have a few things in common:

- They are surreptitious, behind-the-scenes changes that are not well communicated
- They assume what the consumer wants.
- They are difficult to understand and have no clear rationale
- The advantage may be wholly for Facebook with little if no benefit to consumers.

There has been a growing backlash against Facebook, although the site is in no danger of going under.

There are some marketing take-aways:

- Customers want upfront communications.
- Customers do not want to be taken for granted.
- Customers want to feel as if they have some level of control, especially over their personal information.
- Customers do not want to feel excessively marketed to.

Facebook is one of the few companies that could actually survive this type of backlash. Why? Because people like what it offers, and it is free. If people paid for services, then this would definitely not fly.

Next time you are planning a big marketing change or push,

think of Facebook. Are you going to raise concerns? Will you have to backtrack and explain yourself?

