



**Strategic**  
Communications

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## **Social Media and Your 2020 Marketing Strategy**

There have been plenty of notable changes in the social media landscape as of late. New channels (like TikTok) are popping up. Legacy channels (like Facebook and Twitter) are cracking down on users and APIs whose approaches have been more spammy than strategic.

In our work, we've seen growth across most of the channels we manage stagnant, and even decline. But the days of chasing the numbers are drawing to an end (if they haven't already ended), so we've been doing some thinking about the role that social media can and should play as part of an overall content marketing strategy—what's changed, what the opportunities and risks might be and whether, and how, we should continue to use social media as part of an overall strategic, and aligned, content marketing strategy.

As we pondered the topic, we wondered what other traditional and digital marketing experts had to say. So, we asked them! Here's a look at what social media and marketing practitioners have to say about:

- How changes in social media channels have impacted their use of social media as part of their overall content strategy.
- Whether they're relying more, or less, on social media channels.
- Whether they're doing more, or less, paid advertising in social media and search.

- Strategies for 2020.
- Predictions for their future use of social media as part of their overall content strategy.

Here we share their perspectives. Learn more about each contributor's background and organization in the Appendix.

## How Changes in Social Media Channels Have Impacted Use

Paige Arnof-Fenn – [Mavens & Moguls](#)

I am a big fan of content marketing as a gateway to thought leadership which is a great way to build your brand, increase your visibility more broadly, and raise your profile which allows you to raise your prices when you attract more clients/customers. I regularly share quality content based on my experience personally and professionally. To qualify it must be timely and relevant.

To generate ideas I look at the calendar to see if there are any natural opportunities based on the season or activities, keep a running list of topics I get asked about by my clients and other business owners and note when I read or hear about something new I want to explore further, a trend, theme or idea that catches my attention.

If it is an issue that affects me or my business, then it is likely to be a topic that impacts others too. Once I decide on an idea to write about, I may do research on the topic, talk to people for input and just start typing. If I have a unique perspective to share, or any advice I think may help others, I get it out there via social media or whatever distribution vehicle makes the most sense.

Nikola Baldikov – [Brosix](#)

It's difficult to build organic traffic through social media. People have become inundated with information and it's becoming increasingly difficult to stand out unless you're very targeted in your approach. Things like Facebook groups and private niche groups in Slack still work since you're focusing on an audience that is open to your message. It's a good idea to participate in such groups and to share your content there. Be careful when choosing, though, and make sure that you're only focusing on the relevant ones. Q&A community websites such as Reddit and Quora are also a good place to engage the right audience.

### Kane Carpenter – [DAGGERFINN](#)

Social media is constantly changing. And it's hard for businesses and brands to constantly pivot and maneuver to take advantage of social media's built-in audience. This is why, through 2019 and 2020, we have started guiding our clients toward using social media as an employer branding tool. This way, it doesn't matter which platform they want to use or are most proficient at (that will depend on their internal marketing capabilities or what they choose to outsource to an agency), but they will also have a 'north star' with social media—to highlight their employer brand and why they are a great place to work.

### Jonathan Chan – [Insane Growth](#)

While the recent social media crackdowns have made it more a bit more difficult to organically build an audience, this isn't anything new. Social media companies have always been moving towards pushing business users to their paid advertising features and this latest round of updates is just par for the course.

### Lauren Grech – [LLG Agency](#)

All social media platforms have started to focus on commercialization, which is having a huge impact as brands try to grow their customers and clientele through social media. These brands are fighting to be heard, but their strategy could have the opposite effect, so it is necessary to consistently update your content strategy based on the ever-changing social media trends. So ultimately yes, you need to rely on your content strategy more, but you and your brand need to have an actual strategy behind it.

We are seeing a direct relation between our social media activities and our other content marketing strategies. Social media has become a validation of sorts for your company and brand, so if your SEO is doing great and people are visiting your website, then you can assume they will also check out your social media outlets to see different content from your brand and validate your work. As such, it is imperative to maintain consistency among all outlets, channels and/or platforms, even if your message is different for each, your brand should stay the same.

### Aida Grigoryan – [Incredo](#)

At Incredo, we have been using LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, and Quora as part of our content strategy. They still help us reach some organic impressions, we see relatively good engagement rate and keep up with sharing posts tailored to the specifics of each platform.

