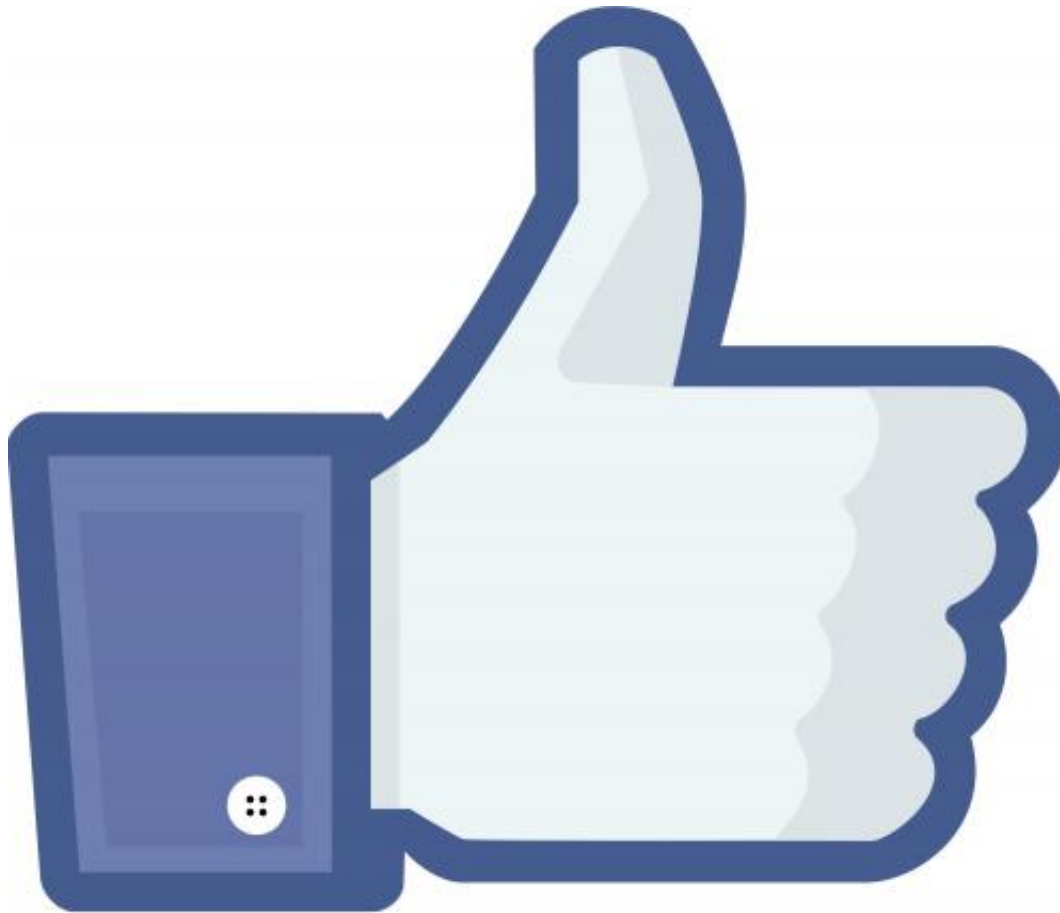


Facebook adding 'Photo Magic' to Messenger application

December 17 2015, by Michael Liedtke



Facebook is trying to make it easier to send photos as the holiday season's picture-taking frenzy escalates with the arrival of Christmas and

New Year's Eve.

The world's largest [social networking service](#) is offering a feature call "Photo Magic" that will automatically address a message so it can be sent quickly to Facebook friends identified in a picture. The option relies on the same image-recognition technology that attaches people's names to Facebook posts.

With this twist, Facebook is deploying the technology in its Messenger application to make it more convenient to distribute pictures to a few friends and family members.

Facebook Inc. will highlight Photo Magic in a Messenger update that will start rolling out Thursday to [users](#) of Apple's iPhones and smartphones running on Google's Android software. It will still be up to each individual to decide whether they want to activate Photo Magic. After the feature is turned on, it can still be switched off at any time.

The update is being distributed to a broad audience after a month of testing among smartphone users in Australia. Facebook is planning to make Photo Magic available to Messenger users everywhere in the world except in Canada and the European Union.

Messenger currently has more than 700 million users, about half the size of the audience on Facebook's social network.

Facebook is counting on Photo Magic to foster more allegiance to its Messenger app as it competes against other competing services such as Snapchat that have become particularly popular among teenagers and young adults.

If Photo Magic is turned on, it is supposed to promptly figure out if any of the people in a picture belong to the smartphone owner's circle of

Facebook friends. If some are found, Photo Magic creates a messaging thread that allows a user to send the picture to all the identified parties with two clicks.

About 9.5 billion pictures are already sent through Messenger each month, according to Facebook. The Menlo Park, California, company believes the volume will be even higher if Photo Magic's automation is successful in making it less of a hassle to pick out the images and figure out which people might be interested in seeing them.

As part of the Messenger upgrade, Facebook is also including an option that will allow users to change the colors of their exchanges with different friends, and switch the formal name of a recipient to a nickname, such as "mom" or "dad." Until now, Messenger's address book mirrored the names listed on people's Facebook profiles.

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