



# SOCIAL MEDIA TRENDS 2018

29 EXPERTS ON THE  
FUTURE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

WRITTEN BY  
DANNY GOODWIN

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# DANNY GOODWIN

Executive Editor of Search Engine Journal. In addition to overseeing SEJ's editorial strategy and managing contributions from a team of 60+ industry experts, he also writes news and articles about SEO, PPC, social media marketing, content marketing. Danny has been a professional editor, writer, and ghostwriter in the marketing industry for 10 years, creating content for SMBs to global brands, spanning all things search and digital. He formerly was managing editor of Momentology and editor of Search Engine Watch.

# 29 EXPERTS ON THE MOST IMPORTANT 2018 SOCIAL MEDIA TRENDS

The biggest [social media trends of 2017](#) included video, influencer marketing, and bots.

Now it's time to get ready for 2018, and clearly, those trends aren't going away soon.

The next year you can be sure video and influencer marketing will continue to be top social media trends. Ephemeral marketing also seems poised to have a huge year.

But (hopefully) one of the most important trends we'll see in 2018 is businesses and brands finally recognizing the need to make authentic and emotional connections with their customers or audience, on whatever technology or social platform that makes the most sense.

While a few brands and businesses understand this now, there are still too many that still don't get it.

But this only scratches the surface of this year's installment. Read on for social media marketing tips and insights galore!

Here are the most important 2018 social media trends you need to know to succeed, according to 29 of the top marketing experts.



# SHANE BARKER

**Digital Strategist, Shane Barker Consulting**

Social media continues to amaze and impress me every day. Especially with the continual changes to their algorithms, it's not quite as easy to crack the code to success.

However, since I've been closely following its evolution, I can clearly see certain trends that are here to stay. So, here's my two cents on what you should focus on in 2018 to nail your social media strategy.

## 1. Instagram Stories

Well, honestly when Instagram launched "Stories," I wasn't quite convinced about their effectiveness. Why would you emulate something which is already available on another popular platform? But like I said at the beginning, social media

amazes me at times. The success of Instagram Stories was one such impressive revelation.

In just a year, Instagram Stories are being used by [200 million](#) people every month! Given the rate at which its popularity is growing, I certainly expect it to reach most Instagram users in 2018.

The beauty of Instagram Stories is that it requires minimal effort to create and the possibilities are endless. Hence, smart businesses must leverage this opportunity for greater social media success next year.

## 2. Influencer Marketing

Influencer Marketing Hub [predicts](#) that the total spend on sponsored posts by influencers will reach \$24 million by 2018. With 67 percent of marketers planning to increase their influencer marketing budgets next year, it is certainly something worth spending on.

Social influencers can be extremely beneficial in expanding your reach and getting your message across to your target audiences. Because influencer marketing isn't pushy like traditional ads, your brand's messaging appears more credible, too.

By connecting with relevant influencers and creating a long-term relationship with them, you can reap incredible returns. So if you're looking to up your social media strategy, leverage influencers in 2018.

### 3. Live Videos

Another social media trend that you must definitely leverage in 2018: live videos. According to some astonishing insights revealed by Facebook, people spend [3x more time](#) watching live videos than pre-recorded ones. Not just that. The engagement on live videos is 10x more than that on normal pre-recorded videos.



Live videos have helped many companies dramatically increase their social followers and engagement. GORUCK, a manufacturer of backpacks, has had thousands of viewers watching its live coverage of a [48-hour endurance event](#). This clearly indicates that live videos need to be an integral part of your social media strategy in 2018.



# KENDALL BIRD

**Associate Social Media Manager, Collegis Education**

In 2017, we saw the rise of video and it is becoming the biggest player in the social media world. In 2018, we will continue to see a focus on social video, however, brands will need to take a different approach to be seen and heard.

The trend I see becoming a focus in 2018 is within social media and online reviews, and brands showing authentic and transparent feedback with their communities. We are continuing to see more focus on people leaving honest feedback online about products and experiences through places such as YouTube, Facebook, Google My Business and Yelp. But how are brands combating the negative and turning it into positive?

I would encourage anyone who is looking for ways to improve their social media strategy to

look into online reviews and start measuring them immediately. This is where you are going to find out what your communities are looking for from your brand.

There are a few things you may also want to consider implementing when you are focused in on online reviews including protocols for all situations that may arise. Think about FAQs, common complaints, weather-related issues and brand stance (we saw a lot of this with hurricane season this year), advertising trolls, crisis management and general support.

Education to your leadership team, staff, or client about the importance behind social media customer service is also critical. Be sure they understand why you are focusing on social customer service, and why it is important for brand reputation and advocacy.

**Moral of the story:** there is a lot of noise in social media today. Focus on your consumer and communities to earn success in social media.



# LISA BUYER

**CEO & Social PR Consultant, The Buyer Group**

The two biggest trends will be AR/VR and live video.

That's not to say they will be the most used or best applied.

When it comes to AR/VR, most brands are not aware of the marketing possibilities and still see it as a bright shiny object that's expensive and years away from adaptation. Storytelling, media relations, content marketing, customer experience will drastically be enhanced with AR/VR.

True, the technology is not 100 percent accessible and affordable; it is very close. So close brands can't afford to ignore it.

As a start, I recommend reading ["Marketing New Realities"](#) to fully embrace the possibilities

of preparing for the AR/VR/MR movement. AR/VR is expected to give social, SEO, and public relations a whole new dimension and experience to audiences.

When it comes to live video, yes brands realize this is the best performing content with the most opportunity in 2018. The problem is that they are still intimidated and insecure about actually going live.