But...

We haven't seen many leads coming from social media and social media works for us mainly to increase brand awareness and web traffic.

### Polly Kay – [English Blinds](#)

While you do, of course, need to fine-tune your social media content strategy on an ongoing basis to keep up with the demands of your demographic audience, find new demographics to target, and identify new platforms and approaches to target, the key elements for social media content strategy don't change.

Providing quality content that your audience wants to see is still king; it needs to generate a response and reaction in them, like amusement, interest, or an emotion that they want to pass on and share with others. When you can achieve this, your platform doesn't matter, and to a great extent, it negates or reduces the need to spend significant sums on paid ads to support your content.

However, what does shift over time is where and how demographics get their social media fix and in what format. Those demographics themselves are highly fluid, changing and evolving continually.

This means that, ultimately, an effective social media content strategy is one that is demographic-led, fluid, and adaptive. As long as you concentrate on your demographics, getting to know them, and identifying and serving what they want, the fine details of this and the ebb and flow of trends and channels are far less impactful.

### Courtney Keene – [MyRoofingPal](#)

While there are a lot of changes I could talk about, one that's often overlooked is how brands are being viewed on social media as a whole. There's been a push in recent years for brands to be active, participating in internet culture, memes, and content production that falls more in line with the average user of each social media platform.

While this was novel initially, most people see it for what it is: An attempt for brands to slip advertisements into the public consciousness without making them look like advertisements. It comes across as dishonest, and I think users of social media are catching on.

What we've tried to do in the face of this— though our company isn't some big, recognizable brand -- is to provide actual value to our potential customers without selling to them. We offer guides, videos, and other forms of content specifically tailored to what our ideal user might be looking for (home improvement and renovations), and we aren't pushy in trying to get them to visit our site.

Mainly we use social media as part of a slow drip funnel. They get plenty of great content for free in exchange for joining our mailing list, and when they require our services, they're much more likely to use our site.

Alexander M. Kehoe – [Caveni Digital Solutions](#)

Some social media platforms have very effectively cracked down on spam without hurting their legitimate userbase. Sadly, in the case of Facebook and Instagram, they have compromised the quality of their service for the everyday user meaning that those platforms are mostly only used now to cross-post content created on other platforms. In most cases, we use social media platforms as a force multiplier for our website content and do the same thing for most of our clients. The organic reach of social media is diminished lately and most PPC platforms are under-performing. Google ads, while effective, simply do not perform as well as they used to, and Facebook is really only effective for specific demographics. Content, in general, is very effective comparatively.

Samantha Starns – [Samstarns.com](#)

A lot of my reputation comes from social media as an entrepreneur and small business owner. Instagram particularly (due to its visual nature) is a huge platform for me as a photographer. Before 2017 or so, it used to be much easier to build a following on social media, Instagram specifically. Over the past year, engagement on the platform has declined steadily for me. Is this due to a decrease in bots and fake engagement accounts, or is it due to a prioritization of ads being shown over organic business content? We may never know exactly what combination of that has caused the decline.

What I've experienced, though, is that if content is consistently of high quality, and doesn't hard-sell the viewer, your engagement won't matter as much. Will you go viral? Likely not. But you'll be putting out content that's intended only for your target audience. Play by the rules and terms of service and utilize all the options (hashtags, location tags, etc.) and your target demographic will find you. Yes, it's hard to completely ignore the number of Likes and Follows one gets on places like Instagram, but if you had 5,000 Likes on an image, it means nothing if those people aren't your target demographic, or aren't converting to leads/bookings/sales.

While I still use social media, I pay attention to it less now than before. Consumers are becoming wiser to "comment-bait" captions that pretend to be interested in what the reader has to say but are just fishing for engagement.

Frank Tortorici – [Marketing Maven](#)

New channels like TikTok have provided ways for brands to create content that show brand personality without coming off 'sales-like' similar to an ad. This strategy has been seen to increase brand awareness, sales, and overall marketing goals.

Although we do not see popular platforms like Instagram, LinkedIn and YouTube going anywhere anytime soon, content strategy for these platforms has begun to shift to follow the authentic trend. Real-time communication such as Instagram Live and LinkedIn Live have also been used by marketers as tactics to promote brand authenticity.

