21 Creative Ways To Increase Your Facebook Fanbase

If you build a Facebook Page, will fans come? This is the great hope for many businesses. However, fans do not magically appear from the Facebook mist.

People must be lured to your fan page. And there are some good and bad ways to go about doing this. In this article, I'll share a big myth and 21 ways to drive more fans to your Facebook fan page. (Though **Facebook recently changed the "Become A Fan" button to the new, omnipresent "Like" button – and a fan page is called a "Business Page" or "Facebook Page"** – we can still call them fan pages and people who join are fans!)

The Big Myth

There's a great myth that once you create a Facebook fan page for your business, the first thing you should do to get fans is invite ALL your friends from your personal profile using the "Suggest to Friends" feature.



Unfortunately, **this strategy may not be that effective and can, in fact, often backfire**. I have seen many industry gurus complain that when they decline a fan page request, it's frustrating to continue to be asked again and again.

There are several **reasons not to use the Suggest to Friends** feature:

Facebook users can only like up to 500 pages and may wish to be selective. (Though I have seen it's possible to go over this limit).

Fan page suggestions may often build up, unnoticed. (At last count, I have 593 overlooked fan page suggestions and am already a fan of 500!)

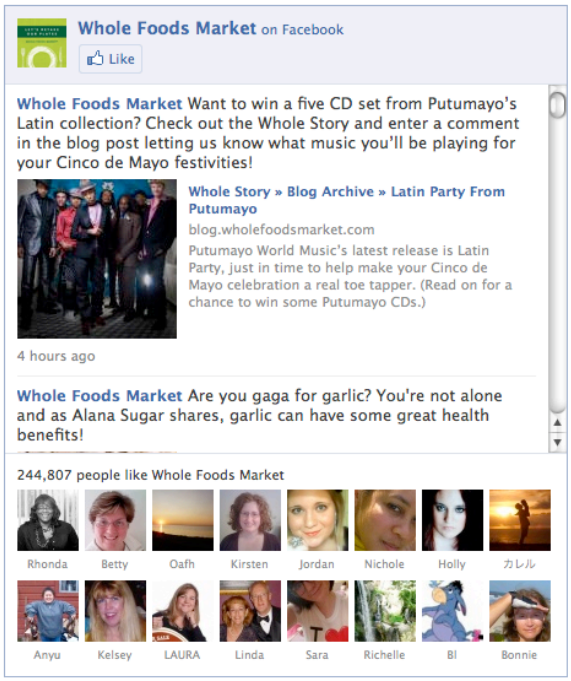
To aggressively pursue all your friends to join your fan page – for no apparent incentive – is **counterintuitive to the nature of *social* media**.

So, the good news is **there are many ways to promote your fan page and proactively increase your fan base without bugging all your current Facebook friends, and also by thinking wider than just Facebook**.

Here are 21 ways to get more fans for your Facebook fan page:

#1: Embed Widgets on Your Website

Select from a number of the new **Facebook Social Plugins** and place them on your website and blog. The Fan Box widget is now the Like Box and it works well to **display your current fan page stream and a selection of fans** - see screenshot below with Whole Foods Market Facebook Like Box. I would recommend adding a title above the box encouraging visitors to your site/blog to click the "Like" button (which makes them a Facebook fan).



Whole Foods Market Facebook Like Box.

You might also consider the **Live Stream** widget for more advanced uses, particularly on an FBML custom tab of your fan page itself. The Live Stream

widget allows Facebook users to **add their comments to a live event**, for example, and that activity pushes out into their stream.

#2: Invite Your Email and Ezine Subscribers

Assuming you have an opt-in email list, definitely **send out an invitation to your subscribers via email** (several times, over time) letting them know about your fan page and encouraging them to join. Ideally, provide them with a description of the page and an incentive to join.

Be sure to have the **Facebook logo/badge appear in your HTML newsletters**. Instead of the usual "Join our Fan Page," **say something creative like "Write on our Facebook wall,"** or "Join our Facebook community," or "Come add your photo to our Facebook group" (where "group" is actually your fan page). Users have to be a fan in order to interact with your fan page in this way.