Brands are scared of not being perfect or they are going live without a real strategy or plan.

The hardest part for brands and live video is getting started. If this is the case, brands doing live video right will have a huge opportunity since the competition will be low.

Other trending thoughts for 2018

- Creativity is the new productivity.
- AR/VR is the new social media.
- Instagram is the new Facebook.

- Facebook is the new TV.
- Snapchat is the new MySpace.
- LinkedIn blue is the new black.
- Medium is the new blog.
- Twitter is the new social movement.
- Emojis are the new universal language.
- AI is the new customer service.
- Talkwalker is the new Google Alert.
- Podcasts are the new radio.
- And we can't forget...Meditation is the new Starbucks run.



# MEL CARSON

**Founder & Principal Strategist, Delightful Communications**

I'm still going to be banging the drum about "people not just pixels" with our clients over the next year.

As I [predicted for 2017](#), we've seen a doubling of enquiries for personal branding and event amplification services as businesses realize that people truly are their best asset and, in order to build up trust with a target audience, putting people at the heart of your marketing and PR across social media channels, really does increase engagement.

Video will continue to be huge, especially with technology and production costs coming down – think about inexpensive 360-degree cameras and

Steadicams – as companies embrace brand journalism and live streaming like our client Bing Ads has done so well with the launch of Bing TV and Janes of Digital this year.

And then there will be advances in AI and machine learning to help further personalize a lot of the messages companies are trying to get across. This will hopefully improve targeting capabilities down the funnel and we should all see less wasted and better ROI!





# GEOFFREY COLON

**Senior Marketing Communications Designer,  
Microsoft**

Three trends to watch in 2018:

## 1. Phigital

Almost every social media marketer should become familiar with this term. I didn't make it up. It has existed for the past year.

What does it mean? It means those marketers that can make their customer experience in the digital world meet their customer experience in the physical world so they feel like one seamless experience will shine. Why?

Most younger consumers have trained everyone to use the conjoint effect to blur the lines between the

online and offline worlds in which we inhabit. This will cause major attribution issues. But those have always existed.

If a person comes into a store and buys something but their whole experience started on social media, who gets the credit? How is this tabulated into a success metric? This leads to trend #2.

## 2. Emotional Analytics

Likes, Shares, Views, Clicks are great but in 2018 the social media marketers on the edge will start to measure emotion and feeling.

- What is the sentiment of customers toward us?
- How does social media change that sentiment?
- Is our Brand Health Index strong?
- Do we have high Net Promoter Score?
- Do people remember us?

The other metrics still matter, but they aren't as important in terms of click and buy as much as evoke long tail feelings. For once, some companies are finally finding their groove in how social

media is to be used in business. Not as a sales generator, but an emotions engine.

### 3. LinkedIn

No, I'm not saying this because I work at Microsoft but have you been on the platform lately? It's a weird mix of business, culture, life insights and more.

It also isn't bound by the limiting algorithms of other platforms. Anyone can publish content that can be seen by anyone else, which makes the platform more open source than any other which still requires following someone to see their content. As a result of this more open environment, there is more navigation for success.



# BRENT CSUTORAS

**Managing Partner, Search Engine Journal**

For almost a decade we have approached social media as a new medium that required more testing than standardized strategies, but I think the biggest thing companies need to realize and focus on in 2018 is that we have a lot of examples, information, and experience, to create and implement real social media strategies.

Take the time to audit your current efforts, research what has been working for others, evaluate your competition, and start really considering how your target audience is going to engage with you on social media.

Another thing companies are really not focusing enough on is utilizing all the options available to them through social media ads. Whether your target audience is super specific and you need to target behaviors like whether an individual has

recently marked themselves as single, or if you have a local event you want to advertise only to people in certain demographics and within a range of one mile from your event, there are a ton of options and strategies to review, in order to really get in front of your audience on social media.

Lastly... stop ignoring Reddit. It is continuing to grow, in the process of redesigning and improving, and has something for every company.

It's 2018 – it's time to stop making excuses for not having a solid social media strategy.



# LEAH DEKREY

**Social Media Strategist, CoSchedule**

I think the two biggest things in 2018 will be ephemeral content and messaging.

## Ephemeral Content

I think we'll see Instagram and Snapchat ramp up their arms race in 2018. As new functionality is released, we'll likely see returns in the form of better engagement, and brands will want to be a part of that.

## Brands Leveraging Messaging Apps to Reach Customers

We already see this happening with Facebook starting to build ad links between the Facebook ad platform and WhatsApp. So this is a great avenue

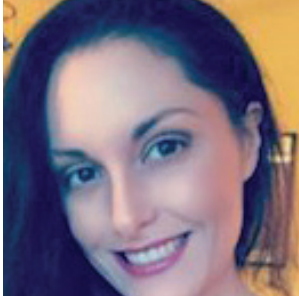
for customer success agents to build 1-on-1 interactions with users.

## Genuine Influencer Marketing

Everyone is all about influencer marketing right now, and a lot of people think it will continue to develop in 2018. I agree with this.

But I'm also growing tired of the constant feed of reality stars hawking detox teas and teeth whitening products on social media. I can't be the only one growing sick of this and also feeling it's far too disingenuous.

Let's move toward more genuine influencer marketing in 2018, please.



# VICTORIA EDWARDS

**Senior Marketing Manager, GuideWell Connect**

Here's what I expect to change in the future, either in 2018 or further down the line:


## **Greater Facebook Ad Transparency**


I saw the below screenshots in a Facebook group that shows a very interesting test running in Canada.

