Acknowledgements

The Ketchum Digital & Social Almanac has been a community project in the truest sense of the term. We’ve used the digital and social techniques and tools that we advocate.

Colleagues from Beijing to Toronto and from Chicago to Vienna helped identify the top 100 digital and social new stories from last year and produced opinion pieces for the year ahead.

The editing and production has also been an international effort involving colleagues in corporate communication, client service, from London and New York.

My thanks to everyone involved in the project. Special thanks are due to Marc Phillips and Paul Middleton for helping knock the content into shape, and Karen Wilks for design and layout.

Stephen Waddington
Chief Engagement Officer
January 2016
What happens next?
The year ahead in digital and social media

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THE TOP 100 NEWS STORIES
The brief for the Ketchum Digital & Social Almanac 2016 Almanac was straightforward.

We asked leaders from across the Ketchum network to review the top digital and social media updates they’ve encountered over the last 12 months and to add something insightful to help guide our clients through the year ahead.

The viewpoints you’ll read are all crowdsourced from our own talent. We’ve also included the top 100 news stories we identified in 2015.

Each article is a deeper, more considered commentary on the state of digital and social media, marketing and public relations.

Looking across these commentaries there are some clear trends which neatly summarize the state of public relations. We’ve identified some sure bets for 2016, too.

**Seven trends for 2016**

**#1 Influencers**
Powerful influencers are emerging on the Internet in every market. It makes planning and creating scale tricky, but building relationships hasn’t changed.

**#2 Paid and earned**
Integrating paid content into earned campaigns makes your campaigns work harder and delivers an improved return on investment. Influencers, algorithms and amplification are all compelling reasons for paid integration.

**#3 Authenticity**
Successful organizations build trust and reputation on the Internet by being open, candid and timely, just like regular people behave offline.

**#4 The Internet is people**
Organizations need to get out of the way and let their people build relationships via the Internet and social networks, again like people do in regular lives.

**#5 Video**
If you’re not using video you need to grab a camera and crack on. The Internet adores live streaming and short-form video.

**#6 Social platforms mature**
The social media eco-system is maturing around Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter and WhatsApp, but don’t you dare underestimate China’s Weixin.

**#7 Communities**
Niche communities built around a common purpose are the most influential form of media. We’ve included a powerful case study of our own learning and development platform.

I’d like to thank everyone that contributed to this project. You’ll meet them as you work your way through the almanac.

I’d also like to thank my colleague and friend Debra Forman who helped develop the original idea and provided support along the way.

We hope you enjoy Ketchum’s 2016 Almanac. If you’d like to talk to us about working with your organization to tackle any of the issues raised please don’t hesitate to get in touch. You can reach me at stephen.waddington@ketchum.com

We hope to see you on the Internet in 2016.
Influencers project their personality and personal brand with every post, picture or video they publish.

The people who lead opinion have changed, but relationship building remains the same.

Remember those days when only journalists, selected A-list celebrities and some wise men and women seen on the TV defined what was important, necessary or entertaining? Me neither.

Now almost anyone can influence how the public think about brands and issues.

New stars arise
Social media has changed how we interact with our friends and colleagues, it has given everyone the chance to publish his or her opinion and tell the world how they feel, think and eat.

New influencers rose from the blogosphere and later other platforms such as Instagram, Vine and YouTube, seemingly achieving Instafame.

What they wear soon goes out of stock. What they discuss is trending in social news feeds. They have overtaken traditional opinion to shift buying decisions and brand reputation.

This is the one essential thing brands have to keep in mind when working with influencers and conducting influencer relations.

A one-size-fits-all methodology doesn’t work. Using a scattergun approach and pitching the same story to several influencers at the same time won’t work out. If you want successful and sustained influencer relations, bespoke is the name of the game.

Do your research
The strongest campaigns are those developed together by brands and influencers.

Don’t waste your time pitching ideas to unsuitable influencers. Read through their blogs, scroll through their Instagram feeds and watch their videos.

The most popular influencers with the largest communities are often not the best option. Depending on audience and topic, working together with niche influencers frequently achieves better results.

Relations as in relationship
Working with influencers has to start with relationship building and working as equals. Influencers are creative minds and know what their followers and fans appreciate. When briefing them at the start of a campaign give them space for their creative input.

Don’t prewrite copy, define key objectives and messages, instead let influencers implement plans in their own way.

About Doris Christina Steiner Doris helps brands overhaul their digital presence and connect with influencers. She’s a member of the Austrian Public Relations Ethics Council.
Paid is a four letter word that public relations is increasingly using to its advantage.

Paid, until recently a four-letter word in public relations, is bringing an advantage never experienced before; control. For the first time, public relations is not solely at the mercy of journalists and publishers, or limited by organic reach alone.

Paid media leverages digital’s full capabilities of audience targeting, timing, reliable reach and measurement.

**Paid media, but not as you know it**
Let’s clarify that paid media in support of public relations is very different from advertising paid media, and requires a unique perspective.

Positioning brands as thought leaders and the thoughtful selection of publisher partners for earned amplification is a skillset the public relations professional is best equipped to provide.

**Online noise and user control**
The average person spends around 10 hours consuming media each day, and in that time is exposed to 5,000+ marketing messages, according to eMarketer and Media Dynamics.

We register awareness for about one-quarter of those messages and, fewer still, approximately 3% make any sort of actual impression. The online space is overcrowded with content, and consumers are firmly in control of what they engage with, when and where.

**Paying to play**
Fans, loyal customers and advocates will find and engage with a favored brand’s best content; so build it and they will come. Faithful visitors to a news or publisher site may read an earned feature.

But what about the potential customers searching for the content a brand has to offer, who don’t know it exists? This is where paid digital media is helping to expand a brand’s reach beyond the organic to a whole new audience.

**Control: targeting and timing**
Want to specifically reach college-educated women, age 25 to 34, with kids, living in Midwest America, that are interested in healthy foods and organic products? Check.

A negative news story broke and you need to capture people actively searching for more information to ensure they see your viewpoint? Done. Working toward earned, but the urgency of the situation calls for immediate distribution?

Paid digital can go live today. And when the earned does run, paid media will go into action, amplifying the story to reach even more eyeballs than any single media outlet can deliver. When there is positive earned coverage from a reputable and highly respected outlet, paid lets you shout it from the rooftops if you wish.

**Adding earned value**
Paid media placement can lead to earned coverage. Paid can also encourage social sharing for further organic reach. Video views are purchased, but the clickthroughs to the content, generated as a result of the views, come at no cost. There are so many ways paid media brings additional return on investment beyond your primary key performance indication (KPI).
#3 You’ve earned it. Now amplify it effectively to the right audience at scale.

How can you use paid media to amplify the earned content that you’ve worked so hard as an agency to obtain?

The digital world provides many avenues, if used properly, to amplify your earned messaging, content and insights beyond its organic reach.

Focus on the issues, topic and context
Scenario: The holiday season is approaching.

The digital ad space is crowded and everyone’s bidding competitively to be seen.

Your client is a well-known national hotel chain and they’ve just been named one of the 10 Best Hotel Chains for Families in 2015 by a prominent publication.

This is a perfect opportunity to recommend paid to expand earned reach by targeting digital native real estate on relevant female, parenting, lifestyle, and travel verticals.

