

Social Media 101

When I graduated high school in 2015, social media was growing worldwide. These platforms allowed people to communicate with each other virtually, despite physical distance. My generation has worked with social media throughout our professional careers, but other generations may have questions about the platforms. How does social media encourage so many to spend time looking at a screen?

My goal for this column is to provide you a deeper dive into the different social media platforms. Next month, I will share the role these platforms can have in marketing Hereford operations and our breed.

Social Media Basics

Before breaking down each of the platforms, let's start by understanding a few general social media terms. A profile is an account created by a person or business that provides the ability to share content and connect with other accounts (personal or business). When you hear the term "feed," don't think grain. A social media feed is the content posted by the accounts you follow or yourself. Content posted to a feed will stay there until it is deleted unlike what is termed a "story" in social media parlance. Stories allow users to post content that will disappear after 24 hours. Now that you understand the basics, let's look at each platform.



Facebook — One of the first platforms that kicked off a new era of communication and marketing was Facebook. Facebook's initial goal was to connect people through a virtual platform. Facebook has evolved from being not only a way for people to connect, but also a means to connect businesses with potential customers. On Facebook, a variety of content will appear for a user, ranging from photos and videos to text-only posts. Businesses now use Facebook to target potential customers, and the platform has proven to be a successful way to grow brand identity.



Instagram — The main difference between Facebook and Instagram is the look of both platforms. Both have feeds and stories for content, but the organization of the content is different. For someone new to social media, I would recommend starting with Facebook and expanding to Instagram once you learn the basics. Both platforms are useful for businesses to market their product and individuals to network.



Twitter — When you hear Twitter, think news. Unlike Facebook and Instagram, Twitter limits posts to 280 characters. Twitter users are not as likely to share photos but are more inclined to share a thought. Businesses and news organizations use Twitter to share small bits of information quickly. If you enjoy keeping up with news and aren't interested in longer posts, Twitter might be for you.



Snapchat — Snapchat has replaced texting for some users. This platform allows users to snap a photo, add a short description and easily send it to one person or their entire friends list. Snapchat has become a way for users to easily connect with close peers. In terms of marketing, Snapchat hasn't had as much success because users prefer to keep content limited to stories from close friends.



TikTok — TikTok entered the social media game in 2016 and was a fresh addition to the platforms already in existence. TikTok is a video-only platform that connects people with content which interests them. Often, people don't like the platform the first few times they log on, but as time progresses their feed is customized to their interests. Right now, TikTok isn't overwhelmed with business content, but could be an avenue in the future to share content and connect through an entirely new way. This will be an interesting platform to follow the next few years.

The online world of social media seems to continually grow and change as technology advances. My best advice is to download a platform that interests you and create an account. Don't feel obligated to post anything right away. Engage, observe, and learn the basics of the platform you choose, and before you know it, navigating social media will get easier. **HW**

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