

Refresh Your Feed

Beyond Social Media Trends in 2023



By Meagan Camp

For many marketers, social media, and the ever-increasing space it inhabits in our daily lives often makes it challenging to switch gears between perusing LinkedIn looking for inspiration to drafting captions based on a technical project description.

B2B social media is very different, and in my opinion, a lot more interesting than seeing photos from a distant relative's Instagram story detailing each highlight of their last road trip. I love how social media keeps us connected, but when I arrive to a Zoom window to meet with a firm for the first time, I'm often more of a puzzle master. Instead of social media connecting your firm to the rest of your industry, it acts as a barrier, a grey area that marketers know they should understand, but simply can't stay consistent with their approach.

One way to help clean the slate of the so-so analytics and missed opportunities of last year is to be energized and inspired by what is to come this year in social media. This area of marketing is always changing, updating, and launching new features. If you are like me and can't wait to see what new tool or release is going to change how we create next, this may give you some new ideas for how to approach social media. If this isn't your favorite task on your to-do list, but you are looking for a safe space to find some support, I hope this list can guide you through to your next content calendar.

Social media, to me, is really made up of two areas. First is the social networks, or platforms, themselves. There are hundreds, if not thousands, that have been launched in the past 20 years. Did you know this year is LinkedIn's 20th birthday? Most of them are small communities focused on a niche topic or industry and the rest are attempting to be the next TikTok, but lack that special something to hook the masses. The second area houses the business of social media. This includes the tools we use to create, manage, and track social media. Think of the hundreds of camera apps in the App store or scheduling tools you see when you begin to look for

software to help you post more efficiently. The data and the storytelling that can be created around your data is what makes social media so unique for B2B. At the end of the day, the goal has always been to connect people and to create communities.

Whenever you are having one of those weeks or months or even quarters where you are unsure what to post or if it will add value, choose content that tells a story about your company. I often remind clients that someone new is visiting or even choosing to follow your accounts every day and that means there is an opportunity to introduce yourself and connect with someone new.

All the Data

As social media gets more complex and technology continues to expand, the data - from the simple KPIs like engagement to complex demographics on LinkedIn are so rarely used for more than a marketing report or to satisfy short-term campaigns. So, where can social media be utilized outside of the traditional marketing space?

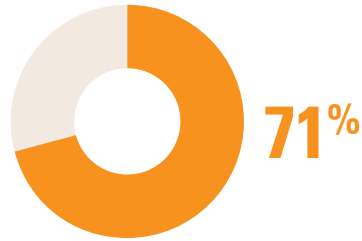
There is an incredible amount of data that a firm can glean from social media, their website, email marketing, and SEO. The average marketer looks at the classic data points, followers, likes, and other vanity metrics to see if they are hitting the mark with their social media strategy. The truth is that for B2B social media, their strategies are often short-term, and underbaked. For firms to truly see the effectiveness of their social media strategies, they must create a strategy around long-term campaigns (sound a bit like a project road map, right?) They also must learn how to look at one piece of content and see 10-15 different ways it could be reused - not as filler, but instead to think of each of those ways as a type of social media user. We all know that some people are visual learners and others aren't, it is the same for social media. Some of us like to watch videos with no sound and others adore listening to a sound bite on loop. Reusing content, called evergreen content, is about taking something like a

blog post and making it work for lots of different audiences who want to interact with you. What does this have to do with data? The data you have access to will clearly tell you what content should fall into that evergreen content category, and what content you can let go of and not worry about posting again.

For long-term campaigns, use data to tell you how your current followers are staying engaged throughout and if they are also visiting your website, interacting with employees, or are potential leads. I've worked in the past with firms who announce a project win, post a photo of the groundbreaking and another one when the ribbon is cut. What if, instead, you took each major project and mapped out a content strategy throughout the project and owned when the next chapter of the project is shared, instead of waiting to post a recap of a milestone after it has happened? Data can help you make this plan and show your firm leaders and colleagues how important it is to treat social media like the 24/7 opportunity it is. You can't control who sees your content, but it also means that someone has the chance to get a first impression of your firm every minute of every day, and that is a prime business development activity that should be owned.