Paid can return ample additional clicks to the content for a minimum out-of-pocket investment with just one week of extra boosting.

Or maybe your client is a leading financial services company and it has the research and infographics to prove that people prefer to gift themselves this holiday season. You can obtain an earned placement on a major news show which is then published on its website.

A small amount of paid amplification will work in your favor.

For content such as the earned placement mentioned above, it’s important to leave native targeting open to make sure that your reach is broad enough, and your cost-per-click is set slightly higher than normal. This way you will beat competition who might also be bidding.

When targeting is set too narrowly in a crowded environment, it can work against you by not reaching a large enough audience.

Presenting the other side of an issue
Sometimes news-sensitive stances that aren’t scientifically backed make the front page of your digital world.

Paid offers a means of quickly putting forward an alternative viewpoint.

With a planned or incremental paid budget, you can interrupt trending search terms through Google AdWords, promote tweets with positive or negative keywords and present an alternative point of view to those truly interested in the news.

When you can educate and prove how to work paid algorithms in your favor, the results will only pay off.
YOU NEED TO GET A SOCIAL LIFE

The most relevant conversations about your company are happening on social media. It’s time to get involved.

If you were a CEO, and you happened to be at a cocktail party, what would you do if a group of guests started talking about your latest product? You might do a number of things, but standing idly by the punchbowl certainly wouldn’t be one of them.

Thousands of conversations about brands are happening every day on social media, influencing the opinion of everyone from consumers, to the media, to potential clients.

This is one of the biggest untapped opportunities in the corporate thought leadership space.

If you’re a numbers person, the fact that 47% of journalists use Twitter to source story leads should be compelling enough to justify building some social visibility. Need more?

Tell your corporate story from a personal perspective
Owned channels can only do so much. They cannot, as easily, provide stakeholders with the why or how behind what your company does. Your executives, however, can provide the personal angle that adds another dimension to your brand story.

Keep your executives visible
When your executives are active in important industry conversations that affect your brand, they will remain much more front-of-mind when it comes to high visibility opportunities such as awards or speaker nominations for conferences and events.

Have an opinion
Even if they aren’t talking about your brand, every conversation your executives have on social media contributes to their leadership or industry point of view. The more they can establish dialogue for themselves, the more it is associated with your company.

Easier said than done
Yes, this is true. Social media is not native to today’s executives. It’s often unfamiliar territory. Couple that with the fact that, as high profile people, all eyes will be on them when they send their first tweet, and you’ve got a potentially high risk situation, regardless of the rewards.

Luckily, this isn’t space exploration. There are resources out there that can make this transition into social media a smooth and even enjoyable one. In fact, offerings like Ketchum’s own StoryWorks.me platform can help socially curious executives not only launch their social presence, but guide them every step of the way.

From engagement strategies, to content creation for social posts or blogs, to real-time social listening for key opportunities, executives never need to go it alone.

The world’s biggest party suddenly doesn’t seem as daunting when you can attend with an entourage, now does it?
These conversations about and around you are taking place day-in, day-out, behind your back and in your face.”

Gur Tsabar

Whether you like it or not people are talking about you. You’d be wise to listen.

They’re talking about your company, they’re talking about the amazing services you provide, and about the defective products you’ve manufactured.

They’re complaining about your exorbitant fees and praising your incredible discounts.

They’re talking about your down-to-earth CEO, your hilarious flight attendants, your thoughtful cashiers, your rude customer service reps... and they’re also talking about your competitors who, by the way, are also having their say about you.

They’re also talking about where you source your products and ingredients, and questioning how you source them; how well you pay your employees, and the diversity of your workforce.

They’re sharing pictures of your dirty hotel rooms along with your amazing culinary concoctions. They’re laughing about that off-color comment your CFO made on the earnings call and about your celebrity spokesperson who just checked into rehab.

They’re talking about your latest initiative, your latest commercial, your most recent product innovation and hollering about how poorly they think you’re treating our environment.

These conversations are happening on Facebook walls, Twitter feeds, YouTube channels, online petitions and Tumblr blogs.

Each of these platforms has as much power and potential as yours, if not more, to both spread good and bad messages about you. Not to mention: they can move at the speed of light.

In the time it took you to draft a note to your manager, so he or she can get your legal counsel to approve your tweet, someone hacked your company logo, generated a meme about your shoddy technical support, and then got it up-voted to the front page of Reddit for the whole world to see... and then talk about some more.

These examples are a fraction of what we call your un-owned conversations, conversations you do not control. These are the publics’ conversations.

Collectively, they’re defining your permission and your reputation. If you’re prepared to listen they enable you to understand your permissible space at any given moment in time.
Virtual Reality (VR) is going to provide a new medium for brands to engage consumers in exciting new ways.

Cutting Out the middle medium
The middle medium is the communications equivalent of the middleman. For many brands or campaigns, it means the television, social media or radio. These are the channels that transmit the content. In most instances they are screens that only take up a fraction of the user’s vision. Virtual reality will, ironically, cut out media. It will place consumers right at the heart of a campaign.

Transporting consumers anywhere, anytime
A VR headset provides a first person viewpoint, and offers a completely immersive experience. It is unlike watching a brand sponsored concert video on your laptop where you can still see Bill from accounting out the corner of your eye. VR users feel like they are at the concert.

It is the first medium where users will be surrounded by a screen that takes over their whole field of vision and effectively transports them to another world. Thus enabling a new type of brand experience.

Influencers invite you to join in
Communicators currently send influencers to live experiences so the influencer can talk about a product’s benefits or bring the experience to a wider audience. As VR becomes more mainstream, influencers will still be relevant, but will be used to convince their audience to join VR experiences by encouraging their followers to interact with specific content rather than offering a second hand account.

Enabling engaging experiences
Experience is the key word for VR communications. By putting consumers in a story or an interactive world, they can be engaged as if they were using the brand’s product or service in real life.

If your client is an automotive company, for example, you can now give anyone the engaging experience of a test drive simply by having them put on a headset.

More senses, more success
VR headsets will allow wearers to engage the senses of sight and sound without them physically being there. They will offer a new form of truly immersive brand experience.
Technology removes physical and cultural barriers, but using it in human ways is critical to adoption.

We live in an increasingly globalized world. Companies often have offices in different regions and time zones, and you can hire an employee who lives in Prague to do work for your New York office. This is great, as diverse opinions can easily be included and clients can be serviced around the clock.

However, a large, cross-border talent pool requires better communication and connectivity in order to work seamlessly.

How can we think beyond the four walls of a local office and capitalize on the benefit of having a global team? Here are some tips for using digital and social tools to ensure your global company stays connected.

Include social handles wherever you can
As author and speaker Scott Halford mentions in his work, humans are innately social beings and our brains are wired to want to connect with others. With that in mind, if there is an email sent out announcing a group of new hires, include their social handles so people can immediately connect with them.

Also add social handles to employees’ email signatures, business cards, team introduction emails, etc. Make it easy for people to be social.

Leave your webcam on
As we all know, it is much easier to collaborate with someone when they’re sitting right next to you. Well, it’s time to take advantage of the webcam in their workplace to replicate that feeling.

New York-based Foursquare, is a great example of this practice in action.

