

## 5 Social Media Trends for 2014 - challenges for marketers

### Highlights

1. Social visibility, built on great content, will make for successful social marketing
2. To be seen, companies will have to 'pay to play' using pay-per-click on some platforms
3. Business to business companies will increase their targeted use of LinkedIn
4. Google+ will become more important for appearing on page 1 of Google
5. More photos and videos will hold your audience's attention

All these points require that all important **social media strategy**, integrated with your marketing plan.

### Background: 2013 was the year of Content Creation

As we enter 2014, the effective implementation of social media strategies, search engine optimisation and email marketing continue to be the main areas of focus for marketers. The proliferation of social media platforms – Vine, Instagram, Pinterest and industry-based specialist forums – means that marketing managers are still climbing steep learning curves, dragging long-suffering departments behind them. Not only do they have new platforms to learn but also frequent updates to functionality and algorithms to contend with.

The search engines also present ever-changing environments for marketing managers and website managers, where content needs to serve the reader in order to support SEO.

#### 1. Visibility versus Content

There is no doubt that 2013 was the year of content creation for online marketing. Our view is that ensuring your carefully crafted content is visible is the next priority. This is a challenge as the internet becomes 'noisier' and the size of social media platforms grows apace.

The era of one-size fits all communication via social media has limited marketing potential and, if the audience blinks, the message is missed. The concept of following is widely misunderstood. The question all marketers should ask: 'Are we setting up procedures for following or just popping by from time to time on the off-chance that someone is saying something interesting which we can react to?'

**Tip 1: Concentrate on well written content delivered to a highly targeted social media audience to get your business noticed.**

#### 2. Pay to Play

Facebook has admitted to making it harder for business pages to obtain the reach of two or three years ago. This penalises those companies who were late to the party or those with limited resources to allocate to page management.

Coupled with shareholders requiring a return on investment, Facebook and Twitter are forcing the 'pay to play' model with PPC adverts and paid-for promoted content to ensure visibility. This is borne out on Rick Mulready's latest podcast where he interviews the 10 Social Media managers from US companies <http://rickmulready.com/social-media-trends-2/> and asks them for their views on 2014.

**Tip 2: Compare the cost of managing social media accounts with running a pay per click campaign.**

### 3. Companies will leverage LinkedIn Company Pages

LinkedIn, which is less dependent on advertising due to its diversified revenue streams from premium memberships and career solutions, has also introduced the sponsored update for company profiles. We are still amazed by the lack of uptake by some quite large companies of LinkedIn company page posting. We know there are major brand awareness benefits of regular posting of content.

Here are a few pointers:

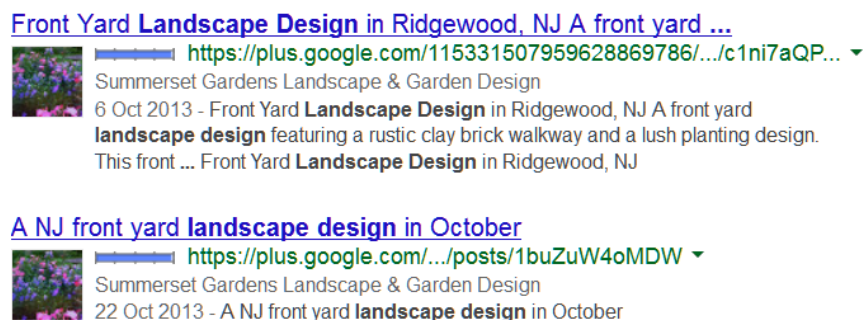
1. Ensure new followers are connected with by the most relevant people in your business.
2. Develop a professional company profile with contact details, links and videos.
3. Add files and images to your company updates and personal posts.
4. Combine sales messages with industry news and comment.

**Tip 3: Use LinkedIn to find the people you really want to do business with and spruce up your company page**

### 4. Google+ to support SEO

Even a cursory examination of Google analytics shows the value Google places on social sharing and socially generated traffic to your website. It is possible to drill down into the analytics to see visitors from all the main social media platforms. This provides the social media manager with insights into which posts on the different platforms lead to the most click throughs to your website. For example, traffic to a new blog post, which has been shared on Facebook, Twitter, Google+, LinkedIn, Reddit, Stumbleupon and Digg, can be identified in real-time.

Search results for long tail keywords will frequently show Google+ posts which include the link to a relevant page on a website. For example, typing in 'landscape design' into Google brings up two Google+ posts on page 1 in 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> position under the strip of images.



**Tip 4: Set up a Google+ business page and regularly share your content and interact with your circles.**

## 5. Visual content – a picture tells 1,000 words, a video does it better

Social media is fast-paced and often attracts fleeting attention. The challenge for marketers is to hold that attention long enough for the audience to click onto a link to your website for more in-depth information. An image or video will help. Back in October 2013, Twitter improved the visual experience (<https://blog.twitter.com/2013/picture-this-more-visual-tweets>)

We anticipate further growth in the importance of images and short video clips on traffic from social media to websites. Whilst some companies might not have the resources to create complex infographics, many will require text on photos and 30 second videos made from a voice recording over a simple PowerPoint to enhance their social media content. These techniques are simple to acquire or outsource and we have experience in their production. For an example see: [App of the Week](#)

**Tip 5: Source a bank of images and short videos for social sharing**

### Integrated Social Media Strategy

In conclusion, effective social media management requires a rolling strategy which keeps up with new features and. For organisations starting out with social media, we would advise concentrating on one or two platforms initially, only adding another as each is fully appreciated for its benefits. The ROI from Social Media Marketing is just measured by sales figures but rather a complex set of outcomes which financially-orientated management might find frustrating.

Failure to participate in social media at all is leaving potential on the shelf. Whilst launching headlong into the full social suite is likely to result in an overwhelming drain on resources. Social Media Marketing should be integrated into your other online communications – blogs, email, e-books and website content – at a minimum and, in our opinion, is best applied as part of your overall marketing strategy.

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