#3: Add to Your Email Signature Block

Instead of promoting your Facebook personal profile (if you do), **include a link to your fan page in every email** you send out. If you use web-based email, check out the Wisestamp signature addon.

#4: Make a Compelling Welcome Video

Create an attractive landing tab (canvas page) with a video that explains exactly a) what your fan page is about, b) who it's for and c) why they should become members. The result: you'll increase your conversion rate from visitors to fans. One of **my favorite fan page welcome videos is by Steve Spangler**, the Science Guy! After watching his video, you can't help but want to join!



(By the way, with the new Facebook changes, if your custom welcome tab and video talk about clicking the "Become A Fan" button, you may want to change the wording to "click the Like button" now).

#5: Use Facebook Apps

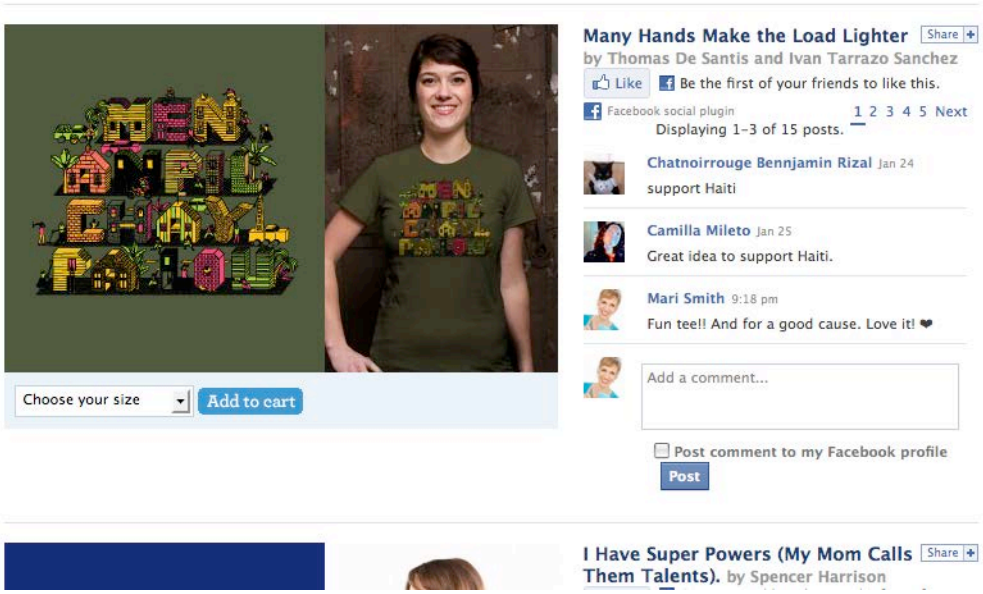
I recently tested **a new live video-streaming app called Vpype**. The app adds a tab to your fan page called "Shows" and when you broadcast as your fan page, everyone can view by default. (You can also broadcast as your personal profile and selectively invite friends/friend lists). By announcing via Twitter, your personal Facebook profile, your blog and your email list, **you can broadcast regular live Internet TV shows from your fan page and create much buzz**.

Another example of app integration is Target's "Bullseye Gives" campaign. **Target had their fans vote on which of ten charities they most wanted to see the company donate to**. By voting, a post goes out onto your Facebook wall and into the News Feeds of all your friends, thus providing Target with valuable exposure. (For custom apps, see companies like Buddy Media, FanAppz, Wildfire Apps, Involver, Virtue, Context Optional.) [**UPDATE**: Thank you to Context Optional, the creators of Target's "Bullseye Gives" campaign!]



#6: Integrate the Facebook Comment Feature

My favorite example of this is the t-shirt company Threadless. On their landing tab (canvas page), you can view and purchase t-shirts as well as **Like and comment on any item and choose to have that comment posted to your Facebook profile**, as shown in this screenshot:



(Screenshot of Threadless Facebook Fan Page landing tab)

Threadless actually has their landing tab set up so visitors don't have to become a fan to purchase/comment/interact. Yet they have organically built well over 100,000 fans.