When they opened up their San Francisco office, they wanted to develop a way all of their employees could stay connected around the clock, and in a way to make it feel as if they were all in one location.

It created the Portal, a videoconference system with a large, high-definition screen that is left on all day. This screen, centrally located in both offices, allows employees to walk directly up to the live feed and start a conversation with someone on the other end as if they walked up to someone’s desk.

Daily stand-up meetings and impromptu discussions are held around the Portal enabling real-time connection and a more free-flowing exchange of ideas.

Geography is now no longer a barrier to how we connect.
NETWORKS ARE PEOPLE

Applying industrialized marketing techniques to social media is flawed. Be human, please.

With more than two billion people using it worldwide, no one can deny the power of social media to reach consumers. It can reach them at scale, hitting millions of eyeballs in a matter of seconds.

It can reach them with surgical precision, targeting demographics, interests and geography to deliver the right message to the right person at the right time. Of course for a marketer, this changes everything.

But are you changing along with it? In the context of something this powerful, are you still looking at social media as simply a more effective way to broadcast your message? Because if you are, you’re leaving the loop wide open.

The reason social media has changed everything isn’t the fact that it has made it easier to reach more people. It’s not simply a better billboard. Social media has changed everything because it has made brand communication a two-way street.

More social, I guess you could say.

Consumers now have a way to directly connect with brands in a very public way.

They can ask, complain, compliment and otherwise banter directly with brands like never before.

There’s an old-fashioned word for this; conversation.

You don’t make a friend by showing them a funny picture. You don’t win over your future spouse by saying something insightful and walking away. You may get their attention like that, but if you want to create an emotional connection, you must interact. This always begins with conversation.

When someone talks to you about your brand, you have grabbed their attention.

If you’re lucky, it could be because they like you. Or, it might be because they don’t like you. But as is true with any social relationship, closing that loop with conversation is the only way you can strengthen, steer and even change that sentiment.

You cannot have a conversation with your consumer via a billboard, a TV commercial, an article or even a banner ad. You can, however, do this on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat.

So make your real-time memes. Tell those visual stories. Create that brilliant content.

But don’t just put it out there and walk away. Be present to extend the conversation as it comes back to you. Close that loop.

Every comment, and every share – each one of those reactions represents an opportunity to start a conversation that has the potential to win a true fan, create a strong advocate, or earn a loyal customer.

Eyeballs are great, but hearts are greater.
Content Marketing: Buzzword to Saturation

Stop posting nonsense on the Internet. It’s a conversation.

Last September I hustled along to Content Marketing World – arguably the largest gathering of digital content nerds in the world.

Over the course of my three years of attendance, the event has grown so rapidly that this year’s keynote speaker, actor John Cleese, opened by asking, “Why are thousands of people in a storage warehouse for submarines?”

He had a point.

The event’s insane growth has been fueled by the massive shift in marketing and communications toward smart online content. Nearly every big brand, agency and digital vendor demanded a presence at the event, and a massive submarine-storage-turned-convention centre was the only suitable place for a crowd this large.

But while great in size, we content marketers were, frankly, a little down this year. In fact, compared to years past, the mood was downright depressed.

Content marketing is at a critical tipping point with its pendulum quickly swinging from CMO-buzzword to over-saturation. One keynote speaker even went so far as to say we are facing a “trough of disappointment” in the industry.

So how do we buck this trend?

Don’t move without a strategy
Brands that make content for content’s sake fail fast. You must know the ins and outs of your business goals, your audience and their content consumption habits – what makes them share, what makes them jump – prior to the creation phase.

Your strategy should not just aim to reach but engage, regardless of the shiny new platform you decide to leverage. Plus, supporting your strategy with PESO – paid, earned, shared and owned – tactics will aid success.

Marry quality with quantity
“Content marketing is really like a first date. If all you do is talk about yourself, there won’t be a second date,” said another keynote speaker.

The very best content marketing rarely even mentions the product. Its high-quality video; beautifully written essays; sharp, witty tweets – and it’s done with purpose and passion.

The old adage of “quality over quantity” has evolved – you now need both to succeed. A stunning piece of content won’t make waves without a steady cadence.

Make them break out the tissues
What is your mom sharing on Facebook? Stories that move her, make her laugh, or make her cry – that’s what. We’re all human, and we want to enjoy and share the things that spark emotion.

Great content marketing will do just that – and the greatest content will create movements fueled by feelings. Find the human truth that moves your audience and build your content strategy around it. It’s what will set your content marketing apart.
In an oversaturated social media landscape, video offers a way to break through the chatter and achieve higher levels of meaningful engagement with a brands’ targets.

**Video is popping**
According to a recent report from big data company, Shareablee, social engagement with brands is growing at a rapid pace. There were more than 39 billion “actions” across the social web in 2015 in the US alone. That’s up 52% from 2014.

Video content specifically from brands increased by 98%, and engagement with those videos grew by 163% year over year. The bottom line is that social videos represent a sweet spot where organic and paid engagement overlap in a powerful way.

**Cost per view is affordable**
Cost per view on photo posts are running at around 20 to 50 times more. It’s so affordable to get eyes on video content that you are missing out on a huge opportunity if you aren’t exploring this format.

**Get scrappy with content creation**
That’s all well and good, but how do you afford video content creation? We in Chicago worked with one of our clients on a large-scale social activation around a brand relaunch.

In the interest of getting the most out of our client’s investment, we negotiated a few hours of shooting time with the talent after he was finished shooting our agency ad partner’s commercials.

By piggybacking on an already existing video shoot and arming ourselves with a well-strategized shot list, we managed to capture enough footage to create a full calendar of social videos to leverage across Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

**Do it yourself**
You don’t need a professionally staffed video shoot to create engaging social videos or even a high-end camera. Never underestimate what you can do with an iPhone and some inspirational ideas.

With powerful photo editing apps like Snapseed, Photoshop and Instagram, you can create dynamic content on the go.

Instagram continues to be a huge resource with its stable of apps like Hyperlapse, Layout and Boomerang so don’t be afraid to indulge your inner movie-maker.

Jeff Campbell
@jeffreycampbell

About Jeff Campbell
Jeff is an Art Director. When he’s not making awesome social content for brands, he loves to travel, eat gummy bears, do DIY projects, and hang out with his four-pound Chihuahua.
LIVESTREAMING: CUT THROUGH CONTENT FOR THE BRAVE

#11 Periscope and Meerkat aren’t for everyone. They will be dominated by influencers who are good entertainers.

I loaded Twitch.TV, the popular site where you can watch others play video games, right before writing this to make sure I wasn’t crazy. I’m not. There were 300,000 people watching others play video games as I typed this sentence.

That’s huge but it’s nowhere near what Twitch.TV reaches at its peak. According to the New York Times, Twitch typically gets between 700,000 to 800,000 visitors during peak primetime which is more than Headline News, CNN, E! and MSNBC. It even rivals MTV, with a similar viewer demographic.

Broadcasters, or streamers, make money through ad revenue, subscriptions, and even private donations. One popular streamer, LegendaryLea, has a Hall of Fame on her page that lists her top donors. Want to get on that list? It will cost you a cool $4,643.

So, when Periscope and Meerkat launched at SXSW this year, everyone expected live streaming to be the next Twitter. We were going to live in a world that democratized live content creation. But it didn’t happen.