You can see every ad that a brand (Walmart, in this example) is promoting within Facebook, regardless of whether you're the target of the ads:



Walmart Canada

Walmart Canada 

Walmart Canada  @walmartcanada

Home

About

Events

Community Terms

Photos

Videos

Posts

Shop

Notes

Community

Create a Page

Shop Now

Message

Like

Follow

Share

...

Save

Suggest Edits

Create Page

Like as your Page

Invite Friends

Block Page

Report Page



View ads

Viewing ads from Walmart Canada

These are ads that Walmart Canada is currently showing to people through Facebook's advertising platform. We're making these ads available to you, even if you aren't part of the intended audience, in order to give you more information about how this Page is using Facebook ads. We aren't able to show certain kinds of ads, such as some dynamic and offer ads, at this time.

You'll see the Facebook News Feed versions of any ads. Advertisers may run ads across different products, sites and apps (such as Instagram or Messenger), so they may look different here to how they appear there.

Offers, special pricing and other details may not apply to you. Learn more.

Walmart Canada  Sponsored · 

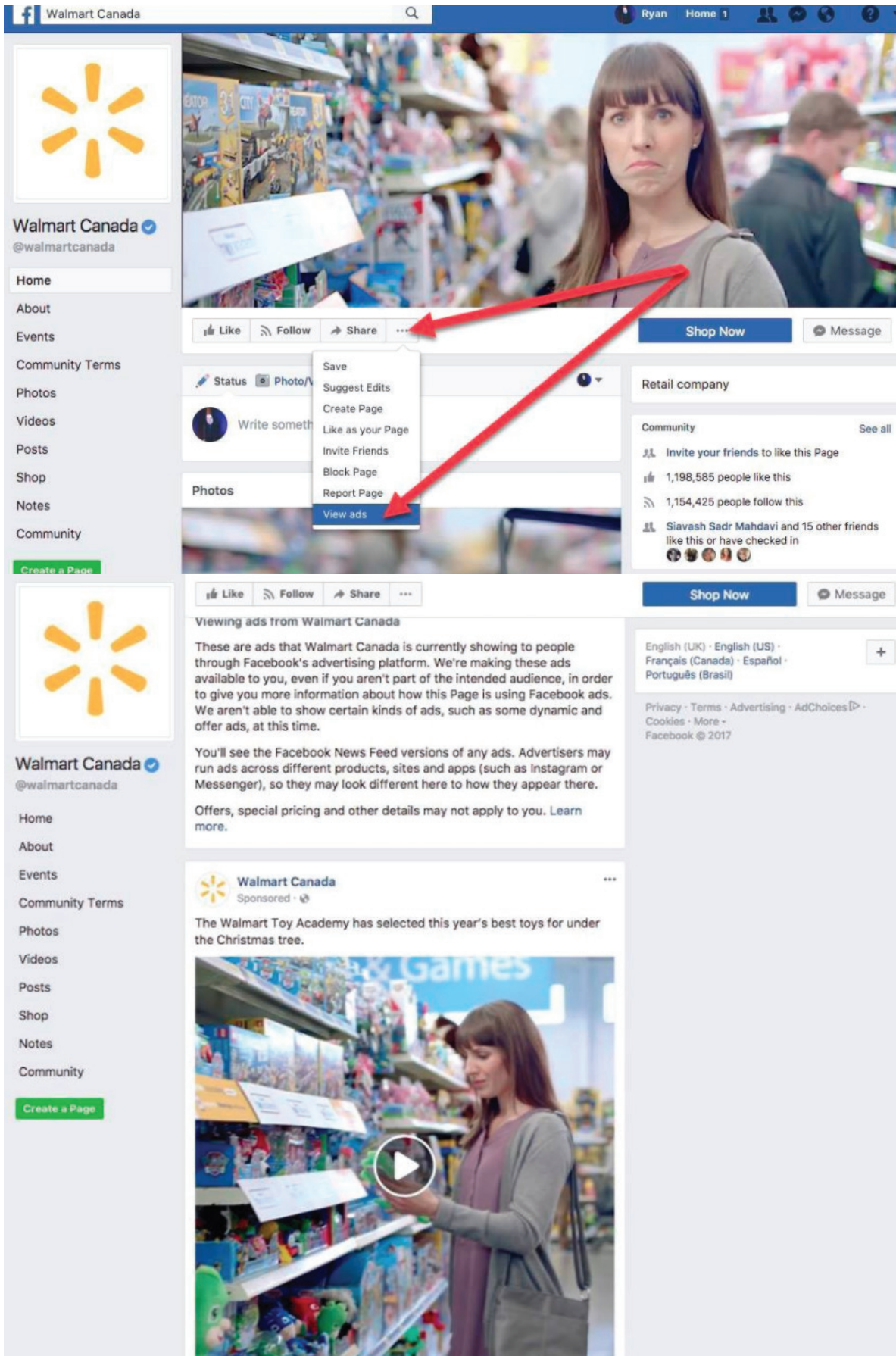
The Walmart Toy Academy has selected this year's best toys for under the Christmas tree.

Shop Now

Message

English (UK) · English (US) · Français (Canada) · Español · Português (Brasil)

Privacy · Terms · Advertising · AdChoices · Cookies · More · Facebook © 2017



I thought this was fascinating. Think of the competitive intelligence you can gain from this.

