4 Methods For Breaking Through The Social Clutter

Best Practices for Increasing Your Brand’s Social Media Visibility During The Holidays

likeable media
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The social media space is congested. 30 billion pieces of content are shared on Facebook each month. 340 million tweets are posted on Twitter daily. 72 hours of video are uploaded to YouTube every minute. With data like this, it’s no surprise that the average post by a brand on Facebook only reaches 10-16% of fans.

Sound scary?

It shouldn’t. This isn’t a new phenomenon. For decades, consumers have had access to an incredible amount of information and have filtered that information in various ways: they skim newspapers, flip through magazines, and fast forward through TV. Smart marketers have adjusted to the fast-paced, evolving consumer for decades. Digital marketers can do the same.

As digital marketers we need to implement strategies and tactics that will not only capture the attention of consumers, but also maintain interest. Connecting with your target audiences in increasingly cluttered social platforms can be challenging.

We compiled this white paper to help you better understand how to navigate social media effectively to break through the congestion. This white paper is for marketers looking to leverage social media channels to extend their brand message. This white paper is for community managers looking to gain more exposure and reach. This white paper is for brands who want visibility during extra congested times of year such as the holidays.

In this white paper we give brands suggestions for how to work around the holiday social media congestion. We take you through four methods for breaking through the social media clutter: multichannel strategies, social advertising, content tactics, and social commerce.

If you have additional tips for defeating social clutter we’d love to hear them. Tweet them at twitter.com/likeablemedia, post on our Facebook page (fb.com/likeablemedia), or email marketing@likeable.com.

Thanks!

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INTRODUCTION

There’s no question that the social media space is congested and brands need to find a way to break through this noise. In this paper we review the following areas to support our position including:

1. **An overview of the current social media landscape.** We look at the statistics around social media marketing and the role such plays near the holidays — demonstrating just how congested the marketplace currently is.

2. **Four methods brands can use to break through this social clutter.** These methods include using multichannel strategies, social advertising, content tactics, and social commerce. Various case studies are presented throughout to help illustrate.

3. **A content checklist.** Marketers can use this checklist to guide their social media planning this holiday season and other highly congested times of the year in order to be successful.

CURRENT SOCIAL MEDIA LANDSCAPE

With the constant influx of Facebook statuses, photos, and videos on everyone’s news feeds, it’s no surprise that only 10-16% of fans see a brand’s post on Facebook. This limitation is a result of the EdgeRank algorithm, according to an announcement by Facebook earlier this year [more information on EdgeRank is discussed later in this paper]. With the average Facebook user having 130 friends and liking 80 brand pages, as Facebook revealed at the Facebook F8 Developer Conference last year, over 60% of users’ newsfeeds are being inundated with brand messages. Brands are constantly posting to consumers and thus are competing against each other to get a fan’s attention. The current social congestion prevents fans from seeing valuable and informative posts and prevents brands from interacting with consumers, especially during prime holiday season shopping time.

This holiday season, online shoppers will be spending more compared to last year. eMarketer predicts in its September 2012 “Online Holiday Shopping Forecast and Trends” report that online shoppers in the United States will spend $54.47 billion this holiday period, up 16.8% from $46.63 billion last year. The report predicts online holiday sales to account for nearly a quarter (24.3%) of the $224.2 billion in US retail ecommerce sales forecast for all of 2012. As a result of the forecasted increase, more online retailers are preparing early this year. Shop.org cites that around 60% of online retailers claim they will begin their holiday marketing efforts no later than Halloween, up from 53% last year.

Figure 1 eMarketer, September 2012
Sales are not the only thing slated to increase. Another number up from last year according to Shop.org’s report: social media’s role in the marketing funnel. Almost 60% of retailers anticipate marketing more through Facebook this year than last; 45.0% say the same about Pinterest and 40.0% about Twitter.

With more of a focus on marketing through social media, there will no doubt be a flood of noise in this space during the holidays. According to Shop.org’s 2012 Pre-Holiday Study, the top investments that retailers have made this year to foster holiday revenue growth are: mobile optimized websites (54.7%), Facebook page (52.8%), cross-selling on the product page (49.1%), and Pinterest boards (43.4%). With two social media sites in the top three investments, consumers will see more messages and campaigns pushed out from brands this holiday season.

