

# SOCIAL MEDIA REVISITED

## INCREASING PRODUCT AWARENESS

BY LEO DARDASHTI



LEO DARDASHTI  
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Social media permeates our culture: over 1.8 billion monthly active users on Facebook, 600 million on Instagram and 106 million on LinkedIn. Many of you may have tried one or more of these platforms with mixed results and ask, "What benefit does social media have for my business?" According to the Pew Research Center's January 2017 *Social Media Fact Sheet*, 69 percent of Americans use social media today compared to five percent just 10 years ago.

But those new users aren't just young people. The fastest growing segment of social media users is the 50-to-64 year old age group. Variations by race, gender, income, education and geography are, for the most part, insignificant. Since social media is key to communicating in today's media landscape, let's explore the benefits of using three of the largest platforms.

### Facebook

Facebook's COO Sheryl Sandberg commented last September that the social media giant has four million advertisers and over 60 million businesses – mostly small- and medium sized – with active Facebook pages. She noted that a third of small businesses in the U.S. still don't have a web page, even though Facebook's business pages are free and easy to create. Sandberg added, "We've worked hard to make our ads very easy to use, very simple, low cost and high ROI."

Facebook provides ways to create awareness, generate leads, drive discovery, boost sales and earn loyalty. The Messenger application supports conversations right from Facebook to answer customer questions or concerns. You can also create Custom Audiences from your customer contacts or website traffic, find people similar to your customers with Lookalike Audiences and create different kinds of video, photo and carousel ads to entice customers to learn more.

### Instagram

Business accounts on Instagram claim over half a million advertisers, and a third of the most-viewed stories are from businesses. To set up a business account, first set up a Facebook account. In your 150 character bio, add your company web site. In addition to posting up to 10 photos or videos at once in a slideshow, businesses can post Instagram Stories – a sequence of images that disappear in 24 hours. Business users should also add a "contact" button that will link customers to their company's email, phone number – and even show map directions.

Branded hashtags (i.e. #yourbrand, #yourproduct) or paid ads help promote your business by an even greater magnitude. Product giveaways can be effective in growing followers, if there is a requirement to tag an interested acquaintance. Compensating an influencer or tradeshow to "takeover" your brand's Instagram account exposes your products to potential followers with similar interests. In my opinion, Instagram is best used to build brand awareness, while lead development is secondary.

### LinkedIn

Most professionals are familiar with using LinkedIn to promote their careers by developing business contacts. Creating a free company page with a 2,000 character summary exposes your brand to new professionals. A business page can be used to connect with potential buyers or business partners.

Using the "Profile Views" feature can provide insights into their professions, industries and locations. Blog posts, webinar invitations and articles can help grow a business's network of contacts. Customized ad campaigns can specify recipients by title, function, skills, schools or groups. Joining relevant groups will yield added exposure and develop more connections.

An affordable Business Plus account provides more detailed reports for those who viewed your page and supports sending them customized invitations. Send up to 15 private messages per month to unconnected members of groups. Make new connections by sending up to 25 InMail messages per month.

To attract and retain followers or connections, develop relevant and engaging content – photos, videos, graphics – that is updated frequently. I suggest creating a social media calendar and assigning specific individuals to support content and responses. Improve on ideas from your competitors social media pages. Start by mastering just one platform, before expanding to other platforms.

Manufacturers can promote their brands and products by selectively using social media. The key is to understand your strategy and objectives for using the multitude of platforms now available to businesses.

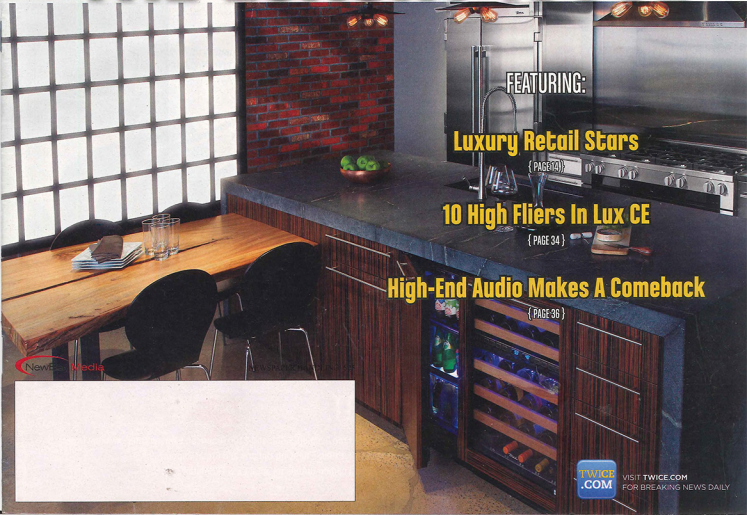
*Leo Dardashti is president and CEO of Atlantic, Inc., a diversified product manufacturer and supplier of consumer electronic accessories, home storage and organizational products, Urb SPACE fashionable home furnishings, Caimi USA high-end furniture, and the exclusive North American supplier of Snowsound acoustic panels. Dardashti is also a member of CTA's Accessories Division Board.*



# TWICE



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