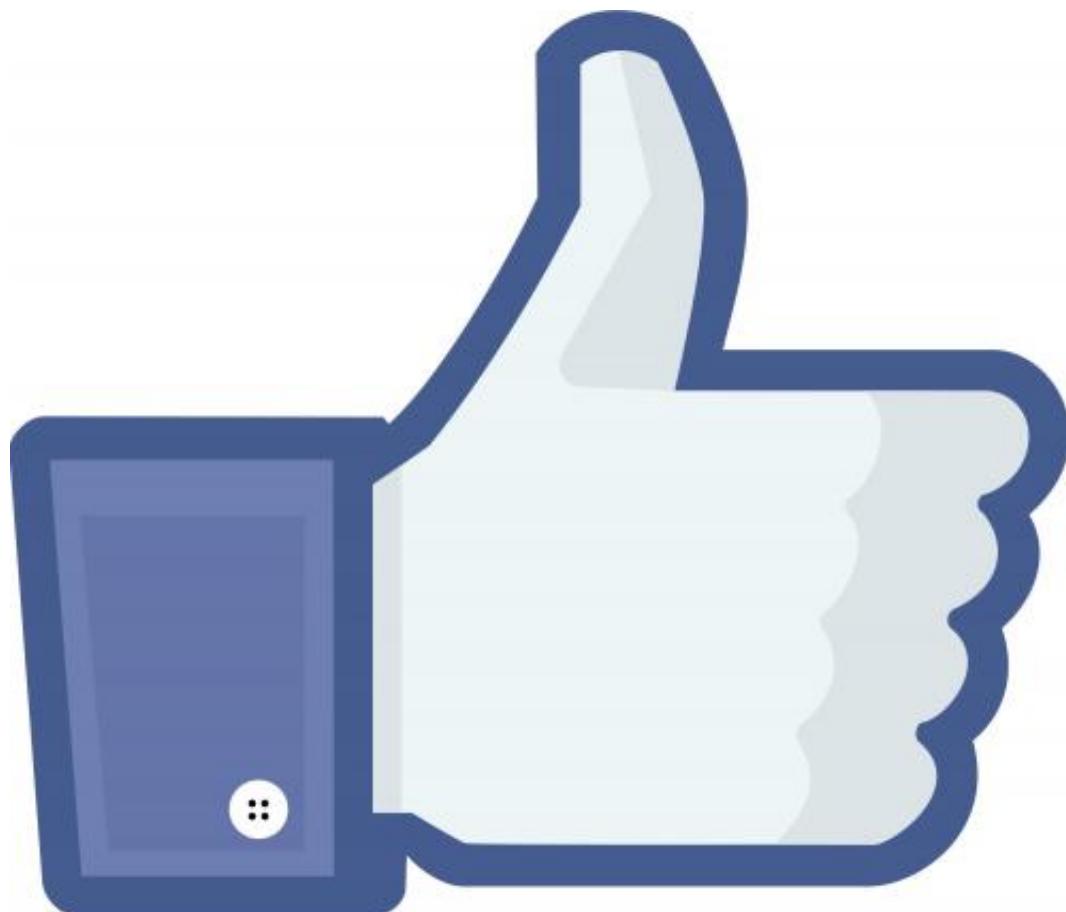


Facebook explains how it will prioritize local news

January 31 2018, by Queenie Wong, The Mercury News



Facebook on Monday said it's prioritizing local news on the social network as part of the tech firm's efforts to encourage more users to

interact on and off the site.

"People consistently tell us they want to see more [local news](#) on Facebook. Local news helps us understand the issues that matter in our communities and affect our lives," Facebook CEO and co-founder Mark Zuckerberg wrote in a social [media](#) post.

If a user follows a local news outlet or a friend posts a local story, it may show up higher on the News Feed, he said.

Facebook identifies local publishers "as those that are clicked on by readers in a tight geographic area."

A growing number of Americans are consuming news stories from social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter. But the company, which also competes with news outlets for ad dollars, has also faced criticism that it isn't doing enough to combat misinformation from going viral.

Facebook has been revamping its News Feed to show more posts from family and friends and fewer posts from businesses, brands and media.

While posts from family and friends will still be ranked higher on the social network, news will make up about 4 percent of News Feed, Zuckerberg said this month.

Facebook, which has more than 2 billion users worldwide, said it's prioritizing trustworthy, informative and local news. User surveys will help the tech firm decide what outlet is trustworthy.

Facing criticism that social media could be dividing people, Facebook said it's trying to help users strengthen their relationships with family and friends. In December, the company admitted that the site can be bad for users who are merely consuming information but not interacting with

family and friends.

Zuckerberg, who spent last year touring the United States, said that people he met emphasized how much they had in common with one another.

"Many people told me they thought that if we could turn down the temperature on the more divisive issues and instead focus on concrete local issues, then we'd all make more progress together," he wrote.

Reading more local news, he noted, can also motivate people to get more involved in their communities.

"Local news helps build community—both on and offline. It's an important part of making sure the time we all spend on Facebook is valuable," Zuckerberg wrote.

Facebook said it will start ranking local news higher on the News Feed in the United States, but plans to roll out the changes to other countries this year.

In 2017, about two-thirds of Americans got at least some of their news on [social media](#), according to the Pew Research Center.

Meanwhile, U.S. newspapers continue to face declining circulation and ad revenue. In 2016, ad revenue for the newspaper industry, was about \$18 billion, a decrease of 10 percent compared to the previous year, according to the center's annual report about the state of the [news](#) media.

In the third quarter, Facebook grew its ad sales by 47 percent to about \$10 billion compared to the same period last year. The tech firm is scheduled to report its fourth quarter results on Wednesday.

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