I reached out to my Facebook rep, who stated that:

*“Starting November 14, in Canada, we are testing a new feature that will allow people to see the active ads a Page is running across Facebook, Instagram, and Audience Network. Upon visiting a Page, people will see a ‘View Ads’ link, which will allow them to view active ads the Page is running even if they are not in the target audience.*

*With this initial test, people will be able to click on the ads to simulate functionality, but we will not be providing impressions or clicks from this feature so this will not affect your reporting or billing. In addition, we will not release targeting information or display what platform ads are running on.*

*We hope that more transparency will mean more people can help report inappropriate ads. We*

*try to catch content that shouldn't be on Facebook before it's even posted – but because this is not always possible, we also take action when people report ads that violate our policies. This is important progress as we continue to execute our larger plans to help bolster and support election integrity.*

*We know it is important that we get this feature right – and that means testing and gathering feedback before rolling it out broadly. Testing in Canada aligns well with our election integrity work that is already underway there.*

*Our plan is to roll this feature out in the United States and more broadly next summer, ahead of the U.S. 2018 midterm elections. This new ability to view ads will apply to all Pages and advertisers – not just political ones – but we recognize it is an integral part of our civic engagement efforts.”*

## Paying for Audience Insights

In the same conversation, I spoke to my rep about campaigns under one client competing with one another, as they are all targeting the same demographics within reason. These campaigns were focused on open enrollment with regards to healthcare.

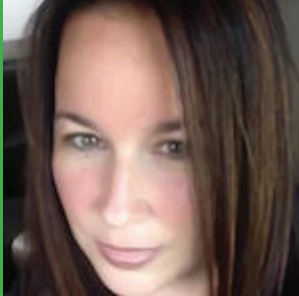
Our rep mentioned that, due to Facebook's layout and our targeting, our campaigns were, in fact, competing with one another. However, due to our client's needs, we could not really back down, but only turn off underperforming ads and focus on the best-performing ones.

This led me to think about what's next for Facebook. This time of year is crazy for Facebook with regards to not only open enrollment but the holiday season. The newsfeed is only so vast. So what happens when Facebook has reached capacity?

Then I found this [AdWeek article](#), which states:

*“During recent earnings calls, Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg has communicated to investors that Facebook is close to hitting a tipping point with ad load, and that it soon won’t be able to pack more ads into newsfeeds. As a result, it’s eyeing new forms of revenue through its messaging app Messenger and could turn Insight Audiences into a paid product that scrubs Facebook’s users for deep troves of data.”*

So, in the future, I expect Facebook – and other social platforms – to turn audience targeting data and insights into a pay-to-play feature (or a paid plugin or add-on to other tools).



# MELISSA FACH

**Social & Community Manager, Pubcon**

Here are three areas to focus your efforts in 2018 for greater social media success:

## Start With Research

With all the competition out there today, all businesses need to be smarter with their social media shares. This means that people need to really focus on competitive research, audience research, and keyword research.

You are wasting time, money and effort when you create social shares with no focus. There has to be a plan and a targeted audience(s) for each share.

## Learning Styles

One of the biggest things businesses miss when creating personas and categories for targeted

audiences is learning styles. How people learn and take in information is different. How you appeal to different learning styles on social must be different.

There is one specifically I want to touch on, tactile learners.

Tactile learners are hands-on learners; they learn by touching and doing. And, for them to decide to invest in a company means they need to learn more about you or your product in a tactile way.

Video is a great way to reach them. How does your product work? **SHOW THEM!** Show them the entire product and everything they would need to know.

Make videos where they can see and understand all aspects of a product. Think video reviews on YouTube or in Amazon reviews. A deeper visual understanding of a product or service is key in converting tactile learners.

## Learning – Go Beyond Reading on the Internet

There are a lot of good ideas on the Internet; there is no doubt about it. However, there are also a lot of rehashed ideas and a constant flood of “similar” information out there.

Often, the best way to get inspired with new and totally out of the box ideas is to attend conferences. Sessions at conferences are different than online content because there is often a conversation with the audience that spurs off ideas.

When you put a lot of minds together discussing a topic, you gain a ton of new insights. And, there are networking opportunities where people can get questions answered or just get opinions on strategies.

With conferences, you can take the ideas you have learned online through reading and find more advanced ways to use them.





# KAT HASELKORN

**Founder, KH Creative**

There will be two big trends in the social realm for 2018.

First, I believe companies will work harder than ever to match their online and offline personas.

As businesses increasingly realize the value of social for generating brand awareness and attracting new customers, it isn't uncommon to see a wide gap between the company's digital personality and their real-life brand image. I predict in 2018 we'll see an increasing number of businesses working to close the gap and align their online and offline selves.

One other trend that seems to be on the rise is transparency of ads. Particularly on Instagram, there are a growing number of brand ambassadors who are very upfront about the products and experiences they're being paid to promote. They'll very clearly denote a post with #ad or #sp, but it doesn't have a negative effect on the number of likes or decrease respect among followers. Be transparent!

When it comes to brands I love, I personally don't care if they are paying someone to highlight the product in a social post. It's definitely become the norm and most millennials are discerning enough consumers that we simply appreciate not being lied to.

If it's a sponsored post, no big deal. Just don't pretend otherwise.



# SAM HOLLINGSWORTH

**Director of Search, Elevation Ten Thousand**

Expect more video content to perform better, increased ad revenue to be spent across the major channels, and for reporting to continue to improve even more than it has over the last five years.

Notifications will continue to work their way into social network algorithms by way of supplementation, and the smartest brands with the best content will get users – current and potential customers – to care so deeply about their content that they subscribe to their channels with a real interest in, not just their content, but also hopefully their products and/or services.

