

Key Takeaways for PBS Shows from the Recent Facebook Conference

It's been a very exciting couple of weeks for social media on the web, Twitter held its first ever "Chirp" conference, and Facebook hosted the 3rd annual "F8" developer conference. Both companies announced many new features, and products that will provide PBS, shows, and member stations with an enormous opportunity to drive traffic and engagement across platforms.

The speed with which both Facebook and Twitter are innovating right now is phenomenal, and what follows is a quick summary of their most recent announcements. PBS Interactive is prepared to help you navigate through these changes, and will be providing additional guidance, best practices, and tools to help take advantage of these new opportunities in the coming weeks.

Facebook

1. *The Like Button and the Open Graph*

A key plug-in that Facebook made available is the "Like" button. If you currently manage a Facebook Fan Page you probably noticed that people no longer "Fan" your page but rather they now "Like" the page.

At the F8 conference last week Facebook announced the availability of a small widget that allows you to add a "Like" button to any page on your web site.

When a user "Likes" something, Facebook adds that page to the user's profile where their friends can see and share it further. A major key to the success of the Like button is its ease of use both on the part of web site owners and of users. For people managing web sites, the Like button can be integrated by adding 1-line of code to their page template. For users, they no longer have to login to the site, or to Facebook in order to Like things across the web. This should dramatically increase the number of users sending PBS content into Facebook.

In addition to the Like button, the Open Graph is a new protocol that is designed to make it easier for Facebook to index and sort pages across the web. While the Open Graph is an open-standard, Facebook is currently the only site to use it. Implementation of the Open Graph is a matter of adding some additional meta-data tags to your site's header.

How can I benefit? Facebook is a major source of traffic to PBS sites, and the Like button presents a tremendous opportunity to increase that traffic even further.

Should I use it now?

Like Button: Feel free to implement the Facebook Like button on your site immediately, there is no downside to doing so (<http://developers.facebook.com/docs/reference/plugins/like>).

In May, PBS in conjunction with Gigya will begin to rollout a Like button that supports multiple social-networks, not just Facebook. This button will automatically detect which sites the user is already a member of and present the best sharing option to them.

Open Graph: At this time, it's unknown how valuable this will be to PBS sites. PBS Interactive will do some testing and make further recommendations at a later date.

2. *Activity Feed and Recommendations*

In addition to "Like Boxes" (formerly known as Fan Boxes that showed recent posts to your Facebook Fan Page), there are now two new widgets available to entice cross-site traffic and Likes.

The Activity Feed widget provides a stream of the most recent and socially-relevant content being shared in Facebook from your site.

Recommendations - Based on an individual user's personal activities on PBS.org, as well as their friends' activities this widget serves up socially-relevant links. Perhaps the most powerful of the widgets currently available, this one is currently being implemented on the PBS.org homepage.

How Can I benefit? These new widgets provide an opportunity to serve up related links that aren't just based on the content itself, but also the user's previous interactions, and the interactions of their friends.

Should I use it now? At this time, the Activity Feed and Recommendations widgets key off of the domain, so will serve up relevant content from across PBS.org. This has the potential to dramatically increase cross-site circulation and is highly recommended.

3. *Is there more?*

In short, yes. While the products mentioned above all are extremely relevant right now, Facebook also announced major changes to "Facebook Connect" which allows users to login to web sites using their Facebook Account, as well as automatic-personalization of site content without requiring users to login. These both have huge potential, and PBS is currently exploring ways of integrating these services more deeply into existing and future online experiences.

Twitter has also announced some very important changes to their platform, watch this blog next week for more information about what's coming next from them.