

# What Marketers Need to Do Differently on Facebook Messenger

To the customer, it's personal

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An interview with:

**Liz Cole**

Vice President, Group Director of Social Strategy  
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As Facebook Messenger emerges as a marketing channel in its own right, brands should take advantage of its unique attributes. Liz Cole, vice president and group director of social strategy at Digitas, spoke with eMarketer's Rahul Chadha about the do's and don'ts of leveraging those attributes to engage with consumers. Cole was interviewed as part of eMarketer's September report, "Messaging Apps and Marketing 2018: Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp and RCS Help Brands Connect with Customers."

**eMarketer:**

What common mistakes do brands make when they use Facebook Messenger for marketing?

**Liz Cole:**

The biggest pitfall is treating it like a broadcast channel instead of leveraging Messenger's strengths. One, it's interactive—it responds and adapts to user inputs. The execution should give the user a chance to give input that results in a customer experience beyond the straightforward path of placing an order on a website.

Two, it's personal. There's so much data you can leverage within Facebook, as well as the brand's own first-party customer data. The ability to marry these two data sets is the ideal use of Messenger.

Three, Messenger is private-ish. There are a lot of interactions with brands that people might not want to conduct over the phone. Those can be obvious things like shopping for personal care products or medical supplies and services, but also things like bedbug removal. Every brand should think about how one-on-one dialogue will be most of service to their customers on a silent, slightly private channel.

**eMarketer:**

Is there a tipping point where brands can go too far given how personal marketing is in messaging apps?

**Liz Cole:**

Obviously data privacy concerns are in the public eye more and more. At the same time, we have more capabilities than we've ever had to use data to better serve ads to people.

Messenger is a crucible of this delicate balance. It's about constantly maintaining that equilibrium between making ads more innovative and effective, but not freaking people out. With great power comes great responsibility.

But the more useful, fun and interesting the execution, the more latitude you have with people to invade their personal space and use the data you have about them in order to serve custom messages.

“It's about constantly maintaining that equilibrium between making ads more innovative and effective, but not freaking people out.”

**eMarketer:**

Customer service is often the first use case marketers try on Facebook Messenger. Do brands typically go about it the right way?

**Liz Cole:**

A lot of brands just use Messenger to replicate the experience of talking to a customer service rep on the phone, or talking to a salesperson or consultant.

But on Messenger, brands can talk to someone differently who's interacted every week versus someone who messages you for the first time in a year. You can remember what they've said, their order

numbers, their demographic information, their phone number and their shipping address so they don't have to repeat it.

There's an opportunity to upgrade the service experience instead of just replicating it, but it doesn't seem like a lot of brands are there quite yet.

**eMarketer:**

What's the level of interest in ad units served within Facebook Messenger among your clients?

**Liz Cole:**

There's a lot of interest in Messenger, both in terms of advertising and bots. It's discussed in every pitch we go into and every tactical plan we present.

But there's a lot of ground to cover between that excitement and actually bringing various effective uses of Messenger to life. It requires a lot more thought and decision-making than traditional display ads if you do it right.

“Messenger display ads can be very interruptive and a little bit invasive.”

**eMarketer:**

Facebook seems like it's positioning Messenger ads as an easy add-on to existing campaigns on the platform and letting advertisers repurpose preexisting creative. What are your thoughts on this?

**Liz Cole:**

It surprised me that Facebook would position Messenger ads that way, because they're really different than Facebook ads, at least right now. Messenger display ads can be very interruptive and a little bit invasive.

A display ad in the Facebook News Feed is like advertising on the radio. But a display ad in Messenger is like advertising in the middle of a phone call. That doesn't mean don't do it. It means brands should recognize that dynamic and respect it.

What messages would be welcome in that scenario? Who are the people who would want to hear from you? Perhaps you target people who have already messaged your business or are high-value customers. But using Messenger as an extension of your display ad campaign elsewhere on Facebook is the wrong way to go about it.

**eMarketer:**

Do your clients that use Messenger ads have the same type of key performance indicators for those ads as they would for displays ad on Facebook?

**Liz Cole:**

Not necessarily. For a lot of clients, the purpose of Messenger isn't just to drive people further down the funnel or drive website traffic. Ideally, it's to collect and organize the information gathered on people who engaged in a two-way interaction.

What are frequently asked questions? What are common problems? What are the offers people aren't interested in? What are the paths they don't take, especially when they interact with a bot?

Messenger can be very powerful because it creates instant learnings that can be applied in other marketing channels, the customer experience as a whole or even product development. This type of information has always been there through customer feedback, but through Messenger, it can be a lot more instant and specific.

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