

# THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO FACEBOOK TIMELINE PROMOTIONS

Timeline promotion ideas, best practices and your most frequently asked questions – answered!



## → WHAT'S COVERED IN THIS PDF:

- » 9 Best practices for Timeline promotions
- » 8 Awesome Timeline promotion ideas
- » 5 Legal ways to contact Timeline promotion winners
- » Your FAQs – Answered!



## INTRODUCTION

On August 27th, 2013, Facebook announced changes to their promotion guidelines. According to their update, promotions and contests can now be hosted on a Page's Timeline. This is exciting news for Page admins who want to host super-simple, low-fuss Facebook promotions.

If your business is planning to host a Timeline promotion, this PDF has everything you need to know before you hit "Post." In this guide, we share best practices, tips, engaging Timeline promotion ideas, information on how to "legally" contact promotion winners plus answers to the five most commonly asked questions about Timeline promotions.

***Ready? Let's get started!***



## 9 BEST PRACTICES FOR TIMELINE PROMOTIONS

Now that contests and promotions are allowed on Facebook Page Timelines, there are a handful of best practices businesses should keep in mind before they host one of their own. In this section, we cover everything you need to know about how to run a successful (i.e., one that meets your goals) Timeline contest or promotion.

Here we go:

### 1. Create a plan/set a goal

With any type of Facebook promotion, the first step is to create a plan and set some goals. During this process, ask yourself: “What is it that I want to gain from this promotion?” For some businesses, the goals might be sales oriented, with a focus on collecting email addresses for a mailing list; for others, it could be purely about boosting engagement and Page Likes. Whatever your business wants to accomplish with your Facebook Timeline promotion will dictate which of these best practices are right for you.

### 2. Craft your perfect Timeline contest or promotion post

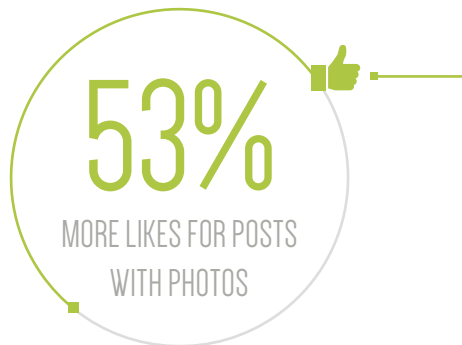
The language you use for your Timeline contest is important. To craft a Timeline contest post that complies with Facebook’s new promotion guidelines and inspires lots of engagement, follow these tips:

- a. **Use the appropriate call to action (CTA).** If you’re hosting a “Like to enter” contest, for example, be direct in your post. Tell users in the first or second sentence of your post, “Like this post for a chance to win!” Then you can get into the details of the contest. The same tip goes for “Comment to enter” Timeline contests, just replace “Like” with “Comment.”



DOES MY  
CONTEST COMPLY  
WITH FACEBOOK'S  
PROMOTION  
GUIDELINES?

[READ GUIDELINES](#)



## COMMENT/LIKE IMPORTER

In a nutshell, the Comment/Like Importer allows you to easily import all the data you receive from your Timeline promotion (i.e., Likes, comments, comment Likes and photo comments that appear within a post) into the ShortStack database for you to organize and then randomly select winners.

[Click here](#) to learn more.

**b. Include an image.** Photos on Facebook generate 53 percent more Likes than the average post (according to Hubspot). And choosing the right kind of photo can make the post even more engaging. Use a photo that features your contest prize and is human-centric (this is FACEbook, after all). For instance, instead of sharing a photo of your prize against a sterile white background, use a photo of a person holding or pointing to your contest prize. We did this for our first ever ShortStack Timeline contest and saw excellent results.

**c. Include necessary disclaimers and rules.** According to Facebook's latest promotion guidelines, you are required to include verbiage within your Timeline contest post acknowledging that your promotion is in no way sponsored, endorsed or administered by, or associated with, Facebook. You must also include a complete description of your promotion's official rules, along with terms and eligibility requirements. When you include all the necessary copy, your Timeline contest post can get pretty lengthy. Fortunately, there's a better alternative — hosting the terms on an app (we'll get to the details in a bit).

### 3. Promote your Timeline contest or promotion

When businesses combine a Timeline contest or promotion with Facebook's new embed feature and ShortStack's new **Comment/Like Importer** they have a massively powerful marketing tool.

