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How Facebook is Killing the Little Guy

Sun, 2015-02-22 15:16 — Robin Olson

There are so many stories to tell, but the will to tell them has diminished over the past few months. I've been writing this blog for nine years. Doing so has changed my life in ways I never could have imagined. I never expected that writing, in the hopes a publisher would magically find me, would turn into a labor of love that spawned the creation of a non-profit cat rescue called *Kitten Associates*^[1]. Though the publisher never found me, my rescue has helped over 350 cats since KA opened in 2010 and through this blog I've given life-saving advice to many of you across the globe.

But there was a cost.

These stories take hours, into days, to write, photograph, edit. I don't get paid for these tales, though the community I've built is priceless. Because you have been there for us, we can keep the rescue-kitties of Kitten Associates fed and cared for, but it doesn't allow me to pay my bills. **In the end, something has to give, which is why I haven't posted anything for nearly 6 weeks, so I can focus on my graphic design work.**



These 12 cats could have died in 2013 if I didn't have the ability to get the word out on their plight.

The other reason I've lost my passion to write is Facebook. Facebook giveth and taketh (*yeah, great grammar here*) away. Being on Facebook watered my seedling blog, *Covered in Cat Hair*, so it could blossom. It helped us find homes and rescues for so many cats, too. But the ever-starving beast of greed propels FB to make more and more changes to the mystical-algorithm that continues to whittle away any chance that what I write will ever be seen by people who want to see it. It's that little code that determines what content is seen and what is not.

I read somewhere a wonderful summation of why being on Facebook is a mistake: "You don't build your home on someone else's land." Well that's what I did and so many other mom and pop shops did, too. Now it's biting us in the ass because if we don't "pay to play," there's only about a 2-5% chance any of our fans will read what we're posting.

So is it worth it for me to keep writing when you won't see it, it takes too much of my time and I'm broke because of it?

No.

But.

I love you guys, even if you aren't seeing this right now. I love our community and I NEED to write. I have so many stories to tell you, but I have to find a better solution. **One of them is that I'm working on a major overhaul of this web site to provide a chat feature and some other fun ways for us to get to know each other and retain our community. It will mean you'll have to come visit us here, but I hope that if I can create a nice enough destination it will be worth the effort to stop by.** It will take some time to get this accomplished but that is my goal. I will build my new house on **MY land** so no one can take it away or decide who can or won't be allowed to view my efforts.

I also fear that what Facebook has done will seriously hurt other rescue groups, as it is my own. There's a [petition going around](#)^[2] asking FB to reconsider and change the algorithm so that non-profits will still be able to reach their fans without the penalty of having to pay for it. They can't afford to "play" at the level of the heavy-hitters so FB will continue to turn into one big promotion/advertising machine. **Is this what we want?**

I want a place to go to hang out with my friends and make new friends. FB did an amazing job with that, but now they've taken it away if you run a small blog or non-profit. Those folks provided a great deal of fresh, fabulous content that is going to waste and eventually they are going to leave, too.



©2015 Robin AF Olson. Freya never would have had a chance if we didn't have such a good support system, ready to donate for her surgery. All I had to do was post a request for help on Facebook. It didn't have to cost our rescue money to do a mailing or pay a PR person to help. Freya has her own FB page called [For Freya](#) ^[3], which I now realize may be a mistake because again this "house" is not built on our land.

How much money does Facebook need? Where is the space to give back, to be fair, to be reasonable? I'm not saying don't make a living, but I am saying greed is an ugly thing and it's hurting a lot of innocent people and animals who NEED a venue like this to get the word out about what it is that's important to them and their friends/fans.

Facebook could be a beautiful golden palace instead of yet another place for the 1% to decide what the rest of us get to see. Why not just charge a subscription fee? Even if they charge a \$1 per person they have what...a billion dollars a year? They can drop the advertising and open up the news feed so we can REALLY see what our friends and interests have to share.

I know. Fat chance.

Note: I see the irony that I'm going to have to pay to "boost" this post on FB in the hopes you'll read it.

CICH Content Categories:

[Announcements](#) ^[4]

[Annoying](#) ^[5]

Comments

Sun, 2015-02-22 17:33 — [Lee Ann Lenfest \(not verified\)](#) ^[6]

I don't use facebook to follow bloggers and the like... ^[7]

I don't use facebook to follow you. Instead, I use feedly that lets me know when a new post has been posted. Facebook is not a reliable tool UNLESS you turn on notifications for a page / group. I do hope that the petition gets acknowledged because I don't consider Non-Profits as business. Yes, they are a business; but, it's not for profit. They are helpful organizations? Anyway, thought I'd let you know that I never miss a post because I follow via feedly. :-)

Mon, 2015-02-23 10:40 — [ZoeEmEffGee](#) ^[8]

Same here! After Google ^[9]

Same here! After Google Reader disappeared I moved to feedly and I love it!