We also expect to see more of the same in terms of the video content that is published, the general

popularity of video, and the ways marketers are able to use video on specific channels to truly reach users and form a real connection with them and your brand.

Video was expected to be the big content form on social media headed into 2017 — and it lived up to the hype for the obvious reasons: it became much more supported, even encouraged, to create and publish quality video content for social media brand channels.

Video is a much more intimate form of content, nearly recreating the true-life experience humans find when they are out in public, and most of all, video is the easiest-to-consume form of content (as well as the most challenging and, oftentimes, time-consuming content type to make). Expect the growth of video and its success to continue.

I also expect enhanced video-overlay notifications to be employed on Facebook

sooner rather than later, where channels creating good, strong content could have some real success, similar to the call-to-action video overlays of YouTube that allowed users to more seamlessly make connections with common content, common users, and common themes.

These enhanced video call-to-action buttons are going to continue to improve the performance of, not just channel conversions and leads, but also general user engagement, time spent watching, and other social media metrics that will help build better, more impactful campaigns.



# JORDAN KASTELER

**SEO Director, Hennessey Consulting**

The biggest trend is ephemeral social media, or in other words, posts that disappear after a given time.

We saw Snapchat start it and Facebook hop right on board.

Personally, I'm not a fan of it – but adds a new element of sharing content you might not have otherwise shared before.



# KATY KATZ

**Director of Account Strategy, Marketing Refresh**

The main social media priority for smart brands should be how to enhance the experience of connection through their social platforms. If you pull together all of the biggest trends that will be shaping social media next year, they all have the theme of enhanced user experience in common.

## Visual Content

Visuals are a major opportunity for brands in 2018. As social media becomes increasingly cluttered, people are scrolling blindly past content more and more.

Video (live stream or recorded) consistently proves to be an opportunity to stand out. And now that phone companies [like Apple](#) are prioritizing

augmented reality (AR) technology, AR has become a real opportunity for brands in social, too.

Use the tools that are available in 2018 to push yourself past the old stock photography limits. Now is the time to get good at these new visual capabilities.

## Personal Experiences

But the experience has to be more than just visual next year. The most memorable brands make the experience personal, too.

Wendy's social media team was on fire toward the end of 2017 as they [jabbed other brands](#) and took time to answer individual questions in a snarky, personalized way. When their social team held an ['Ask Me Anything' on Reddit](#), it went viral with additional praise and questions from the public.

Millennials and Gen Z live for memes, clapbacks, and inside social jokes and Wendy's understands



this about their target market. They found a way to speak in the voice of their audience and prioritized personalization to actually [drive business results.](#)

And you should set your customers up for success on social media, too. Over 90 percent of people [trust user-generated content](#) more than traditional advertising. Brands can take advantage of this trust by setting their customers and influencers up for successful social sharing.

For example, if you have a retail location, make it easy and interesting for your customers to post to Instagram. Inviting spaces, lighting, and even a gimmicky goody should all factor into a complete 2018 social strategy.

## Be Like Your Customers

One final thing for businesses to consider is to use social media the way that your customers use it. Many brands have not mastered the “stories” feature on Instagram. However, its daily user totals

have surpassed 200 million, blowing Snapchat out of the water.

Instagram users scroll through stories sequentially, meaning they are going to see your brand story in between their friends' selfies. This is a big opportunity in 2018 as more Instagram users jump onboard.



# KEVAN LEE

**Director of Marketing, Buffer**

I see social media shifting from a one-to-many platform to a 1:1 or one-to-few platform. This is evident in the decline of organic reach, the rise of messaging apps, and the expectations of consumers.

Social media is a place to engage, less so a place to promote.

The companies that will win in this new environment are those that stay true to their brand. Being:

- Consistent with posting.
- Authentic with their voice.
- Responsive to their audience.

The icing on the cake is if you can combine this brand emphasis with a bit of data, particularly with segmentation, so that your voice is reaching the right people.



# JULIA MCCOY

CEO, Express Writers

The two most important aspects of social media marketing for brands in 2018 will be in creative consistency and community building.

## Creative Consistency

Mari Smith [confirmed](#) that Facebook will appreciate and serve live stream videos that people consistently return to watch, and are published from the same creator/publisher week after week.

It's all about consistency with our social media actions in 2018. Find your sweet spot, both in the platform (where your audience lives) and your creative niche (your topics of authority where you have a standout, unique perspective to stand on and build from), and then commit to an ongoing appearance.

Be creative with whatever you do, and commit to consistently showing up. It'll make all the difference.

## Community Building

On top of that, it's important to build our own community.

As content shock hits us more and more with millions of pieces of content being created daily, it is no longer enough to just post, create, and schedule. Marketers must consistently work to build a strong tribe, not just pump out content and create, create, create.

By knowing whom we serve, and consistently creating and not only creating but engaging, we can work toward building a tribe. Communities are powerful and worth their weight in gold for any brand.

Anyone with any budget can develop a community, over time. No excuse is good enough to not focus on planning on building your own community in the coming year.



# DEBBIE MILLER

**President, Social Hospitality**

Here are my three trends to watch in 2018:

## 1. The Continued Rise of Instagram Stories

Daily views of Instagram Stories already surpass daily Snapchat views after only a year, and this number will likely continue to rise. As this feature evolves, elements like the ability to add links and advertise through stories will make it a key component of advertising.

## 2. The Power of Influencer Marketing

Many large brands rely on celebrity and social influencers to connect with a socially-savvy audience. Millennial and Gen Z consumers trust these influencers and heavily rely on their perspectives when making buying decisions.