***Here's why:*** When you feature a piece of content, like a status update, from your Facebook Page on a high-traffic place such as your brand's blog or website, it encourages users to engage simply because it's right there in front of them and easy to take action! The barriers to entry, in the case of Timeline contests and promotions, are no longer there when you embed the post in your blog or website.

 For more suggestions on how you can use Facebook's new embed post feature, [click here](#).

#### 4. Use an app to host your promotion's official rules

You know how we mentioned earlier that there's an alternative to having a lengthy Timeline contest or promotion? Using an app is the better option for hosting official contest rules and Facebook's required disclaimer.

If you want your Timeline contest post to be short, sweet, super easy to enter — AND in compliance with Facebook's updated promotion guidelines — create a complementary contest app and link to it in your post. If you do this, your next Timeline contest post could look and be as simple as this:

*"Like or comment on this post for your chance to win a \$50 gift card! For more contest details and rules, click here to read: [link to your contest app]."*

#### 5. Use an app to collect valuable data from contest entrants

If you want to grow your business's mailing list, consider hosting a Timeline contest or promotion and building a complementary contest app that contains an entry form.

In the copy for your Timeline contest or promotion, drive users to your Facebook app by sharing a link to it. **Provide an incentive so users will want to go to your app.** For example, users who enter your contest via your app can receive extra entries, giving them a better chance to win your company's fantastic prize.

#### 6. Select a random winner

Everyone wants a fair shot at winning! Users entering your contest via a post comment or Like want to know that you will choose a winner fairly.

One easy way to choose a contest winner at random is with our Random Contest Entry Picker. [Click here](#) to watch the video (starting a little after the 4-minute mark) to learn how.

## RESTRICTION

Cannot require users to Like a Page to enter a Timeline contest

## SOLUTION

Create a fan-gated app to use in conjunction with your contest

### 7. Contact your Timeline contest winner

Facebook used to be really strict about how Page admins could contact contest winners. The biggest rule was that a company representative could not contact winners on Facebook — it had to be via email or through another off-Facebook method. This rule can no longer be found in Facebook’s promotion guidelines. **Now businesses can contact their contest winner in whatever way they choose — including on Facebook.**

### 8. Increase Page Likes with your Timeline contest or promotion

It’s important to remember: **Facebook still does not allow Pages to require users to Like their Page as a way to enter to win a contest.** You can only ask them to Like status updates. This means non-fans who see your Timeline contest in their News Feed can also enter into your Timeline contest.

The only way to really drive Page Likes with a Facebook contest or promotion is to host the contest using a fan-gated app.

To drive new Page Likes with your Timeline contest or promotion, incentivize users to visit your contest fan-gated app by linking your app’s URL in your Timeline contest post. **One of the best incentives is offering additional contest entries to users who also enter your contest through your app.** Another is offering a special discount code that’s revealed when they Like your Page (this way everyone who visits your app can be a winner!).

### 9. Calculate the ROI of your Timeline promotion

When your Timeline promotion ends, revisit your goals and check to see if you met them or not. If you hosted a basic Timeline promotion, record how much engagement, i.e., how many comments or Likes, your contest earned. If you hosted a more layered and integrated Timeline promotion with the help of an app, gather data about how many people clicked to view your promotion versus the number of people who entered. **Save your contest entrants’ email addresses in a database to use for later.**



## 8 AWESOME TIMELINE PROMOTION IDEAS

Now that we've covered all the best practices for hosting a Timeline promotion, you are prepared to host one! If you're in need of some promotion inspiration, we've got you covered. In this section, we share with you eight awesome Timeline promotion ideas to try:

### Timeline Promotion Idea #1: Photo Comment Promotion

If your business or client is planning to launch a new product, use a Facebook Timeline contest to get feedback (or first impressions) in advance. In your post, share a photo of your soon-to-be released product and ask users to share their thoughts in a comment as a way to win a prize.

This Timeline crowdsourcing-style contest is a fun way to drive lots of comment entries, and it's also a smart way to get valuable feedback on your product from your fans. The feedback you receive might even encourage your brand to make some beneficial adjustments to the products before you take them to market.

After the Timeline contest entry period has ended, you can use ShortStack's Comment/Like Importer to upload all the comments to ShortStack's database to evaluate and choose a winner.



Introducing our brand-new burger! Tell us what you think for a chance to win a \$25 gift card!

