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Renewed mobile Facebook focus, iPhone 5 launch: Ignore mobile at your peril

By John Ginsberg

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The recent announcement by Facebook of its increased focus in the mobile space, coupled with the fevered interest following the iPhone 5 launch, should be seen as a timely reminder to companies to seriously consider mobile as part of their existing multi-channel communications strategy.

Now is the time to recognise the moves of Facebook in the mobile arena, as well as the continued growth of this communications platform, in order to grow a brand's share of voice and engage actively with consumers.

Facebook's share price jumped by nearly 8% shortly after the news announcing plans by CEO, Mark Zuckerberg, to harness the social network's mobile offering. This announcement, though perhaps a bit delayed, has been embraced by the markets and is a positive shot in the arm following the company's initial public offering (IPO) in May, following which it lost half of its share value.

Dramatic increase

The social media platform has experienced a dramatic increase in the number of active monthly users on its mobile platform from 325 million users a year ago to 543 million mobile users currently. However, the general consensus is that Facebook has hit a ceiling with its desktop- and laptop-based platform in terms of the number of users, which is obvious with the slowdown in the growth of web-based numbers.

Mobile phone adoption globally has fuelled Facebook's renewed mobile focus, with the number of users accessing the Internet via mobile quickly catching up to that of web-based users. World Wide Worx recently reported that nearly 80% of South Africans own a mobile phone with 6.8 million accessing Facebook from via mobile.

Tech giant Apple's recent iPhone 5 launch is also a significant step towards a post-PC world. The adoption of the iPhone 5 will also benefit from recently quashed rumours of a Facebook smartphone, emphasising the company's focus on integrating Facebook into every device that users may choose to use. This is already evident in the deep Facebook integration found in the iPhone 5.

Huge appetite

The appetite for the iPhone 4 and 4S was huge and the sales of the new iPhone 5 are already estimated to be around double that of the previous model in its first week on sale. This new relationship between Facebook and Apple will be very

advantageous for the social network and could easily boost the amount of mobile users even more.

More excitingly, Facebook is looking to increase the rivalry with Google by exploring the implementation of incorporating a search-engine function into the social network. With nearly a billion searches per day being handled by Facebook at present, the presence of a brand being on Facebook will be crucial should this function be rolled out.

Just as Facebook adapts to the trends experienced such as the shift to mobile, businesses need to adapt accordingly and explore the growth possibilities presented in the mobile boom. It is simply no longer viable for businesses who wish to remain profitable to ignore significant technology shifts such as the current 'seismic' shift to mobile.

Vast opportunities exist for both global and local businesses to capitalise on this shift by aligning their marketing strategies to engage actively with consumers across multiple platforms.

ABOUT JOHN GINSBERG

John is involved in a software as a service company called Ensight. The company is building a marketing platform that helps companies automate communication across multiple channels. Follow @johnginsberg on Twitter.

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