

Is your Facebook competition legal?

 By [Tyrone Middleton](#)

29 Jan 2013

A majority of businesses have or are considering using Facebook pages to promote their companies. Many of them resort to tactics such as bribery, encouraging users to 'like their page' in order to enter a competition or win a prize. The aim is to either stir up support or grow a larger fan base. All this is often done without the use of a third party application.

The truth is that most companies don't actually read or understand what the Facebook terms actually allow. We all fall prey to these agreements where we 'sign our lives away' without actually reading the fine print.

What's not allowed

Let's take a look at what Facebook does not allow when running competitions on their platform:

- They don't allow any competitions where the company simply states 'Like our page in order to enter'
- Uploading a photograph in order to enter
- Comment or Share this post to enter.

What this means is that that you may not use any of Facebook's functionality as an entry point to a competition. The only way you can create that functionality is by using a third party application e.g. company will create a separate Facebook app and have it on their page.

The terms aren't hidden anywhere, when you sign up to create a new page, you are prompted and asked right off the bat "have you read our terms and conditions, do you agree with this?"

If the points above refer to your company page, chances are that your Facebook competition is most probably in violation of the terms and conditions. There's potential threat to all companies partaking in this. It's happened in India and more recently, to a company in New Zealand with 6500 fans who found that their Facebook pages suddenly became inactive. Upon enquiry, they were informed that they did not adhere to the rules, forcing them to start the entire process of growing, engaging and sustaining a fan base over from scratch.

What's allowed

On every single page there is a drop down menu with a star that reads 'report this page to Facebook'. At this stage, Facebook will start noticing if company x has received continuous reporting and it could result in their pages being shut down. No one wants to be that headline story.

While this is merely to alert companies that potentially they are at risk, it's crucial to educate the South African Market about this and inform them that there are alternatives to ensuring compliance. It's not a case about if, but when. Facebook won't make an example of a company with say 200 fans; they'll aim for brands with thousands of followers. If your page is inactive or no longer functional, chances are your fans will move onto the next best thing.

So you might be asking, what are you allowed to do when running a Facebook competition? You may:

- Require an entrant to like your page, check into a place or connect to your platform integration in order to enter your competition. Provided you include a further step whereby entrants must provide their contact details. If your only means of contacting entrants is via Facebook, then your competition is illegal in terms of Facebook's terms and conditions.
- Ask the entrant to upload a [photo](#) or video as part of their entry - ONLY if it's facilitated through a third party application, or your own Facebook application.

Check for compliance

If you're not sure whether your competitions going to be legal in terms of Facebook or not, there are steps you can take to ensure or aim for compliance:

- Don't run competitions that require the use of Facebook facilities only, competitions can only be run through app's on Facebook.
- If you have already done this, don't panic, remove all reference to the incorrect competitions run in the past so that if your page is inspected for irregularities it won't show up.
- Administer your competition through an application, not through your wall or any other means (an example of this would be by using online photo uploading competition site [Teedu](#))
- If you chose not to use a third party application, you will need to create your own application and link it to your Facebook page. Your application must be registered with Facebook and include a disclosure adjacent to any promotion entry field: *'This promotion is in no way sponsored, endorsed or administrated by, or associated with, Facebook'*
- *Read the terms and conditions*

If you're reading this and understand that you can't really do that much and feel limited, you're correct. As a page owner or Admin it's crucial that you do not ignore these terms and conditions as there are consequences. A third party application makes the entire process easier and takes away the headache of ensuring compliance.

In conclusion remember that Facebook does not require your permission to shut down your page or account with no warning and no reinstatement. It may also be challenging if your competitors are on the prowl and pay closer attention than you do resulting in them reporting you. Should you require additional information Teedu can inform you with regards to the legality of your competition or manage campaigns for you.

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