Janice Wald – [Blogger, Blogging Coach and Freelance Writer](#)

Since the rise of Instagram, I have started using Instagram more to promote my content. I also write about Instagram on my blog more often. Mostly, I put a great deal of emphasis into using Instagram Stories. I've read many people aren't using Instagram Stories. Therefore, my repeated use makes my brand more unique than others.

Julianne Weinman – [SSPR](#)

The changes in social media platform algorithms and APIs have largely been in response to a shift in the relationship between consumers and brands. After a wave of data breaches and an era of "fake news", consumers are demanding more transparency and authenticity from the brands they interact with and buy from.

While some brands have moved away from social media during these changes, the average daily time spent on social media continues to rise every year and these platforms are still a very lucrative medium for reaching consumers where they are already spending a chunk of their time. Instead of moving away from social media, companies should adjust their approach to these platforms.

Skylar Whitney – [Dittoe Public Relations](#)

In the early 2010s, marketers came to realize it was imperative to have a presence on social media to connect with target audiences. Today, marketers are realizing that simply posting content to these channels is no longer enough to cut through the noise. We've begun

evaluating top-performing content on a weekly to bi-weekly basis to ensure it's living up to our expectations.

## **Are Marketers Relying More, or Less, on Social Media Channels**

Alexandra Cote – [B2B SaaS Content Writer and Strategist](#)

Honestly, social media has lost a huge part of my attention. Mainly because there's not much value left for me as an individual brand and neither for my clients. I only keep doing the following:

1. Keep Facebook posts to the minimum so people can see my clients are still active.
2. Use Twitter for support and delighting leads and customers. Along with this I also try to participate in industry discussions via Twitter chats.
3. As for LinkedIn, there's only value to promote yourself as an individual so I've been posting regular insightful content.

Meg Marrs – [K9 of Mine](#)

While it can be frustrating to have social media channels completely shift their strategy, this is the nature of online marketing. Google does the same thing—whenever they release a major algorithm change, people lose entire businesses.

Keeping in mind that change and flux are an inherent part of online marketing, I don't avoid social media channels because of these changes. Instead, I try to use social media to build communities that can't be severely broken by an algorithm change. For example, I've begun to focus a lot more on our Facebook group ([Dog Lover's Unite](#)) rather than our individual business page. The group is a better environment for fostering conversation between members, and it also provides me with direct access to our audience without requiring me to pay for ads.

Social media networks are still a prime spot for introducing yourself to an audience. It's great for getting reach and finding new fans. But I'd suggest capturing those individuals by another means as quickly as possible. This means getting them to join a private group, getting them to join your newsletter - do your best to be able to access them outside of the social network, in case things do go sour.

## Are Marketers Relying More, or Less, on Paid Advertising

Nikola Baldikov – [Brosix](#)

If you're serious about bringing social media traffic to your website, you should be ready to pay for it.

Jonathan Chan – [Insane Growth](#)

While the recent social media crackdowns have made it more a bit more difficult to organically build an audience, this isn't anything new. Social media companies have always been moving towards pushing business users to their paid advertising features and this latest round of updates is just par for the course.

At the end of the day, paid social media advertising is still incredibly powerful for businesses that are willing to use it and I don't see that changing anytime soon. I believe that this is going to end up encouraging more brands to turn to paid advertising as the ability to grow an audience organically becomes more limited.

Sean Clancy – [Edge Marketing](#)

You have to pay to play in Social Media now, there is no other option. If you don't pay, nobody and I mean nobody will see what your company will say.

We ensure that our paid posts are researched thoroughly and pitched to the right demographic at the right time. We are constantly tweaking it for the small gains from the previous post, as this makes all the difference.

Using analytics and trends data is vital now, the competition is so fierce you need to find any advantages and undiscovered data you can.

Alexandra Cote – [B2B SaaS Content Writer and Strategist](#)

As for paid advertising, I'm doing none. I keep my focus on SERP optimization. This is certainly the best "channel" to focus on if you want to "promote" your brand in the long run.

Lauren Grech – [LLG Agency](#)

We do not use paid advertising because we haven't found a good return on investment through it in our industry, and our public relations skills and marketing campaigns garner that brand awareness and recognition just the same. However, I believe if companies can create the

proper paid advertising strategy for their brand, it can work very well. But if it is not completely thought out, then it can have the opposite effect.