### 3. The Significance of Gen Z

As Gen Zers enter the workforce, their buying power will increase. As such, their habits will affect social media trends since they're grown up with social media are critically influenced by it. Brands will have to monitor and strategize accordingly based on Gen Z's consumption of media and behaviors as a result.



# REBECCA MURTAGH

**Founder, Karner Blue Marketing**

In 2018, social media will be more about relationships than ever before.

Two major goals for every smart brand:

- Make your brand more human.
- Create an emotional connection with customers.

Here are my top recommendations for using social media to build an influential brand in 2018:

## 1. Aspire to be Good

Offer quality product, services, support and be respectful in how you use social media. Social media is powerful when leveraged for customer

education and engagement. Not just a broadcasting platform for brand announcements and promotions.

Added bonus: well-planned and executed social media campaigns can elevate your brand's visibility in search.

## 2. Engage

Like any good relationship, social media should be viewed as a reciprocal relationship. Give to your customers as much as you are hoping to get out of the connection.

Don't approach social media as an aggregation of followers and fans, but rather a representation of relationships. Reciprocating follows, likes, and comments with real customers will go a long way in recognizing that each of your customers is a real person that you (the brand) values.

## 3. Think Long-Term

There is nothing more frustrating than to lose someone you have invested yourself in. Be genuine about

building a mutually-beneficial long-term relationship with each customer to maximize the ROI of resources invested in building audiences for your brand.

#### 4. Be Real

Audiences are savvy and can sense a phony a mile away. Authenticity and sincerity rules in content, promotion and one-to-one interaction.



# MADDY OSMAN

**SEO Content Strategist, The Blogsmith**

There are two social media trends that continue to grow – and not enough brands are taking full advantage just yet: video content, and on a related note, ephemeral content (like Stories on Instagram or Snapchat).

Brands need to realize that video content doesn't need to be a full/expensive production. In fact, it may be more effective to shoot live without even having the opportunity to edit.

Studies are showing that people engage with this content disproportionately higher than regular text or image-focused content. If you're not using it, you're missing out on an easy opportunity to connect with your audience.

Use ephemeral content to share a behind the scenes look at your company, showing customers

and fans the human side of your brand. Millennials crave authentic connections to brands and this is an easy way to make it happen.

When it comes to videos and ephemeral content, get out of your head and experiment. If you're nervous about being on camera, find a point person at your company to be the face of your brand with regards to this type of content.



# ERIK QUALMAN

**Motivational Speaker & Author**

Keep an eye on WhatsApp. It's already huge in other parts of the world, especially South America, and it will be big in the United States in 2018.

It was smart of Facebook to purchase WhatsApp when they did.

As brands, the quicker you figure out how to leverage this growing platform, the further you will be ahead of your competition.



# TED RUBIN

**Co-Founder, Prevailing Path**

Social is moving to a prove it or lose it stage... so start thinking how *content is the ad*. The importance of content in your SEO and middle funnel strategy will be critical.

Social media platforms are essentially huge AI systems designed to keep users “tuned in” by showing them things they want to see and using data to improve the success of that goal each time a user engages. But AI isn’t really that smart yet.

Most AI is big data pattern recognition that gets better at predicting what they will do as more people use the systems. It’s not actually ‘thinking’.

As the Trump media machine proved, real thinking beings can manipulate these systems with relative ease using anchor content such as a blog post, or video, bot based syndication (half of Trump’s



Twitter followers are fakes) and then the power of real people sharing and training the algorithms to “think.”

Add in some well-placed adds on automatic networks like Facebook and bam, media that motivates. Brand marketers can easily do this in a less nefarious way and tune the process to eliminate endless digital spam and create awesome content that the AI algorithms connect with people along the path to purchase that might actually care.

All of this is so important because shopping behavior is changing from a world where consumers go to stores to get products (walking around and finding what they need, to one where products come to consumers.

Stores aren't going away tomorrow, but the fundamental role of a retailer is going to change over time from a physical location to a service that fits the product needs of a consumer whenever and wherever she chooses, including product discovery.

What's more, much of a future consumer's product needs will be anticipated and automated, moving toward a friction-free experience. The challenge for retailers and brands alike will be remaining relevant in a consumer's mind. The combination of the decline of the store shelf coupled with the end of push advertising effectiveness will eliminate some brands and retailers while others will thrive like never before.

*Retail relevancy* will become all about *simplicity*.  
Frictionless buying is the future of retail.

Simplicity is the new EDLP. Make it easy and... she will buy from you again, and again, and again.



# JASMINE SANDLER

CEO, Agent-cy Online Marketing

Three social media trends for 2018:

## 1. Chatbots & AI Affecting Social Customer Care

Brands must think through the process of social customer care with specific business goals behind them and then seek to use the many live chat and AI tools out there being integrated with social networks like Facebook by pairing flow questions and answers to profile visits. In this, brands need to have chatbot monitoring in effect so that they can continue to improve social customer care and win more social market share.

## 2. Influencer Marketing of All Sizes & Shapes

Understand influencers by product and audience set. Understand large and micro influencers and how to best incentivize them, leverage them, reward them, and gain marketing insights from their hosted influencer marketing campaigns.

## 3. Story Social Selling & Video Content

It will be critical to do this in a professional way, and in a way that engages and grows an audience. Stories are rampant in Instagram and Facebook, and LinkedIn is now becoming more of a video run network.