Mobile shopping will also be a huge part of the holiday shopping experience this year. As stated in NRF’s holiday consumer spending survey results, 52.9% of those who own smartphones and 64.1% of those who own tablets plan to use their devices to research and purchase holiday gifts this year.

With online shoppers predicted to spend more this holiday season, more marketers preparing their efforts earlier, and an upsurge in social media marketing, there will unquestionably be increased competition for brands to get their messages across and for fans to take notice. Brands will need a way to break through the social media noise in order to be successful.

4 METHODS FOR BREAKING THROUGH THE SOCIAL CLUTTER

Breaking through the social media congestion and noise does not have to be difficult. Instead of shouting at consumers to purchase, there are a number of best practices when it comes to advertising and marketing in social media that, if followed correctly, allow brands to get their messages across effectively. We have outlined four methods using various case studies that marketers can apply in order to reach particular customers and capture their attention. These methods include using:

- Multichannel Strategies
- Social Advertising
- Content Tactics
- Social Commerce

Utilizing a multichannel strategy is extremely important for marketing. Social media cannot be the only touch point to influence a buyer. It must be part of a complete marketing mix and include multiple social media properties as consumers prefer different social channels.

Mobile should also be a huge consideration in marketing strategies. Currently 50% of mobile subscribers own a smartphone, according to Nielsen. Mobile will also play a huge part this holiday season. Google claims that 85% of shoppers plan to start shopping for a gift on one device and finish it on another and four in five mobile and tablet owners will use their devices to locate stores, look up coupons, read reviews and compare prices.
Taking advantage of social advertising is another great way to stand out and break through the social advertising chaos. Via traditional display Facebook ads that can increase awareness to “Custom Audience” Facebook ads that target specific customers using CRM data to Twitter advertising, brands can promote their businesses and engage with customers in unique ways.

When it comes to content tactics, following network-specific best practices can ensure that brands are effectively optimizing the channel and reaching and engaging their customers at the right place and right time.

Finally, in addition to the aforementioned marketing strategies, using emerging social commerce opportunities helps brands break through the noise and drive sales.

**MULTICHANNEL STRATEGIES**

A good marketing plan uses different channels to reach and engage a brand’s current and potential customers. To be successful, brands must be where their customers are. When marketers can target consumers via multiple channels for the same message, a campaign’s success will be greater.

**No Silos**

However, while many marketers use different channels for campaigns, marketers do not appear to be executing and managing the channels together. According to IMB’s “2012 State of Marketing” survey, 78 percent of marketers indicated they run social media marketing in silos, discretely and on an ad hoc basis. The reason, the study found, was that the majority of marketers said their existing systems were too disparate to integrate paid, owned, and earned channels together.

With heavy promotions that brands will be conducting this holiday season, it is essential that marketers use a multichannel strategy by incorporating social media together with print, email, retail stores, ecommerce sites, and more. Multiple touch points influence many buyers and extend a brand’s reach, allowing the brand to break through the advertising noise.

**Full Social Campaign**

In addition to having a complete marketing mix for campaigns, marketers need to make sure that when it comes to social media, different networks are also integrated together. While it is true that customers prefer different social media channels, the communication needs to be consistent across all in order to reach the most consumers possible.

Marketers must understand and approach different networks based on the audience, purpose, and behavior. Not only are the demographics of users on social networks different but the content on each varies. While many use Facebook to communicate and share photos with family and friends, people tend to use Twitter more for content and news information and sharing. Pinterest is heavily skewed female and is 100% visual content. By understanding the distinctions in each,
marketers can make sure they approach these networks accordingly to reach the most consumers as possible.

Mobile

As smartphone ownership continues to increase year over year, marketers need to be more serious when it comes to integrating this channel into their efforts. In its recent “The State of Mobile Technology Adoption” report, Forrester estimates that smartphones will represent 53% of all mobile phones in the US by the end of 2012 and 77% by the end of 2016. Social Media usage is growing via mobile as well. According to Facebook, its mobile customer base rose 61% from last year to 604 million active users. With these increases and forecasts, marketers need to account for the fact that many of their customers will likely be on this channel and conduct campaigns and efforts accordingly.