Aida Grigoryan – [Incredo](#)

You may have millions of followers but if you don't pay for an ad, your posts don't reach your hard-earned followers. The costs of running paid ads are getting much higher too.

There is one thing *all* businesses should keep in mind - social media channels are owned by third parties and you actually don't own your social media assets. If one day the owner of X social media channel writes new rules, you might lose what you have been building for years.

That's why we only invest a few hours weekly to update our social media accounts, but we don't run any ads. Instead, we invest in creating high-quality content for our website that can be repurposed and distributed many-many times. Businesses should focus on investing in their website optimization, SEO, and relying on more channels like email or SMS marketing.

Meg Marris – [K9 of Mine](#)

Since I am in the affiliate marketing space, I don't do paid ads. They simply aren't sustainable for us. However, if I was selling my own products, I would certainly consider it. I'd suggest focusing on paid ads with under-utilized social networks like Pinterest ads (so long as your industry is relevant for Pinterest).

Frank Tortorici – [Marketing Maven](#)

With the introduction of new social media platforms, Facebook's increase in paid vs. organic reach and Twitter's crackdown on spammy/bot activity amongst others, marketers are urged to constantly revise strategy to achieve business goals. As a result, these changes have led to increases in paid advertising and quality of organic content. Although various platforms encourage increased ad spend, consumer demand for raw, genuine organic content has also increased. Marketers are beginning to shift towards curating authentic, organic content to increase engagement and virality while saving advertising dollars.

Janice Wald – [Blogger, Blogging Coach and Freelance Writer](#)

I am using paid means of boosting my Instagram success. This resulted in my growing my account to over 10,000 followers. Since I have over 10,000 Instagram followers, I'm able to use the Swipe Up feature with Bitly link shorteners. These Bitly links allow me to track the analytics of my content promotion on Instagram. I listen to podcasts about how to succeed on Instagram

and read a great deal about Instagram growth as well. My Instagram followers get to see a more fun, creative, playful side than my blog followers do. This, in turn, results in boosting my brand on Instagram.

Skylar Whitney – [Dittoe Public Relations](#)

More than ever, we're relying on social media to distribute messaging about new products, initiatives, events and the like. We've seen a shift away from organic content and more support from C-level decision-makers when it comes to paid distribution on social media. Not only does paid reach a larger audience, but social media advertisements also allow marketers to control the demographic reach of their content, making it more impactful in the long run. Over the past few years, we've seen clients develop an interest in paid social efforts, followed by increased budgets across all platforms. We're seeing the ROI in real-time and that's enough to further invest in these initiatives.

### **Strategies for 2020**

Paige Arnof-Fenn – [Mavens & Moguls](#)

To make content even more attractive and drive conversion further in 2020 I will try to understand not just what or how to purchase a product, experience or service but also be able to inspire audiences by identifying the underlying motivation. The key to becoming more influential, I think, is when you can answer why they do what they do and connect with people on an emotional level. This will be my focus in the new year. I will keep tweaking as I go and try not to get too bogged down in the noise from the election! I just want to keep building on this year's successes and move forward. I wrote monthly columns for both Entrepreneur and Forbes for many years and contribute to blogs constantly, so this strategy has worked for me for more than a decade. I write about what I know and share my stories and lessons learned good, bad and ugly.

Myasia Burns – [Midan Marketing](#)

I think more than anything I've adjusted my expectations for what a social ROI should be – and I'm learning how to communicate those expectations upward. We rely on social media less for conversion and site clicks, but more for checking the pulse of our target audience and bringing them content they value, whether it converts to a sale or not. When we have something where we *need* those eyeballs or clicks, then a paid ad might make sense, but boosting for the sake of

boosting doesn't help anyone. These new algorithms force us to consider what needs to be said and what is simply just making noise. I think we're seeing a quality vs. quantity shift in our social media results. We may see fewer impressions, but the ones we retain are a more engaged audience – these are the people we *want* to talk to.

#### Jonathan Chan – [Insane Growth](#)

The core of our content strategy remains the same: to produce high-quality content and to utilize influencers wherever possible to promote our content.

