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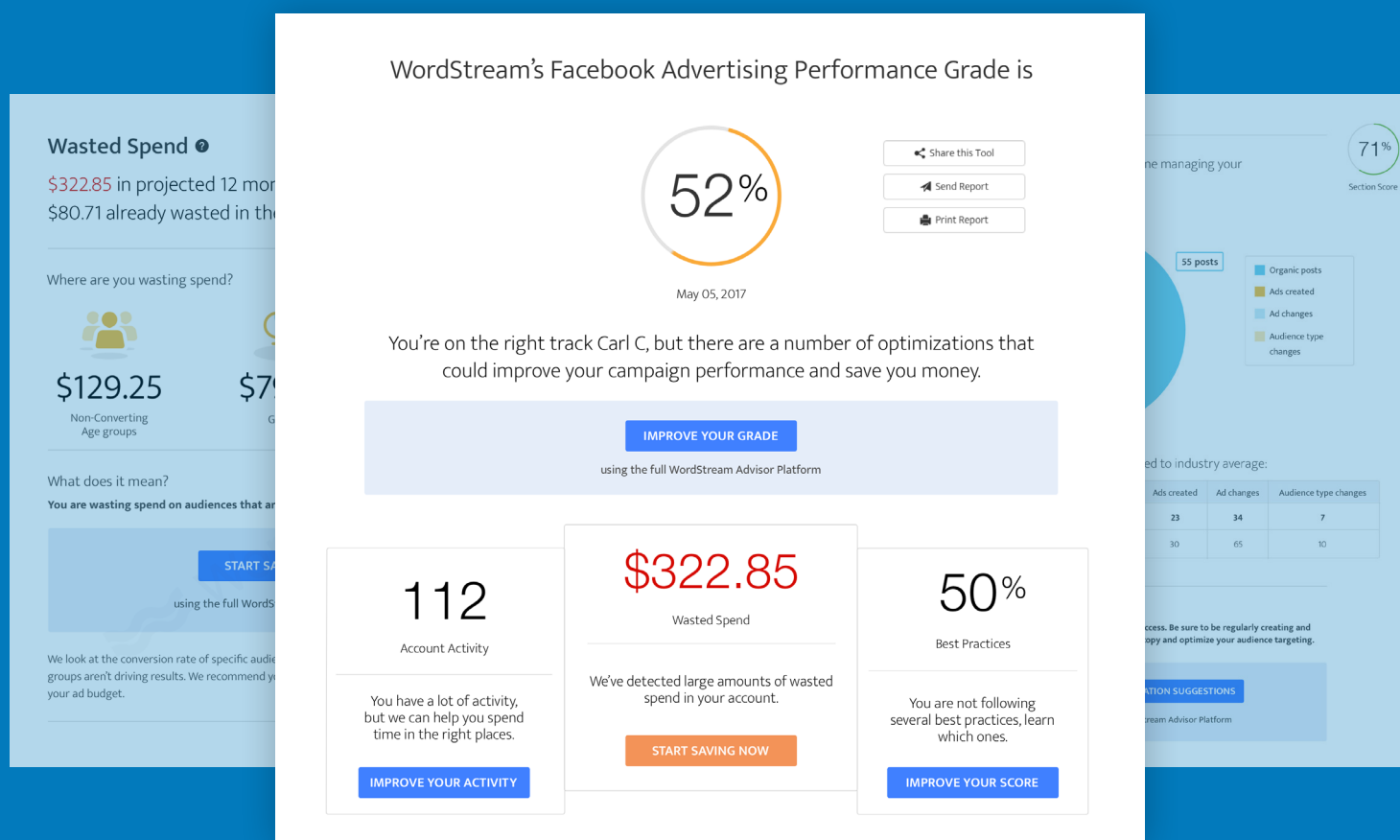
By Danny Goodwin

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10 Important 2020 SOCIAL MEDIA TRENDS You Need to Know

BY DANNY GOODWIN

Want to succeed on social media in 2020?

Then you need to know what trends will matter most this year.

While the technology we have access to has never been greater, the competition has also never been higher.

Plus, there is no shortage of platforms where you could be investing your time.

But in the end, it all comes back to your audience.

Are you getting in front of them where they're spending their time?

Are you giving them what they want or need, at the right time?

What matters to them?

These are the questions we all need answers to - and these answers seemingly change every year.

So I asked some really smart people for their thoughts on social media marketing in 2020.

Here are 10 social media trends that will matter most to marketers, brands, and businesses in 2020, according to 34 experts.



1 CONNECTION + COMMUNITY + EXPERIENCE

In 2020, the big trend will actually be a return to the basics.

Lisa Buyer, CEO, and Social PR Consultant, The Buyer Group, said that it is no longer enough to provide a service your customer needs. Self-serving social messages won't cut it in 2020, either.

"The new mindset is this: The relationship we build with our customers is more important than the products and services we sell them," Buyer said.

Part of the "back-to-basics" approach to social media means you should step back and think about two things, according to **Michael Williams**, Senior Social Media Manager, Jellyfish:

- Who is your audience?
- What are their interests and challenges?

"When it comes to creating content, brands need to counteract the social media noise, think 'less is more,' and create messaging that actually resonates with their key audience(s)," Williams said.

That all starts with the connection.

"People are looking for connections on a personal level with businesses and brands that feel like part of their community," said **Mary Davies**, President, Beanstalk Internet Marketing. "Businesses will need to put more effort than ever into being more of a helpful, understanding 'friend' in a community than simply a service/product provider."

Elena Salazar, Digital Marketing Manager, VMware, said “smart brands should aim to make their social media social. It may seem obvious, but there are still a lot of brands that don’t respond to comments on their posts,” she said.

“It is important to listen to your audience and provide value to them as opposed to solely using your social media channels to promote your products/services,” Salazar said. “With more and more competition on social media, truly connecting with people will help humanize your brand and gain the trust of your audience (which will help your sales!).”

“Part of that means spending more time building engaging content and being more engaged,” said **Amanda Webb**, Digital Marketing Strategy Specialist, Spiderworking.

“This is one area where SMBs can still win,” according to Webb. “Social networks will also recognize engaging pages and give them a lift in reach. This engagement will help when you create ads, too.”

Erin Jones, Founder, RepBright, expects to see an increase in the value of authentic engagement in 2020. After all, social media was never meant to be a platform for push marketing, and users have shown that they value engagement and interactions with brands.

“People want to feel like they know who they’re spending money with, as a result, brands will need to step up and provide an environment for their customers to do so quickly and easily,” Jones said. “Making them feel like they’re part of a group that they want to be in will ensure brand loyalty and great social media engagement.”

That means community will also be key.

That’s why brands should create their own groups on Facebook (and specialized LinkedIn groups), rather than just having a company page to get likes or follows, said **Krystian Szastok**, SEM Consultant, KrystianSzastok.co.uk, tells.

You have the power to build a strong community around your brand and create movements that have an impact beyond increasing sales, said **Lenka Koppova**, Freelance Social Media Strategist & Founder, Cambridge Social Media.

“The reason why I call it community, is the ability of brands online not only to educate and entertain their audiences but also to engage and facilitate meaningful interactions among their followers, users, and fans,” Koppova said.

Davies believes that, in 2020, we will see the group and like-minded community spaces dominating more and more, which means a much heavier workload for marketers and brands.

“Groups and communities require a lot of time to manage, as they really are all about the personal communication, not just posting and waiting for the comments to roll in or paying for an ad and waiting for a click,” Davies said. “Leaning on influencers and experts will continue to be a major factor in social media, especially in these community-minded groups.”

And don’t forget to focus on creating experience, said **Brie Anderson**, Program Director of Digital Marketing, WSU Tech.

“Brands should focus on their groups, direct messages, and comments as the conversation is key to community and experience,” Anderson said. “Giveaways and automated shoutouts don’t cut it anymore, brands are going to have to have a vested interest in their customer base and engage with them online.”

Companies that adhere to the principle of “people not just pixels” will reap rewards in 2020, said **Mel Carson**, Founder, CEO & Principal Strategist, Delightful Communications.





2 AUTHENTIC INFLUENCERS

Influencer marketing isn't going anywhere; in fact, it's maturing, said **Erin Fredregill**, Founder & CEO, Robe + Signet.

“The key is in creating a crystal clear influencer strategy that thoughtfully integrates with your overall marketing strategy, establishing a thorough influencer vetting process and providing a brief that clearly outlines your brand’s goals and content guidelines while still allowing micro-influencers to direct the narrative in a way that feels authentic to their audience,” Fredregill said.

Kendall Bird, Social Media Manager, DKY, believes influencers who are authentic will be more powerful than “power influencers” (e.g., Kim Kardashian), as these authentic influencers will share content they care about and actually use on a regular basis.

“Social media users know what a forced relationship with a brand looks like, and they’re tired of seeing these interactions,” Bird said. “I encourage brands and companies to look for influencers who will authentically use their product or service and share it with their audiences.”

For smaller organizations or those in the B2B industry that may be struggling to see how influencer marketing can be implemented to reach their goals, there are a few places to start, said **Anastasia Warren**, Senior Social Media Manager, KoMarketing Associates.