One example of a brand incorporating mobile in its holiday efforts is Dunkin Donuts. Dunkin Donuts launched a Halloween promotion using mobile and social to help consumers get in the spirit. The company let consumers purchase mobile gift cards in Halloween specific designs and introduced a contest through Twitter and Instagram that encouraged consumers to dress up their Dunkin Donuts cup and share via these social network sites.

The contest was geared towards people on the go and those with access to mobile devices. With a simple photo snap, consumers could upload their creations on their phones using the given hashtag without even needing to connect to a PC. According to Scott Hudler, the VP of Global Consumer Engagement at the company, mobile and location-based promotions will continue to be an important part of Dunkin Donut’s overall marketing efforts in the future.

Case Study from a Likeable Brand

Ritani is a high-end jewelry brand founded in 1999. Ritani Real Moments is an ongoing contest launched in February 2011 where fans upload a photo taken of a moment when a piece of Ritani jewelry was exchanged—an engagement, wedding, anniversary, etc. To enter, fans need to “like” the Ritani Facebook page and fill out the entry form located on the Real Moments tab. After entrants upload photos, they can see how the photos would look as a Ritani ad. The winning photo, chosen every other week by Ritani, is based on the creativity of the image and how well the sentiment or emotion is visually expressed. The winner receives a diamond pendant necklace and their photo as a Ritani ad in Cosmopolitan, Glamour or Marie Claire. After the magazine
ads are circulated, the chosen winner receives a $500 retail voucher to use on a piece of Ritani jewelry in the winner’s area.

This campaign focuses on the sentiment surrounding these special occasions and encourages brand loyalty by tying into these landmark moments in life. Fans who submit entries are personally contacted by Ritani and establish a personal relationship with the brand.

The Ritani Real Moments campaign has received exposure from wedding, engagement, jewelry, and marketing bloggers across the web. Some of the notable blogs that have picked up the campaign include the major jewelry industry trade show and magazines The Centurion, JCK, and National Jeweler.

Overall, the Real Moments campaign is heavily integrated with other marketing channels allowing for extended reach. Facebook ads are used to help promote the contest to fans and non-fans alike along with tweets from the Ritani handle to reach the Twitter audience. In order to generate buzz about the campaign outside social media, the brand runs email blasts and in store promotional flyers with its retailers. In addition, Ritani places the winning ad in a print magazine such as Cosmopolitan, Glamour or Marie Claire, which have a combined circulation of 6,324,291. Furthermore, brick and mortar stores are incorporated into the marketing strategy as Ritani also awards and promotes the retailer in the area in which the winners are chosen, therefore reaping local publicity.

The Real Moments campaign has seen great success since it launched. There have hundreds of entries with 15 winners since February 2011. In addition, Ritani saw a 50% increase in fan interaction around posts mentioning and promoting Real Moments, as well as announcing winners. The biggest ROI the company has seen as a result of the campaign is the growth in Facebook fans. Before the brand started the campaign in early 2011 it had 10,000 fans. Just one year after the campaign launched, the brand had over 450,000 fans, a 4400% increase.

**SOCIAL ADVERTISING**

Advertising on social media networks is an effective way to reach more consumers and get them to engage with a brand’s content.
Specifically through Facebook advertising and Twitter advertising, brands can break through the millions of posts and noise in order to promote their message.

**Facebook Advertising**

Facebook currently offers businesses a number of advertising options on its platform depending on the overarching goal. The different options include:

- Standard Display Ad
- Sponsored Stories Ad
- Premium Ad
- Logout Page Ad
- Mobile Ad

The most traditional type of Facebook advertising are display ads found on the right-hand side of Facebook. These ads are designed to drive traffic to a Facebook page or to a brand’s website outside Facebook. These ads seek to inform users of a product or service and link them to a Facebook page or external website. The cost for these ads is on cost-per-click or cost-per-impression basis.

**Sponsored Stories Advertising**

Sponsored stories advertising is geared at showcasing users’ engagements and recommendations of brands to a target audience. The ad can show that a user likes a brand page to increase likes on that page or can promote a popular piece of content to extend the reach and involve more people in the conversation.

