

## Background

Facebook announced some major (and sweeping) changes with regards to sharing and privacy on the social network last week that are beginning to be seen on the site. Users now have much more control over who they share with and what is shared with different groups. There are no major changes to the way brands interact with the platform (or users), although Facebook also announced plans to phase out 'Places' (its geo-location element) and instead location will now be more closely integrated into the whole system which does have knock on effects for brands.

## Details

In the main, the changes affect users alone; there is now:

- a cleaned up user interface when posting,
- post-by-post control over what people can tag (including when content is seen),
- a moderation queue where tagged photos of individuals are held for approval rather than automatically appearing in your feed,
- a 'view profile as' option (that shows you what other users can see when they look at your profile) and
- no requirement to be a friend (or fan) of someone to tag them (or a brand) in a photo.

Another big change announced regards location tagging. Whilst many have seen the phasing out of 'Places' as a concession in this market, Facebook are actually doubling down as users can now choose to assign/tag a location directly in all posts (even if you are nowhere near that location/place). In other words, there are a lot more chances for people to now assign a location (and brand page links) to content.

## Implications

When users feel safe and know that their information is secure, history tells us that usage and engagement rates rise. Mindshare doesn't expect this to be any different for Facebook with these changes over time. Whilst immediately unlikely to drastically change the moderation costs of running a brand page – the potential for anything that increases the amount of sharing across a network as large as Facebook may have knock on effects when it comes to moderation and community management costs.

The location move has multiple implications: 1) Foursquare just lost a major competitor (even though Facebook Places worked with the service) in the geo-location arena making it a little more unique (some have said powerful), 2) brands without physical presences may need to create more offline events in order to leverage this powerful referral source and 3) the increased granularity when it comes to location could also be seen as a potential move towards more granular sharing in the future for brands.

## Summary

These were welcome, and pretty uncontroversial, changes for users. Most of the new features have been requested for a while. Time will tell if (or how) the new functionality will alter current user behaviour. Success for any platform at the moment is increasingly resting on the ability for users being able and happy to share what they want with who they want.