“Look into industry event speakers or ambassadors to see who your target audience is paying attention to on social media and on the floor at industry events,” Warren said. “Additionally, look internally at how employees can step into thought leadership roles and become the voice of an organization through engagement and amplification of messaging.”

In 2020, our concept of influencer tiers – major influencers with millions of followers all the way to micro-influencers in the 1,000s – will expand even further because it’s becoming easier for everyone to be an influencer, as **Kevan Lee**, VP of Marketing, Buffer, points out.

He said businesses can take advantage of this by doubling down on employee advocacy (more on this in Trend #5) and user-generated content (see Trend #10).



3 DIVERSIFY WITH TIKTOK, REDDIT & MORE

Emma Franks, Sr. Paid Social Account Manager, Hanapin Marketing, expects diversification to be a primary trend in social media, especially on the advertising side. Diversification is also beneficial for risk mitigation by reducing dependency on Facebook and/or LinkedIn.

“Facebook is no longer the one-stop-shop it used to be. Younger demographics are favoring the sister platform of Instagram, as well as TikTok and Snapchat,” Franks said. “Every ‘early-mover’ advertiser who embraces smaller networks now (e.g., Twitter, Quora, Reddit, Snapchat) will enjoy an environment of relatively low cost due to lower levels of competition.”

Speaking of TikTok – **Brandon Doyle**, CEO & Founder, Wallaroo Media, said getting onto that platform now is key.

“Organic reach on TikTok is like nothing we’ve ever seen. It’s better than even the early days of Facebook,” Doyle said. “Create content that will resonate with your target audience, but be willing to test and iterate over time to see what works best. We’ve seen incredible results for our clients. The ad platform is early-stage but the ROI there is great, too.”

Debbie Miller, President, Social Hospitality, expects more marketers to start exploring ways to take advantage of TikTok’s advertising platform to reach engaged Gen Z consumers.

“It could also be worthwhile to locate the platform’s top users to endorse your brand if they’re a fit,” Miller said. “This younger demographic is highly engaged and trusting of the opinions of their peers.”

Another platform companies need to put on the radar in 2020: Reddit, according to **Brent Csutoras**, Adviser, Search Engine Journal.

Many companies have found marketing on Reddit difficult and intimidating. But consumers’ use of Reddit is growing rapidly and view brands on Reddit as more authoritative (likely due to the difficulty and commitment required to be successful on Reddit), he said.

“It has never been a better time for brands to establish themselves on a platform that is largely responsible for creating much of the internet culture we have come to enjoy today,” Csutoras said. “With over 430 million monthly active users and about 32% of all Americans on Reddit each month, brands need to take a serious look at making Reddit a part of their 2020 plans.”



4 REIMAGINE SOCIAL ANALYTICS

The era of reporting on vanity metrics seems to be nearing its end, especially on Facebook-owned platforms.

Anna Bredava, Marketing Manager, Awario, noted that this should make social analytics tools even more useful to marketers, as we analyze and report on our social media successes and failures.

Sam Ruchlewicz, VP of Digital Strategy & Data Analytics, Warschawski, agreed. He said as the amount of money being spent on social media (ads, influencer programs, organic programs, etc.) increases, so will the scrutiny of those investments by both marketing leaders and the C-suite.

“Smart marketers will continue investing in measurement and analytics programs that go beyond the standard vanity metrics and toward meaningful metrics that more accurately align with larger organizational/business goals,” Ruchlewicz said. “On the analytics side, it has never been more important for marketers to create their own source of truth and do their own math in terms of quantifying outcomes, especially when it comes to measuring incrementality. As machine learning continues to evolve, the brands with the best data will rise to the top – so make sure you have the infrastructure in place to do that.”

So that leaves us with an important question to answer: how will analytics measure reach in a like-less world and correlate activities of potential customer to marketer objectives?

“Deeper, inferential metrics will be needed to describe how social media influence consumer behavior and local commerce,”

Pierre DeBois, Founder and CEO, Zimana Analytics. “Social media platforms must refresh their analytic dashboards to provide more transparency behind the measurements.”

5 USE EMPLOYEE ADVOCACY TO YOUR ADVANTAGE

Your employees are more important to the success of your company than you think, said **Ted Rubin**, CMO, Photofy.

“Brands that are winning this new journey are providing large quantities of fresh and relevant content for shoppers to use when they actually need it,” Rubin said. “Empower your employees and they will power your brand.”

Employee generated content helps build brand trust and reinforce relationships, as Kendall Bird points out.

“I encourage all companies to think about employee advocacy, even if it is starting on a smaller scale with employees sharing blog content to their social media networks,” she said.



6

GET CREATIVE: STOP BEING BORING!

Boring brands are everywhere, with their boring social media content.



In B2B tech, for instance, Mel Carson is always looking for more creative ways to stand out in a sea of blah, blah, blah. For instance, showcasing what it all means with dynamic examples, which may be:

- Short (but effective) videos shot at events where tech partners talk about their solutions, how the idea came about, how it was built, etc.
- Short-form animated GIFs and videos that are designed to inspire the viewer, not just to understand, but to take action.

Who wants to go to a brand page and just see a bunch of 'buy my stuff!' posts or boring posts that don't apply to their life or solve their problems?

Nobody, that's who, said **Chris Sciulli**, Digital Marketing Lead, The International Society of Automation / Owner & Author, SmokehouseSEO.com.

So, in 2020, start being interesting and stop using your social media as a place where you stand on a box and shout ads at people.

"Nobody cares about your ads unless you have shown your worth by providing quality consumable content," Sciulli said. "Nobody cares that you just got a new drinking fountain in the break room. Put yourself in the place of their visitors and think about what they would want to see and interact with."



7 STORIES 2.0

Smart brands/businesses would do well to ensure they have a solid Stories strategy for 2020 with daily images, micro-videos, and content that audiences value, said **Mari Smith**, Social Media Thought Leader & CEO, Mari Smith International, Inc.

“Follow those accounts leading the way,” Smith said. “Get creative. Be sure to always tie to the bottom line and add your CTAs.”

Sarah Clarke, Media Strategist & Founder, Dufferin Media, believes the consumption of ephemeral content (social media content that is only available for a limited amount of time and then disappears) will continue increasing in 2020.

“Stories are a perfect way to get the attention, for a few valuable seconds, of an audience that loves authentic creative content,” Clarke said. “Stories are a great way to add a touch of humanity to your social media using emojis, videos, and stickers.”

Smart brands and businesses will make this a greater focus in their 2020 marketing strategy if they want to have a higher level of success reaching their audiences, and increasing engagement, Clarke said.



8 USE SOCIAL MEDIA AS A DISCOVERY ENGINE

Are you using social media to drive direct traffic and branded search? If not, you should be in 2020, said **Mark Traphagen**, VP of Content Strategy, Aimclear

“Ahead-of-the-game brands will add paid and organic social posts using arresting creative, emblazoned with a brand name along with “money” terms and phrases prominently displayed,” Traphagen said. “The objective is driving top-of-funnel seekers to brand-specific search – low cost on the social end; incredible potential value on the search traffic end.”

But that’s just one way to use social media as a discovery engine. You can also use social media to point to private messaging and text message clubs to stay in touch, said **Virginia Nussey**, Director of Marketing, Mobile Monkey.

She expects more brands to develop high-value, high-transparency, highly personalized VIP access programs.

“Check out Gary Vaynerchuk for a first look at how this is working,” Nussey said. “He uses the opening of his YouTube videos to share an opt-in text message phone number. The text message club starts with an automated welcome message. After that, Vaynerchuk personally sends motivation and lifestyle messages to the community with a text message blast tool. The strategy is part automation, part personalization, and a 100% scalable brand connection.”



9 YOUTUBE & VIDEO

Video may not be a hot new trend, but it remains an important trend in social media.

As **Joe Youngblood**, Founder, Winner Winner Chicken Dinner, put it: 2020 is the year that video content on social media is no longer a nice-to-have, but a must-have.

“Data has suggested for some time that consumers who view online videos are more likely than their counterparts to make a purchase,” Youngblood said. “Consumers now appear to expect video content from a brand they are going to do business with. If you haven’t started experimenting with video, now is the time to get going or you’ll risk falling behind the competition.”

Oh, and don’t forget: YouTube is a social media platform.

“In 2020, the biggest trend that smart brands and businesses should focus on for greater success is the emergence of YouTube as the leading social media platform,” said **Greg Jarboe**, President & Co-founder, SEO-PR.

Why YouTube in 2020?

In the full ebook (download to see it all), Jarboe lays out all the latest juicy data and stats, which include this important fact: YouTube is the #2 site on the web (behind only Google), while Facebook ranks fourth, according to Alexa.

10 LEVERAGE UGC

The content your audience creates is invaluable to your brand, according to **Kristi Kellogg**, CEO, and Founder, Dazzling Digital.

“Your customers (and potential customers) find content posted by their peers far more influential, trustworthy, and compelling than the content a brand creates itself,” Kellogg said.

