

## NEW TRICKS AND TOOLS ON SOCIAL

> Which moves faster: the speed of light or social media?

Technically, it's still the speed of light, but social media can feel like it's moving at unbelievable speeds. We're at a point in time where social media is key to your business, and social sites are scrambling to launch new features as well as duplicate and outdo the competition.

That's good news for small-business owners. New and useful features seem to launch daily right now, all with the goal of making it easier for you, the user, in mind.

So what are the latest feature launches that should be on your radar? Here's a list to keep you updated.

### Facebook

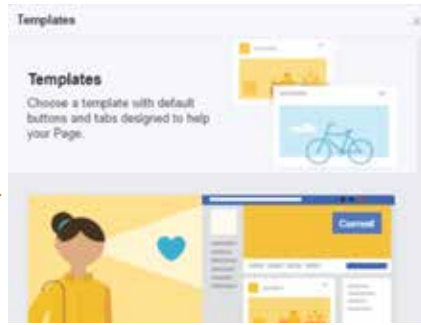
**Facebook Live** launched on April 6, 2016, and instantly became a hit for Facebook. The live streaming feature allows users to go live from profiles and pages to connect with their friends

or fans in real-time. Video allows users to get more organic (free) reach than text and image posts, which makes Facebook Live a useful tool for any business looking to grow engagement (the number of people engaging with your posts) and reach (the number of people seeing your post).

In October, Facebook announced that users could **schedule live broadcasts** ahead of time. The feature allows verified pages to schedule out when they plan to go live up to a week

ahead of time. On the front end, fans see a graphic that asks them if they would like to get a reminder of the live event.

This feature is a little bit more sophisticated, but harder, than the alternative of simply sharing a graphic or video post inviting people to join you for your



next live stream. To see the steps for scheduling a live video broadcast, go to [safnow.org/moreonline](http://safnow.org/moreonline).

Facebook also recently launched **Facebook Page Templates**, which tells more about what a business actually does and tailors the page to the business type.

Currently, you can choose between Standard, Business, Venues, Nonprofit, Politicians, Services, Restaurants and Cafes and Shopping. With these templates come some new, useful tabs, including the "Jobs" tab, which allows you to post job listings for your store.

Access templates under Settings > Edit Page.

Some smaller but more recent updates for Facebook include:

- In January, Facebook **made changes to how it determines whether content is authentic or not**. This reduced the effectiveness of any post that asked for likes, comments or shares, including posts similar to "Like this post if you'd love this arrangement for Mother's Day."
- **Facebook Messenger** is becoming a bigger tool for businesses, as Facebook is exploring features such as receipts and ads through Facebook Messenger. In March, Facebook launched reactions and mentions within Messenger, which allow chat participants to react to each line of text sent, as well as mention people specifically in a conversation to notify them that they may need to respond.
- In yet another example of sites duplicating more and more features from other platforms, in March, Facebook launched an **in-app camera** with fun filters, masks and frames. (Sound similar to Snapchat's model, right?)

■ You can now manage Facebook messages, comments and Instagram comments right from the **Facebook Messenger dashboard on desktop**. This time-saving tool is still rolling out for all users.

■ **Business pages** can now create groups and serve as an admin to existing groups. This is great if you want people on your team to be active in your group, but you don't want them to use their personal accounts. This is also still rolling out for all users.

Facebook hasn't made any big changes to ads recently, beyond its constant tweaking of its algorithms, but you may have noticed some small changes in the layout of Ads Manager.

How to take advantage of new Facebook features:

- Plan to go live with special holiday promotions, an informative video on a flower of the month, a Q&A or a store tour and let users know ahead of time by scheduling your live event or posting the date and time.
- Choose your ideal template.
- Make your content as authentic as possible so that you aren't penalized on your reach.
- Get creative with photos by using the in-app camera and by finding ways to share fun content from other platforms on your Facebook page.
- Start familiarizing yourself with FB Messenger because you could soon be receiving orders through the service.

### Instagram

In April, Instagram announced that it was up to 700 million users, with the latest 100 million joining at a rapid rate. Instagram is gaining popularity with businesses that are seeing the potential to sell and highlight products through the extremely visual platform.

Instagram has focused a lot of energy on **Instagram Stories**, a collection of photos and videos that users can share from their day, similar to Snapchat Stories, as well as Instagram Live, Instagram's live-streaming feature. On January 24, it announced that Instagram Stories was available



globally, and brands have been taking advantage of it to show off the daily, behind-the-scenes moments of their businesses. Stories can be promoted, which has advertisers flocking to the site to advertise their products. Also taking a page from Snapchat, you can decorate Instagram stories with doodles and stickers to make them more eye-catching and unique.