👍 30 Likes • 💬 25 Comments

**FREE RESOURCE DOWNLOAD** 

We explain more about the benefits of Facebook custom audiences in our eBook “How the Pros Use Facebook Advertising.”

**Timeline Promotion Idea #2: Like Promotion**

If you want to drive lots of Like entries with a Timeline contest, keep it simple. For instance, you can ask:

*“Who’s excited for Super Saturday shopping? Like this post for a chance to win a valuable prize!”*

The simpler your Timeline contests, the better. Users don’t have to think — they just have to click “Like,” and they’re entered. The really cool thing about this kind of Timeline contest is that if you use a tool (e.g., ShortStack’s new Comment/Like Importer feature) to collect Facebook IDs, you can create a large custom audience, and then run highly targeted ads on Facebook (just be sure to disclose in the terms of your contest that you plan to do this).

How does this work? By using the Comment/Like Importer, you receive access to all the Facebook IDs of the users who entered your contest by clicking “Like.” If your business wants to later run highly targeted ads on Facebook, they can use these Facebook IDs to create ads with a custom audience.



**Timeline Promotion Idea #3: Store Promotion**

If you own a brick-and-mortar store, host a Timeline promotion to advertise your in-store promotion to your Facebook fans. Upload a photo that gives details about your sale. Next, ask users to Like and/or comment on your post to enter to win. An appropriate prize would be a gift card to your store!

This kind of Timeline Contest idea is perfect for rewarding one (or a few) of your loyal Facebook fans and getting the word out about your store's sale, thus bringing in some extra foot traffic and sales!

**Timeline Promotion Idea #4: "The Comment with the Most Likes Wins" Promotion**

Since August 2013, we've made a few pretty significant updates (per the suggestions of our rad users) to our Comment/Like Importer tool. One suggestion came from a ShortStack user who posted a comment on our blog asking if there was a way to record the number of Likes on a comment. Our hardworking developers quickly made this possible with the Comment/ Like Importer!

Host a Timeline promotion asking users to comment on your post for a chance to win a prize from your business. Within the rules of your promotion, state that the comment with the most Likes, i.e., votes, wins!

This kind of Timeline promotion encourages people to reach out to their Facebook friends for votes increasing the likelihood that the promotion will "go viral" and increase the reach of your promotion to users who are not yet familiar with your brand.

**UGC**  
(photos, videos,  
links, etc.)

  
**MORE  
SHARES**

  
**MORE BRAND  
VISIBILITY**

### Timeline Promotion Idea #5: Photo-Voting Promotion

This Timeline promotion idea is similar to the previous idea we just described. The difference? Instead of encouraging text comments, ask for photo comments!

Facebook allows users to comment on a post with a photo. This feature is ideal for brands that want to host a really simple photo-voting contest on the Timeline to collect valuable user generated content (UGC).

User generated content (such as photos) is also valuable because it can be shared later on Facebook to feature fans in posts or it can be shared on your business's other social profiles such as Pinterest. Photos submitted by your fans can also give you useful insight as to who your fans are.

Businesses that get lots of entries can use the Comment/Like Importer to import all photos entries into a database to save and use later. Once in the database, you can also easily select the contest winner(s) with the most Likes on their photo.

### Timeline Promotion Idea #6: Video-Voting Promotion

When a user comments on a post with a video URL, the video appears and can be played within the comments feed on the Timeline. To host a Timeline video-voting contest, ask users to comment on your post with a link to their video. For example, if you're a restaurant, have users share video tutorials of their favorite dishes, this is especially fun during the holidays. Then have your fans vote for their favorite.

Hosting a video-voting promotion on the Timeline is fun and entries are easy to look through and play in the comments feed. Choosing a winner is simple, too. The winner of your Timeline promotion could be fan-selected according to the video comment with the most Likes. Or the winner could be chosen by your brand, according to which video entry you thought was best.

**Note:** When you export the data from your video-voting Timeline promotion using the Comment/Like Importer, **only the video URLs will be exported** to the ShortStack database – not the video itself.



Which of our games do you plan to gift this holiday season? Each comment earns you 5 points and a chance to win a new gaming unit!

👍 156 Likes • 💬 78 Comments

Write a comment...