She said every brand can take three steps in 2020 to get more user-generated content (UGC) and earn more social proof:

- Encourage your audience to tag your brand in social posts by always reposting and/or featuring that UGC.
- Comment and interact with your audience regularly.
- Run contests that drive UGC.

WANT MORE SOCIAL MEDIA TRENDS & INSIGHTS FOR 2020?

This only scratches the surface of what you'll find in our new ebook, The Biggest Social Media Trends of 2020, According to 34 Experts. Ready for more?

You'll get more uncensored and unfiltered insights and tips straight from these marketing experts on how to succeed on social media in 2020:



BRIE E ANDERSON



KENDALL BIRD



ANNA BREDAVA



LISA BUYER



MEL CARSON



SARAH CLARKE



BRENT CSUTORAS



MARY DAVIES



PIERRE DEBOIS



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PROGRAM DIRECTOR OF DIGITAL MARKETING, WSU TECH

Social media in 2020 will continue to push brands and influencers to focus on creating experiences.

With more noise than ever, brands will have to have a loyal fanbase to get any sort of reach. More platforms will require meaningful engagement with followers.

Brands should focus on their groups, direct messages, and comments as the conversation is key to community and experience.

Giveaways and automated shoutouts don't cut it anymore, brands are going to have to have a vested interest in their customer base and engage with them online.



KENDALL BIRD

SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGER, DKY

SOCIAL MEDIA IS GOING BACK TO ITS ROOTS OF CONNECTION AND COMMUNITY

We're constantly seeing articles and reports that paid reach is not what it used to be. I believe it's because social media users are looking for authenticity and transparency, and want real connections with real people.

Brands and companies will have a larger focus on groups within platforms such as Facebook and LinkedIn as users move to private spaces for community and connection with others.

I encourage brands and companies to look for opportunities to create these groups or private communities to have authentic communication, and not sell products or services.

EMPLOYEE ADVOCACY WILL CONTINUE TO BE A TOP TREND

Employee generated content helps build brand trust and reinforce relationships. In fact, Sprout Social shared about this topic stating that **45%** of consumers are more likely to research a product or service when an employee shares about it on social media.

In my opinion, this is because of human connection.

The social media user already has a connection to the employee sharing about a product or service and likely trusts them as they are in their social circle.

I encourage all companies to think about employee advocacy, even if it is starting on a smaller scale with employees sharing blog content to their social media networks.

INFLUENCERS WILL STILL BE PART OF THE SOCIAL MEDIA LANDSCAPE

However, influencers who are authentic will be more powerful than your power-influencer (example: Kim Kardashian) as these authentic influencers will share content they care about and actually use on a regular basis.

Social media users know what a forced relationship with a brand looks like, and they're tired of seeing these interactions.

I encourage brands and companies to look for influencers who will authentically use their product or service and share it with their audiences.



ANNA BREDAVA

MARKETING MANAGER, AWARIO

First of all, in the midst of the American election cycle, I think social media companies' responsibility will become an even more prominent topic of debate. Thus, there will be more regulations for ads and news on social media platforms.

We've already seen it with Twitter banning ads from political parties on their platform, and I think there'll be more of this from other networks in the future.

For social media managers, it means a trickier process for setting up ads related to social and political issues and changes in feed algorithms.

The second trend is shifting the focus from vanity metrics, especially for Facebook-owned platforms. Seems like Facebook is set on removing like counts on Instagram and might do the same for Facebook as well.

This will surely affect how we do influencer marketing – social analytics tools that analyze influencers' true reach might become even more useful.

And the third one would be the further commercialization and monetization of social media platforms for businesses.

Platforms are becoming more advertiser-friendly, while organic reach decreases – and this will only continue in 2020.

The Social Media Not-Hot List for 2020

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BREANNA JACOBS

VP, CONFERENCE PRODUCTION
SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGIES SUMMIT



As we approach a new decade, there is a plethora of information out there on predictions, trends and the next big thing in social media.

In a fast-changing industry like ours, it is important to keep a pulse on where things are heading.

After all, trends don't last forever. What worked for social media marketers in the past may not work in 2020.

As we look ahead, it's equally important to know where NOT to invest your resources in the new year.

If you are in the midst of planning your social media strategies for 2020, take a look at our list of dying trends, platforms, and tactics.



1 The Instagram Aesthetic

The growth of Instagram has created a nearly omnipresent look **coined** by The Atlantic as the “Instagram Aesthetic.”

You’d have to be living under a rock to not know what we’re talking about: selfies in front of beautifully painted walls, perfect lattes, and avocado toast and expertly filtered images.

This look has gotten so popular that **museums** and exhibitions have been built with the goal of creating that perfect photo opp.

However, the rise of a new generation of influencers, Instagram Stories and short-form platforms like TikTok have ushered in content that is less polished and more in-the-moment.

Short-form, ephemeral content is a response to consumers’ shrinking attention spans and fear of missing out.

STRATEGY TO INCORPORATE INSTEAD

500 million users now use Instagram Stories every day. Stories are also growing on Facebook, Snapchat and YouTube. Smart marketers will prioritize stories content on a variety of platforms.



2 Vanity Metrics

It started with the **news** over the summer that Instagram was experimenting with removing likes from posts in Canada and other countries.

Then, in November, TechCrunch **reported** that Instagram was making likes private from some posts everywhere.

This shift means that users will be less influenced by how many likes a post already has before deciding whether or not to like it.

Instagram wasn't the first platform to utilize the idea of likes, but it definitely popularized the concept. This change could represent a larger shift away from external validation for the social media industry in general.

STRATEGY TO INCORPORATE INSTEAD

While it's too soon to know if this change will be rolled out globally and how it will affect marketers, it suggests that vanity metrics will be less important in 2020.

Without post likes, marketers will need to determine new ways of measuring campaigns, influencer relationships, and audience engagement.



3 Engagement Pods

Engagement Pods, a group of users who work together to increase post engagement, were once thought of as the **answer to algorithm challenges** on Instagram.

However, it soon became clear that this tactic, much like buying followers, only led to fake engagement that would never translate to meaningful results.

Marketers who tried **engagement pods** saw some success in increasing engagement, but they also found them time-consuming and suspicious-looking to their audience.

Facebook quickly took steps to counteract **inauthentic behavior**. In 2018, the platform suspended **several accounts** that helped profiles falsify post engagements and started removing fake likes and comments from published posts.

STRATEGY TO INCORPORATE INSTEAD

Rather than spending time trying to game the platform, focus on how Instagram can help you achieve your business priorities.

Identify your target audience and share thoughtful content and eye-catching creative to drive authentic interactions with your followers.



4 Instagram Threads

In October of this year, Instagram **launched** Threads, a companion app for Instagram that allows users to message only their Close Friends list.

Other features include setting up notifications to come from specific people users choose, setting away messages and allowing the app to set an auto status based on your activity.

The goal of the app is to make it easier for users to share “more personal moments with a select group of people you choose.”

The camera-first app generated some buzz with experts calling it another **shift towards privacy** and a move to **steal users from Snapchat** by mimicking their messaging interface.

But the relatively low downloads of Threads implies that the app hasn't really caught on. There were only **220,000 downloads** in the first week it was available, which is less than .1% of Instagram users.

STRATEGY TO INCORPORATE INSTEAD

Utilize Instagram's Close Friends list to create VIP offers for certain customers or to update your roster of influencers, but don't spend time trying to learn the ropes of this app, which will likely be abandoned by Facebook in 2020.



5 Snapchat's Hold on Gen Z

Despite frequent attacks from Facebook, Snapchat has maintained its popularity among the youngest generation: **53%** of internet users between the ages of 15-23 are on Snapchat.

But 2019 saw the rise of short-form video platform TikTok, owned by the Chinese company ByteDance.

TikTok has rapidly gained popularity with **over 500 million** monthly active users and the **number three spot** in worldwide app downloads.

As with Snapchat, TikTok is growing fastest among Generation Z. **41%** of users are between the age of 16 and 24.

TikTok appeals to the younger generation with a straightforward interface, short videos that don't require too much attention and a global appeal.

It also reflects a trend towards **passive browsing** – consuming content without sharing any of their own.

STRATEGY TO INCORPORATE INSTEAD

While it's too soon to predict whether Snapchat or TikTok will win in the battle over young consumers, it is important for marketers to keep an eye on the changing landscape of social media platforms.



6 Canned Responses From Chatbots

When Facebook introduced Chatbots to the Messenger platform in 2016, the technology entered the consumer mainstream.

By 2017, Facebook developers had created **over 100,000 bots** to handle basic customer service interactions like making product recommendations, taking orders and collecting information.

But those early bots could only ask specific questions and respond to customers with prewritten responses. While **53%** of customers report that they would rather message a company than call customer service, customers still expect that interaction to be personal and human.

Advances in artificial intelligence and algorithms will enable chatbots to be more adaptive and conversational, like this example from **Facebook and Stanford**.



STRATEGY TO INCORPORATE INSTEAD

As chatbots get smarter, consumer expectations are sure to follow suit.

If your brand is behind on incorporating chatbots into your marketing and customer service strategy, now is the time to act.

