



POV: IS YOUR BRAND AFFECTED BY
FACEBOOK CUSTOM LINK CHANGES?

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IS YOUR BRAND AFFECTED BY FACEBOOK CUSTOM LINK CHANGES?

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In an effort to combat the misinformation and “fake news” prevalent on Facebook, the platform has updated the way users share links. Brands are now limited in their ability to create custom link previews for their posts and custom share buttons for their websites.



Due to the nature of pharma marketing, many brands rely on the ability to change link previews or host custom share buttons on their websites to ensure messaging is FDA-compliant. Though the process has changed, there are a few steps marketers can take to continue to have some control over messaging in Facebook posts and sharing buttons.

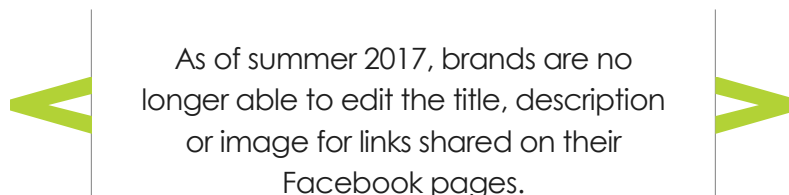
This POV will address why Facebook axed custom link previews, how the change impacts the posting process for pharma marketers, and what brands can do to continue to compliantly engage with users on the top social platform.

BACKGROUND

Facebook teased this update nearly three months ago at its annual F8 conference. Spammers, scammers and authors of “clickbait” were put on notice: Facebook is committed to fighting malicious and misleading content. It will be introducing features over time to increase transparency for users.

One of the first clear demonstrations of this commitment was a July update to [Facebook's API](#) that limits the ability for marketers to customize link previews in their page posts.

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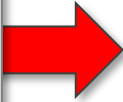
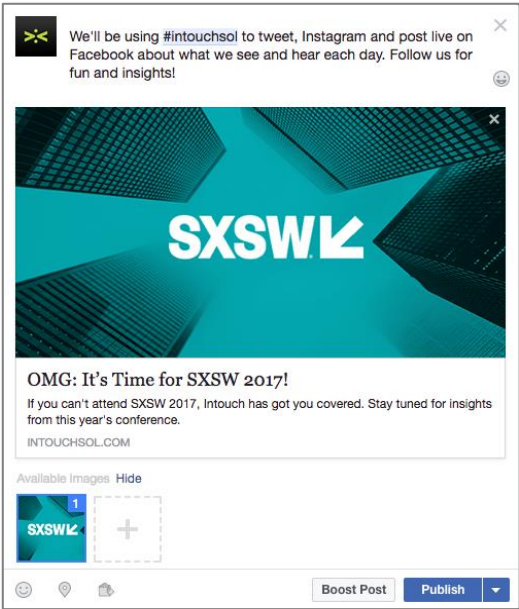
Instead, Open Graph tags will be used to populate link previews. Without Open Graph tags, page owners have little control over what will be used in link previews, and organic metadata may or may not be used instead.

Ads like domain ads or page-like ads are not impacted by this update.

INSIGHTS

Here's how these updates impact brands on Facebook.

- **Owned organic content.** Any brands that relied on editing link previews to remove treatment name or indication from a link preview to remain FDA-compliant will be unable to post links to those destinations.



The image on the left shows the original title and description; the image on the right shows an edited version. This type of editing is no longer possible.

- **Custom share buttons.** Removing customization for links also applies to unique native share buttons. The [Feed Dialog](#), which for years has allowed website developers to create custom share buttons with a designated image, title, description and URL, will no longer support these parameters. The [Share Dialog](#) will be used in most cases moving forward, and will rely on [Open Graph](#) tags for share previews.



