

Getting

creative

with

Facebook

Facebook's rapidly expanding Creative Shop works with brands and agencies to create bespoke content for Facebook and Instagram. Jill Gray, a creative strategist at Creative Shop in London, talks us through the dos and don'ts of advertising on the world's biggest social network

By Rachael Steven

On August 24, 2015, Facebook recorded a new milestone. For the first time, one billion people had logged onto the site in a single day.

It's only 12 years since Facebook was founded but it's hard to imagine a world without it. A staggering 1.5 billion people visit the site each month – around 20% of the world's population – and in the US, one in every five minutes spent on a mobile is spent using Facebook or Instagram.

For brands, Facebook is often seen as both a blessing and a headache: it can be used to reach vast audiences and target very specific ones at relatively little cost. But with new features and updates being rolled out on a seemingly constant basis, and so much content on the site, it can be difficult to figure out who exactly is seeing your posts and how best to get their attention.

Bridging the gap

Four years ago, Facebook set up Creative Shop, an in-house creative studio that works with brands and agencies to create campaigns for Facebook and sister company Instagram. Much of Creative Shop's work is focused on helping users create content for mobile (90% of its daily visitors now come through a phone) and keep up with developments and new tools on the platform.

"If you think about where the industry has come from, and where it's going, it's moving so fast, and I think it's really difficult for clients and agencies to keep up," says Jill Gray, a creative strategist at Creative Shop. "Across the whole digital space, there's a gap between the advertising that's being done, and the full potential of the platform as a creative canvas. Creative Shop is really here to help bridge that gap and to work with the industry to set a really high bar for mobile storytelling," she tells CR.

Facebook declined to confirm how many people are now employed by Creative Shop but there are growing teams throughout the US, Europe, Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East. The brand is currently recruiting creative strategists and technologists to work for Creative Shop in Hong Kong, Stockholm,

"There's a gap between the advertising that's being done and the full potential of the platform"

Singapore, Buenos Aires, Los Angeles and Toronto via its website.

Gray says teams are made up of people from a mix of creative and digital backgrounds. Its London office is headed up by Rob Newlan, formerly a senior brand manager for Coca-Cola and Guinness, while chief creative officer Mark D'Arcy, who has led Creative Shop since its inception, comes from Time Warner.

"We have a really diverse group of people around the world – lots of former creative directors and strategy directors, and people with pretty interesting backgrounds from design and digital to photography," adds Gray.

"We're growing teams in Asia, Latin America, around the US, Europe, Africa and the Middle East, so everything is quite spread out. We want to mirror the way that clients work and that's very much on a local basis. If we're going to collaborate with the industry, it's important to have people on the ground, understanding local cultures and working with clients and agencies," she says.

A new canvas

Creating content that will stand out against posts from family and friends without being intrusive or annoying is a challenging task – and the quality of advertising on Facebook varies hugely. In a bid to attract better campaigns (and presumably, boost the platform's ad revenue) Facebook has launched several new tools and products for advertisers of late. These range from updated guidelines for brands to Canvas, a full-screen experience designed for mobile, which combines text, images, video and call-to-action buttons to create a more immersive style of advertising. Users can tilt to view panoramic images or zoom in to see things close-up and content loads in less than two seconds.

Canvas has already been used by Guinness, which launched a full-screen vertical video in March offering users a tour of its Open Gate Brewery in Dublin (which was recently opened to the public) as well as Wendy's, Universal, Macy's and Mr Porter. Facebook Creative Shop also worked with Netflix to create a campaign

Facing page A campaign created for Carnival Cruises using Facebook's new advertising tool, Canvas. Canvas lets brands use a mix of video, images, text and call to action buttons – the Carnival Cruises ad allows users to scroll through photographs of sandy beaches, 360 images showing the view from a ship and videos of people snorkelling. Carnival says that 50 percent of people who opened the ad scrolled right through until the end and that the average time spent with it was over two minutes

promoting its Pablo Escobar drama *Narcos*, which combined video teasers with stories about the show's characters. Gray says the creation of experiences like this, which are created specifically for Facebook on mobile, has led to "far greater dwell times than we've seen in the past".

While most of Creative Shop's work is done with big brands and agencies, Facebook also publishes advice for small and medium sized businesses online, offering case studies and best practice tips on its Business Pages. Gray says Creative Shop is working "more and more" with the site's small business teams around the world and Facebook recently launched a series of videos for advertisers (titled *Pub in Pub*) which feature creatives from Wieden + Kennedy, Abercrombie & Fitch, Razorfish and Droga5 talking about successful campaigns they have launched on the platform.

While many of the principles for creating a great ad are the same on Facebook as on any other platform – a compelling story, strong copy and a good use of visuals – there are some key differences. "We've had over 50 years of perfecting the television story arc, but we're really at the beginning of defining what that should be for mobile. Attention spans are significantly shorter, users are multi-tasking, and brands need to know that context in which their advertising is coming up," says Gray.