Just make sure that you are thinking beyond pre-written responses to basic questions.

Take the time and make the investment in chatbots that learn your customers' names, remember their orders and can speak in a human way.

CONCLUSION

Social media is an industry where change is constant and the “next big thing” is always just around the corner.

But not every big idea pans out and those new tactics that everyone is trying often fail.

As we look towards 2020, it's good to take a look back at what didn't live up to the hype. It might just help us learn where to invest our resources for the future.



LISA BUYER

**CEO AND SOCIAL PR CONSULTANT,
THE BUYER GROUP**



DOCUSERIES HITS SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS FOR BRANDS

2020 is the year to invest in binge-watching docuseries-style content inspired by Netflix. Brands hitting this new content concept out of the park in 2019 included Digital Distillery's **'Pay The Invoice'**, a nine-part web B2B docu-series following the lives of seven ad agency owners and freelancers as they embark on a journey led by Cat Howell on how to scale their business.

The B2C sexual wellbeing brand K-Y® also released **The Pleasure is Mine**, a documentary series (docu-series) intended to normalize sex-positive conversations in America with the hashtag #GetWhatYouWant.

ANTI-SOCIAL: SCALING BACK & PRIORITIZING

Anti-social is another trend coming after 10 years of social media high with brands.

The utopia of social media is starting to fizzle as brands and humans feel the burnout and over saturation of chasing the social media dragon.

Organic results are becoming harder to achieve and justify ROI. Scaling back to one or two channels that work and sunsetting the channels not returning a positive business outcome.

OLD SCHOOL TOUCHES ARE MAKING A COME BACK BECAUSE THEY STAND OUT

Mailing a postcard or a newsletter is making a comeback weaving in the modern-day digital marketing with traditional print media.

For example, the **Hustle and Flow Chart** podcast offers its listeners who are mostly made up of entrepreneurs and digital marketers a membership option to subscribe to show notes delivered monthly via snail mail in the form of a 9x12 print newsletter.

SUBJECTIVE & OBJECTIVE SOCIAL MEDIA PAINS

Matching your social media goals with your brand's business objectives is a no brainer. Sort of.

Social media is also subjective and not formulated in one secret potion. What works for one brand does not work for another and sometimes subjective and unproven wacky, tacky and off-brand things work really well.

There is no right or wrong in many ways when it comes to social media for business. This makes social media management a very stressful position at times.

TURNING FANS INTO CUSTOMERS & CUSTOMERS INTO FANS

Providing a service your customer needs is not enough today. Posting self-serving social media messages do not work.

- Tony Robbins calls it “Creating Raving Fan Customers.”
- Hubspot announced the traditional funnel was broken and introduced the flywheel putting customers in the middle and in charge.
- Most recently, David Meerman Scott and Reiko Scott released the book **Fanocracy** highlighting the need for brands to put customers’ needs and wishes at the extreme center of everything it does.

The new mindset is this: The relationship we build with our customers is more important than the products and services we sell them.



MEL CARSON

**FOUNDER, CEO & PRINCIPAL STRATEGIST,
DELIGHTFUL COMMUNICATIONS**

Delightful Communications is a B2B technology agency that truly believes that B2B doesn't need to be boring.

What we are seeing more and more of is clients wanting us to be more creative and agile with ideas around how to stand out in B2B tech beyond the buzzwords.



The space is awash with blah, blah, blah about AI and machine learning and we have spotted the opportunity to show the possibilities and actually showcase what it all means with dynamic examples – these might be:

- Short (but effective) videos shot at events where tech partners talk about their solutions, how the idea came about, how it was built, etc.
- Short-form animated GIFs and videos that are designed to inspire the viewer, not just to understand, but to take action.

As I mentioned last year, people power is on the increase as we put more and more faces to the marketing we do for our clients, whether through influencer programs, content co-creation or event co-amplification, companies that adhere to our principle of “people not just pixels” will reap rewards in 2020.

SARAH CLARKE

**MEDIA STRATEGIST & FOUNDER,
DUFFERIN MEDIA**



THE CONTINUED RISE OF STORIES

In 2020 I believe there will be a continuing increase in the consumption of ephemeral content.

Ephemeral content is a type of social media content that is only available for a limited amount of time and then disappears – such as Instagram or Facebook stories or Snapchat posts.

According to a recent report by Hootsuite, 64% of marketers either already have incorporated Instagram Stories into their strategies or plan to. This is because of the rapidly increasing statistics Instagram is reporting – over 500 million active daily story users. This will only continue to grow into 2020 and beyond.

Stories are a perfect way to get the attention, for a few valuable seconds, of an audience that loves authentic creative content. Stories are a great way to add a touch of humanity to your social media using emojis, videos, and stickers.

Smart brands and businesses will make this a greater focus in their 2020 marketing strategy if they want to have a higher level of success reaching their audiences, and increasing engagement.

BRENT CSUTORAS

**ADVISOR AND CO-OWNER,
SEARCH ENGINE JOURNAL**



I know that a lot of companies find marketing on Reddit difficult and intimidating, but I think more companies need to put Reddit on their radar for 2020.

Not only has the site had consistent 25% to 30% year over year growth for over a decade now, but **recent studies** also show that consumers use of Reddit is growing rapidly and view brands on Reddit as more authoritative (likely due to the difficulty and commitment required to be successful on Reddit).

With the majority of Reddit updates over the last year is focused on giving brands more tools to have success, it has never been a better time for brands to establish themselves on a platform that is largely responsible for creating much of the internet culture we have come to enjoy today.

With over 430 million monthly active users and about 32% of all Americans on Reddit each month, brands need to take a serious look at making Reddit a part of their 2020 plans.

MARY DAVIES

PRESIDENT, BEANSTALK INTERNET MARKETING

Social media is increasingly becoming an information resource and hive mind type of space rather than just a place to keep up on what friends ate for dinner last night and how cute your BFF thinks her baby is.

In 2020, I believe we will see the group and like-minded community spaces dominating more and more which for SMMs means a much heavier workload.

Though we will still need to keep up and manage active main profiles such as a Facebook business page and keep a steady stream of paid ads/boosted posts at play, we will need to create community spaces in addition to that.



Groups and communities require a lot of time to manage as they really are all about the personal communication, not just posting and waiting for the comments to roll in or paying for an ad and waiting for a click.

It will be quite important for SMMs to be able to put trusted group members (whether they be public members or employees of a business) in community management positions to help bear the load and keep the spaces well maintained and helpful.

Leaning on influencers and experts will continue to be a major factor in social media, especially in these community-minded groups. Providing a strong reputable resource will be a very important aspect of the resource side of the communities that are created.

In addition to creating these hives of like-minded people, businesses will want to focus on carrying their community-focused tone into their overall social presence whether that be in chats, posts or ads.

People are looking for connections on a personal level with businesses and brands that feel like part of their community.

Businesses will need to put more effort than ever into being more of a helpful, understanding “friend” in a community than simply a service/product provider.

PIERRE DEBOIS

**FOUNDER AND CEO,
ZIMANA ANALYTICS**



There are several social media patterns that have wide-sweeping consequences for not only brands and marketers, but for people and organizations from all walks of life.

1. BASIC SOCIAL MEDIA METRICS ARE ON THE WAY OUT

This observation sounds like a no-brainer, given that the trend to deemphasize basic metrics as an analytic strategy has existed for some time now.

The end of Klout back in 2018 was the first major signal; Facebook's and Instagram's experiment with hiding likes further punctuated the trend.

Instead, social media advertising will place a strong effort on hyper-local-campaigns that provide a unified online and offline experiences for retail. The blurring of retail online and offline is the driver for this interest.

Social media will have to show through its advertising options that it can focus messages on the facets of the consumer journey that highlight convenient activity for nearby customers.

Customers are already looking for items nearby, and big-box retailers like Walmart, Home Depot, and Costco are seeing ecommerce success as “click and collect” sales according to eMarketer.

Hyperlocal ad campaigns in social media will further de-emphasize the measurement value of likes and shares for marketers.

2. AN ADVERTISING BUDGET SHOWDOWN

All the social media platforms have revised or added digital advertising options, many of which center on taking advantage of local commerce and providing more targeted messaging.

But the platforms are competing against emerging services that have drawn customer attention for lengthier periods of time.

Amazon has proven that a non-social media platform can gain significant advertising share without the culture wars and trust credibility that distracts Facebook, Twitter, and others.

That fact will tempt streaming services and podcasts in developing advertising that competes against Pinterest, TikTok, LinkedIn, as well as Twitter, Instagram, and others.

The most appealing benefit for advertisers would be mitigated risks, such as preventing brand content from appearing next to unwanted social messages.

Thus, each social media platform will have to prove that they have a consistent audience persona and that they policed the bad actors of fake accounts, trolls, and negative content to minimize branding risks for marketers.

Back in 2016, Twitter **touted** that “Nearly 40% of Twitter users say they’ve made a purchase as a direct result of a Tweet from an influencer.”

Today, Twitter, along with all other platforms, will need to show brands more transparency behind claims that advertising on their platforms is a worthwhile investment.