As users comment on items, **that activity is pushed out into their stream** (profile wall and their friends' News Feeds), which creates **valuable viral visibility** for your fan page.

(**Important Update**: Facebook no longer supports FBML. Please refer to the articles on Facebook iFrame.) For further information on adding the comment box to your FBML page/app, see these pages.

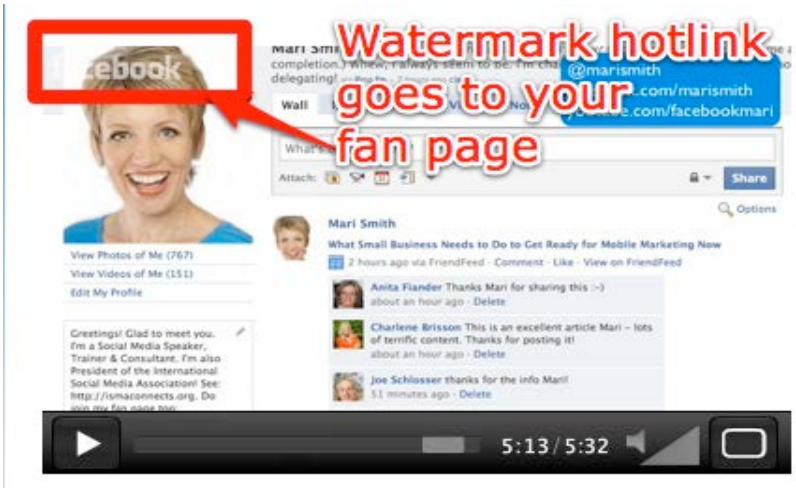
#7: Get Fans to Tag Photos

If you host live events, be sure to take plenty of photos (or even hire a professional photographer), **load the photos to your fan page and encourage fans to tag themselves**. This, again, pushes out into their wall and friends' News Feeds, providing valuable (free!) exposure. And, a picture says a thousand words – we notice the thumbnails in our feed more than text. *(Props to Nick O'Neil for this tip.)*

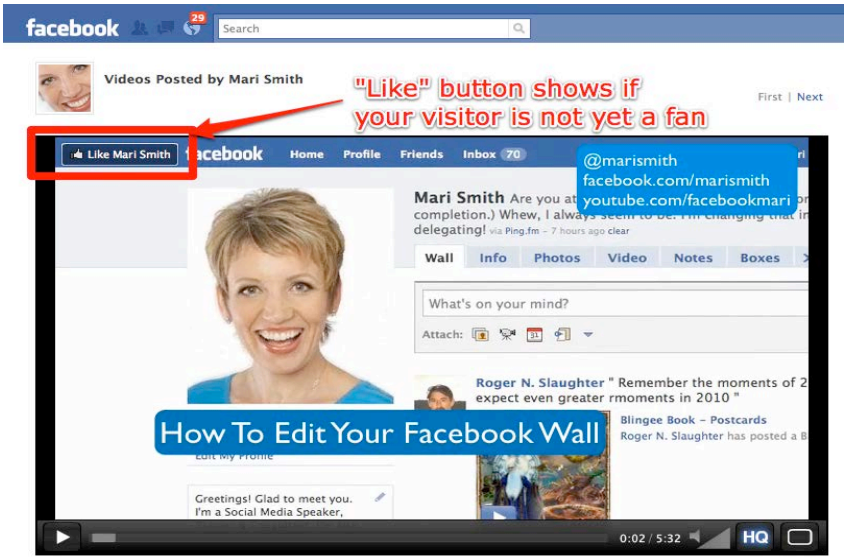
#8: Load Videos and Embed on Your Site

Facebook's Video feature is extremely powerful. **You can load video content to your Facebook fan page, then take the source code and embed on your blog/website**. **There is a ~~"Become a Fan"~~ button right in the video itself**. For an excellent tutorial, see Nick O'Neil's post: How To Get Thousands of Facebook Fans With a Single Video.