Sun, 2015-02-22 22:56 — [Bernie \(not verified\)](#)

Stay in contact ^[10]

Robin,

If this happens, is there a way, you can continue to send out notifications in our email acc'ts so we can continue to follow you.

I am aware of the fees fb is planning. It appears anything worth following on fb is being (in a form) censored by fb by charging a fee.

I am one who hopes you will send out mass emails so we will continue to be able to read your work.

Even tho, I don't comment, that does not mean I, like many others aren't reading your work.

Sun, 2015-02-22 23:24 — JA macT (not verified)

Don't pay to boost posts ^[11]

Robin, there is a great video post on why it does not pay to promote posts on FB, so please don't pay. FB farms out those extra posts to companies that have mailing lists of people that have no interest in your posts. Let me look for it - hold on. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oVfHeWTKjag> ^[12]

Mon, 2015-02-23 03:15 — Henry (not verified)

Librarians have gotten good results from paying to boost a post ^[13]

But, honestly, your instinct is right: build your house on your land. I see what you post here because I found you on FB and added your blog to my Feedly. I know that FB doesn't show me everything ... and that's actually ok, because so many people follow so many others that single items get lost in the noise anyway.

Use social media tools like Twitter and FB to drive people here, and put the content that matters here.

Mon, 2015-02-23 06:05 — [CATachresis \(not verified\)](#) ^[14]

I saw this on facebook! ^[15]

Ironically I did see this post shared on facebook, but I do agree with you facebook is greedy! I have a page to promote my it'sy bitsy blog, but will not pay fb to promote it on principle! Caro :)

Mon, 2015-02-23 09:31 — [JaneA \(not verified\)](#) ^[16]

Paying to play ^[17]

I totally understand your frustration with Facebook and its "pay to play" mentality. I know there are other networks, which I've been considering. There's Ello, which at this point has a promise to remain ad-free forever (don't know how well that'll work, but hey), and I've been considering Tumblr as well because it's an image-heavy platform but you can still write posts on it, too.

I'm honestly not sure what to do about Facebook. I have a relatively small community for my Paws and Effect page, but that community is really engaged and they enjoy sharing the life of the gang. I've found that community to be an incredibly supportive place, and to this point the "pay to play" thing hasn't hit me too hard. On the other hand, I know it eventually will, and I remember hearing that same talk at BlogPaws where the speaker said it's not wise to build your home on someone else's land.

For me, the technical challenge of creating forums and the like on my own blog is a little too much, so I don't think that's the route for me -- but what I would like to get is more people from my Facebook community engaged with my actual blog. How do I do that? Not sure yet. And getting people engaged on my actual blog is still kind of a struggle for me. Asking open-ended questions at the end of my post seems to be a great start, but I'd definitely like to see more conversation.

Maybe this is something to talk about at BlogPaws -- the idea of creating a community but not on someone else's land. This is one reason why I haven't gotten big into Triberr and some of the others. I definitely have a finite amount of time and energy to spare (between having a full-time job, a steady freelance writing gig, and volunteering for DCIN), so I want to spend that energy wisely. And how do we move our engaged followers from Facebook to another venue?

(Regarding boosting posts, the only post I ever boosted was the one I wrote about how I got my Belladonna into solid remission from diabetes, because I thought that was info that needed to be shared more widely than I could reach within my small community. It's probably the only post I'll ever boost because boosting does have a toxic effect in the long run.)

It's so hard to tell. How do we share our stories effectively with as large an audience as possible? *sigh* And you certainly deserve to have your stories shared widely because you and KA are doing amazing work!

P.S. I hope when you get around to redesigning your website, you use a mobile-friendly format. Half the time I read your posts on my phone during my lunch breaks at work and it can be a challenge because the page scales to the point where the type is really small.

Mon, 2015-03-02 10:27 — [Robin Olson](#) ^[18]

Mobile Friendly ^[19]

yeah...I'm sorry about that. our blog is 9 years old and it looks like it! We DO have a reader on iTunes that works pretty well but you'd have to have an iPhone. Technology..gotta love it and hate it!

Mon, 2015-02-23 10:29 — [Catonymouse](#) (not verified)

f-fbook ^[20]

Robyn I didn't use Facebook to find you, or to follow!