Solution-Based Storytelling

Deciding what to share on social media and when are either determined by a marketing plan or by an outside party, like a client or another department. We all know the struggle to get content from other employees in a firm is very, very real. We've all been there and there are several strategies to change that are part of your workflow, but starting at the beginning of a significant event or project and deciding what you would like to post, and what that post will promote puts you in control. It also helps you when you have employees who simply send you something and ask you to post it and you struggle with how to give them a "no" that won't deter them from helping you in the future. If you have a plan and it is mapped out then you have the perfect response to anyone trying to do your job for you!



71% of social marketers agree they are able to provide helpful insights to other departments, yet only 12% of social teams say their primary function is to do so. Social and bottom-line business metrics continue to exist in a state of disconnect.

— *Sprout Social Index, Edition XV*

We often approach social media content by only identifying it by the original medium - blog, video, ribbon cutting photo, a link to a job description. Instead, take the labels away and find the core story – a long-time client, a community project, an employee who will make an impact with their experience and skillset, and open it up to a campaign. This shift in labels will help take the blinders off when you are unsure how to use it best.

When you have the core story, now you can start to be creative and go beyond a post.

Posting to social media is only effective if that content fits the purpose of that network. You don't see many of those vacation videos on LinkedIn, and people aren't often reading their latest peer-reviewed paper over Instagram Stories with a cat filter on their face. If you



In January during my “Refresh Your Feed: Social Media Strategy in 2023” webinar, there were several excellent questions asked by our fellow SMPS members that are relevant to talking about social media in A/E/C marketing.

Q: How do you recommend handling client permission for discussing projects or project-specific content?

Treat social media with the same amount of focus and execution as you would public relations or any other client communication. When you are told that a project or client is sensitive, make a plan. Understand exactly what is sensitive (images, brands, language, employees, locations, etc.) and draft a plan for how you will create content and the rules to follow.

If you aren't clear on what is sensitive, see if you can meet with the client's social media manager and collaborate with them on an approvals process. Build the relationship, remove any barriers from promoting the work the way you would any other project.

Q: What's the best way to show BD and leadership social data?

The first point I'll borrow from Courtney Kearney and the way she describes getting buy-in from leaders on a CRM which is to find out what data is important to them and present them with data that aligns with those goals.

If you have a strategic plan or a current marketing plan for the year, find ways to connect the data you can pull from social media to these firm-wide goals. This data is important and should be factored into larger benchmarking data.

How do you present this data? Create a reporting tool that mirrors how other data is presented and use descriptors that are easy to understand and not full of social media jargon. There are analytics tools that will quickly export data for you in visuals that are easy to add to reports. Look at your scheduling tool to see what they offer.



B2B marketers must stop tracking short-term metrics that fail to convince the C-suite of its long-term impact.”

—LinkedIn Collective

flipped those around, it makes sense. So, part of looking at your strategy for 2023 is to no longer just schedule one photo with a caption and send it to all your accounts at once with no care for the different audiences or networks that you are posting to. Now that you are seeing content in a new way, you can take a few minutes to tailor it to each network so that it fits the experience of the followers who are going to see the post.

StudiolD recently shared their content marketing trends for 2023 in a report and said, “A complete content hub is home to a variety of content types. No one prospect is the same — different people consume content differently and prefer different formats. Visual learners will appreciate infographics and videos, while prospects who are further along in their buyer journey may be looking for more intensive content like whitepapers and downloadable guides. Meet the buyer where they are and produce a robust content hub, allowing them to match where they are in their journey with your content.”

For any marketing team, or team of one, the goal is always to give yourself time to think ahead and create a consistent routine of capturing content, analyzing your data, and scheduling a majority of your posts ahead of time so you know it is always working for you, even when you have other tasks to accomplish. ■

Meagan will be presenting “Summer Social Media Trends” webinar with SMPS on June 7th.

Look for registration details on SMPS social media channels!



MEAGAN CAMP is the owner of The Modern Take. She started her agency in 2017 after 15 years of being a professional writer and editor. Now she works in the A/E/C space and with firms around the country to create intentional and powerful story-driven social media strategies.