Watching live streams through Meerkat and Periscope is painful and often cringe inducing.

Facebook realized this and launched their live streaming brilliantly. To launch the product, only celebrities with verified pages could create live streams. Then in early December 2015 when all of the kinks were addressed, Facebook rolled live streaming out to users.

The popularity of live streaming and the inability for the average user to do it successfully means that talent will be increasingly valued. Now is the time for brands and marketers to identify influencers that align with their brand and create long term deals to lock up their talent while the value is high.

Where is live streaming going to go next? We’ve seen video games and adult services make tremendous amounts of money through this technology but what will be the next type of content to explode? Here are three areas I think are ripe for influencer marketing and live streaming...

#1 Food
Prepared videos are already huge on both television and the Internet. But... they are also heavily edited. Cooks and chefs who are able to entertain an audience while preparing food will be able to carve out the next big niche. While writing this article, I saw someone streaming their pre-Thanksgiving Day preparation and it was fascinating.

#2 Creative services
Earlier this year, Twitch released a Creative Channel where artists narrated their creations. It debuted with a Bob Ross marathon but quickly became focused on graphic design and video editing. In the olden days, we learned art and trade skills by watching masters. Now, anyone can get involved.

#3 Health
While there are some privacy issues to overcome, health, wellness and medicine would be fascinating to watch. Imagine someone live streaming their workout, or nutrition planning or even surgery. There are tonnes of opportunities for engaging content that can not only entertain, but also make the world a better place.
Have you ever noticed that direct traffic to your website or blog is higher than you originally anticipated? Do people actually type URLs into their browsers and go directly to your website? The short answer is probably not. You may have fallen victim to what’s commonly referred to as Dark Social – the social sharing of articles, links and news stories that occurs on private platforms such as email, instant messenger and text.

These links are not tracked by analytics software, and the origins or referral sources (where they come from) cannot be determined, so they appear as direct traffic.

The reason why they’re not tracked is because they’re occurring on private platforms where the user is protected through privacy laws and businesses are not able to measure or extract data.

According to a report by RadiumOne, 69% of global sharing activity takes place via dark social, versus 23% via Facebook.

What’s also interesting is that 32% of people who share content online will choose to do so via dark social only.

Using link shorteners allows you to track the number of clicks your links receive over a certain period of time. If you don’t use a service like this, the clicks on your links cannot be tracked and you’ll be left with lower numbers and incomplete measurement.

When it comes to link shortening services there are a number to choose from:
- Google URL Shortener
- Bitly
- Ow.ly
- Custom branded shorteners – work with your domain registrar or try Domainr or 101Domain.

Link shorteners, used in conjunction with your web analytics, will provide a more holistic picture of what’s really going on with your content and traffic.

They will allow you to see in the dark.

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“Inaccurate analytics and measurement results may be skewing your decision making in the wrong direction.”

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Beyond the Birdfeeder

#13 Twitter accounts need a personality and purpose.

Creating a unique Twitter brand voice isn’t just important; it’s critical.

Online social narratives fall into the thicket if they appear too self-serving or alternatively, too bland. Through years of experimentation many brands have transformed the social platform into a place for instant hits.

Toshiba America uses our services to help generate registration leads for its well-known US and Canadian science competition for students, Toshiba/NSTA ExploraVision.

While the entire ExploraVision programme encompasses elements of Paid, Earned, Shared and Owned (PESO) activity - Facebook and Twitter are crucial components that collectively drive 87% of the competition website’s social traffic and 10% of leads each month of the campaign.

But why in 2015 did we grow ExploraVision significantly more than in years’ past? Well, we moved beyond pushing out tweets with playful tones to actually finding and engaging with science teachers. Here’s how we did it.

Finding common motives
Science teachers are a sizeable Twitter community who are active in weekly educational hashtag chats and more likely than other teachers to share photos from within the classroom. Due to the visual nature of science, they thrive on feedback.

Compliment and convert
We all know it can be a fine line to not only extol the benefits of your client’s product or service but also create content you want to resonate with the intended audience. Our approach for the ExploraVision is simple – compliment and convert. We search each morning for top organic tweets from science teachers using a select set of approved keywords.

After a brief vetting process we then compose personalized responses that commend or ask teachers to explain what they’ve shared.

If a teacher responds, we incorporate a link to ExploraVision.org. We learned that simply pushing out links from the get-go turns off teachers, or worse, it looks like spam.

Celebrating innovative teaching
Though it does take some time to build private Twitter lists, once created, they offer a robust way to monitor conversations and see how discussions evolve. Through daily monitoring of teachers with whom we’ve engaged, we stay updated on the language of classroom chatter and this informs our overall editorial content.

Return on Twitter
We’re already exceeding ExploraVision website traffic and registration benchmarks thanks to this grassroots strategy that doesn’t single out influencers, but rather teachers who are truly passionate about what they do.

To further quantify our efforts, Toshiba’s most recent brand reputation survey showed an increase in “perception of Toshiba supporting the local community through education, volunteerism and contributions.”
When Facebook started, it was campus ratings that encouraged people in similar space to have a similar conversations. By 2004, Facebook had grown to one million people. Yet with the advent of other social media, people thought the campus chat board had peaked.

More than a decade later, Facebook has more than a billion daily active users. We are well into the information age, approaching the nanotechnology age, and people are thinking Facebook has peaked again.

The pundits were wrong then. They are wrong today. Here are four of the most profound ways Facebook – and its holdings – will continue to evolve in the medium term.

#1 Facebook acquires Instagram
It was 2012 when the dreaded selfie became a thing. Facebook already had photo albums for scorned exes to troll and to change that would have been detrimental to the brand. However, Facebook could not deny one salient truth about social media – content without context has to be visual. With 150 million active users at the time sharing their Insta-lunches, there had to be more. And for $1 billion, Facebook discovered how.

#2 Internet neutrality
Net Neutrality is a hot button issue for many digital experts worldwide. In short, you like visiting whatever websites you wish? If Net Neutrality is not adhered to across democratic countries, that could be a thing of the past. Adverse points-of-view, arguments that differ from a popular opinion, or even graphics to illustrate a platform that isn’t entirely accepted – could all vanish if data is allowed to be manipulated, sold, or even bartered.

#3 More video
The one aspect of Facebook that seemed to be so antiquated was the interactivity of images. As we have seen through Instagram’s Boomerang feature, images should have as many possibilities to interact with consumers as the written word or advertising already does.

GIFs are wonderful for sharing and posting, however, there should be more – and guess who discovered where more should be?

Facebook announced that profile images will have the opportunity to interact and become GIFs.

These images will be centered on your profile, seven seconds long, and can be temporarily set for a certain timeframe.

This allows people who value their personal brand to become more interactive, expressive and personable. Going beyond that... what about businesses? Personal endorsements? Testimonials? Features? Paid spots?

#4 Mobile first, and last
Due respect to a notable merchant and creditor, look in your pocket now... you see it? That’s your phone – or, as most of us know it to be, your digital umbilical cord. And what social platform to better take advantage of that thing you check (on average) 50 times a day than Facebook? In 2015, the majority of Facebook’s updates were built for the mobile phone. From larger images to smaller data points, optimized brand pages and SEO-programmatic content – all of which are based on user friendliness and mobile first. Facebook evolved for the phone, not to get in the phone.
It’s easy to think of Facebook, Instagram and Twitter as the dominant social media platforms. Weixin shows that’s a mistake.