Here, Gray outlines some tips for using the site and points out some things that brands should avoid.

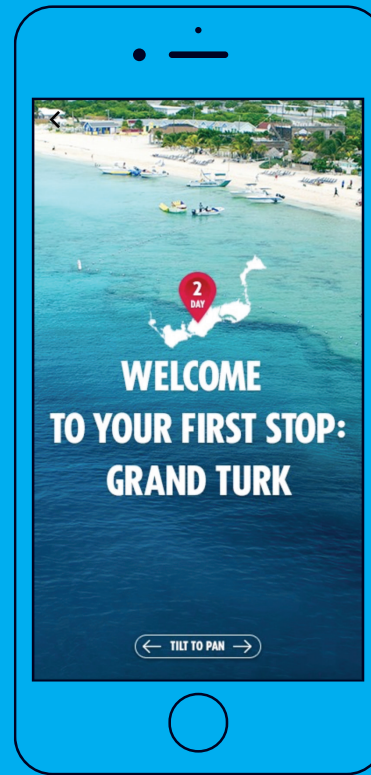
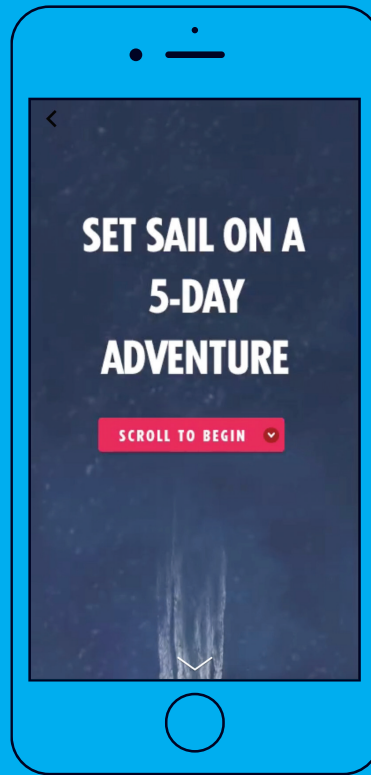
More on Facebook Creative Shop and Canvas at facebook.com/business/a/creative-tools-and-canvas.facebook.com

1 Don't treat social content as an afterthought

Gray cites this as a common mistake made by brands and agencies, and says that advertisers should be investing in creating original content for social media if they really want users to take notice. "What's really common right now is that you see brands and agencies at the last second saying, 'What's going to go on Facebook and Instagram?' and it ends up being this mentality of 'let's just take the key image from the campaign and we'll pop it on the platform. But that really doesn't take advantage of the full potential of the platform... [brands] need to be thinking about social media earlier in the process of creative development, and bringing that into the production schedule. If you're going to do a film, do a version for Facebook,'" she adds.

2 Shoot for mobile, not for wide screen

Speaking at TV marketing conference PromaxBDA in Barcelona this year (promaxbda.com) Gray told the audience: "Everyone loves a good wide shot. It's epic, it's beautiful, it's how you will always want to shoot things, but it looks a lot different in feed. When you're holding a mobile in your hand, it's just a lot smaller." Instead, she recommends still shooting in wide aspect but keeping in mind a 1x1 grid so that a separate version can be created to better fit screens on a mobile. "It's about maximising that space," she adds.



3 Get to the point

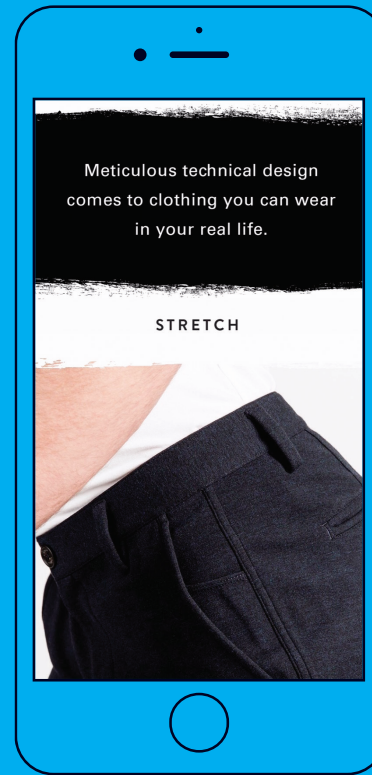
Traditional advertising often adheres to a 30 or 60-second story arc but impatient mobile audiences are unlikely to wait this long for a 'big reveal'. Instead, Gray recommends keeping a rhythm of around three seconds to keep viewers engaged. "People move really fast on a mobile, so you have to present yourself and set the stage quicker," she adds. "You're still telling a linear story, just quicker," she says.

4 Play with space

360° video is now a key focus for Facebook Creative Shop, says Gray – but in order to create rewarding experiences, brands need to use this extra space to further or enhance a narrative rather than just for the sake of it. "360 isn't pretty, and the novelty of it will wear off very quickly, but that capability combined with the craft of storytelling has amazing potential, and that's something we're trying very hard to push," she explains.