3. SOME REIMAGINING OF SOCIAL MEDIA ANALYTICS

The big question will be how will analytics measure reach in a like-less world and correlate activities of potential customer to marketer objectives.

Much of this will allow more predictive analytics techniques, such as sentiment analysis and regression analysis, to include real-world concerns within the data models.

Deeper, inferential metrics will be needed to describe how social media influence consumer behavior and local commerce.

Social media platforms must refresh their analytic dashboards to provide more transparency behind the measurements.

The debacle over how Facebook measured video metrics reminds marketers to not take social media platform engagement reporting at face value.

4. A VIDEO CONCERN

Video will remain popular, but the right video length for conveying a message will be researched, triggering nuanced questions on all platforms regarding messaging.

Firms like eMarketer have **noted** that people spending time with digital video has displayed traditional TV with overall average media use plateauing, while others like video startup Parmonic have **researched and discovered** nuanced B2B video playback behavior based on length.

Social media experts will see more discussions matching the video features on social media platforms against source and message, as well as choosing an optimal video content length.

5. CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE ONLINE BRAND BEHAVIOR

Social media platforms will have to find ways helping brands leverage the social interest of their audience segments while remaining culturally appropriate.

Micro-influencers have used social media to attract culturally-savvy millennial audiences, connecting the brand with specific segments on social media such as young Hispanic and African American consumers.

Meanwhile, protest social media profiles such as **Sleeping Giants** have called out brands for advertising on alt-right media.

With all this in mind, social media platforms must proactively encourage marketers to have a proper eye for culturally appropriate online brand behavior.

Digital marketing is shifting such that embracing cultural concerns is a strategic branding tactic as well as a social statement. That has heavily ethics and economic implications.

Brand activity meant to demonstrate social awareness must come before talking about it on social media.

Without guidance, brands risk alienating consumers as being insensitive to racial, social, and environmental issues.

BRANDON DOYLE

**CEO & FOUNDER,
WALLAROO MEDIA**

GET ON TIKTOK — NOW

Organic reach on TikTok is like nothing we've ever seen. It's better than even the early days of Facebook. Getting on to that platform now is key.

The audience skews young – we all know that. But the overall numbers are massive.

- Over 1.5 billion downloads.
- ~800 million active users.
- ~60 million active users in the U.S.

The way the algorithm is designed allows content to get massive reach even with little followers.

Create content that will resonate with your target audience, but be willing to test and iterate over time to see what works best. We've seen incredible results for our clients.

The ad platform is early-stage but the ROI there is great, too.

And TikTok is rolling out a creator/collaboration marketplace soon for influencers that should be promising.

Get on TikTok – now.



VICTORIA EDWARDS

**SENIOR MANAGER, STRATEGY,
GUIDEWELL CONNECT**

CHATBOTS/AI

I think smart brands should focus on solving their customers' problems and utilizing AI tools to help them.

For example, chatbots – even though they have been around for a little while – will only become more commonly used among more brands, especially within the healthcare vertical.

Making appointments and speaking with a virtual doctor will only be more available in the social media space.

MORE FOCUS ON THE MEDICARE POPULATION

65% of 50-64-year-olds and 61% of 65+ year-olds use Facebook and it's only going to grow more with regards to usage in the digital space.

Brands need to stop assuming that that population isn't using social media.

So if your product or service focuses on that segment, you not only need to target them in social media, but personalize it to make sure you're not just targeting the age, but targeting their interests.



A portrait of Emma Franks, a woman with long, wavy brown hair, smiling. She is wearing a black top and a necklace with a small pendant. The background shows a brick building and some greenery.

EMMA FRANKS

**SR. PAID SOCIAL ACCOUNT MANAGER,
HANAPIN MARKETING**

I expect diversification to be a primary trend in social media advertising throughout 2020. We saw it creep up in 2019 more than years past, and there's no chance of it slowing down.

Facebook is no longer the one-stop-shop it used to be. Younger demographics are favoring the sister platform of Instagram, as well as TikTok and Snapchat.

We, as users, are generally becoming more conscious of the negative impact that heavy social media use can have on relationships and mental health.

Of course, that doesn't mean we're about to put our phones down entirely, but I believe user attention will be the most divided across websites and apps that it has ever been.

Every “early-mover” advertiser who embraces smaller networks now (e.g., Twitter, Quora, Reddit, Snapchat) will enjoy an environment of relatively low cost due to lower levels of competition.

Diversification is also beneficial for risk mitigation by reducing dependency on Facebook and/or LinkedIn.

Whether purely for retargeting or with a comprehensive full-funnel approach, platform diversification will be a competitive advantage for social advertisers in 2020.

ERIN FREDREGILL

**FOUNDER & CEO,
ROBE + SIGNET**

Influencer marketing isn't going anywhere; in fact, it's maturing.

With the advent of TikTok, the number of micro-influencers, especially among the Gen Z market, is growing rapidly and larger TikTok influencers are seemingly appearing overnight.

That, along with the maturation of other popular platforms like Instagram and YouTube and a growing distaste for branded/high-production content presents a greater opportunity for marketers to collaborate with micro-influencers for “unfiltered” content to reuse for their marketing and connect with their target audience that otherwise wouldn't have been receptive to other forms of advertising.

The key is in creating a crystal clear influencer strategy that thoughtfully integrates with your overall marketing strategy, establishing a thorough influencer vetting process and providing a brief that clearly outlines your brand's goals and content guidelines while still allowing micro-influencers to direct the narrative in a way that feels authentic to their audience.



GREG JARBOE

**PRESIDENT & CO-FOUNDER,
SEO-PR**



In 2019, one of the social media trends that mattered the most was **“video, video, video!”**

In 2020, the biggest trend that smart brands and businesses should focus on for greater success is the emergence of YouTube as the leading social media platform.

According to **Alexa**, an Amazon.com company, YouTube.com is the #2 site on the web, behind only Google.com. By comparison, Facebook.com ranks #4.

According to a **combination of public opinion surveys and large-scale data analysis**, the Pew Research Center has found:

- 73% of U.S. adults used YouTube, according to a Pew survey in early 2019. And among those who are 18- to 24-years old, 90% used YouTube. The only other social media platform that approaches YouTube in terms of its reach is Facebook, which was used by 69% of U.S. adults.

- YouTube channels generate a massive amount of content each and every week. According to a Pew analysis published in July 2019, almost 44,000 YouTube channels had at least 250,000 subscribers. Collectively, these popular channels uploaded 48,486 hours of content and got more than 14.2 billion individual views a week. The average video was 12 minutes long and received nearly 60,000 views in the first seven days after it was posted.

- In Pew's 2018 survey, 81% of YouTube's adult users in the U.S. said that they at least occasionally watch the videos suggested by the platform's recommendation algorithm. In a study of the algorithm itself, Pew found that YouTube recommends progressively longer videos - at least when it lacks information about what the viewer needed in order to make more personalized recommendations. After a chain of just four video recommendations, the algorithm was likely to suggest a video more than five minutes longer than the one the viewer originally started on.

And according to Google **data:**

Over 2 billion logged-in users visit YouTube each month. Every day, people watch over a billion hours of video and generate billions of views.

- More than 70% of YouTube watch time comes from mobile devices (e.g. smartphones and tablets).
- Over the past three years, the number of YouTube channels with more than 1 billion views has grown by 5x.
- Watch time for shopping-related videos on YouTube in the U.S. has grown by more than 5x over the past two years.

That's why smart brands and businesses should focus on YouTube in 2020 to see even greater social media success.

ERIN JONES

FOUNDER, REPBRIGHT



In 2020, I expect to see an increase in the value of authentic engagement.

Social media was never meant to be a platform for push marketing, and users have shown that they value engagement and interactions with brands.

People want to feel like they know who they're spending money with, as a result, brands will need to step up and provide an environment for their customers to do so quickly and easily.

The importance of online reputation management (ORM) will continue to grow as a result. Whether your community is real or virtual, there's a huge push towards valuing interaction. I'm looking forward to it.

To be successful in 2020, companies will need to provide great content, imagery, and close the loop by responding to questions and comments from their audience.

Making them feel like they're part of a group that they want to be in will ensure brand loyalty and great social media engagement.

KRISTI KELLOGG

**CEO, AND FOUNDER,
DAZZLING DIGITAL**



LEVERAGE USER-GENERATED CONTENT TO UP YOUR BRAND'S SOCIAL PROOF

Foster a social media community where users are generating high-quality content about your brand regularly.

The content your audience creates is invaluable to your brand. Your customers (and potential customers) find content posted by their peers far more influential, trustworthy, and compelling than the content a brand creates itself.

Every brand can take these three steps in 2020 to get more user-generated content (UGC):

- Encourage your audience to tag your brand in social posts by always reposting and/or featuring that UGC. When other users see that your brand is always rewarding people who post with a spotlight, they'll want in, too.