Mon, 2015-02-23 10:39 — [ZoeEmEffGee](#) ^[8]

I subscribed to your RSS [21]

I subscribed to your RSS years ago. I never rely on Facebook to follow anything important....I see more advertisements, spam, and chain posts (SHARE IF YOU LOVE JESUS!!!!) than anything I actually care about.

Everyone, if you want to read this blog, click that orange RSS button up top. I use Feedly - it's free and there are apps for Android and iOS. I check my feeds every day and never miss a CiCH post!

Keep posting Robin. I for one will keep reading. I look forward to your updates!!

~Lianne

Mon, 2015-02-23 12:02 — Catnonymouse (not verified)

facebook [22]

I would hate not seeing the updates that you post.

While on some level I get (kind of because honestly I do not pay too much attention to the chatter regarding fb and paying to use it) for business BUT the exception should be made for organizations like yours that is a non-profit for animals.

Maybe a petition should be sent to them to not charge groups such as yours. I would gladly sign it.

Mon, 2015-02-23 12:10 — Connie and The Cerw (not verified) [23]

No matter where you go there are problems.. [24]

I have heard so many complaints about FB, and I get it, I really do.. but you go to google+ and you hear complaints that there are no filters.. and you go over to twitter and there is really no filters, so it is near impossible to really follow anyone..

I use fb as a bulliten board.. I do what I can to attract attention to myself, but I don't rely on it or any other one medium to drive traffic to my blog..

I wish you oodles of success with your new design though.. making a place to hang out on your own space is a good idea.

Mon, 2015-02-23 12:41 — Catnonymouse (not verified)

Facebook brought me to you/K.A. ...but it won't keep us apart! [25]

Although, without Facebook, I don't know that I ever would have "met" you, Robin, or Kitten Associates, but if they're going to charge you & other non-profit cat/animal rescue groups to have a presence, or post, I won't support that! It's unfair, unethical & just plain greedy. Unlike most people, I don't have a "smart" phone, so I can't do that RSS thing, or access Facebook in any way other than on my computer, but I will find a way of keeping it touch & reading your pawsome blogs about the kitties I've come to know & love, like Freya & The Dood!

Mon, 2015-02-23 14:28 — jmu hj (not verified)

RE: FACEBOOK [26]

When Mark Zuckerberg started facebook, he is purported to have said it was free and always would be. I want that. We all want that. He didn't want advertising. I don't want advertising. Get rid of the advertising, facebook. And no, don't charge us a fee for using the site, either. Robin, you're right. Greed is an ugly thing. I've been advocating for cats needing loving, forever homes on facebook, every day, for several years. This has gone from being a very pleasant and effective experience to being ever narrower and ever more difficult. I'm quite disillusioned, but I know that there still is no other site on earth that can reach as wide a base as facebook does. So I continue. But not happily. I, for one, will always visit your site. It's on my RSS feed.

Mon, 2015-02-23 18:41 — Ardie (not verified)

Your Blog and FB Pages [27]

If I don't see any posts from you each day I go looking! I HAVE TO see how the family (which includes you and Sam, of course) is doing. I check For Freya, Kitten Associates, and CiCH. I don't want to miss anything.<3

Mon, 2015-02-23 19:36 — Julianne (not verified)

So now what? ^[28]

So what's the best way to reach you? I totally support what you're doing. I've been bitten by FB, too, so I understand what you're going through. This is the first time I've ever seen your blog (maybe because of that boost), and I'd like to stay in touch without Facebook. How can I do that?

Mon, 2015-03-02 10:24 — [Robin Olson](#) ^[18]

Ways ^[29]

You can sign up for an RSS feed and one of these days we'll have a newsletter. You can also sign up for google alerts so you'll know when we have new stories. Our new web site will have a lot more features, but that's going to be down the road. I don't think there's one perfect answer, but we won't be leaving FB, you just have to make sure you have notifications selected when you like our FB page. :-)

[CICH @ Google+](#)

[Robin @ Google+](#)

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Links

- [1] <http://kittenassociates.org/>
- [2] <https://www.change.org/p/facebook-change-your-algorithm-for-non-profit-pages>
- [3] <https://www.facebook.com/forFreya>
- [4] <https://coveredincathair.com/taxonomy/term/33>
- [5] <https://coveredincathair.com/category/cich-content-categories/annoying>
- [6] <http://theunfocusedlife.blogspot.com/>
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- [12] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oVfHeWTKjag>
- [13] <https://coveredincathair.com/comment/9391#comment-9391>
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