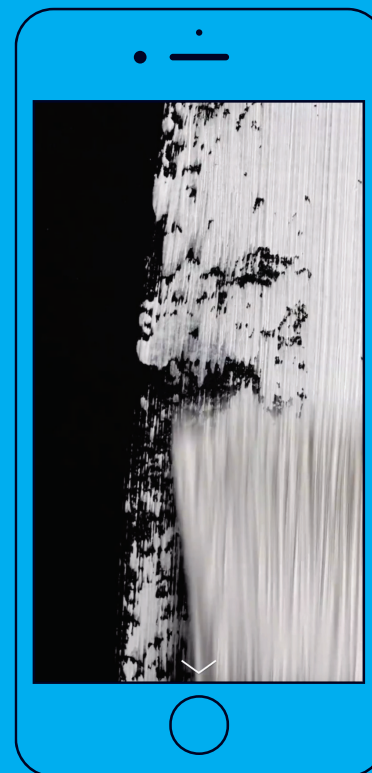
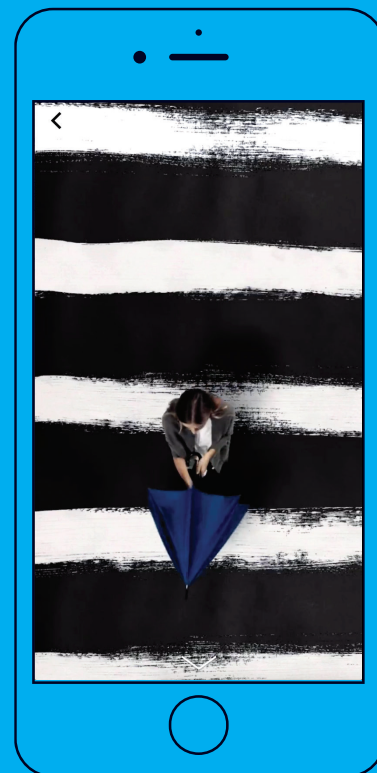
Content should be mobile first and videos should reward movement, "otherwise people are going to get bored," adds Gray. Creative Shop has also been working on a handful of narrative frameworks using split screens, circular stages and choose your own adventure models – in November, it launched a video for Nescafé, created with Publicis, which featured footage of people from around the world eating breakfast (viewers could move their smartphone in any direction to move through different clips). Creative Shop has also worked on 360° make-up tutorials with cosmetics brand Nars.

This page A campaign for Canadian retailer Kit and Ace created using Canvas. The campaign uses video and photography to promote the brand's clothing and fabrics – it begins with a bold black-and-white video before moving on to pages highlighting different products and design features. Facebook says the ad was watched for 36 seconds on average and led to 500 'offline conversions' (in-store purchases as a result of seeing the ad on the site)



5 Create lightweight designs

Rather than focusing on making social content that will 'go viral' or complex apps which require heavy input from users, Gray recommends thinking about content from a UX point of view – creating experiences which users can access seamlessly, rather than something that will disrupt their time on the site. "The majority of people would like a lighter weight experience," she adds. "When you make an entire campaign about [going viral or getting a certain number of people to download an app, for example] you make the campaign really small. One of the most common mistakes people make is still treating these platforms as social activations, rather than the really powerful business moving platforms they can be," she adds.



6 Personalise content

Facebook users expect that content which shows up on their feed will be relevant to them, explains Gray. The platform's targeting features allow brands to target users based on demographics such as age, gender and location as well as interests and behaviours (eg device usage). "People like advertising if it's relevant to them and relevance can come through being super useful, super entertaining, but it has to be right for the people receiving it. Our tools have been too blunt in the past to be able to do this, but now, it's amazing how precise our targeting can be," she says.

Last year, Creative Shop worked with Sky Sports to create a personalised campaign targeting Premier League fans to promote the channel's Start of Season show. The show featured pundits and footballers discussing the League's most memorable moments, and Facebook and Instagram users were invited to contribute by answering polls. The show was previewed in three parts on Facebook, and watched by 1m users for more than 15 minutes that weekend. Creative Shop also worked with Sky Sports to create cut downs of the show which focused on specific football clubs and targeted videos at supporters of those clubs. "It drove their view rates tremendously, higher than anything they'd seen before – just through that simple step of planning ahead to personalise," says Gray.

Another campaign for Zalando and Topshop used 1,000 versions of a film promoting a partnership between the two brands. Videos featured model and Topshop ambassador Cara Delevingne trying to pronounce the lesser-known locations that Zalando now ships Topshop's clothes to, and videos were served to users in those locations. "It's impossible to say that everyone should be doing 1,000 ads, but three versions are likely better than one. It's also about making sure that the thing we twist around for those different versions is meaningful. At the end of the day, creativity is the thing that wins in all of it and the quality of storytelling is what's important," says Gray.

Copyright of Creative Review is the property of Centaur Communications and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.