

By *Westley Hackmann* Posted *November 20, 2014* In *Social Media*

Businesses are always looking for ways to stay ahead of their competition, remain connected to their existing customers and reach new ones. With the increasing usage of social media networks, businesses should include these in their marketing efforts. But the differences between social media platforms for marketing can leave a person hesitant to even try one for their business.

A study done by Pew Research shows that some 73% of online adults now use a social media platform of some kind (1). Facebook is the number one site but approximately 42% of online adults are now using multiple sites.



As the social media options continue to grow, marketers must consider many things before deciding which platform to use. So before jumping into the social media platform pool, consider who your audience is, whom you are trying to engage and what type of content you're sharing. Do you have heavy visuals to share? Can you show large images of your product? According to MDG Advertising, 94% "more total views are attracted by content containing compelling images," but trying to find photos for an audience that isn't interested might be futile (2). If your audience is into numbers and stats, no amount of images will generate engagement.

While Facebook is popular across most demographics, other platforms have found their own niche audience segment. Below is a brief overview of some of the top social media platforms:

Facebook:

- Social networking site where users create profiles, upload photos and videos, send messages and keep in touch with family, friends and colleagues.
- Facebook is the most widely used social networking site, so at a minimum, all businesses should have a Facebook page if looking to generate more brand awareness.
- Keep in mind the recent generational shift in users: According to the 2014 Facebook Demographic Report, 3.3 million Americans aged 13-17 have left Facebook in the last 3 years (3). Facebook's biggest growth has been in the over 55 population, adding 12.4 million new users in the same time period.

Pinterest:

- Content-sharing service that allows members to pin or post photos and videos to their pinboards.
- Best for companies with rich images to tell their story (i.e. hospitality or travel industry, interior decorating, wedding-related).
- Audience is predominantly female (68%), so any company that is targeting a more female-centric audience should be using Pinterest.
- Users have a high household income level.

Instagram:

- Online mobile photo- and video-sharing networking service. Photos and video posted on Instagram can be shared on several other networking platforms such as Facebook, Tumblr and Flickr.
- Image-friendly businesses such as restaurants and clothing retailers should be utilizing Instagram.

- Instagram has particular appeal to the 18-29 year age group.
- The only platform that actually skews towards urban dwellers and non-whites

Twitter

- Social networking service where users send and read 140-character messages called tweets. Users must be registered to send tweets but anyone can read them.
- Twitter's strength lies in posting info in real time, so any business dealing with in-the-moment updates—such as news organizations or sports-related content—should be incorporating Twitter in their marketing efforts.
- While only about 7% of Americans are using Twitter, they are more likely to follow brands or companies and check their Twitter feed frequently during the day (4).

LinkedIn

- Business-oriented social networking service used to build connections and professional relationships.
- Because of the professional nature of the site, LinkedIn is especially popular among college graduates and employed people.
- All professional businesses and freelance marketers should be using LinkedIn.
- This is not a site that users check daily, so the effort needed to maintain a presence is less than other platforms. Weekly check-ins seem to be sufficient to ensure your profile is secure.

Marketers must be strategic about which networks they choose and how they publish their content. Social media options are not a “one size fits all” deal. Figure out what you want to say and find the best platform to meet your needs. What works for one business does not work for another.

Want to learn more about using social media in your marketing efforts? Dana Communications can help. Reach out to Lynn Kaniper at 609.466.9187 ext. 117 or lkaniper@danacommunications.com.

Sources:

(1) Social Media Update, Pew Research Internet Project, December 2013

(2) Visual vs. Textual Marketing—Choosing the Right Social Media Platform for Your Business. March 31, 2014

(3) 2014 Facebook Demographic Report compiled by iStrategyLabs, January 2014

(4) 7 Surprising Statistics About Twitter in America by Jay Baer