Weixin is a social media platform for more than 650 million Chinese users. Its in-app functions allow users to communicate, shop, book services and access mobile banking.

Weixin is known as WeChat in other markets. WeChat is a stripped down version of the Chinese original. Critically, it lacks banking or payment integration.

Apps-within an app
This apps-in-app ecosystem forms a mass of great content, connected features and unparalleled experiences, accessible from any mobile screen. This has also helped redefine consumer shopping and Chinese life. It’s commonplace to use Weixin to conduct all sorts of micro transactions.

Here’s a glimpse of what Weixin use looks like in late 2015.

7:30am. Beijing. Wake-up. Breakfast means coffee + fast and furious responses as I catch up on Weixin. Need to be back in sync with everyone else’s lives since last night before I set off for work.

8:30am. Commute to office
At the train station, buy a bottle of water from the vending machine and pay with Weixin. Browse through Weixin subscriptions to Harper’s Bazaar, New York Times and Tencent sites for breaking posts or videos.

9:00am. Office downstairs
“A large latte, less milk, please?” Scan the Weixin QR code by the register and pay with my Weixin Wallet.

Shop and checkout
11:30am Shop Now:
Incoming Weixin notification...
Sis: Ok. I know what I want for my birthday
Sis: Please get the red-white special edition... please?

Sis: In four quick clicks, I pay for her gift on JD.com (app-within-app) and score a 10 rmb discount for using Weixin Pay.

1:00pm Lunch
Order food. Real chat with colleagues, Weixin other friends.
Pay for lunch with Weixin to get 5 rmb discount! Use Weixin ‘Go Dutch’ function to split payment. Colleagues send money.

3:00pm Conference call with Shanghai team
Activate Weixin multi-party video chat with Shanghai colleagues. Draft plan for client proposal.

Red envelope: lucky money
4:45pm Lucky break
It’s my turn to run ‘Lucky Money.’ I open Weixin’s ‘Lucky Money’ app, deposit 50 rmb from my balance and invite 15 colleagues to begin the Lucky grab. I hit send.

I hear pings and suddenly everyone is tapping furiously on their phones. My colleagues grab amounts ranging from 0.93 rmb to 12 rmb. It’s a lovely way to end the afternoon.

Friend, services and payment on one app
8:30pm ‘Go Dutch’ payment after dinner
Order a Didi taxi to go home. A Weixin notification arrives from my Didi taxi driver to confirm pick-up in 10 minutes. I activate a 5% taxi discount from my Weixin ‘Coupons’ folder, and pick up some items from the minimart. A total of four clicks and one passcode verification later, I pay both via their Weixin payment identities.

10:00pm Home
Read posts, check Moments, more screen shopping on JD.com.
Just before bed, I send a ‘Lucky Money’ to my sister, message her ‘Happy Birthday,’ which activates the Weixin floating birthday cakes on screen.
# Communities are People. Online and Offline

**#16** Smaller networks and better conversations are the future of online communications – and public relations.

Community management is developing fast but here are four trends rooted in the here and now.

**#1 Will 2016 mean new communities outside of Facebook and Twitter?**
Will this be a chance to move away from the big blue logoed social giants and into new realms of community management – what about Snapchat for brands and businesses on a one-to-one level?

One answer can be found in Channel 4’s use of WhatsApp to inform younger audiences about the Scottish referendum. We should also pay attention to the diversification of Facebook’s group application (see #4 on niche communities).

**#2 Will AI make your job easier or change the way community managers work?**
AI – not necessarily Artificial Intelligence but Automated Interaction – was a big buzzphrase for 2015. In 2016, A.I. will become a bigger focus. Automation and algorithms are great for making things work better; discovery easier and all around recipes for saving time.

As good as this sounds, it’s making all digital marketers and social media practitioners quake in their boots when you mention the idea that someday an app or software might replace them.

**#3 People first**
Technology dazzles but it is the people in your teams that make social buzz.

After all it is people that make up the world and people at the other end of the screen, whatever platform you are communicating with them on.

How we forget this is mindboggling.

**#4 Will smaller equal success?**
Complex evaluation data can baffle even the smartest of communicators. Will we finally switch to a new way to measure success in communities and content in 2016, with a focus on time and quality, à la Medium, over scale and link baiting in existing platforms? I hope so.

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“Are we one step closer to a smart community management tool? – it still takes a person to talk to people and interact on a one-to-one level or more.”
Ketchum tackled this challenge in 2015 with an online learning and development programme called the Race to Make It Real. The premise is to put the best content online, make it available on any mobile device, and deliver it in small digestible interactive pieces with ongoing interaction and an open exchange of ideas.

Over six months, 1,600 client-facing colleagues completed the programme – learning the agency’s new strategy, applying a new creative planning process and suggesting how best to implement those ideas across social media.

Leaders gave the exercise top marks for several reasons:

#1 Rigor
The programme was rigorous – typical comment, “You couldn’t fake it, your comments showed immediately if you had mastered the content.”

#2 Bite-sized learning
Although completing the whole exercise took eight to 10 hours, the learning was always bite-sized. Each concept or practice to be learned took only three to five minutes, then users applied it in an interactive way – with a poll, a quiz or a comment. This way people completed the program at their own speed to their own rhythm – perhaps on their smartphone on their commute, then a few minutes at lunch, maybe a quick check-in on a weekend train ride, or just a daily half hour at the office.

#3 Leaderboard
People loved being able to see their own, and their colleagues’, rankings on the leaderboard. Points were awarded in three areas: completion of the learning content, evidence of mastery and, most importantly, supplying their own ideas in the comments areas and receiving votes for their ideas from colleagues.

#4 Content
Best practice was demonstrated in short animations, content varied continuously from written concepts, to live video, to animations, to polls, to conversation with others – it was never boring.

#5 Cohort design
Each team had 30 people in it, carefully brought together from all levels and geographies to represent the global Ketchum community.

They didn’t know each other at the start, but beginning with sharing personal stories and naming their team they soon got to know each other – and they loved meeting colleagues throughout our global network.

#6 Visibility to the boss
At the conclusion of the four weeks, the top three participants from each team on the leaderboard had a one-hour live webinar with the CEO to discuss their ideas.

#7 Outcome for each and all
With the confusion of the chaotic digital marketing communications marketplace, it helped individuals to have a focus on the primary skills to be learned.

The agency benefitted because the learning was presented as, “here’s what our best knowledge is at present, please challenge this and help us figure out where this is going.”
100 PLATFOR\$ AND TOOL UPDATES FROM THE SOCIAL WEB IN 2015

1. AMAZON INTERNET OF THINGS PLATFORM WORK IN PROGRESS
Amazon launched an Internet of Things (IoT) platform. It enables connected devices to easily and securely interact with cloud applications, and other devices. The Amazon IoT platform will make it as easy for people to build apps for light bulbs as it would for rockets. Watch this space.

2. AMAZON TAKES ACTION ON FAKE REVIEWS
Amazon took legal action against more than 1,000 unidentified people it claimed provided fake reviews on the US version of its website. It claimed that the defendants sold false reviews for as little as $5 on the website Fiverr.

