

The new face of your business is an avatar.

The increasing reality for business owners and marketers in 2021 and beyond is that their online social media presence is becoming the new face of their business. Gone are the days where a brand can reliably communicate their narratives through the high reaching waves of television and radio to the masses. Newspaper ads and glossy magazine ad pages are not the sure fire means of getting your message out to the middle class dads or their teenage kids eager to get their parents to open their wallets for their must-have items. While the old mediums will never truly die as long as there is a significant amount of people still using them, in today's world of business, social media advertising is the new realm for delivering your narrative to the consumer.

With 4.55 billion people worldwide using social media, over half the world's population is signed on to a new global atmosphere of products and services being marketed to them. In North America, 74% of the population is active on social media. As the world turns their attention to the social sphere, the business world is adapting as it must to maintain relevance. Reports show that spending on social media advertising will hit \$105 billion in 2021, a 15% increase from the year over. Big brands and small businesses can all benefit from this trend that will undoubtedly become the primary means of marketing for the foreseeable future. What makes social media so amazing for businesses is that you can target the audience in so many ways; including paid advertising, organic content creation, community groups, customer engagement, customer service, brand personality, competitor analysis, and so much more.

Before the emergence of Facebook and all the other social apps that have taken over the world; the major means of marketing were through the channels on the television, the waves of the radio, and the pages of newspapers and magazines. In this era there is a defined amount of time you will be spending with the brand and a place in mind of where you will be consuming advertising. People at home watching TV might become familiar with a brand while they are watching TV with carefully laid out and expensive 30 second ads that they will probably see countless times. Everyone of this era is familiar with the cliché of having dad reading the newspaper at breakfast, and his teenage daughter leafing through the pages of a glossy fashion magazine. Businesses could be sure to pack a major influence on the consumer by a carefully placed ad for car parts near the business section, or a full page ad in Vogue magazine for the latest teen fashion products. But in today's world people get their news of the world differently, with people accessing this information accordingly: 82% through online media including social media, 64% through television media, and only 24% through print media.

The Social Media Creator is the new Picasso

Short-form video has taken a huge surge in the social media society with Tik Tok paving the way and Instagram Reels rushing in to join in on the craze. Now it's a feature on basically every

social media app, and marketers are quickly incorporating the growing influence of Creators on these platforms. Creators and social media Influencers have dedicated their professions to making content that interests people and excites their passions. In the last two years, the social media landscape has really transformed from being mostly high quality pictures paired with captions or long form text, to platforms for video content that will capture the viewer's attention over a long-standing relationship. Forecasts show that US marketers have picked up on this budding trend, with 67.9% of companies with 100 or more employees planning on using Influencer Marketing in 2021. That is up from 62.3% from last year and figures to rise up to 72.5% for said companies. Stacy DeBroff, founder and CEO of influencer marketing platform Influence Central, has said that, "Social commerce in particular has made influencers very powerful."

Creating content for social media can be done by anyone that has a little bit of imagination and some understanding of the social media platform they are using. This is part of what makes this trend so exciting for small businesses and self promoters. I have been running the social media accounts for the pizza place I work for and have found it amazing for reaching new customers and keeping people excited about the business. When I first started out, I was getting really great results using the more traditional social media features with photo carousels and using my writing skills to whip out some catchy copy to highlight what was being shown. Then the game really changed and suddenly video was the biggest focus on how to reach people. At first I was really terrified of how I would be able to fit into this creative medium I wasn't very familiar with. But I was quickly able to overcome those fears because there is so much help out there you can find online to learn anything you need to know, and also these platforms have dedicated a ton of money and resources to make it very easy for you to make these videos and get them out to the kind of people that want to see your stuff.

This new way is a friendly way for business

I have been following this trend personally now for about a year and have found that social media is truly going to be the way of the future for how businesses communicate their message to the consumer. These social platforms have created a new level of interaction between the brand and consumer that has never been seen before. Think about how you can basically become friends with your customers, joke around with them, find out about what's going on in their lives, and see the true atmosphere of what you are providing for. This will lead to long lasting relationships with consumers and being able to earn a trust and understanding of what your business is all about. In my experience with engaging with customers and reaching out for new ones, the importance of showing a genuine voice that is an authority in their niche is key. So as long as you have something for people that can benefit them, all you need to do to reach people about this is to be friendly. Tell them about yourself and give them something for free that shows them what you're all about (and it can just be knowledge that won't cost you anything!).

There is also the benefit of being able to reach out to some many people without ever spending a dime! Using social media is free. It's free to view everything on the platform and it's free to

post anything and reach the people that follow you and also you are able to target non-followers using hashtags and the algorithms the platforms have set up to distribute content. You can certainly boost your reach and refine the targeting of customers by paying for sponsored ads and such as well. The social media world is highly compatible for just about any type of marketing strategy and budget, which will inevitably spur this next generation of entrepreneurs to exciting new levels of building relationships and extending the conversation with their customers.

Sources:

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