One step that we have made, and most brands are taking, is to not sell our product, but rather share information, stories, and connections. By doing this, your brand comes across as an actual person that can create a loyal following of interest, rather than a company just trying to get the consumer's money.

#### Julianne Weinman – [SSPR](#)

We began using TikTok and reanalyzed our strategy for our current social media channels. TikTok is one of the fastest-growing social media platforms and has a huge connection with the younger generation, so if you want to reach this generation who may now or potentially later be your customer or client, then you should join the platform. This avenue to reach a new, targeted demographic shows that we must always analyze each platform to understand who the audience is and what they want to see. For example, the younger generations are beginning to leave Facebook, so we curate our Facebook content around older generations.

Authenticity is king in 2020 and consumers are placing their loyalties with companies who seem approachable and personable and have built genuine connections with their customers. From working with influencers to appointing team members to be brand representatives or even simply crafting a more approachable brand voice, brands must adjust their content strategies to be focused on connecting with consumers, and less on getting them to immediately convert.

Once brands have established trust and formed connections, customers will be more likely to interact with paid content and even more likely to follow through and convert.

## Predictions for the Future Use of Social Media

Paige Arnof-Fenn – [Mavens & Moguls](#)

Arnof-Fenn has several predictions for the future of social media:

- Content quality and length will continue to matter for rankings. Web pages that contain long, high-quality content get more visibility and shares so becoming that trusted source and influencers with timely and helpful answers to questions gets rewarded quickly.
- There will be more confidence in trusted content, friends and influencers than advertising. The world has been moving this way for years with people seeking their friends' and influencers' opinions and advice online on what to buy, where to go, and what to do more than a paid ad or fancily packaged content. =Customers are savvy today they are happy to buy what they want and need but they do not like to be sold things. Curated content and ideas from a trusted source beat paid content every time.
- Content will match the buyer's journey. Understanding that journey will inform how to attract, engage and convert customers and which keywords and topics are used.
- Influencers will continue to rise in prominence. Partnering and building relationships with the right influencers with content that is co-created helps brands scale and grow faster and amplify and boost their message.

Nikola Baldikov – [Brosix](#)

My prediction is that paid advertising will become even more targeted and worth your money in the future, so it's definitely worth the investment!

Myasia Burns – [Midan Marketing](#)

Looking towards the future, I think we will continue to spend more time learning about the communities we join, and the content people are wanting to consume. Then, we'll find relevant ways to share more about our clients while still listening, learning and engaging. Two-way communication model at its finest!

Jonathan Chan – [Insane Growth](#)

Influencers are becoming more powerful in today's social media age and more and more brands are relying on influencers to help promote their message. We are going to see influencers, especially micro-influencers, being used more strategically in the future.

Sean Clancy – [Edge Marketing](#)

I think AI will be the future of social media, with the feedback from posts looping into an algorithm that will be created and publish your new posts for you. Learning from interactions and engagements from your audience and auto tweaking your posts with the new information on board.

Alexandra Cote – [B2B SaaS Content Writer and Strategist](#)

As for the future, I will focus on creating more videos and use these on YouTube and LinkedIn.

Lauren Grech – [LLG Agency](#)

Influencer marketing is still on the rise, albeit in new ways, so our plan is still to continue growing connections and network. User-generated content and word of mouth will continue to be essential to brand trust, and therefore, growth.

Frank Tortorici – [Marketing Maven](#)

As social media continues to grow, marketers predict a rise in demand for engaging organic content and, as a result, encourage brands to curate unique strategies on the ideal social media platforms to efficiently target their audience.

Skylar Whitney – [Dittoe Public Relations](#)

I believe the use of influencers will become even more widespread moving forward, allowing marketers to reach audiences in a way that combines paid and organic, as well as public relations and social media strategies. Brands will also taper off their need to have a presence on every social media channel and instead focus in on the ones truly making an impact.

Facebook will, more than likely, continue to be the “top dog” when it comes to social media channels, but in the past few years, we’ve seen a large increase in the level of engagements on LinkedIn. Whether being used for recruiting purposes or B2B marketing, this platform has

grown exponentially and will continue to provide new ways for professionals to connect with one another and brands alike.

The rise of influencers on platforms like YouTube and Instagram has also pulled focus from Facebook and allowed marketers to reach beyond their previous Facebook audiences and engage with users in a whole new way.

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