Premium ads are aimed at improving demographic targeting and take multiple forms. One type, like ads, increase engagement by displaying users’ friends who already like a brand page. Showing friends who are already connected to a brand in an ad helps users remember the message better. Nielsen has found that people are twice as likely to remember advertising messages and four times more likely to buy a product when they see a friend’s name associated with it. Other premium ads include polls, events, sampling, and video — all intended to showcase a brand and increase engagement.

A more recent Facebook advertisement option for brands includes placing ads on Facebook’s logout page. Because a lot of users do not want to leave Facebook until they are ready, placing ads after users log-out helps account for this and provides a natural transition. Success with this type of ad can be seen with a recent Procter & Gamble’s Swiffer ad. The brand’s post “Cleaning better doesn’t have to take longer! Who else agrees that cleaning better doesn’t have to take longer?” was featured next to a video featuring Swiffer’s mop-like products. The video went from 60 likes to over 12,250 and the post was shared 245 times (from May 30th to June 5th), according to ClickZ.
The last type of Facebook advertising, and one in which is growing in popularity by the day, is mobile ads. With over 604 million active mobile Facebook users, a 61% increase from last year, brands need to reach users in this space in order to promote their message. According to a recent study by AdParlor, Facebook mobile news feed ads are the most efficient type of Facebook ads. When comparing other Facebook ad campaigns, the study found mobile ads to have the highest click through rate (CTR) of 1.32%, which is fifteen times higher than non-mobile Facebook ad campaigns, and the cheapest cost-per-click of $0.42, which is 30% cheaper than non-mobile Facebook ad clicks.

A very effective and powerful feature of the Facebook advertising platform is the ability to target ads at specific users. Facebook users provide a great deal of data in their profiles and this helps marketers to reach exactly who they want using Facebook advertising. With such an abundance of data, marketers can choose to target ads based on age, location, interests, and gender, just to name a few. However, in order for ads to be successful, the right strategy must be set in place first otherwise marketers might pick too many or too few targeting options. The key is to have a strategy established for using Facebook ads and understand the capabilities and options before setting forth.

Custom Audience Facebook Ads

A new type of Facebook advertising recently announced by Facebook might prove to be another very effective Facebook advertising option. Facebook revealed its new “Custom Audience” ads at the September 2012 Dreamforce Conference. This new initiative means businesses can now tie users’ email addresses and phone numbers to information in their CRM systems. This means Facebook ads can now be more narrowly targeted: brands can push ads out to their existing customers whether to get them to be fans of the brand’s page or target specific groups of prospects (e.g. frequent purchasers). The ROI impact with these ads may be noticeable. With the ability to target current customers who are already likely to purchase a brand’s product, brands will see greater returns with their ads as a result. The money spent on Facebook ads is actually spent targeting customers who have already made a purchase and who are likely to do so in the future. With more relevant targeting, brands should be able to see lower costs-per-like, costs-per-click, and a greater ROI.

Just three weeks after the Custom Audience ads launched, Facebook announced that its customers were already seeing solid results. One ecommerce company they cited, OpenSky, used Facebook Custom Audience ads to get members of its site who hadn’t made a purchase ever or in the past 30 days to buy something. By segmenting its email list and showing relevant Facebook ads to specific targets, OpenSky saw a 30% better conversion rate on the Facebook ads. Because of the targeting option of the ads, the company could actually show specific products to a certain group on its email list based on their interests. By using an email blast instead, the company
would have had little clue as to what products to show.

Twitter Advertising

Similar to how advertising on Facebook can help companies reach more consumers, advertising on Twitter is also a great tactic to reach users on that network and break through the noise to consumers. Brands can advertise on Twitter using three methods: Promoted Tweets, Promoted Trends and Promoted Accounts.

Promoted Tweets are similar to paid search ads but are offered on a cost-per-engagement basis. This type of advertisement appears in the search results when a user searches for a keyword that a brand or person has bid on. Only when someone performs an action does the brand or person pay.

