

Messenger Marketing and Bot Building Explained

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A lot of people have thrown out the idea that a Facebook Messenger bot such as Manychat is a possible replacement for their email list.

We first need to explain what all these things mean...

Definitions – What’s a ‘Bot’?

There is a difference between Messenger marketing and Messenger bots. Messenger marketing is marketing to your prospects, to your customers, on Facebook Messenger, Whatsapp, Skype, Slack, any sort of instant messaging platform. Most of us use at least one of these platforms. I've actually resisted putting Facebook Messenger on my phone for a really long time, but I'm definitely in the minority.

If you just add a bunch of your customers to a Whatsapp group, then you're doing Messenger marketing. No bots necessary, no fancy technology, no complex systems.

It doesn't have to be very complicated. It could be as simple as creating a Whatsapp group of your absolutely, hottest, best customers who come to you with ads. If you go to live events, then adding people to come to your live events on Whatsapp group so they can talk to each other is probably a really good idea. That's Messenger marketing.

Messenger bots then are automated Messenger conversations. For example, if you go to the Maze Marketing Podcast Facebook page and click the ‘message page’ button, you will engage with our bot, because neither Johnson or myself are on that page, manning that chat. What it will do is it will spit back to you some common options.

It will ask whether you:

- Want to subscribe
- Want our free bonus resources
- Have a topic that you'd like us to cover

So it starts to cover some common scenarios. An analogy would be if you phoned up a reasonably large company and were put through to the switchboard where you have to press ‘1’ for customer service. It's a little bit like that, only more advanced instance because it's on Facebook Messenger. It happens instantly. It's more interactive.

Will Messenger Marketing replace Email?

So for anyone who is asking should I ditch my email marketing platform and build a Messenger bot instead, it's like, well, *no*. Because they're obviously **very different things**.

Think about how you use Messenger. For example, I (Rob) have a friend who has some issues. She likes to send very long messages on Whatsapp. My wife actually calls them “essays”.

When these “essays” come in, I kind of think “*oh no*”. I have to make a mental calculation to decide whether I can be bothered; whether I have the emotional and mental determination to read this right now. The answer may or may not be yes. If you're just taking your email strategy and you're dumping your email strategy into Facebook Messenger, whether that's a bot or manually, it's not the same thing. If you think about most of the messages that you send to your friends on Facebook Messenger or on Whatsapp or anything like that, they're normally short, they might have images, they might use emojis. It's interactive and it's quick.

Where Should You Use a Bot?

I (Rob) have done a bit of testing with my Facebook ads. There's a lot of talk about using Facebook Messenger as the first point of contact for new prospects. So instead of sending people to a landing page for example, new prospects might comment on a post or click on a button, and receive the lead magnet or whatever they asked for through Facebook Messenger.

In theory it's lower friction for the prospect because they don't have to type in an email address or complete a form, but I'm not seeing great results with it at the moment.

I suspect that if someone goes through the effort of messaging you, they probably need to be a warmer prospect, not somebody who has just discovered you for the first time. Facebook Messenger is probably an ideal tool for closing sales.

If you've got people who've got questions and want to interact, there's all sorts of fantastic stuff that you can do with a Messenger bot. For example, if your business provides quotations and prices, you could actually build the logic into the bot that would be able to spit out a quote to someone.

Let's say you sell windows and doors. I'm a potential customer, and I know what size windows that I have. I know what style I want (uPVC say). I want it to have a certain finish. The bot can gather all that information. It can store it in custom fields and do calculations based on those custom fields. It can spit out an immediate price.

All of this is quite close to someone buying.

So Facebook Messenger feels to me like more of a tool for engaging warmer people. That's my gut instinct.

How To Engage People

The most engaging way to build a bot on Messenger, or to do any Messenger marketing is to send short messages and ask questions.

You can ask questions and give people options and send them down different paths of interaction. You can send people down a particular thread, and depending on how they respond you send them down one way or the other. You can store their answers in custom fields, and you can tag them, do all these sorts of segmentation.

(Jonathan): I agree that it's a tool for a warm sales situation. I can't really imagine it working with absolutely cold prospects. I'm sure there are cases where it works, but in most cases, going from not knowing each other at all to an interactive conversation can be quite a leap.

I think that a bot would be a better fit for somebody who came in cold from Google search than from Facebook. Because people on social media are mostly killing time, checking the news, checking on their

friends, and are not necessarily in the mood to buy. Whereas, with Google search, even though a visitor will likely be cold in the sense that they don't know you, they're in a hotter buying frame of mind.

They've got a problem, or else they wouldn't have done a Google search. They've got unanswered questions in the head they NEED an answer to. And given that they need an answer fast, a chat bot could be an ideal mechanism for feeding them a customized answer that is ideal for them.

Segmentation Matters...

In marketing, there is this idea of segmentation. When a person opens a Messenger conversation with your bot, you ask some questions to find out what it is that they're needing or what problem they're trying to solve. And then based on that, you can redirect them to the right answer that is customized for them. I think this is very powerful inside of a bot.

It also can essentially serve the same function as a form. For people who are currently sending paid Facebook clicks to a lead capture page and asking for contact information, a bot can do that and can store that info for you. It can remove barrier to entry, because a bot can be kind of a fun, almost playful interaction compared to just filling out a good old boring black and white form.