# MARK SCHAEFER

**Executive Director, Schaefer Marketing Solutions**

By far the biggest impact on social media marketing of any type is the exploding levels of content that challenge our abilities to be heard and stand out. The entry barrier for creating content is near zero, meaning that anybody with a connected device is a potential competitor these days.

Creating social media content that transcends this information density will require new skills, new strategies, and even the emergence of new content forms (which we are now seeing). A staggering challenge, but also a great opportunity for the creative and bold.



# JES SCHOLZ

CMO Emerging Markets, Ringier

Here are two trends in social media to watch in 2018:

## Focus on Gen Z

Millennials are so 2017. Gen Z are coming into their early 20s and have begun to flex their purchasing power.

Of course, for many of us, SnapChat springs to mind. But effectively targeting Gen Z is more involved than simply adding another social media channel to your mix.

This generation, even more than their millennial predecessors, isn't going to be engaged by the traditional public broadcasting approach to social media taken by platforms such as Twitter.

Gen Z requires relevant and relatable conversations. This is causing a shift toward ephemeral content, such as Instagram stories, where not only the authenticity but also FOMO keeps users engaged.

We are also witnessing a phase into group or 1-1 based social mediums, such as messaging apps. With WhatsApp finally allowing businesses to communicate via their platform, be sure to get into the beta and grow your lists for a short-term competitive edge.

To tailor and distribute content at scale, invest in conversational UIs and build a chatbot with personalization options. Moving your focus on chat apps will also address the issue of declining organic reach on traditional social platform, if you have no money to pay to play.

### Listen With Your Eyes

Social listening has traditionally been driven by text keyword mentions, in 2018, thanks to advances in image recognition, this will expand to include [visual brand mentions](#) as well. Effectively increasing

the scale of the conversation by over 80 percent; the number of branded social media posts that don't contain text mentions. Not only will this help you better understand your brand positioning and use cases, you can also find influencers.

What's more, image recognition opens the door to turn selfies into sales. Take the photos of your products uploaded on social media discovered through image recognition, then with the poster's permission, integrate these UGC images onto your website, app or email newsletter.

This authentic social proof is more powerful than traditional testimonials and has been proven to significantly drive up conversion rates. To take it a step further, create interfaces where if you click on a UGC image, you can shop the look. Such as what ASOS is doing with their As Seen On Me integration.





# MARI SMITH

**Social Media Consultant & Trainer, [MariSmith.com](http://MariSmith.com)**

Live video broadcasting continues to grow at a steady pace and those users and businesses with professional, television-quality broadcasts will rise to the top. As Facebook focuses on building out its array of shows on the Watch platform and expands into more countries, the demand for quality video programming will increase.

Influencers and content creators will embrace Facebook's Creator app and new stars will be born. Advertisers will focus more on compelling, short-form video content for use in ad breaks throughout all this new video content.

Stories on both Facebook and Instagram garner more business users and buzz. Instagram is already leading the pack with 300 million daily active users. At the current rate of growth, by the end of 2018, nearly half of all Instagram users will be using Stories. Brands will need to adopt

creative uses of Stories to reach their audience on Instagram. And, as Facebook continues to aggressively push Stories for personal and business — and now collaboratively in groups and events — savvy businesses will put this format at the forefront of their marketing strategy.

**Messenger for business** will keep iterating at a fairly fast pace, adding more new features to enable businesses of all sizes to create closer connections with their audience members. More businesses will embrace “conversational commerce” through the right mix of automated messaging and human interaction. Businesses will more closely integrate Messenger with their website and entire shopping experience to allow their customers more streamlined and personalized interactions.



# MICHELLE STINSON-ROSS

**Director of Marketing Operations,  
Apogee Results**

Finding ways to cut through the noise and clutter across a wider and wider spreading social ecosystem will continue to be the determining factor for social media success.

## **Create Video Experiences**

Technologically, the video options in social media provide a way to stand out in a way that's easy to consume on mobile and more likely to provide a longer, more memorable positive brand experience. No matter whether you choose to produce and upload videos formatted for mobile consumption, take advantage of live viewer

engagement, or invest in immersive 360 videos brands will have to keep authenticity, storytelling, and audience-centric principals in sharp focus.

There has never been a good reason to use a technological option just because it's there. Consider first how you can best serve the needs, wants, and desires of the community gathered around the brand and craft video experiences around that.

### **Support Major Influencers**

The other important way to cut through noise and clutter is to support powerful influencers related to your industry. Providing ideation, data, products and support to people who can connect large groups of passionate followers to your brand continues to be important in 2018.

But influencer outreach goes beyond marketing to them the way you market to your end

consumer. Yes, there is much they can do for your service, product, brand but at the end of the engagement, they have to receive value from the relationship.

What do you and your marketing team have to offer an Instagram influencer, for example, that is different, remarkable, and valuable beyond cash or free product? What can you do to help them serve their audience in ways that they would not be able to do alone?

The one factor in all of digital marketing that remains constant is the human factor. The more communication and technology improve, the more we as marketing communicators have to take our gaze off of our collective navels and focus on the needs, wants, and desires of our fellow human beings. It is the humanity of the brand that will cause it to rise above the rest of the crowd.



# MARK TRAPHAGEN

**Senior Director of Brand Evangelism, Stone Temple Consulting**

It certainly wouldn't be anything new to say that business social media needs to be more personal and relational, but I want to take that in a specific direction that I see growing but still underutilized: using social media to gain and grow strategic partnerships.