- Comment and interact with your audience regularly. Answer your questions. Give enthusiastic feedback when they talk to (or about) you. If your brand creates relationships with customers, you'll end up being top-of-mind. And if your brand is top-of-mind, there's a far greater chance people will post about your brand.
- Run contests that drive UGC. If you want to find a way to spark a stream of user-generated content, try running contests to incentivize content creation. For example, a brand could offer a special discount to anyone who posts something to Instagram mentioning and tagging the brand (or a specific product or service). Or, a brand could reward the poster who got the most engagement when posting about their brand with a freebie or cash prize.

Leveraging UGC is instrumental for earning more social proof – and every brand can use more of that.

LENKA KOPPOVA



FREELANCE SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGIST & FOUNDER, CAMBRIDGE SOCIAL MEDIA

I think that 2020 will be (aside from the obvious trends like video, live video, influencer marketing or Stories and other types of disappearing content) all about community and going back to basics in terms of connecting with other customers online on a deeper, more personal level.

The reason why I call it community, is the ability of brands online not only to educate and entertain their audiences but also to engage and facilitate meaningful interactions among their followers, users, and fans.

They have the power to build a strong community around their brand and create movements that have an impact beyond increasing sales!

Authentic, real-time and relatable content will be more popular as it will allow people to connect with brands on a deeper, more meaningful level.

Customers want to see more real, behind-the-scenes, transparent content that helps them understand who are the people behind the brand.

In terms of social customer service, personalization and using unscalable methods to surprise and delight customers will be more popular as it allows brands to create stronger relationships with their prospects, customers as well as their broader audience.

One of the recent social media trends is eliminating superficial metrics such as likes and focusing on more meaningful actions like comments and DMs, which is only showcasing the importance of personal touches even more.

Two of the platforms that are already giving us good signs that this trend will prevail and will get even stronger in 2020 are Instagram and LinkedIn.

With the focus on driving on-platform engagement, meaningful commenting and improving the inbox experience, there are clear signs that genuine interactions and building engaged communities are the way forward when it comes to social media strategies.

This will go hand in hand with the growing popularity of using nano influencers to reach smaller, but highly engaged communities where a brand can build more impactful connections with their target customers much faster and easier.

KEVAN LEE

VP OF MARKETING, BUFFER

In 2020, our concept of influencers will expand even further. We already have influencer tiers – major influencers with millions of followers all the way to micro-influencers in the 1,000s.

Now with Instagram rolling out Creator profiles and with the proliferation of content creation apps on our phones, it's becoming easier and easier for everyone to be an influencer.

Businesses can take advantage of this in a couple of ways.

First, they can make it easy for their customers to advocate for their brand by doubling down on UGC, by putting social share features into the product purchase experience, etc.

And second, you can double down on a tried-and-true old school tactic: employee advocacy. Encourage your team to share your brand and your products.

DEBBIE MILLER

PRESIDENT, SOCIAL HOSPITALITY

TikTok was the new big kid on the block this year. As of 2019, the app boasts **500 million** active users worldwide and **1.5 billion** downloads globally.

Marketers will start exploring ways to take advantage of TikTok's advertising platform to reach engaged Gen Z consumers.

It could also be worthwhile to locate the platform's top users to endorse your brand if they're a fit. This younger demographic is highly engaged and trusting of the opinions of their peers.

On a related note, leveraging micro-influencers is also beneficial. Many millennials and Gen Z consumers trust these individuals more than brands themselves.

Micro-influencers have active, niche communities that put a lot of stock into what their peers say. Note that micro-influencers vary from the likes of big-name celebrity influencers, many of whom's endorsements aren't considered as credible.

The appeal of live and real-time content will continue to rise in 2020. According to Forrester, users watch live video **10 to 20 times** longer than on-demand content.

Facebook and Instagram Stories are a solid way for brands to interact in a more authentic way than simply posting content to those feeds.

The engagement received organically through these mediums tends to be higher as well. Of course, there's an opportunity to optimize paid advertising efforts through video as well.

VIRGINIA NUSSEY

**DIRECTOR OF MARKETING,
MOBILE MONKEY**



In 2020, social media marketing will be disrupted by users taking more control over their feeds by using mute, unfollow and block ad features.

In response, brands continue to develop more high-value, high-transparency, highly personalized VIP access programs.

Social media is the discovery engine where fans are pointed to private messaging and text message clubs to stay in touch.

Check out Gary Vaynerchuk for a first look at how this is working. He uses the opening of his YouTube videos to share an opt-in text message phone number.

The text message club starts with an automated welcome message. After that, Vaynerchuk personally sends motivation and lifestyle messages to the community with a text message blast tool.

The strategy is part automation, part personalization, and a 100% scalable brand connection.

Brands realize they are here for it and the technology that makes it possible is actually easy for businesses with all size budgets and resources.

Using social media networks as an introductory step in more private communication will take off in 2020.

TED RUBIN

CMO, PHOTOFY

It sounds obvious, but businesses are missing it: your employees are more important to the success of your company than you think.

Employee advocacy isn't just about having your employees post on their social channels about your brand.

Empowering employees to be more than just mouthpieces for your brand is a way to go beyond advocacy – and benefit both your employees and your brand.

What do I mean by going beyond advocacy?

In last year's post, I talked about empowering your employees through social media, so they can empower your brand and the concept of Employee Created Content, #ECC. However, I think you can (and should) take it further. But how do you do this?

Marketers may be able to reach the right person at the right time with the right message, but in the process, they are annoying the hell out of the 99.9% of people that are not in buying mode.

Shoppers' feeds are full of messaging for products they've already bought, hotel rooms and flights they've already booked, and deals on things they don't need or want.

Today's shopper has more information than ever in the palm of their hand and is becoming very adept at using it when and where they want.

Brands that are winning this new journey are providing large quantities of fresh and relevant content for shoppers to use when they actually need it.

Not only does this help simplify shopping, but it also has a lasting impact on the algorithms that affect what shoppers find across all forms of search.

Especially effective is localized content, as search becomes much more geo-specific.

In the face of declining returns from digital advertising and the growing need for more of this kind of superior, impactful content, Collaborative Content Creation (crowd marketing), and Community Created Content, #CCC, offers a highly effective solution.

Considering the average overall social media engagement for branded content is far less than 1%, it is absolutely imperative that brands start thinking about expanding their content creation with those who truly interact and engage with others – employees and communities that value the brand.

It stands to reason that personal networks have higher levels of engagement thanks to a real relational connection, but brands need to know how to leverage it consistently and at scale.

Most organizations are sitting on a goldmine of authentic content creation that is likely closest to their customers... personally and geographically.

Give your customers and employees the tools to create and share branded content (and if possible couple it internally with a powerful content management system and analytics package).

It's the perfect addition to existing brand digital activities and an incredibly efficient way to increase the scale and effectiveness of those efforts and content creation.

Empower your employees and they will power your brand...
#ROE (Return on Employees)

SAM RUCHLEWICZ

**VP OF DIGITAL STRATEGY &
DATA ANALYTICS, WARSCHAWSKI**

I believe that the notable trends that smart businesses will focus on for 2020 fall into three main buckets:

BUILDING REAL, AUTHENTIC RELATIONSHIPS WITH YOUR AUDIENCE THROUGH RELEVANT AND COMPELLING CONTENT

I've long believed that too much of the content brands post on social media are:

- Platform agnostic (i.e., not tailoring content for the intent + audience of each platform).
- Company-centric (i.e., only posting content that focuses on what your customers can do for you vs. how your brand can create value for them).

I'm hopeful that 2020 will be the year we finally stray away from this old, outdated approach to a new, customer-centric one.

From a tactical perspective, that means actively listening and observing the behaviors of each of your audience segments across all stages of their journey (strangers, prospects, customers, & fans/detractors) to determine:

- What they're looking for (i.e., specific content).
- How they want to receive it (ads, videos, articles, etc.).
- Ultimately, why they want that content in that format.

I'm a firm believer that getting to that core "why" for each audience segment, at each stage of their journey, is the foundation to building a real relationship with those individuals.

Once you have that nugget of insight, the next step is creating/curating content for that specific group that is brand-centric, real and authentic – whether that be via Stories (which I do think are under-utilized by many brands), IGTV, LinkedIn Live, Listicles, Quizzes, AR experiences or something else entirely. Let the format and platform be dictated by the audience.

The crux of this is that smart brands will invest the time, energy and resources up-front to understand their audience segments, then create and distribute content that is relevant and compelling to those segments individually.

After all that is done, invest the time and resources necessary to automate as much of this process as possible and streamline your content creation/curation – social platforms tend to favor fresh content and more creative rotation.

Don't let your content get stale, and make sure you are continuing to create value for your audience.

RETHINKING 'INFLUENCE' ON SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

With an ever-increasing number of brands climbing aboard the influencer marketing train (especially on Instagram & YouTube), I think we're going to see smart brands re-thinking their influencer programs. This will be driven by a number of factors, including:

- A. Continued reduction in organic reach of influencers.
- B. The gradual removal of metrics from social platforms (e.g., "Likes" from IG).
- C. Increased awareness among consumers regarding influencer marketing.
- D. Eroding trust in non-niche influencers.

Market saturation with diminished reach increase costs, while (B)-(D), along with slowing economic growth, hinder performance and/or obfuscate efficacy – making investments in traditional “influencers” less appealing and effective.