Similar to Promoted Tweets, Promoted Trends are keywords that brands can pay for to appear at top of the trending topics list. Brands then pay only when a user performs an action on the Promoted Trend.

Promoted Accounts are most similar to a Facebook “like” campaign. The goal for Promoted Accounts is to get users to follow a certain brand or Twitter handle. Brands pay to show their account in the “Who to Follow” section on Twitter.

These three different types of Twitter Advertising have proven to be effective for brands. According to a study from Labs42, as reported by eMarketer, 24.8% of users see Promoted Tweets from brands that are relevant to them. Meanwhile, 21.2% of users said they have found out about a new brand through Promoted Tweets and 21.6% of users have received a discount through Promoted Tweets. The report also shows that the success of Promoted Tweets can be seen in the receptiveness of users. Users have found Promoted Tweets relevant enough to pass along the message, with 14% of users saying that they have retweeted a Promoted Tweet.

Case Study from a Likeable Brand

The Pampered Chef is a premier direct seller of high quality kitchen tools. In 2000, the company launched the “Help Whip Cancer” campaign to support the importance of breast cancer early detection. Since the company’s creation, they have had a long-standing tradition of giving back as they believe it is important to positively impact others.

One of the ways The Pampered Chef has been promoting the message of giving back is
through their “Help Whip Cancer” campaign (with the name giving a nod to their kitchen products). The company joins forces with the American Cancer Society for the campaign each year to raise awareness and funds for breast cancer education and early detection programs. During the month of May, The Pampered Chef Consultants raise money from the sale of special pink products, hold special Fundraiser Cooking Shows, and tell others about the importance of regular breast cancer screenings and checkups.

The Pampered Chef decided to use the power of new and current fans through sharing to drive awareness to this important cause. On May 10, 2012, a “Sharing is Caring” status was published promising fans that for every new like in May, $1 would be donated to the American Cancer Society.

To help spread the word, The Pampered Chef used Facebook advertising. These ads were implemented in the hopes of bringing more awareness to the campaign and brand as well as contributing to the final donation amount.

The Facebook Ads were extremely effective in the success of the campaign. Overall, almost $20,000 was donated to the American Cancer Society from the new page “likes” with almost a quarter of the amount attributed to the Facebook ads. A high click-through-rate of 0.21%, 0.17 percentage points above the industry average as reported by Social Fresh of 0.04%, indicates the strong interest in the campaign. With a total spend of $850, the ads also generated 4,357 likes for a cost per like of $0.19, well below the industry average of $1.07. In addition, the ads were very efficient in terms of cost. At only a cost per click of $0.21, the ads were much lower than the industry average of $0.51. Overall, the Facebook ads helped to spread the word about the promotion to fans and non-fans alike. These ads also helped The Pampered Chef achieve their final donation amount. Not only did the Facebook Ads bring awareness to the campaign, they helped bring awareness to the brand as a whole and allowed The Pampered Chef to break through the social clutter.

**CONTENT TACTICS**

As mentioned earlier, only 10-16% of fans see a brand’s Facebook post due to EdgeRank. EdgeRank is the name of the algorithm which Facebook uses to determine what appears in their users’ news feeds. It determines not only which fans are most important to brands (meaning the brand’s content appears most frequently to those users) but also which kinds of content should appear higher than others. The algorithm is based on three factors: Affinity (score between the viewing user and the creator of the piece of content); Weight (comments, likes, tags on posts); and Time decay (how long ago content was created). To adjust for EdgeRank, brands need to assess their pages and content and follow industry best practices. Doing so will allow brands to increase reach and break through the noise that limits fans seeing their posts.

In terms of successful content, photos perform the best for increasing engagement, followed by short text, video, and links. According to
Buddy Media’s “Strategies for Effective Wall Posts: A Timeline Analysis,” photos in posts get a 39% higher interaction rate than average.

Beyond photos, fill in the blanks, photo captions, questions, tips, and quotes can all help increase the amount of likes, comments and shares.

In addition, posts should include some sort of call to action. The report found that posts with call to actions (such as “Like,” “Caption This,” “Share,” “Yes or No” and “True or False”) receive an interaction rate that is 48% higher than average. For question type posts, the question should come at the end of the post as this generates a 15% higher overall interaction rate.