In marketing our agency, friendships and partnerships with data suppliers, tool and software vendors, industry publications, and more have played a significant role in expanding our reach and providing us with data and insights we can turn into valuable, brand-building content.

Here's the social connection: it occurred to me recently that most of those relationships either

started or were nurtured through social media. I believe social media is ideal for developing strategic partnerships because, if done correctly, it is a more human and less intimidating way to connect than other means, such as an email or cold call.

Much of this works the same way as social media does (or should) for building organic relationships with influencers. You start with normal human engagement with the potential partner, contributing meaningful responses to their posts, helping them find resources, and contributing to their projects. Over time you earn the right to propose partnership projects of your own, and you're more likely to get buy-in.

Or you might even get offered wonderful opportunities that might not have happened without the social media relationships you've built.

In one case, we had been nurturing our relationship via social media with the principle of a major social media metrics provider. Over the course of a year or so we gradually built enough

rapport and trust to where his company began regularly sharing our content with their audience.

Then, recently, he contacted us to offer us first shot at some amazing data they had collected. We jumped on the opportunity and will be producing a co-branded study that will be heavily promoted by both us and the tool creator.

So in 2018, think relational on social, but think beyond just customers and influencers to the potential value of strategic partnerships with related but non-competing businesses. Social may be the best place to win those!





# ASHLEY WARD

Corporate Speaker & Evangelist, SEMrush

## Video ads

Last year, I predicted that video was going to be the biggest [social media trend for 2017](#), and it was one of the biggest. As we approach the new year, people still want video and they want even more of it.

In fact, [43 percent of people](#) want to see more video content from us marketers. In 2018, let's give the people what they want, but let's do it from a business perspective.

Where brands can really capitalize on social media in 2018 is going to be with social media video ads. These video ads are already starting to trend and will continue to trend as we hit the first quarter.

As they should, since viewers retain 95 percent of a message in a video compared to only 10 percent when reading it in text. Plus, there's a huge amount of exposure gained when video ads can be played in the middle of Instagram stories, before YouTube videos, and while scrolling through Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram feeds.

Even better, any business can create video ads. You don't need an entire production team or a big budget when it comes to creating video. It can be as simple as a great storyboard and an iPhone.  
#noexcuses

As we wrap up 2017, make sure video ads make it to your 2018 social media strategy.



# TESSA WEGERT

**Branded Content Developer, Contently**

Last year we saw live streaming video take off, and in 2018 more brands will be experimenting with this medium.

Consumers increasingly crave and expect real-time content, and live streaming provides backstage access to their favorite brands. It has become both a critical component of influencer marketing and a reliable means to attract and retain followers.

With networks like Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook ramping up their live-streaming capabilities, it's a great time to get involved.

Something else to focus on in the months to come is Snapchat, Instagram, and Facebook Stories. The story format taps into the relevance and sense

of urgency that's inherent to live content, and whether your brand is B2C or B2B there's tons of value in creating an encapsulated narrative that social media users can quickly engage with and enjoy.

With the recent launch of Reels, a similar feature on YouTube, we're going to see content creators of all kinds hone their story skills in 2018.



# DENNIS YU

Chief Technology Officer, BlitzMetrics

Reorganize your entire business and marketing efforts around ONE-MINUTE VIDEOS if you want to succeed in 2018 – not bots, tools, AI, or tricks. Facebook is the Google of social, and their algorithm heavily favors engagement. A three-second video view counts as engagement and is the easiest type of interaction to drive.

Here are some ways you should be creating ONE-MINUTE VIDEOS:

- Interview your best customers with your iPhone, each answering a question in a ONE-MINUTE VIDEO. You're not looking for a blatant testimonial, but to engender trust among your prospects who see these videos. Facebook calls this "word of mouth at scale" when you use the

“dollar a day” method to boost your posts.

- **Create a one minute WHY video** – who you are, a life event that affected you, or anything that personalizes you. If you want to drive a sale, you must get people to know, like, and trust you.
- **Interview your employees and partners in ONE-MINUTE VIDEOS.** Be like a journalist, not a used car salesperson – to elevate them and help them tell their story. This creates “implied endorsement”, as the authority from these people rubs off onto you, whether or not they say something about you. Who are these authority people you can get ONE-MINUTE of time with to ask them just one question?

Here’s how you should be using your ONE-MINUTE VIDEOS:

- **Create a public figure page (not your profile) to post these one-minute videos.** You can’t boost or get analytics from a profile, so create

a page with your name and profile picture, just like your user profile.

- **Post your one-minute videos natively (uploaded to Facebook) and enable captions.** Trim these videos to get right to the point – no bumpers, since people bail immediately if they see them.
- **Boost these posts for \$1 a day for 7 days each.** That's \$7 total to test what's working, according to Logan Young's "Standards of Excellence." If you can get more than 50 percent of people who watch for 3 seconds to stay around to 10 seconds or get an average watch time above 15 seconds, add more money to that boost.
- **Set up remarketing audiences against anyone who has engaged with your one-minute videos.** Send them to your website, collect their emails, or do whatever is next in your customer sequence. Consider how you can break your AEC (awareness, engagement, conversion) funnel into many steps. Use your one-minute videos in

sequence – pretend you're Netflix and you have seasons and episodes with your videos.

- **Get pro at understanding what videos are working against which audiences.** Copy these sequences over to YouTube, Twitter, your website, LinkedIn, and wherever.

Instagram is part of Facebook – and they let you boost videos that are under one minute.

Have I convinced you that Facebook success in 2018 is now all about one-minute videos in the mobile newsfeed, as opposed to whatever is on your website or timeline?