One way I can see this materializing is via increasing polarization within the influencer spectrum, with nano influencers (1k to 5k followings) and micro-influencers (5k to 50k followers), along with major, name-brand influencers (1M+ followers), receiving the majority of the attention from marketers – and those stuck in the middle (i.e., 50k to 1M followers) being pushed to either grow their followings or specify/focus on a niche.

In addition to the above, I think we'll start to see smart brands investing in other sources of influence – including closed social media groups/communities, blogs, partnerships, referrals, question sites (I believe sites like Reddit, Wikipedia and Quora are going to becoming increasingly important, especially in the early & middle phases of the journey), along with flanker affiliates.

These are all non-traditional sources of influence where audiences are turning for information – and all represent opportunities to both gain additional insight into your target audience and reach them at the moments that matter.

INCREASED EMPHASIS ON QUANTIFYING IMPACT AND OUTCOMES

As the amount of money being spent on social media (ads, influencer programs, organic programs, etc.) increases, so will the scrutiny of those investments by both marketing leaders and the C-suite.

Smart marketers will continue investing in measurement and analytics programs that go beyond the standard vanity metrics pushed by platforms (likes, comments, shares, impressions, reach, etc.) and toward meaningful metrics that more accurately align with larger organizational/business goals.

While many social media platforms have made these types of analyses particularly difficult by creating walled gardens and restricting data flow, it is nonetheless possible.

A smart social media marketing and analytics strategy centers as much data capture as possible on your owned properties (e.g., your website) vs. your borrowed audiences (e.g., social media) – and uses social as a conduit to create owned connections.

On the analytics side, it has never been more important for marketers to create their own source of truth and do their own math in terms of quantifying outcomes, especially when it comes to measuring incrementality – don't trust the platforms.

Push as much customer data back into the social media platforms to measure incrementality and provide the data necessary for the algorithms to learn.

As machine learning continues to evolve, the brands with the best data will rise to the top – so make sure you have the infrastructure in place to do that.

ELENA SALAZAR

**DIGITAL MARKETING MANAGER,
VMWARE**



Smart brands should aim to make their social media social. It may seem obvious, but there are still a lot of brands that don't respond to comments on their posts.

There are a lot of ways to better engage with your audience on social media:

- Poll your audience and use the results to create content that best meets their needs and wants.
- Host Twitter chats to have structured discussions with your followers.

It is important to listen to your audience and provide value to them as opposed to solely using your social media channels to promote your products/services.

With more and more competition on social media, truly connecting with people will help humanize your brand and gain the trust of your audience (which will help your sales!).

Do you ever see ads follow you around the internet for something you've already bought?

You can avoid this mistake by excluding people who have already converted from receiving your paid social ads.

You will avoid annoying people while focusing your advertising dollars on people who you still have a chance to sell to. It's a win-win.

This does require some cross-tactic collaboration. Smart brands take an omnichannel approach to digital marketing rather than running campaigns in silos.

While you are putting together your social media plans, check in with your counterparts who manage your company's email marketing, paid search, content syndication, or programmatic advertising programs to collaborate with one another rather than compete with each other.

MARK SCHAEFER



**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
SCHAEFER MARKETING SOLUTIONS / AUTHOR,
'MARKETING REBELLION: THE MOST HUMAN COMPANY WINS'**

I think that businesses have systematically taken the “social” out of social media.

We have replaced a human voice with personas, real connection with bots and automated messages, and through dashboards and algorithms, reduced social media to a glorified IT maintenance function.

Basically, we are doing the opposite of what consumers want.

I do think there is an opportunity to reverse this trend and use technology to be more human or even use humans to be more human.

Perhaps this is a wish more than a trend!

CHRIS SCIULLI



**DIGITAL MARKETING LEAD,
THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY OF AUTOMATION /
OWNER & AUTHOR, SMOKEHOUSESEO.COM**

The biggest thing to focus on is to get compliant with data privacy laws and recognize they're not just applicable to email marketing as some may think.

Data privacy restrictions are going to come more into play in terms of ad targeting.

We're already seeing platforms like Twitter tighten their policies to prepare for the CCPA. Therefore, having quality first-party data that you collect in the right way is going to be crucial in getting your ads in front of the right people without violating the law or a platform's terms of service.

Even if you for some reason blew off the GDPR, get on this because I can almost guarantee you the CCPA won't be the only data privacy law that will affect social (and all your other channels) in 2020.

Other than compliance, the best thing you can do is to humanize your brand.

Nobody likes boring brands or brand voices that sound like they're being run by an AI or a snooty professor.

Recently, we're seeing a lot of examples of positive things happening when social media managers loosen up, brand participation in the recent Netflix [Twitter thread](#) comes to mind.

The overwhelmingly positive response every participant received would have been unheard of just five to ten years ago so this shows you what the audience is moving towards in terms of what they like.

Be human, be useful but above all, be authentic. Meaning, there's a limit.

Nobody wants to hear their mortgage broker talking about "yeeting" somebody "into traffic" because it's not real, funny or helpful.

As long as you're not doing obviously tone-deaf or offensive things, don't be afraid to experiment even with things you might be counter-intuitive.

For my day job, we didn't think industrial engineering would work on Pinterest but now it's one of our most popular social channels. You don't know until you try.

Finally, another thing smart brands should be doing is actually being interesting and not using their social media as a place where they stand on a box and shout ads at people.

Nobody cares about your ads unless you have shown your worth by providing quality consumable content.

Nobody cares that you just got a new drinking fountain in the break room.

Who wants to go to a brand page and just see a bunch of 'Buy my stuff!' posts or boring posts that don't apply to their life or solve their problems?

Put yourself in the place of their visitors and think about what they would want to see and interact with.

Also, if someone sends you a message or tries to open up a conversation with you by leaving a comment, answer!

Social media is meant to be social and if you can't or won't take the time to engage with people, it might be time to stop because other brands will and taking that time is going to be a difference-maker.

ASHLEY SEGURA



VP OF OPERATIONS, TOPHATRANK

Smart brands and businesses should focus on two things for their social media marketing in 2020: retargeting campaigns and audience personas.

Retargeting has become one of the most effective ways to convert social media followers into new and returning customers.

Yes, this does mean that you'll need to add a social media advertising budget if you don't already have one.

On top of a social media advertising budget, you need to have your audience persona defined in detail.

This means knowing way more about your target customer than just their age, location, and gender.

You have the data at your fingertips these days, so use the data and understand what other brands they love and why, influencers they follow, how they make purchase decisions, where they vacation (if they even take holidays), and whether or not they're a dog or cat person. Yes, even that last bit will help you create more effective social media campaigns.

After you have audience personas fully developed, make sure tracking pixels are installed on the important pages of your website (blog, checkout, product pages, etc.) and start uploading any CRM data you have.

Retargeting campaigns paired with deeply defined audience personas will help smart businesses and brands engage and convert more followers on social media in 2020.

KRYSTIAN SZASTOK



SEM CONSULTANT, KRYSTIANSZASTOK.CO.UK

The no. 1 trend I keep seeing is that your audience is no longer your audience if you're relying on someone like Facebook to stay visible to them.

Social share of voice continued to be squished by the leading platforms in 2019 and I foresee this continuing as they try to maximize their profits and manage the overall noise they generate.

They need to balance very well what information they show us and when and some very often (Facebook notably) go very far with how they personalize our results and filter out anything they don't want us to see.

One could mention TikTok and how they treat disabled users, mentioned in a Verge [article](#).

All these personalizations and filters mean that brands can't rely on usual organic visibility, paying for even appearing in front of your current audience, that you've spent years building up will continue to be normal and more expensive.

One of the things I keep suggesting to brands is creating their own groups on Facebook, rather than just having a company page to get "the likes." Similarly, with moving people into specialized LinkedIn groups rather than hoping for Company Page follows there.

I hope that more decentralized social media platforms will emerge that will allow brands to communicate to their audience without having to rely on Facebook's or another giant's mood swings and their algorithms, but one can only hope that it'll come to us so soon.

MARI SMITH



**SOCIAL MEDIA THOUGHT LEADER & CEO,
MARI SMITH INTERNATIONAL, INC.**

INTERACTIVE VIDEO

As the demand for video content continues to increase in 2020, video tool companies and social networks will keep adding more creative features to keep viewers engaged longer.

Video communications company Loom just raised \$30M; investors include Instagram co-founders.

Popular design company Canva recently introduced video editing with big plans for 2020.

Wave.video now has a CTA button embedded in videos made using their online video maker, along with a new integrations button.

PERSONALIZED VIDEO EMAIL MARKETING WILL SEE GROWTH IN THE COMING YEAR TOO

Plus, Facebook will keep iterating across all its video products to bring in more interactive elements.

Smart brands/businesses absolutely need to lean more into video in 2020, if they aren't already. But video doesn't have to be a massive drain on resources.

Keep it short, quick, easy, fun. Explore all the ways your viewers can actually engage with your video content.

