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Social media: After three years, does it work?

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The past month I have had the pleasure of introducing the use of social media to a new member of the publishing team here at the journal. It seemed as if decades had passed since I gave the last introduction, with most everyone using it in some form or fashion these days, whether in business or for their person. So this became sort of a throwback, yet it is not Thursday I know, in allowing to revisit my earliest of goals and the steps I used to begin my trek into social media marketing. What I thought then and what I know now should be a huge bonus for this new team member right? Wrong, some of the same questions I had years ago when I began still have been left unanswered and here are my biggest two.

The most basic question is still the most difficult to answer. Does it work? After three years I can honestly say "Sometimes, it depends." Astounding I know, but it really does depend on what you want to achieve. You want to drive more traffic to your website, then yes this is the most proactive way online but this takes new content, expending lots of time and energy. Do you want to promote an event, yes this is a great way to get exposure because as I stated earlier most everyone is on social media in one way or another. Do you want to increase sales, then you have to create a way to measure distinctly your sales funnel from social through website to sales. You do have the option of old school and asking how someone found you but do run the risk of time versus efficiency. Unless you have a clear goal and a way to measure it then who really knows if using social media really works.

How do I come up with content or use content marketing? This is also a tricky one. When I started out I began this column based on my most frequently asked questions. It seemed like the right place to start seeing as that would help both my readers and myself as it was easy to write about what I talk about so much. Now three years later I am still writing about the same questions they just come in different forms. What happens if we run out of content and are we saying the same thing everyone else is? How do you stand out from the noise and how do we know if this content leads to the sales funnel? These are good questions, but the first question that needs answering is what do you want to gain from your content marketing?

Looking back to the beginning this month allowed me to step in from the 30,000 foot view and back into the 30 foot view. When looking through the small picture I think to keep it simple and the answer to both questions is, "Without a clear goal and an effective measuring system you can never be 100% sure if what you are doing is working."

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