3. AMAZON DOES PINS SUPPERMARKET SUPPLY CHAIN
Amazon turned the heat up on the retail business with a button directly connected to the Internet to re-order popular household goods. This service is another bid by Amazon to disrupt supermarkets. Subscriptions for household goods have been available for some time.

4. BUZZFEED: ‘DON’T POST PROPAGANDA AND SALES NONSENSE’
BuzzFeed suspended brand accounts throughout the community and published new guidelines for brands. Be funny and don’t post propaganda.

5. BUILD BUZZFEED STYLE QUIZZES
QZZR is a platform that enables you to create embeddable BuzzFeed-style quizzes. It’s simple and it’s elegant. It’s also free until you hit 50,000 engagements or want to export data.

6. FACEBOOK FUNDRAISING
The social media giant is trialling Fundraisers, a charitable giving application for non-profit organisations. Facebook wants to keep you on the platform. Charities will be able to fundraise from their page and a donate button will be available for pages and posts.

7. FACEBOOK TESTS GIF-STYLE PROFILE PHOTOS AND NEW LAYOUT
Facebook is testing tweaks to user pages. Users on the latest US mobile app in California and the UK are seeing video profile images, a one-liner biography, photos and updates presented as cards.

8. WE DISLIKE FACEBOOK’S DISLIKE
Facebook is testing a series of so-called reactions in Ireland and Spain as an alternative to the Like button. Seven emoji images ranging from Happy to Angry, and Love to Sad, replace the thumbs-up at the bottom of a post.

9. FACEBOOK FOLLOWS GOOGLE WITH FREE LEARNING PLATFORM
Facebook launched a web-based learning platform called Blueprint. It consists of 34 free courses. Google also has a robust web-based learning platform for each of its products. There’s also an app called Primer that provides a good introductory overview to Google’s services.

The Ketchum Engagement Network is a community of digital and social practitioners across the world. We keep a watching brief for what’s happening on the Internet looking for ways to better understand consumer behavior and help our clients engage with their publics. Here are some of the most important digital, traditional media and social updates that we spotted during 2015. There are platform updates, new tools, media innovation and new reports and regulations.
Facebook is set to challenge Google and Twitter as the go-to place for real-time news. Facebook Search will return anything you're allowed to see from its two trillion posts. It serves news on the platform around big stories and live events with the bias of your social graph.

Facebook spotted LinkedIn, Medium and Tumblr’s success with long form content and wants a piece of the action. It launched a significant upgrade to the Notes app this quarter. There's no news yet as to whether Notes will be rolled out beyond people profiles. For now it's a tool that will appeal to influencers with large Facebook networks.

Facebook simplified the tracking pixels that enable us to follow customer journeys between Facebook and third-party websites. This new tracking mechanism enables us to report on numerous different actions and build custom audiences for re-targeting. Here’s a great primer.

Retail is coming to Facebook. This is much more than the buy button launched in June. A new shop page will sit alongside the about tab on a brand’s Facebook page. Mark 2015 as the year that social commerce became a thing. Buy buttons have started to appear on social platforms.

A change to Facebook’s algorithm takes into account how much time you spend looking at a story to decide what appears in your newsfeed.
Facebook extended the rollout of mobile payments in Facebook Messenger in the US. It allows a user to instantly pay or receive money from a friend.

Facebook, Reach Down, Engagement Up
Organic brand reach may be down in the Facebook newsfeed but engagement is up by as much as 50% year-on-year according to Simply Measured. Photos and videos are driving the trend.

Facebook Gets Friendlier
Another Facebook algorithm tweak. We’re seeing less content from brands and publishers, and more from friends. Facebook communities that work hard to earn attention are likely to be unaffected.

Facebook Platform for Media Content
Instant Articles is a new Facebook tool that serves media content natively within the app. It launched with nine media partners including the BBC, BuzzFeed and The New York Times, and committed to share analytics data with publishers.

Facebook Fake Account Cull
Facebook community managers started to see falling totals (around 10%) for branded and community Facebook pages as Facebook culled fake and memorialized accounts.

Facebook Launches Facebook Place Tips
Facebook took aim at the travel business with a proposition called Facebook Place Tips. It wants to be a real time travel guide for consumers competing with Foursquare, TripAdvisor and Yelp.

Facebook at Work
The social giant launched an enterprise version of its platform. We all use Facebook at work but this move will separate personal and professional profiles, and create enterprise groups.

Facebook Is a Consumer Insight Service; Of Course It Is
We’ve been able to plug into Twitter’s firehouse for insights forever but now Facebook is offering the same via DataSift. Data will be anonymised but with 1.3 billion users it’ll be a massive data mine.

Video Wins at Facebook Brand Organic Reach
Photos on Facebook brand pages have the lowest average organic reach according to Socialbakers data. Videos are king of organic reach (8.71%) followed by text-only statuses (5.77%), link posts (5.29%) and photo posts 3.73%.

Improving the End Game
Facebook just made the tricky issue of getting over your ex a little bit easier. The social network is testing a set of features to limit the amount of content you see and share with an ex.
Glassdoor, the TripAdvisor-style employee review and rating community for organizations, closed a fundraising round and took aim at international expansion. It's a reputation management platform for any organization in the business of hiring people, as well as a job site.

Google is spearheading an initiative to promote an emerging format for the mobile web. HTML Accelerated Mobile Pages (AMP) is an open framework for mobile devices. It's backed by The Economist, The New York Times and from Twitter to LinkedIn. Publishers and platforms from The Economist to The New York Times and from Twitter to LinkedIn have backed the standard that aims to improve the performance of the mobile web through a stripped down mobile-first approach.

Google is getting into the prediction business. New features of Google Trends enable you to integrate data from Google News and YouTube. This is a great tool to test content ideas.

Google added responsive design and site speed as variables to its algorithm. Non-mobile sites have been dumped in mobile searches. Use this nifty tool to test the performance of a site.

The Google+ user interface has been redesigned for mobile, and both Collections and Communities have been rebuilt. The relationship between Google+ and the Google algorithm is the only reason that we continue to use the platform. Its increasing becoming an increasingly quiet corner of the Internet.

Apple created a new media format with Live Photos announced by Apple for the iPhone 6 is likely to be disruptive. It's built into the new iOS and both Facebook and Instagram will support the format in mobile apps. Apple says a live photo is not a GIF and it's not a video. The new media format extends the moment of capture by a second-and-a-half either side of a photo.
Innovative News Apps

BuzzFeed updated its news app to serve top stories each hour and Reuters launched a new TV news app that serves personalized news shows on demand. These two apps signpost the future of news: on demand, mobile, personalized, snack format and video.

Recipe Publisher Becomes Native Ad Platform

Allrecipes had an overhaul. You won’t find any ads on the new site. Instead, brands have profile pages and content is embedded in editorial. It’s become a massive native ad platform. This is another example of earned and paid media integration.

Emoji Legitimized for Brand Comms

If emoji weren’t already an acceptable form of brand communication they are now. The Oxford Dictionary made emoji its word of the year for 2016. Emoji are used in messaging apps as a shorthand. Emojipedia has an explanation for the meaning of individual emojis. Use with care – each platform serves its own variant.