STORIES 2.0

With the incredible rise in popularity of TikTok – along with upcoming short-form video sharing platforms such as Byte and Quibi – Mark Zuckerberg and the team will strive to stay as nimble as possible with its Stories feature on both Facebook and Instagram.

Adding even more creative new features that allow for audience engagement, plus potential aggressive testing of a blended horizontal feed that combines the Stories format with the scrolling feed format.

Smart brands/businesses would do well to ensure they have a solid Stories strategy for 2020 with daily images, micro-videos, and content that audiences value.

Follow those accounts leading the way. Get creative. Be sure to always tie to the bottom line and add your CTAs.

CHATBOTS

Marketing automation using Facebook Messenger chatbots has been steadily on the rise for the past several years. But chatbots still don't seem to have quite hit the mainstream yet.

And this is primarily due to businesses and brands really not fully understanding how to properly utilize chatbots in a personalized, engaging and non-pushy way.

Chatbot companies such as ManyChat and MobileMonkey are way ahead of the trend, introducing multi-channel marketing that includes email and SMS along with chatbots.

And, in 2020, depending on what happens with Facebook and the FTC, we may see Instagram and WhatsApp opening up their respective APIs for chatbots.

For those brands/businesses that are smart enough to really dig into the power of chatbots in 2020, you'll definitely have a competitive edge by year's end.

MARK TRAPHAGEN



VP OF CONTENT STRATEGY, AIMCLEAR

In 2020, smart companies will add to their social media toolbox more use of social to drive direct traffic and branded search.

The most valuable keyword in the world is a query with your brand name included.

Ahead-of-the-game brands will add paid and organic social posts using arresting creative, emblazoned with a brand name along with “money” terms and phrases prominently displayed.

The objective is driving top-of-funnel seekers to brand-specific search – low cost on the social end; incredible potential value on the search traffic end.

The trick is tracking attributable brand lift (hint: it can be done!). This tactic is particularly valuable for new or lesser-known brands.

ANASTASIA WARREN



**SENIOR SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGER,
KOMARKETING ASSOCIATES**

One of the biggest trends for 2020 will be the continued rise of influencer marketing.

As social media users look to platforms for personalized content, implementing an influencer strategy will be paramount to connect target audiences and relatable brand evangelists.

The key is to know who to reach out to and what message you are trying to convey.

In the saturated world of social media, don't be afraid to look for influencers that are on the rise or a bit less established in order to build solid relationships.

Because influencers are not a controlled marketing tactic, consistency is key to putting together an influencer marketing plan in terms of messaging and brand value.

For smaller organizations or those in the B2B industry that may be struggling to see how influencer marketing can be implemented to reach their goals, there are a few places to start.

Look into industry event speakers or ambassadors to see who your target audience is paying attention to on social media and on the floor at industry events.

Additionally, look internally at how employees can step into thought leadership roles and become the voice of an organization through engagement and amplification of messaging.

These are simple yet wildly effective ways to boost awareness and in turn, reach your goals.

While influencer marketing is not a new trend, implementing a meticulous strategy including message consistency, the right influencers, and determining when to use them is what will set organizations apart in 2020.

PRO TIP: My favorite tool for discovering influencers related to specific topics and industries is BuzzSumo!

AMANDA WEBB



DIGITAL MARKETING STRATEGY SPECIALIST, SPIDERWORKING

Whatever you do without marketing in 2020 think conversation, personalization, and strategy.

It's going to be harder for smaller businesses to succeed on social. As networks run out of space for advertising, prices are going up but that's not the only problem for businesses with no or small marketing departments.

Social ads are becoming more complex, you need to up-skill and work hard to make sales from them.

THINK ENGAGEMENT

One way you can combat this rise in ad spend is to excel on organic social. Spend more time building engaging content and being more engaged.

This is one area where SMBs can still win. Social networks will also recognize engaging pages and give them a lift in reach. This engagement will help when you create ads too.

It's time to build a proper strategy for your business so you can optimize the time and money you invest in your social media and digital marketing.

EMAIL MARKETING

Smart small businesses will use email marketing more.

We have seen a trend towards private messaging on social and email marketing takes that one step further.

Making all your emails more memorable, personal and engaging will help you build a stronger, more loyal audience.

THE RISE OF TWITTER

People will continue to move away from Facebook-owned properties and look elsewhere for their online conversations.

I predict Twitter is in a good position to grow. They have lots of new features planned for 2020 including more selective sharing.

Have conversations, learn as much as you can about your customers, and personalize your communications and you could be onto a winning strategy for 2020.

MICHAEL WILLIAMS

**SENIOR SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGER,
JELLYFISH**

GETTING YOUR MESSAGING RIGHT & THE RISE OF PERSONALIZATION

In 2020, I think brands need to adopt a “back-to-basics” approach, step back and think:

- Who actually is our audience?
- What are their interests and challenges?

When it comes to creating content, brands need to counteract the social media noise, think “less is more”, and create messaging that actually resonates with their key audience(s).

With the rise in automation, I think we’ll also start to see personalization surprise and delight audiences from a creative and messaging point of view.

COMMUNITIES WILL CONTINUE TO RISE

People are no longer looking for large communities, but relevant ones.

The consumer wants to spend time with people that share their interests and beliefs rather than engage with the general public where the conversation is often unmanageable and at times, toxic.

Despite being a long term brand building piece, social media practitioners should create and engage groups and leverage these for customer feedback and insight ahead of new product launches and brand-driven activity.

FACEBOOK USERS TO BOYCOTT PLATFORM EN MASSE

I'm going out on a bit of a limb here to say that Facebook users will boycott the platform/delete accounts en masse as a result of their stance around political advertising and ongoing data/trust issues.

As such, channel adoption and diversification will be important so that brands can find new and cheaper ways to reach customers and gain their attention.

JOE YOUNGBLOOD

**FOUNDER,
WINNER WINNER CHICKEN DINNER**

2020 is the year that video content on social media is no longer a nice-to-have, but a must-have.

Data has suggested for some time that consumers who view online videos are more likely than their counterparts to make a purchase.

Today social media is largely a video landscape with:

- Stories on Snapchat and Instagram.
- Short-form videos on TikTok and Twitter.
- Long-form videos on YouTube and Facebook.
- Live streaming videos on Twitch and YouTube.
- High-quality video memes on Reddit and Facebook.

Consumers now appear to expect video content from a brand they are going to do business with. If you haven't started experimenting with video, now is the time to get going or you'll risk falling behind the competition.

Another thing about social media in 2020 is the growing decay of organic reach and traffic, that decay started with Facebook years ago and has now spread to Instagram, YouTube, Reddit, and other social platforms.

You're far less likely to get useful engagements, audience growth, and sales organically now than you were just a few years ago.

To be successful in social media marketing in 2020, you must find a way to mix paid and organic promotions on nearly every platform.

The FTC is increasingly exercising its power over the social media marketing landscape. In 2019, they went after YouTube for COPPA violations and other social media platforms could be next.

The deal with YouTube likely sets the precedent for what will follow, that is that content online can't be designed to target kids AND have ads that collect data as it violates the privacy of children.

While YouTube was held accountable to a certain degree, the deal stipulates that the content creators will be largely held accountable moving forward with major fines for failure to comply.

This could deliver a critical blow to online platforms and creators that rely on revenue sharing programs from those platforms and their baked-in advertising solutions.

Instagram and Facebook don't appear to be idly sitting by and watching this and those platforms, along with others, are likely to implement more changes in 2020 to avoid scrutiny and hefty FTC fines.

Finally, in 2020, we may see the fate of social media influencers decided. I believe this year will be a tipping point in the ongoing battle over the usefulness of influencers and the entire landscape of influencer marketing.

This will be the culmination of dwindling organic reach, the need for platforms to increase their own revenue, bad actors as influencers, revelations about how social media impacts mental well being, and increasing government oversight.

If 2020 isn't the year that influencers come to an end, it very well could be seen as the year in which the platforms they use actively work against them.

DENNIS YU

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, BLITZMETRICS

In 2020, performance marketers will be either priced out of Facebook or bring video production in-house.

The algorithm increasingly penalizes posts with low engagement or high negative feedback, with base CPMs over \$40, no matter the objective – even higher on cold traffic.

The #1 most common mistake is running conversion ads to cold traffic, creating a negative cycle of high negative feedback that reduces conversions and then slows down the learning phase.



Short-form video, in 15-second vertical story snippets and one minute for education/entertainment, is the antidote – yielding \$4-10 CPMs.

The low-end of the range is to larger audiences at a lower frequency, choosing higher funnel objectives, and looking not like an ad.

ThruPlays, thus, cost 2-3 cents, since average watch times on good video ads are over 15 seconds, instead of 6 seconds.

And smart marketers are remarketing against those remarketing audiences to measure sequence-driven yield, not last touch or immediate conversion.

Thus, attribution is a necessary accompaniment to measuring the effectiveness of "journeys", which can be configured in Facebook's analytics tool.

Marketers are realizing that "ugly" ads made on a cell phone beat the polished professional look of an ad – because consumers recognize an ad instantly.

2020 will be the year that sequential video engagement is critical to ROI, measured by the assist Facebook provides search, email, and offline conversions.