

# Facebook Launches Program to Help Small Businesses With Their Pages and Ads

200,000 Small Businesses Will Get a \$50 Ad Credit, Starting in January 2012

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Facebook is launching a small business education program this week, looking to show businesses how to optimize their individual pages and to use its self-serve ad platform to effectively target customers.



The social-media giant is partnering with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the National Federation of Independent Business to conduct outreach in the small-business community. The first step is to circulate webinars, case studies and tips, which will be made available starting this week, but Facebook also intends to sponsor a series of road shows in cities across the country starting in October to promote its "Small Business Boost." The third piece of the program will kick off in January 2012, when Facebook will look to award a \$50 ad credit to 200,000 businesses, amounting to \$10 million in free advertising.

According to an eMarketer report, 44% of small- and medium-sized businesses used social media as a marketing tool in August, and 59% spent less than \$100 on social-media marketing.

"We know that small businesses who use web technology grow more than twice as quickly, bring in twice the revenue, and create twice the jobs as small businesses who don't," said David Fischer, Facebook's VP-Advertising and Global Operations. He said 9.2 million small businesses in the U.S. have pages on Facebook, but only 3.2 million of those pages have active engagement. (Some pages exist essentially as shells, created by user signals on the social graph and without action taken by the business owner.)

"You want to be in front of [people] -- maybe it's a few times a week you're posting a few sentences, talking about what's going on," said Mr. Fischer, noting that engagement is key for small business owners. "In most cases it's not a matter of this being particularly complicated."

The program also aims to teach small businesses about Facebook ad products, like its self-serve platform and sponsored stories, which allows brands to build paid advertisements out of user signals such as likes and check-ins. According to Mr. Fischer, the amount that a small business might invest in self-serve ads targeted to their desired audience could range from \$20 a month for a single proprietor business to thousands each week. But he says Facebook has learned of success stories, like two auto dealerships in Massachusetts: one that said it generated \$20,000 in profits off \$300 in ads and another that reported a \$500,000 return on a \$5,000 ad spend.

Facebook itself generates as much as 60% of its ad revenue from its self-serve platform, according to an eMarketer report from January.

Mr. Fischer says there's an internal awareness at Facebook that the company's tools could help stimulate economic growth and noted that Chief Operating Officer Sheryl Sandberg is a member of President Obama's jobs council.

*"We spend a lot of time thinking about how we can work with small businesses, and we know we have tools that can help them effectively," he said. Source Ad Age*

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