Brands should also be cognizant of which days to post on Facebook. The best days to post on Facebook vary depending on the industry, as cited in Buddy Media’s report. For advertising and consulting, the best days to post is on the weekends, which get 69% higher interaction. However, for the fashion industry, Thursday is the best day to post while for general retail, Monday is the best day. The best time to post is during the off-hours. Brands that post between 8pm and 7am have a 14% higher interaction rate than brands that post during 8am and 7pm.

When assessing Twitter posts, brands need to understand there are differences between Facebook and Twitter. The best time to post on Twitter is actually the opposite of Facebook according to another study from Buddy Media, “Strategies for Effective Tweeting: A Statistical Review.” Tweets from 8am to 7pm receive 30% more engagement than tweets during other industry on Twitter. The fashion industry sees a 30% higher engagement on the weekends while publishers see a 29% higher engagement on Saturdays. Additionally, shorter tweets (fewer than 100 characters) are more successful, receiving 17% more engagement than their lengthier counterparts. Using one or two hashtags are acceptable to users, but once a brand uses three or more hashtags, the engagement rate decreases 17%. A brand using “RT” will make a user 12 times more likely to retweet but using the actual word “retweet” will make a user 23 times more likely to retweet.

Social Caffeine, a social media marketing site, has published some research on best times to post for LinkedIn as well as Pinterest. The best time to post on LinkedIn is either 7am to 9am or 5pm to 6pm on Tuesdays, Wednesdays or Thursdays. The worst time 10am to 6pm on Mondays and Fridays. The best social timing for Pinterest is 2pm to 4pm or 8pm to 1am. The time to avoid is 5pm to 7pm. Peak Pinterest posting time is on a Saturday morning and traffic generally builds after 12pm.

Case Studies from 3 Likeable Brands

Extra Space Storage is the second largest operator of self-storage in the U.S., and is a national owner, developer, acquirer and operator of professionally managed self-storage properties. The main problem that Extra Space Storage faces in social engagement is the storage industry. Traditionally, storage has been considered a utility service, with little discussion, or emotion involved in consumer touch points. Because of this, there is an
underwhelming amount of brand awareness for Extra Space Storage.

Extra Space engaged with its current fan base and customers by providing an interactive promotion on Facebook based on strong content, called “What’s In Store?” Users “liked” the page and selected one of two virtual storage doors to play the game. Users were instantly given either a winning door resulting in a prize or a losing door resulting in an organization tip from one of their professional organizers. The five week campaign was promoted via social media content (Twitter, Pinterest, and Facebook). Facebook ads were also used to help drive traffic to the app.

Extra Space gained over 2,600 new Facebook fans during the promotion period, a 15% increase, with over 860 entries. Because of the engaging content, overall page engagement increased by 100% during the promotional period as well.

Another case study showing content success from a Likeable brand is The New York City Health Department. The organization started an initiative called NYC Condom with the goals of increasing awareness of safe sex, generating conversation and community buy-in around safe sex, providing New York City residents with valuable information regarding safe sex practices, and ultimately increasing the use of their own NYC Condoms (which have been distributed for free since 1971).

The first hurdle was getting New York City residents to care about safe sex enough to get involved. The organization found that the best way to do this was to start educating New Yorkers on the social media platforms so that they would know why they should care. The second was getting users to talk about safe sex. Because people are usually reluctant to talk about such a delicate topic on such a public space, they had to create a way to make people interested.

The New York City Health Department created a strong, fun presence on Facebook whereby people wanted to engage with the brand and learn about safe sex practices. The organization then empowered New York City residents by allowing them to design the next NYC condom wrapper by submitting designs through Facebook. The NYC condom wrapper contest provided a way for New Yorkers to have a say in the initiative, which was previously all controlled by the Health Department.

The contest ran from December 14, 2009 until January 22, 2010, and was open to any New York City resident 17 or older. A panel of judges then evaluated the submissions and selected five finalists. New Yorkers were able to select a winner by casting votes online. The winning design, which was announced at a press conference, was turned into a limited edition NYC Condom, and was unveiled that fall.