[**UPDATE**: Since Facebook changed the Become a Fan button to the Like button, **embedded Facebook videos now display a white watermark hotlink of the Facebook name in the upper left corner of the video player** - see first screenshot below. This is a clickable link that goes to the original video page on your fan page. If the visitor to your site clicks through to Facebook from your video, and they are logged into Facebook at the time, **they will see a Like button at the top left corner of the video player** - see second screenshot below.]



(Screenshot shows example of an embedded Facebook video on an external site)



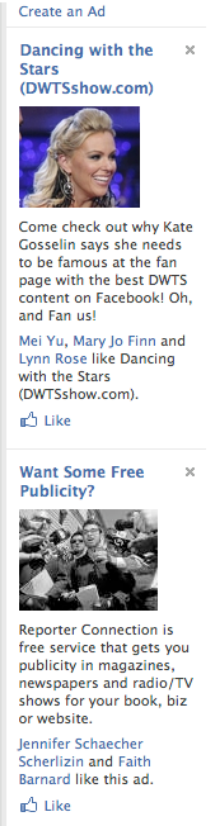
(Screenshot shows the same video on the original page of the fan page with the Like button)

#9: Place Facebook Ads

Even with a nominal weekly/monthly budget, you should be able to **boost your fan count** using Facebook's own social ad feature. It's the most targeted traffic your money can buy. To buy an ad, scroll to the foot of any page inside Facebook and click the link at the very bottom that says "Advertising." From there, you can walk through the wizard and get an excellent sense of how many Facebook users are in your *exact* target market.

Then, **when you advertise your fan page, Facebook users can become a fan (click the Like button) right from the ad** as shown in the screenshot below.

Additionally, **Facebook displays several of your friends who have already liked you, thus creating social proof**.



#10: Run a Contest

This is somewhat of a gray area because Facebook changed their Promotional Guidelines last year. Essentially, you need prior written permission from Facebook and need to be spending a significant amount on ads per month. However, **you CAN require Facebook users to become a fan of your fan page in order to enter a contest**, sweepstakes, drawing or competition. See these two posts for further explanation. PLUS, good news: you CAN run contests and sweepstakes with the use of the apps created by **Wildfire App**.

#11: Link to Twitter

Link your Twitter account to your Facebook fan page and automatically post your Facebook content to Twitter. You can edit what gets posted, choosing from Status Updates, Photos, Links, Notes and Events.

You have 420 characters on the Facebook publisher and 140 on Twitter. **In the tweet that goes out, Facebook truncates your post past a certain character**

count and inserts a bit.ly link back to your fan page. To track click-through stats on that link, just paste the bit.ly link that Facebook created for you in your browser's address bar and add a "+" sign to the end. This works for any bit.ly link!

I also recommend you **promote your Facebook fan page on your Twitter background and possibly in your Twitter bio/URL field too**.

#12: Get Fans to Join Via SMS

Your fans can join your fan page via text message! You'll need to get your first 25 fans and secure your username. Then, to join your fan page, Facebook users just **send a text message to 32665 (FBOOK) with the words "fan yourusername" OR "like yourusername"** (without the quotes).

This feature is ideal when you're addressing a live audience, say. Have everyone pull out their mobile phones and join your fan page on the spot! This would also work well for radio or TV. (Note that this only works for Facebook users with a verified mobile device in his or her account.)

#13: Use Print Media

Look at every piece of print media you use in your business. Your Facebook fan page (as well as Twitter and any other social sites you're active on), should be clearly displayed. **Put your Facebook fan page link (and the logo) on your business cards, letterhead, brochure, print newsletter, magazine ads**, **products**, etc.