Alibaba in Massive Content Marketing Play

Chinese ecommerce giant Alibaba made a $3.5 billion bid for Youku Tudou, China’s top video site. Alibaba is keen to explore closer alignment between the video platform, which reaches more than 500 million viewers, and its e-commerce services.

Virtual Assistants: Facebook M Rivals Google and Siri

Google’s search algorithms are getting smarter but they aren’t yet able to respond to a verbal query and match location (Hoxton or Shoreditch, etc.), context (age, friends, time of day, etc.) and topic (coffee, cake, etc.). The so-called virtual assistant market is heating up. Facebook is launching a service called M that combines artificial intelligence with human support. The service rolled out initially in the US as part of the Messenger app.

Much of the Ad Traffic on the Internet is Fake

A rash of ad tech writers have been poking at traffic data. Bloomberg published an excellent primer. If data looks too good to be true it probably is. We’ve been here before.

Influencer Disclosure Guidance from UK Authority

The UK Advertising Standards Authority issued guidance on how bloggers/vloggers should disclose relationships with brands. This is an emerging area of practice and so has implications worldwide. The UK advertising watchdog says brands are responsible for sponsored content and that it should be clearly labelled as such.

Happy Fifth Birthday Instagram

Instagram celebrated its fifth birthday. It has 500 million active users, half of whom are under 25. It has become a popular visual social media format for fashion, art, travel and food. It’s still possible for new users to gain rapid traction if content resonates with the network.

Boomerang Content Back and Forth

Instagram launched a new content app called Boomerang. It could be useful for brand promotion, walk through and how-to video clips. Boomerang shoots a series of photos and stitches them together in a clip that plays back-and-forth. Clips are saved to your camera roll for posting to Facebook, Instagram and other platforms.

Instagram Engagement Study

There are a few surprises in a Hubspot study of Instagram engagement. It analyzed 1.5 million images. We know #hashtags work but Instagram likes shots posted with no filter, cool colors and desaturated but bright. Action and faces get more likes. Calls to action work.
### Instagram Trends

**Challenge Twitter**
Instagram’s Explore menu takes a much more Twitter-like approach by surfacing posts based on trending tags and locations. Instagram wants in on real-time. Ensure images are geo- and hashtagged as part of any campaign. The new feature is only available in the US for now, with other markets to follow.

**Thinking Outside The Square**
Instagram announced support for landscape and portrait formats. Instagram you’re spoiling us. Its popularity is such that a third-party app market has developed to slice up images before posting to Instagram.

**How to Instagram**
How-to videos started moving from YouTube to shorter formats on platforms such as Instagram and Vine. It’s an opportunity for a brand to create content or engage an influencer on its behalf.

**Instagram Adds Web Services (At Last)**
Instagram embraced the desktop. You can now login to an account and search for hashtags, locations, and user accounts from your desktop.

**Linkedin Focuses on Editorial in Groups**
LinkedIn is going through a transition in the way that it manages Groups. It’s moving Groups to its member services team. There’ll be fewer ads or commercial opportunities. The platform recognized that Groups are places for members to come together for discussions and that ads get in the way. It plays to the strength of public relations on LinkedIn as a means of editorial engagement.

**Linkedin Hits Publishing Milestone**
The numbers tell the story: 350 million users, 200 countries; and 1-in-3 of all professionals on the planet. LinkedIn added another milestone this quarter when it announced a million people publishing on the platform. Editor Daniel Roth shared a post explaining the benefit of thought leadership, sales and marketing.

**Linkedin Acquires Lynda.com**
LinkedIn acquired learning company Lynda.com. LinkedIn users will get access to Lynda.com’s professional development courses taught by sector experts. LinkedIn is resurgent thanks to its mobile app and Pulse.

**Instagram Increases Image Size by 70%**
Instagram is increasing the size of images from 640 x 640 to 1,080 x 1,080. That means better quality photos for third party integrations, big screens and physical prints. The Android app is the first to make the switch with iPhone to follow.

**Linkedin Acquires Lynda.com**
LinkedIn acquired learning company Lynda.com. LinkedIn users will get access to Lynda.com’s professional development courses taught by sector experts. LinkedIn is resurgent thanks to its mobile app and Pulse.

**Instagram Loops The Loop**
Instagram videos now loop. Gap was among the first brands to launch a micro-series utilising the new function.

**Linkedin Acquires Lynda.com**
LinkedIn acquired learning company Lynda.com. LinkedIn users will get access to Lynda.com’s professional development courses taught by sector experts. LinkedIn is resurgent thanks to its mobile app and Pulse.
Is That a Satellite Broadcast Truck in Your Pocket?
Live video streaming became a thing using apps such as Meerkat and Periscope. The premise is simple: open the app and press a button to stream video live to your Twitter network. The stream dies when you close it.

Periscope Goes Horizontal
Live streaming app Periscope added a landscape feature, Live stream in landscape for bigger, wider images. This is a shift away from the vertical portrait format previously favoured. It makes sense as it makes better use of the screen on a mobile device.

Pinterest Links IFTTT and Polyvore
Pinterest’s first partners for its developer platform are starting to roll out. Polyvore and If This Then That (IFTTT) are first up. IFTTT enables Pinterest accounts to be connected to other services such as Dropbox or Instagram for backups while Polyvore added a Pinterest login and Pinterest board collections.

Pinterest Adds Publishing Access to Content Tools
To date we’ve had to publish images directly to Pinterest on behalf of brands or rely on motivated users. That’s changed with 10 Pinterest sanctioned content publishing tools. The first tools to get access to the platform are: Ahalogy, Buffer, Curate, Expion, NewsCred, Percolate, Shoutlet, Sprout, Sprinklr and Tailwind.

Pinterest Takes Aim at Brand Campaigns
Pinterest took aim at the creative community as it developed click-to-buy pins for brands. The platform has been pitching new content formats to ad agencies.

Product Hunt: Reddit for New Stuff
Product Hunt is an online community for new apps, tools and websites. It launched in 2013, came out of beta last year and lists around 10 new products a day.

Bookmark: Reddit News Site
Reddit, the self-described front page of the Internet, is a community where lots of memes and news stories start their life. Reddit publishes a best-of newsletter each Sunday. Now it’s spotted the opportunity to develop a news site called Upvoted curated with content from the site.

The Home Page of the Internet
Much of the content shared on mainstream social networks and platforms often starts life on Reddit. The platform combines the features of a social network with niche communities, called sub-Reddits. Use the community as a start point for listening, creating insights and content sharing.

Snapchat’s Selfie Lenses
Snapchat rolled out selfie lenses for the Halloween holiday that enable users to overlay a pumpkin on a selfie. Watch out for other seasonal and brand selfies. The lenses are hugely popular with hard-to-reach millennials according to Snapchat. The cost for a brand campaign? A cool $750,000.

More Media on Snapchat
Snapchat Discover’s media shelf just got bigger. The messaging app added IGN, Tastemade and Mashable to its publisher line-up. Discover partners such as the CNN and Daily Mail are re-purposing and creating original content for Snapchat’s 100 million-plus active users.
URL sharing service shine light on dark web
The so-called dark web describes messaging services such as Facebook Chat, Snapchat and WhatsApp that are shared privately. This isn’t a new thing. Walled gardens have always been a feature of the Internet. Use URL sharing services to track how content is being shared in these networks.