Past campaigns from the Health Department were done primarily through traditional media outlets such as radio and TV. The NYC Condom wrapper design contest, however, was done entirely through Facebook and word of mouth.
marketing. Facebook marketplace ads were used to get entries and encourage NYC residents to participate in the voting process. The design contest elicited 600 unique entries for the condom design covering all five boroughs and over 15,000 unique online ballots/votes were casted.

The campaign was featured in The New York Times, NY Magazine, TIME, The Village Voice, MSNBC, Los Angeles Times, Telegraph, NY Post, NY Daily News and featured on Late Night with Jimmy Fallon and VH1’s Best Week Ever. The campaign performed so well because Facebook provided a platform for increased individual engagement and for questions to be directly answered to expand education, visibility, and customer service. The NYC Condom Availability Program became one of the first governmental agencies in New York City to use the social media platform as a venue to address any programmatic questions, concerns, and/or misinformation. While social media platforms are used to promote products and services, the NYC Health Department was one of the first governmental agencies in New York City to use social media in order to promote a public health campaign. The NYC Health Department had to ensure that all content placed on the page was accurate, engaging, and relevant, while also being educational and respectful of all page participants.

Corkcicle, maker of the icicle-like wine chiller, is another example of a brand leader that produces strong social media content. The success of Corkcicle’s content lies in its custom graphics that are fun, light, and humorous. The photos posted on the brand’s Facebook page are sharable and well received, as indicated by the high engagement. Currently, the brand has an engagement rate (People Talking About This / Fans) of 15.1%. For comparison, some of the top brands on Facebook, such as Coke and Oreo, have engagement rates of only 1.4% and 0.05%, respectively. Corkcicle has found a key ingredient for its content strategy that truly allows the brand to break through the social clutter.

SOCIAL COMMERCE

Social commerce is a subset of e-commerce that involves using social media and user contributions to assist the online buying and selling of products and services. Examples of social commerce include customer ratings and reviews, user recommendations and referrals, and social shopping tools.

Social commerce, coined by Yahoo! in 2005, provides many benefits to brands. Social commerce is effective in driving traffic volume to retailer websites and helping to increase orders and revenue. Marketers utilizing social commerce see increased revenue as a result of the better shopping experience for consumers. Vocus, using statistics from Gartner Research, quotes that by 2015, social commerce sales will reach $30 billion with over half of web sales
coming from social media. Other key gains brands see using social commerce include increased consumer trust through user reviews and product discovery.

Eventbrite has recently released results showing how social commerce has increased additional revenue. Using a custom suite of analytics tools, the company tracked transactions that were driven through sharing on Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. Eventbrite found that every time someone shares an event they bought tickets for using the online tool, it drives on average $3.23 in additional revenue back to the organizer. Eventbrite reports that this aggregate Dollars per Share has increased 81% from $1.78 in 2010. The company found Facebook to be the highest site-driver for Dollars per Share at $4.15. These results indicate that people are sharing their activities more than before and it is having an impact on the bottom line.

Facebook has taking this explosion of sharing and has introduced new and more effective forms of social commerce. Brands need to be on the forefront of these launches to be able to participate and see success in a timely manner. Two new Facebook features — Facebook Collections and Facebook Gifts — have recently been announced by Facebook that may have a significant impact. Brands will need to be aware of these and take action where necessary in order to break through the social clutter.

Facebook Collections

Just in time for the holiday retail season, Facebook announced that they have begun testing a new feature called “Collections,” which gives users new actions to take such as collect, want, or even buy products that brands share with their fans. Mashable reported that Facebook is testing the new feature with major national retail brands like Victoria’s Secret, Pottery Barn, and Neiman Marcus.

What does the announcement of this pilot mean for brands? First, Collections could be a viable competitor for Pinterest. Facebook is giving users the tools to collect the images that brands push out in a folder — which closely resembles the board-curation process on Pinterest. If the feature becomes widely adopted, brands could be adding another icon for Collections next to the ‘pin it’ buttons on their websites.