### Timeline Promotion Idea #7: Crowdsourcing Promotion

Another of the Comment/Like Importer's new features is the "Allow Multiple Entries per User" option. It lets users submit multiple entries on a Timeline promotion post via multiple comments and a Like on the post.

For example, if a user posts two comments and Likes your Timeline promotion post, when you import your promotion data into the Comment/Like importer, that entrant will receive a total of three entries (one entry per comment posted and an entry for Liking the post), increasing their chances of winning. You can also choose a weight for how much each interaction – Like or comment – is worth (more on this in promotion idea #8).

If your business wants fast feedback from users, host a Timeline promotion that gets users to comment for a chance to win. This kind of Timeline promotion doubles as an ideal crowdsourcing tool!

For instance, you could ask users to leave a comment about their favorite part of the fall or winter season. You could also ask your fans which of your products are their favorites, and why, and use the information to determine which products you should promote or feature most during your seasonal campaigns.



= 1 POINT



= 5 POINTS

### Timeline Promotion Idea #8: Incentivized-Interaction Promotion

If you want to drive lots of interaction on your Timeline promotion, host a promotion that incentivizes and rewards users who want to go the extra mile to engage with your brand.

With the Comment/Like Importer's "Awards Extra Points/Votes" feature, you can enter a custom number of points to assign to comments. For example, Liking a post is always worth 1 point and if you set comments to be worth 10 points each, a user who Likes the post and comments twice would have 21 points. This allows you to reward users who interact with your brand using comments more chances to win!

If you check the "Import Comment Likes as Votes" box the point value for a comment will be added to any bonus points.

Test an incentivized weighted-interaction promotion on your Timeline this holiday season. If you're a clothing company, for instance, you could post a status update with a video of your fall look book and ask users to Like or comment on the post with their thoughts for a chance to win. This is a great way to get feedback and create a little bit of hype before your products officially go on sale.

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All eight of these Timeline promotion ideas are terrific for engagement. Just keep in mind that if you want to collect valuable information (e.g., email addresses and user demographics) from your promotion entrants, you'll want to use an app.

Another thing to remember: It's best to have a game plan for how you're going to combat cheating prior to hosting your Timeline promotion.

With Timeline promotions, it's fairly easy for people to cheat by either creating fake profiles or by using cheap services like Fiverr to help an entry get more Likes. Businesses offering a significant prize should consider using an app to host promotions, as it makes it really simple to detect contest fraud.



## 5 LEGAL WAYS TO CONTACT TIMELINE PROMOTION WINNERS



YOU MAY  
NOW CONTACT  
PROMOTION  
WINNERS VIA  
STATUS UPDATES,  
PRIVATE  
MESSAGES,  
CHAT, ETC.

When Facebook updated their promotion guidelines in August 2013, without fanfare they removed the rule stating that brands could not contact promotion winners on Facebook via status updates, private messages, chat, etc.

The rule was kind of a hassle, especially for businesses with multiple promotion winners to notify, so lots of people were happy to see it go. But in light of the change, many of our users have asked us about the best way to contact contest winners.

Here are five examples of totally legal ways to contact Facebook promotion winners:

### 1. Post a status update

One simple way to contact Timeline promotion winners is to create a post on your Timeline and announce your winners there. For example, the post would read:

*"Congrats [Winner Name!] You've won our awesome prize. To claim it, email us at 'Contest@yourcompany.com.' You have 48 hours to claim your prize. We will choose another winner if we don't hear from you by then."*

FYI: When we hosted our first promotion after the new rule change, we initially tried to tag our winners in our status update using their @name but Facebook does not allow business Pages to tag users, even if they have Liked the page. That said, a status update is a great way to announce your promotion winner, but it is not the best way to contact them as it is impossible to ensure that your contest winners will see your post.



CONTACT A WINNER IN THE  
COMMENT STREAM. JUST USE  
THEIR @NAME.

## 2. Notify winners in the comment stream

If you host a Timeline promotion, the most effective way to contact your promotion winner is in the comment stream using their @name.

One stipulation: Your contest winner(s) must have commented on your Timeline promotion post in order for your business to “@” reply to them. Therefore, in order for this to be an option, host a “Comment” or “Comment and Like” to enter Timeline promotion.

## 3. Require users to submit their email addresses

If you don't like the idea of contacting your promotion winners on Facebook through a status update, require entrants to visit an app to enter their email addresses so that you can contact your winners via email.

