



Social Media: What's New, Old and Still in Existence

by Wade Humphreys

Digital marketing is ever evolving. With the entry of new platforms and technologies, as well as advancements in old ones, marketers can find themselves overwhelmed and struggling to keep up. Constant change doesn't make it any easier as marketers vie for an audience's attention across multiple mediums.

Facebook dominates, currently boasting 1.59 billion users worldwide, including 162.9 million U.S. users. That's more users than Twitter, Instagram and WhatsApp combined. Currently, for every five pages of online media consumed, more than one page belongs to Facebook. That's over 20 percent of your consumer's attention spent on this one social media site.

Social media platforms have quickly become a pay-to-play marketplace. This is especially true with Facebook. Recent data indicates that most posts on Facebook reach on average only 2-6 percent of page followers (those who like your page) if no money is spent to boost them. But Facebook does allow for boosted content and the ability to expand the reach of posts across the platform with minimal dollars allocated to each post. This is a very necessary tactic. Without it you are not even touching a fraction of your followers.

Every marketing strategy should include budget allocation for social media marketing. This budget is over and above your expenditure for social media management and content generation. The current trend with social media centers on video content. Video historically generates the most engagement with users across all mediums like social media, banner advertising and mobile platforms.

YouTube is the second largest search network (behind Google, who owns it) and processes three billion searches per month. That's more searches than Bing, Yahoo, Ask and AOL combined. Having engaging and related video content will go a long way in connecting you with your target audience and helping provide that deeper engagement marketers covet.

Videos have a direct connection to sales: According to Animoto, 73 percent of U.S. adults are more likely to buy a product or service after watching a video that explains it.

The biggest shift occurring right now is live video. This growing trend will continue into the future as live video provides that instant, often times unscripted content most consumers crave. Live video has gained traction since the launch of Merkat and Periscope, both of which integrated with Twitter. Recently Facebook rolled out its own version of live video (LiveStream), which is available now and will further fuel this fire.

Social media thrives on real-time engagement, but each year the window for response becomes smaller and smaller. According to Search Engine Watch, 70 percent of Twitter users expect a response from brands they reach out to, and 53 percent want a response in less than an hour. That number jumps to 72 percent when they're issuing a complaint.

In 2014, consumers complained about brands 879 million times on social media. What's worse – in 2015, brands still weren't responding, because seven out of eight messages to them went unanswered within 72 hours.

Based on this data, companies should leverage online reviews and ratings to their advantage. Embrace Facebook, Yelp, TripAdvisor and all the other platforms as a soapbox to showcase your customer service and happy customers. There is nothing worse than a negative review on social media, especially one that is ignored. It's critical to use these online tools and communication hubs to separate yourself from the competition.

Social shopping is also taking off. Over the past year, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and Pinterest all released or upgraded functionality that allows for online purchasing. This allows for users to purchase clothes, crafts, tech products and more without ever leaving the social media platform. This advancement is long overdue. Consumers were already finding and sharing products they love on social media, and four out of five people say that posts from friends directly influence their buying decisions.

Are you promoting your hotel room offers, concert tickets and other offers online in a click-to-buy format? If not, the time to start is now.

Text messaging may be an old technology and strategy, but it is still a hero. It's surprising how many casinos don't leverage their player club database in this capacity. Text messaging provides an instant way to connect to your loyal followers, and texts get read at staggering levels.

The market leader, Facebook, was the first social network to surpass one billion registered accounts, and currently sits at 1.59 billion monthly active users. Eighth-ranked photo-sharing app Instagram has over 400 million monthly active accounts. The blogging service, Tumblr, has more than 555 million active blog users. The sheer size of some platforms can help marketers choose which platform to focus on, especially if they don't have the resources to manage them all.

Just because a new solution or platform roles out, doesn't mean it's the right fit for your business. Being slow to embrace newer technologies is often wise. This gives you time to better understand how to use it effectively, and where best to include it within your overall marketing strategy. It also gives you time to identify which member of your marketing team is best suited to manage it. Know your verticals, build upon your strategy and move slowly. Quality of content outweighs quantity. Regardless of the medium, make sure what you're saying or offering is relevant to your audience. ♣

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