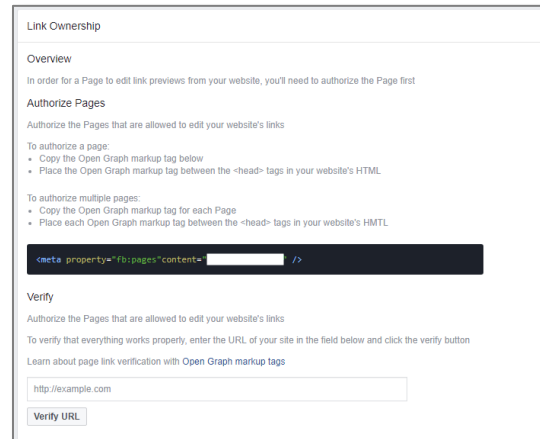
- **Pre-approved content.** Content already scheduled should post as intended and will use the custom link previews in page posts.

NEXT STEPS

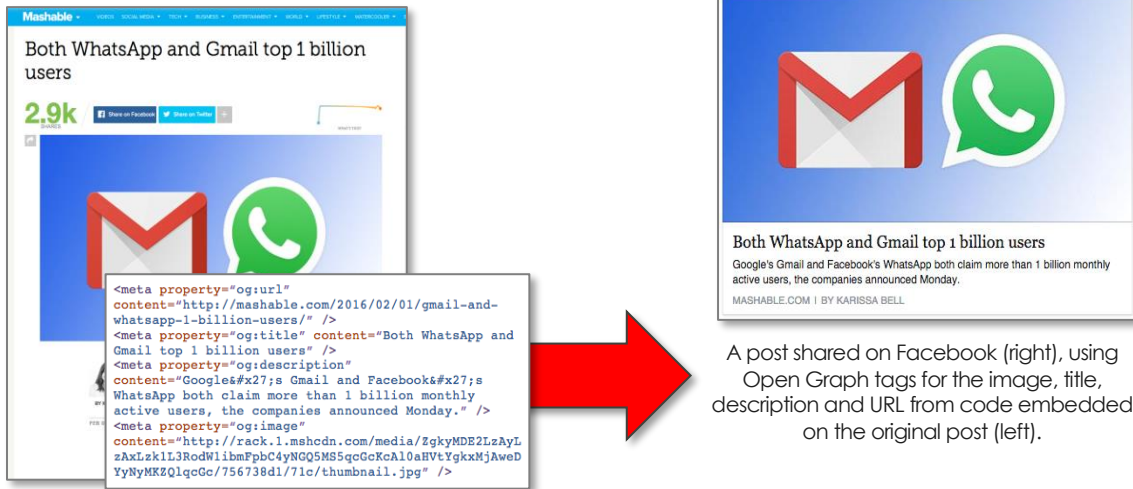
Here's what brands on Facebook can do to account for these changes.

1. **Use the Link Ownership tool if available.**

Some pages may eventually have access to the new Link Ownership tool that allows brands to continue to modify link previews on websites they own. Right now, this is only available for news and media publishers like NBC or BuzzFeed, but Facebook's use of "at first" and "at this time" in their announcement leaves the door open for wider usage in the future.



- ### 2. **Implement Open Graph tags on websites.** Open Graph tags, Facebook's metadata schema, are going to be the only way brands have full control over shared content in the future. We've already talked about why they are especially helpful for pharma brands, but now marketers don't have any other options to control link previews and shares. See our [in-depth POV](#) for more information about the tags, and learn how to begin implementing them.
- ### 3. **Use the Share Dialog for Facebook sharing buttons** instead of the Feed Dialog. The Share Dialog is easy to implement since there is only one parameter (the page URL). If you have custom Facebook share buttons on your website, ensure they are still working as intended. Though the buttons may appear to pass through unique fields for the link previews, when the content is shared to the platform, Open Graph tags are prioritized over custom content.



4. **Account for the update in future content submissions.** This rollout is effective immediately, but solutions to allow link-preview editing may take time to roll out to pages. When developing future content, either use the Open Graph tags on a page to mock up link posts or convert the link posts into photo posts that contain a link in the copy. These steps will ensure that published page content will match content submissions.

Intouch has been working with Facebook reps and the Facebook product team to develop workarounds and solutions for this update. If you have any questions about the update or how this may impact your Facebook strategy, please reach out to your Intouch representative.

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