If you're adamant about collecting the email addresses of your promotion entrants, be sure to include in your contest rules that only entrants who've submitted their email addresses will be selected as winners.

#### 4. Use Twitter

It is not a best practice to ask users to share their email addresses in the comments section because most people are uncomfortable sharing email addresses in public forums. An alternative is to ask users to share their Twitter handles in the comments section instead.

When your Facebook Timeline promotion is over, find your winner's comment and use the Twitter handle s/he provided to send a tweet announcing the news.

**Note:** *Make it clear in your promotion's rules and guidelines that your winner will be contacted via Twitter.*

#### 5. Announce winners on your blog or website

If you don't want to fuss with contacting multiple promotion winners directly, state in the details of your promotion that an announcement will be made on your blog or website on a specific date and time. This way the responsibility is on your entrants to find out if they won.

In the announcement on your website or blog, provide instructions for how your winners should contact you to receive their prizes. For instance, they might have to email a person on your team within certain dates.

**Note:** *As you might have noticed, we did not include Facebook private messaging in our list of ways to contact promotion winners. There's a big reason for this. When a user receives a private message from a user who isn't one of their Facebook friends, the message is often marked as spam. If you choose to go this route to contact your promotion winners, your winners may never see your message.*



## YOUR FAQs – ANSWERED!

When Facebook first updated their promotion guidelines, we had lots of our users ask for details about the change. The five most commonly asked questions about Timeline promotions are addressed in this section.

**Q 1: Any suggestions on how to incorporate, “This contest is not associated with Facebook... etc.”?**

**A:** Your Timeline contest post can get pretty lengthy when you include all that Facebook requires you say when you host a contest on the platform. You can include your rules and regulations within the post. Or you can link users to an app that hosts all your contest rules and Facebook’s required disclaimers.

**Q 2: What is your recommendation for best practices regarding contest rules and regulations with the change that allows Timeline Promotions?**

**A:** Facebook still requires that Page admins include rules and guidelines for a Facebook Timeline contest. You can, indeed, house a PDF on your blog or website that contains the rules, or link to it in your contest post. Our suggestion is to host the rules on an app and link to the app so you can use the app to drive Page Likes, incentivize sharing, and easily build an email list via your Timeline Contest/Promotion.

### LENGTHY RULES?



House your rules on a contest app. This is a great way to drive Page Likes, collect emails and more!



## WHY USE THIRD-PARTY APPS?

Collect email addresses to build your list



Drive Page Likes with a fan-gate



Create a customized, branded look



Easy winner selection and notification



Host rules and disclaimers



Incorporate videos, slideshows, social integrations and more



### Q 3: What are the pros and cons of using a third-party app with a Timeline Promotions?

**A:** For obvious reasons we believe ShortStack makes Facebook promotions – on Timeline or in apps – more powerful. For starters, apps allow you to easily gather email addresses through opt-in forms. You can also use the email addresses you collect to contact your fans and followers outside of Facebook (remember, only a fraction of your fans ever see your status updates). You can use apps to create a customized, branded experience using voting, videos, slideshows and more. And the list goes on. If you want to learn more, read Facebook expert [Jon Loomer's post](#) about the pros and cons (he gives an unbiased assessment) and our [AllFacebook guest post](#), “10 Reasons Apps make Facebook Contests and Promotions More Powerful” (it's not quite as unbiased 😊).

### Q 4: Is it legal or safe to ask entrants to leave their email addresses on Facebook?

**A:** It's legal – but unlikely that many people will want to post their email addresses in public, no matter how great your prize. We don't recommend it. Plus, if you ask for this kind of information, Facebook requires that you let your contest entrants know that you will not misuse their information and that the information is not going to Facebook but to you. Listing this information might complicate your contest rules, making the rules quite lengthy for a Timeline Promotion.

**Q 5: Is it against Facebook rules to “force” non fans to Like my page in order to answer a question?**

**A:** Liking a Page is not allowed as a form of entry into a business’s promotion (the way a Comment or Like for a Timeline promotion can be). But you can use a fan-gated app to hide app content — including a contest or promotion entry — so that non-fans have to Like your Page to get access to your promotion. This is how you can drive new Page Likes with a contest. You’re allowed to have an app that reveals contest information only to fans — and people who have just Liked your Page. It’s actually a best practice to fan-gate apps to drive new Page Likes. For more best practices, [read our post here](#).

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