With **Live Stories**, Instagram users can interact with followers in real-time, just as with Facebook Live. These are great for talking about promotions or for doing Q&As about your business or products. As with Facebook Live, it's good to let people know when you'll be going live ahead of time so they can tune in. Currently, there is no way to schedule a Live Story, but in March, Instagram launched the ability to save live videos to your phone, when they'd previously disappeared after the broadcast ended.

How to take advantage of new Instagram features:

- Plan out live broadcasts to show live moments from open houses, a trick for customers to arrange loose flowers or to announce the winner of a contest. Let people know you'll be going live ahead of time.
- Take advantage of Instagram Stories and give plenty of behind-the-scenes looks at a day in your business, from making deliveries and unboxing products to attending trade shows.
- Liven up your stories with stickers!

## Snapchat

Until now, we've seen what other social sites have copied from Snapchat and implemented in their own way. What sort of features has Snapchat been releasing?

Snapchat is known for its **fun filters** and lenses that allow users to transform themselves into bunnies, rock stars and goddesses. Now, Snapchat has launched **lenses for the rear-facing camera** that allow users to add fun effects to the scene around them.

In March 2016, Snapchat launched **On-Demand Custom Geofilters**. This feature allows users to use a custom graphic to make their own Snapchat filter that people in the area can use. When users in your target area go through their filters, yours will show up as an option. The geofilter can be used for a specific event or as a general marketing tool for your business.

You can use an online template to create your geofilter or, if you have design skills or work with a graphic designer, upload one of your own. The filters cost \$5 for 20,000 square feet, per hour, making it Snapchat's most affordable advertising option. You set your radius and time just as you would a Facebook Ad, and when the filter times out, you are able to see metrics on it, such as how many people used and saw it.

All geofilters are subject to Snapchat's approval and take about two days to be approved.

At the end of 2016, Snapchat made some changes to how targeting worked on the platform, which opened a lot of opportunities for advertisers. It announced "**goal-based**" bidding, which lets users set different goals for their ads beyond just views, more similar to Facebook's platform. The change makes ads more targeted. Instead of referring to an algorithm such as Facebook and Instagram, Snapchat claims to use "machine learning," a type of artificial intelligence, to target the best users.

How to take advantage of new Snapchat features:

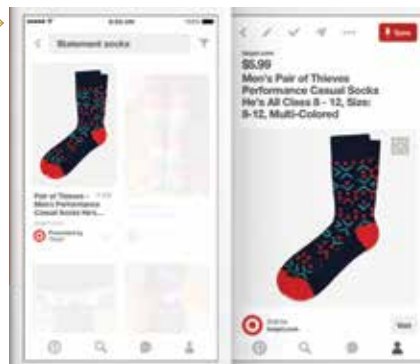
- Make an account. Many small businesses aren't on Snapchat because they aren't sure what to use it for. It's great for short-term offers and behind-the-scenes looks.
- Create a custom geofilter and test it out at your next event.

- Continue to explore and play with all the fun lenses and filters Snapchat has to offer.
- Become more comfortable with the app so that when more advertising options do roll out, you're ready!

## Pinterest

Many people see Pinterest as a personal social site, but the company has focused on being a tool for businesses lately. It all started when it launched **Promoted Pins** in 2014, a tool that lets users advertise products and pages on Pinterest for the first time. In January, it launched **Search Ads**, which use keywords to help users connect with brands.

Pinterest recently launched **Promoted App Pins** that allow users to download an app directly from Pinterest. More retailers are turning to apps to manage loyalty programs and as an e-commerce solution.



Beyond that, Pinterest has been releasing resources to help people use the tools that they've already created. In April, it added guides to help Pinterest advertisers make the most of their pins.

How to take advantage of new Pinterest features:

- Pin high-quality images linking back to your site.
- Explore advertising options that may work best for you — especially if you sell online.
- Look into Promoted App Pins if your business already has an app or is thinking about building one.

**Crystal Vilkaitis** is a social media teacher, owner of **Crystal Media** [heycrystalmedia.com](http://heycrystalmedia.com), and founder of **Social Edge**, a membership website for retailers on social media trends and changes, [socialedge.co](http://socialedge.co).