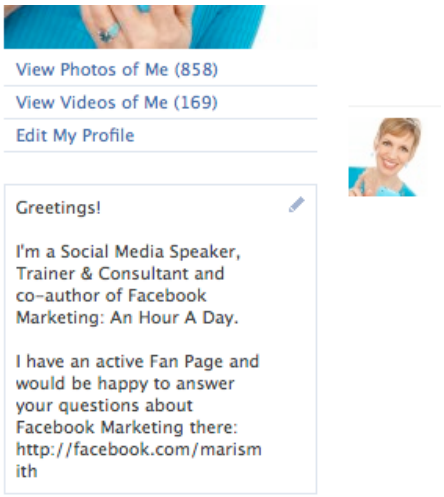
#14: Display at Your Store/Business

If your business is run from physical premises, **put a placard on the front desk** letting your customers know you're on Facebook. Ideally, you have a simple, memorable username. **Incentivize customers to join right away via their mobile device and show you/your staff the confirmation for some kind of instant reward!**

You might **give out physical coupons promoting your fan page**. For restaurants, put the Facebook logo, your username and a call to action on your **menus**.

#15. Add a Link on Your Personal Profile

If you'd like to **promote your fan page to your Facebook friends**, just under your photo on your personal profile there is a section to write something about yourself. I call this the "mini bio" field and strongly suggest adding a link to your fan page like so:



Be sure to **format the URL with http:// otherwise it will not be clickable** with just the www's. You have a limited amount of characters, so keep it succinct and leave out the www's. You can put in hard line breaks though to make the content easier to read.

#16: Add a Badge/Button to Your Profile

Using an app like Profile HTML or Extended Info, you can **create your own custom HTML**, including a Facebook badge and/or graphic embedded, as shown in the screenshot below:



#17: Use the Share Button

The **Share button** is all over Facebook and is a very handy feature. It only works for sharing on your personal profile. So periodically go to your fan page, scroll toward the bottom left column and click the "Share+" button. **Add a compelling comment** along the lines of exciting news, recent changes, special incentives, etc., happening on your fan page and invite your friends to join if they haven't already. I find the Share button far more effective than the Suggest to Friends approach. (And, if you'd like to Share content from the web on to your *fan page* vs. profile, I highly recommend using the **Hootlet bookmarklet tool** at HootSuite.com).



#18: Use the @ Tag

As long as you're a fan of your own fan page, you can "@ tag" it on your own personal profile wall. From time to time, you can **let your friends know about something happening on your fan page by writing a personal status update that includes tagging your fan page with an @ tag**. Simply start typing the "@" symbol and the first few letters of your fan page name (this works whether you have your username registered or not), and it will appear from a drop-down menu to select. This then makes it a nice, subtle hyperlink that your friends can choose to click on.



#19: Autograph Posts on Other Walls

A subtle way to gain more visibility for your fan page is to add an @ tag for your fan page when writing on your friends' walls as a way to sign off.

I would **use this one sparingly** and, again, monitor the response from your friends. I have never been a fan of adding a signature block on Facebook wall posts because our name and profile picture thumbnail are always hyperlinked right back to our profile anyway. But the simple @ tag could be effective.

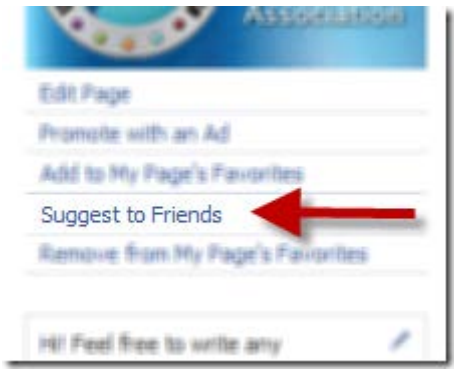
#20: Autograph Other Fan Pages

As with adding your fan page @ tag to posts you make on your friends' walls, you could equally **use the same technique when posting on other fan pages**. This **needs to be used with discretion** and I would advise against doing this on any potentially competing fan page!



#21: *Maybe* Use "Suggest To Friends"

I won't rule this one out completely as it does **depend on how many friends you have**, your relationship with your friends, how often you suggest fan pages/friends to your friends, etc (see 'The Big Myth' above). But I do recommend **monitoring the response to this technique** – perhaps simply by asking for feedback in your status update.



So, these are just 21 ways to create strategic visibility and promote your Facebook fan page.