



# FACEBOOK ABUSES YOU AND YOUR KIDS WITH PSYCHOLOGICAL WARFARE TRICKS

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# An internal email shows how Facebook used a 'psychological trick' to get teens to try a new product

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Shona Ghosh

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Facebook's tbh used a specific ploy to attract teens. Shutterstock

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**FB** Facebook-A

**186.53** 2.72 (+1.50 %)

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- An internal Facebook memo shows how the company used a "psychological trick" that could attract teen users to a new product.
  - The memo, obtained by BuzzFeed, was sent by executives at tbh, the once-popular teen polling app that was acquired and recently shut down by Facebook.
  - The tbh staffers shared how they attracted so many teens to their app — by creating private accounts on Instagram and then following attendees of a particular school.
  - They wrote that this was a "novel method" of attracting new users, if difficult to scale.
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An internal memo [obtained by BuzzFeed](#) shows how a group of Facebook staffers became "obsessed" with finding ways to attract high schoolers to a new product — and landed on a "psychological trick" that worked.

The note was put together by executives at tbh, the once-popular viral polling app that was bought and [recently shut down by Facebook](#) . It isn't clear when the memo was sent.

Tbh was popular with young people and, according to BuzzFeed, its leadership shared lessons in how it managed to target teen users. Facebook, incidentally, [happens to be losing teen users from its main app](#) to Instagram and Snapchat.

Even though Facebook shuttered tbh for "low usage," it did provide learnings for Facebook's own polling tools, according to BuzzFeed. And, it appears, it provided a playbook for targeting younger users.

# Tbh created private Instagram accounts, then followed teen users to trigger their curiosity

One reason tbh was so successful in attracting young users to its app, its founders wrote in the memo, was because it used growth hacking-style methods.

Rather than relying on a The tbh app. TBH. blowout press campaign, tbh used Instagram to create a sense of mystery. This, they said, was "a novel method."

"Our team obsessed with finding ways to get individual high schools to adopt a product simultaneously," they wrote in the memo. "We designed a novel method that was reproducible, albeit non-scalable."

They explained how tbh would create dedicated, private Instagram accounts that targeted users of a particular school.

Taking advantage of the fact that many high schoolers list their school on their Instagram profiles, tbh found a school's location page, then followed any accounts that included that school's name. The tbh account would be blank, except for a call-to-action inviting people to stay tuned for its future app.

According to BuzzFeed, young users would be curious and follow the account back.

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Once tbh had collated enough follow requests for its private account, it would wait till 4 p.m., when schools typically finish, known as "The Golden Launch Hour" internally at tbh.

It would then add the App Store URL for its main app to its private Instagram profile and set the account public, which notified teen users that their follow request had been accepted. They would often follow the link and download the app and like magic, tbh essentially went viral among teens.

The note's authors wrote that these kinds of hacky tactics "are certainly too 'scrappy' for a big company," but added that Facebook could learn from their methods. That might include sending out push notifications instead of download links, "to ensure critical mass" for a new launch.

Facebook declined to comment.

You can read the full memo at [BuzzFeed](#).