You may then ask them one or two questions that segments them. Perhaps and you realize that a person isn't ready to buy and just needs to be nurtured. In that case, this is where the argument comes from that a list of Facebook Messenger subscribers may serve as an alternate channel to email.

Why Messenger Bots Won't Replace Email...

I (Jonathan) don't agree with the idea that Messenger bots will replace email at all. I don't think that's a good idea, and we can get into that another time. Redundancy and security and all that. But I do think that it's a good ***alternative messaging platform***, just as a mechanism to convey your messages.

I think you can bore people to death trying to nurture over a bot, but I have seen some cases in communities where people are really enthusiastic about it. I've seen a bot from a guitar teacher, for example, where he specializes in people that are either just getting started or have been trying to play their instrument for a long time. They just want a ton of info: for example 'how do I do this on the guitar'; 'how do I do that'.

So he can crank out a never ending stream of videos, tips, explanations, breakdowns, and deliver them by Facebook Messenger. Although having said that, you wouldn't want to bombard people on Messenger even more so than email, I think.

That's really important, by the way. I (Rob) send a daily email, and that would not work on Messenger. Subscribing to companies on Facebook Messenger is all very new. We're not used to hearing from companies on Messenger yet. You would have to set people's expectations very carefully.

If you're messaging something to someone every day, it's probably too overwhelming.

And you've got to think as well that email is better suited to longer form detailed information and longer stories. So you've got to play to the strength of the medium. Whereas in a Messenger bot, you would be asking quick questions, sending quick reminders, and providing links.

Like with the guitar teacher, he might be asking whether you currently play? What guitar do you have? What's your level of expertise? Then he can segment rather than just send a mass broadcast message every

time he has a new tutorial. He's then only sending it out to the people who have an appropriate level of expertise for the tutorial, based on previous interaction history. And that's quite powerful.

I (Rob) am also deeply suspicious though of relying heavily on Messenger. Ultimately Facebook controls the platform. Facebook and your bot provider in fact. So you've actually got two layers between you and the customer.

As I've mentioned on previous podcast episodes, I am nervous about Facebook messing with my fortunes. If anybody doesn't know what I'm talking about, you should find the episode where [Facebook shut down my ad accounts](#) for no reason.

There are technical things too, like most people are probably aware that Facebook had massive outages recently. Where it made doing business, launching ads and even just commenting on friends' posts rather difficult.

Should You Setup a Bot?

Besides these considerations, I do think it's a great thing to setup, and Messenger Marketing is going to become a big thing. There's really no getting around that, just from the fact that most of have at least one messaging platform installed on our phones.

I think all of the people who are comparing the open rates of email to your open rates of Messenger basically need to take a step back, because they are completely different media.

If you have the Messenger app installed on your phone and it 'dings' every time you get a message, then of course you're going to open that message. It doesn't mean you're going to read it. It doesn't mean you're going to be engaged with it. It's not like you've opened an email and read an email. That's completely a different level of engagement and value.

So compare apples to apples and stop trying to compare open rates of one media to a completely different media. It's not the same use case.

I (Rob) work from the philosophy that I will communicate with people however they want to hear from me. If people just want to follow me on Messenger and get a notification when we publish a new podcast, then fine, they can do that. My best customers however normally want to hear from me in multiple channels...

They normally want to get Facebook updates. They normally want to get emails from me. My absolute best customers also want to get my print newsletter and come to my live events. So it starts to stack up. But I'm basically happy to communicate with people however they want to hear from me, and I don't think we should dismiss anything. But one medium does not replace another.

Keep Your Messages Salient...

And probably more so than in almost any other situation, in Messenger marketing, it's just super important to keep whatever messages you're sending salient.

Let's say you had a membership website, for example, with some events, some group calls, some coaching calls, and some webinars. Most of your members would be interested in getting a Messenger notification saying, "hey, we're about to start in 30 minutes".

I (Jonathan) know there's been a lot of times I've wanted that; where I missed a webinar the night before because I got busy. But if I'd have had a notification that this thing was starting, I would have been there. So it's important to consider that even if you do try to use it as a replacement for email, it's not just a one-to-one replacement. Think about the person receiving that message, and what is actually going to help them.

Facebook Messenger has huge applications for anyone running time-based events, such as webinars, Facebook Lives, live events, even people who offer like early bird deals. If there's a portion of people in your database who want to hear about your best offers, and they will jump at it first, then let them. They will *want* to hear from you on Facebook Messenger. In that scenario, having the higher open rates compared to email makes a big difference.

Or if you're holding a webinar, having those higher open rates makes a big difference also. Because you're not really trying to communicate that much. You're just trying to remind people to show up to the webinar.

One more point before we wrap it up. I think it's pretty easy to mentally lump together Messenger marketing with Facebook ads. However, even though they are run by the same company, it is a substantially different medium.

If you think about it in the context of the maze, one of the main principles of maze is to be able to interact with people in many different ways and in different contexts. With that in mind, the Messenger platform has become one of the few alternate ways to have a digital communications channel that is different from your email marketing. So that's a pretty strong plus point in the context of setting up a maze follow-up system.

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