Teen on Snapchat
Snapchat is the fastest growing social network with 50% of users aged 16 to 24 according to GlobalWebIndex. Brands are moving onto the platform to engage with this audience.

Searching for answers
Answer the Public pulls data from Bing and Google auto suggest searches and serves answers in an image. It’s a free tool from Coverage Book that you can use to tap into the psyche of Internet searchers and get inspiration for content.

48 how-to guides to PR tools
PRstack published two books consisting of 48 free how-to guides to third-party tools, to help public relations professionals get better at digital public relations. Follow this link for free downloads or to buy print copies.

Royalty free images
Sourcing royalty-free images for mock-ups and PowerPoint decks is always a drama. morguefile.com, iconarchive.com, placeit.net and unsplash.com are all useful resources.

Apps for making images
Gifmaker doesn’t stamp a watermark in the corner of the image so it is good for quick improvised jobs. Canva is another handy low-cost tool for making quick images for sharing on social media or in decks. Its drag-and-drop feature and professional layouts help to produce stunning graphics.

Turn your content into a GIF
Giphy, the GIF platform launched a new iPhone app that you’ll want to download called Giphycam. GIFs are much leaner than video and automatically run almost anywhere on the web. Use Giphycam to pull together posts, tweets and photos into a GIF.

Social scheduling tools
Buffer, Hootsuite, Sprout Social and Tweetdeck are variously recommended by the Ketchum Engagement Network as tools for scheduling social media posts. Schedule with care, and always turn off sharing software when an issue or crisis bubbles up.

Your best headlines ever with free online testing tool
You’re going to want to play with this free tool from CoSchedule. It analyzes headlines and gives you a rating for quality and the potential for social sharing based on resonance. It works for any type of communication and scores you 1 to 100. Less than 50: try again. 60s: decent. 70+: amazing. This headline scored 66.

Foreplay? There’s a web app for that
Crystal Knows analyses social content to recommend the best way to engage with somebody by email. It couldn’t be simpler: search on an individual, hit enter and it’ll spit out a personality report. The web app summarizes social media content and suggests the best way to email, speak, work and sell to an individual. Register for the beta and try it out for yourself.
BrandTale is a tool we discovered via Product Hunt. It tells you where a brand is running a native ad campaign. The tool scans all major media and returns the results for a brand and adjacent advertisers. Here’s an example for British Airways. Handy for insight and planning.

Twitter Curation
Moments landed on Twitter in the US. The new Lightning bolt tab provides a curated summary of the big stories on Twitter that you’ve missed since you last logged on. This is Twitter’s bid to get occasional users coming back. It’s an easy way to consume the content on Twitter without the need to proactively manage your network.

Twitter Cuts Workforce
Twitter shed 300 jobs in product development and engineering. The company said it aims to move faster with a nimble development team. Newly installed CEO Jack Dorsey is streamlining the business and seeking to halt the fall in user growth.

Twitter Polls: Yes or No?
Twitter launched polls on iOS, Android and desktop. The feature allows an account to post a tweet with two multiple choice questions. A poll is available for 24 hours before being deleted. Responses aren’t tracked or shared with an account.

Twitter to Go Beyond 140 Characters?
Twitter is tinkering with the length of tweets. This is the latest idea to increase active users from the current level of around 300 million. Account names, images and URL links may be excluded from the 140 character count.

Twitter Kills Share Counter Button
Twitter angered the Internet by announcing that it intends to switch off the code that feeds social sharing buttons to simplify the interface. It’s an odd move as social proof is an intrinsic part of Internet culture. Brands and publishers wanting to keep using the feature will need to build their own using Gnip, Twitter’s data arm.

Twitter DM Throttle Removed
Twitter removed the 140 character limitation on direct messages. It’s unusual for a feature change to be so useful. It puts Twitter on a more equal footing with other messaging platforms. It’ll be useful for pitching and customer service applications but avoids spam.

CHECK YOUR TWITTER DATA
Twitter pushed out a new dashboard so that users can see how their data is being used by third party apps. The dashboard, available in settings, allows you to review log-in times, devices used, and the activity of apps that you’ve allowed to access your account. Delete anything you don’t need.

Twitter Tweaks to Reduce Noise
Project Lightning is a Twitter project aimed at reducing noise on the platform. It wants to break the timeline and use human editors to serve important stories. Twitter power users will be outraged but the platform needs to drive subscription sign-ups and improve ad performance.

Twitter Tweaks to Direct Messages
Users and brands can now decide whether to accept direct messages from people that they don’t follow. Tweak the setting in Settings > Security & Privacy. This is a boon for anyone that wants to use Twitter for two-way conversation such as customer service, rather than breach the 1,000 tweet daily allowance or clog up their main stream.
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| **TWEET FIRST DISCOVERY TOOL**
Here’s a handy web app from Digital Inspiration that will find the Twitter account that first tweeted a string, meme or URL. Bookmark it for the next time you want to find out the original source of content shared on Twitter. | **TWITTER ROLLS OUT NESTED COMMENTS**
Twitter continues its drive to improve its visual appeal — replacing the RT function with embedded tweets and comments. The new feature was well received by users. However, the change may reduce engagement by restricting how tweets are modified and re-shared. | **GROUP CONVERSATIONS ON TWITTER**
Twitter launched a group direct messaging feature mimicking Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp, and others. Up to 20 people can join in without the need to follow each other. | **AS TWITTER GOES NATIVE, VIDEO FRAMED AS KEY MEDIA CONTENT**
Twitter made a chunky bet on influencer marketing, spending $30 Million on an influencer management company called Niche. | **TWITTER MAKES $30 MILLION INFLUENCER RELATIONS PLAY**
Twitter is claiming a win for its switch from stars and favorites, to hearts and likes. In the first week, Twitter said that it saw a 6% uplift in use of the function. It says the heart is more universally understood. | **HEARTS DRIVE INCREASED ENGAGEMENT SAYS TWITTER**
Twitter is claiming a win for its switch from stars and favorites, to hearts and likes. In the first week, Twitter said that it saw a 6% uplift in use of the function. It says the heart is more universally understood. | **WIKIPEDIA KICKS OUT 380 EDITORS**
Wikipedia banned 380 English so-called ‘black hat’ accounts that were engaging in paid advocacy on behalf of brands. Editing content on Wikipedia when there is conflict of interest breaches its guidelines. Instead, engage with editors via the “talk pages.” Here’s a best practice guide. | **IS ANYONE PAYING ATTENTION TO THAT WIKIPEDIA PAGE?**
Brands often get wound up about content on a Wikipedia page when in reality it gets very little traffic. There’s an open source tool to check how much traffic a page gets. | **YOUTUBE GOES AD FREE FOR PAYING SUBSCRIBERS**
YouTube unveiled a paid version of its video-sharing service. YouTube Red will costs $9.99 USD a month. Subscribers get ad-free video and the ability to save content for offline viewing. | **YOUTUBE PAID MEDIA PLAYS**
YouTube updated its paid product promotion policy. It explicitly prevents content creators from monetizing content through ads unless they sign-up to Google’s rate card. |