In addition, the Collections feature displays purchase-related words in an extremely visible way that will help brands more easily obtain an ROI. “Buy” and “Want” are directly next to “Like” and “Share” allowing brands to easily convert their most loyal fans. Marketers continually struggle with obtaining an ROI for their social media efforts. Facebook Collections will help take the guess work out of determining revenue from social media and help marketers figure out what their consumers actually enjoy and buy.

Brands may also be focusing their efforts on the highly actionable ‘buy’ button on the Facebook images. Brands will be able to add a link from
the photo directly to their eCommerce site, driving sales from the Facebook newsfeed. Facebook isn’t charging to use this tool set yet but Collections could eventually be a revenue stream not just for the brands, but also for the social network if they chose to integrate with the ad platform or charge an affiliate fee.

Facebook Gifts

Another upcoming tool for marketers is Facebook Gifts. Facebook Gifts is Facebook’s smartest approach towards f-commerce thus far. It plays on all Facebook’s strengths and has a legitimate value-add for the end user. Turning the vast amount of user data into recommendations has always been the “800 pound gorilla” in the world of f-commerce, but accurate product recommendations are not the only benefit to the buyer.

The basic idea of Facebook Gifts: When Facebook observes a user mention words like “happy birthday” or “congratulations”, the user will be prompted to buy something through Facebook’s new gift store. Through Facebook Gifts, Facebook is attempting to monetize naturally occurring behavior.

Facebook Gifts uses Facebook’s social graph to solve the biggest annoyance in gift giving: not knowing the address of the recipient. When a user buys a gift for someone, the recipient will receive a notification asking to choose an existing stored address, or add a new one, eliminating any guesswork for the gift giver.

Facebook Gifts will be beneficial to users who like giving gifts, but dislike shopping. In addition, this feature will also cater towards those who tend to give last minute gifts. The gift recipient will receive a notification the moment a user buys a gift, which is much timelier than waiting for a shipment to arrive.

As of now, over 100 Facebook partners are populating this new gift shop with products available via desktop or mobile.

CONCLUSION

We have laid out four methods for brands to break through the social media clutter: Multichannel Strategies, Social Advertising, Content Engagement, and Social Commerce. Marketers should use these methods and follow the approaches taken in the case studies to understand and show how campaigns can stand out and capture the attention of customers not only during the busy holiday season but throughout the entire year.

CONTENT CHECKLIST

We want to make sure marketers are prepared this holiday season. Because content will be at the heart of social media strategies this holiday season, we have put together a checklist of best practices and tips around such. The following helpful list will make sure marketers are prepared to break through the noise for advertising and marketing during the holidays and beyond.
Content Checklist:

☐ Post on Facebook between 8pm and 7am.

☐ Post on Twitter between 8am and 7pm.

☐ Post on LinkedIn between 7am and 9am or 5pm and 6pm on Tuesdays, Wednesdays or Thursdays.

☐ Post on Pinterest between 2pm and 4pm or 8pm and 1am.

☐ Supplement posts with photos to boost engagement.

☐ Include a call to action in every post (e.g. “Like if”).

☐ Utilize interactive or informative posts (e.g. fill in the blanks, photo captions, questions, tips and quotes) to increase interaction.

☐ Use “RT” or “retweet” in tweets to increase engagement.

☐ Keep tweets fewer than 100 characters.

☐ Plan to post on days where your brand’s industry receives the most interaction.
For more information on how social media can drive ROI for your brand, please email Mallorie Rosenbluth at mallorie@likeable.com.

About Likeable Media

Likeable Media is an award-winning, global social media and word of mouth marketing firm with a focus on the creation of compelling content. Likeable Media has worked with over 200 brands such as The Company Store, Things Remembered, Omaha Steaks, 1800flowers.com, Quality Dairy, Cumberland Farms, The Pampered Chef, Pendafilex, Ritani, Verizon, and Logitech. Likeable Media is recognized as one of Facebook’s top 90 Preferred Developer Consultants, and is the only agency to win three consecutive WOMMY awards from the Word of Mouth Marketing Association (WOMMA). Likeable Media was named #118 and #146 in 2011 and 2012, respectively, on the Inc 500 Fastest-Growing U.S. Companies. Likeable consists of Likeable Media, as well as the corporate training program, Likeable U, and the small business software product, Likeable Local.

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