

## **Dick Maggiore: Consumers positioned to rule in 2017**

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From advertisers' perspective, capitalizing on Facebook might seem easy, but sound marketing plan still necessary

By Dick Maggiore Special to The Canton Repository

2017 is designated as the year of the consumer.

Go back a few decades and manufacturers ruled the roost. They could pretty much dictate what their products were, the price they sold for and where you could buy them. Then the advantage moved to the retailers - often called the big boxes - such as Wal-Mart, Home Depot, Costco, Target and Best Buy. They began calling the shots.

Today, it is the consumer. We finally have the upper hand. We can give credit to the internet, the great equalizer, for providing all the information we need to make the right buying decisions.

Companies want to sell more products and services to more consumers. The trouble is the growing list of media choices: traditional offline (radio, TV, newspaper, billboard, magazines) and online (social media, search engine optimization, banner ads, email, video). With so many options, how do we get our messages to consumers?

John Wanamaker was considered a pioneer in marketing, a merchandising genius and a proponent of the power of advertising. He built the first department store in Philadelphia. He was the first retailer to put a full-page ad in a newspaper.

Most in the advertising industry are familiar with Wanamaker's famous complaint: "Half the money I spend on advertising is wasted; the trouble is I don't know which half."

Wanamaker made that complaint more than 100 years ago. Only now are we beginning to figure out the answer to his question.

The internet delivered the means to interact on a massive scale, yet individually. Social media is the term for this unlimited, real time, online communication network, and Facebook is the dominant player.

Depending on the social media habits of your prospects and customers, consideration should be given to Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, Pinterest, YouTube, Snapchat, Google+, Yelp and others. Email, blogs, AdWords, search engine optimization, podcasts and videocasts are other forms of online marketing.

Today's column looks at Facebook, the largest social media network in the world.

In 2012, Facebook topped 1 billion users. In that same year, Facebook went public with a \$100 billion valuation - the largest IPO valuation in history. Since then, the stock has more than tripled. You might be thinking what I'm thinking: "Yep; should have bought that one." The good news is that neither of us bought MySpace!

### More than demographics

From an advertiser's standpoint, Facebook knows a lot about its now nearly 2 billion users. It knows where they are, who they are and what they like. More than demographics, it knows psychographics. Facebook is a consideration for businesses selling to consumers more than for those who sell to other businesses

Your Facebook page needs "likes." They represent folks who have come to your Facebook page and pressed the "like" button, usually because they liked something you posted. The post is called "content."

If you've targeted the right prospects and customers and posted relevant content, you should expect more "likes" and "shares." "Shares" occur when someone hits the "share" button so that your post is shared in one or more of their social media platforms.

"Shares" and "Likes" are two forms of engagement that can be measured. In addition, your measurement might include positive reviews or comments on your posts.

It takes time to build the number of folks who visit your Facebook page. There are ways to facilitate this growth. They include linking to your other online properties such as your website and other social media platforms and emailing to your customer and prospect lists with links to your Facebook page.

You can pay Facebook to "boost" your posts. One misconception is that all the folks who "liked" your Facebook page see all your posts. They do not. Facebook uses an algorithm that allows only your more engaged (sharing and commenting) followers to see your posts. If you "boost" (pay money to Facebook), more of your followers will see your post.

For another fee, Facebook will clone your followers based on parameters you can set geographically, demographically and psychographically. This will allow new people to see your post. Your post will appear inline along with other posts that individual receives with the exception of the word "sponsored" in the upper left of the post.

You also can advertise on the right side of the page with more of a display-type ad with the same targeting opportunities. That ad can be linked to a landing page with an offer. Advertising opportunities like these help to explain the mammoth dollar valuation the market has placed on Facebook.

Encouraging interaction is the No. 1 goal of Facebook marketing. Content, therefore, is critical. As with most communications, we respond to the emotional appeal rather than the rational.

In health care, for example, the post could read, "How to lose 10 pounds in one month safely." A good tactical approach is posting "how to" things that are relevant to your audience. Contests, polls and surveys with some incentives also encourage interaction.

Capitalizing on Facebook might seem relatively easy. But it's not a panacea. Like all other advertising vehicles, usage of Facebook must be based on a sound marketing strategy.

We are aware of a company that spent \$2 million on Facebook and Google advertising and received very few likes and shares. It was a total disaster because the strategy was flawed.

We who buy goods and services increasingly have the upper hand, and social media are helping to empower us and provide advertisers a means to interact with us. Happy New Year - the year of the consumer.

Dick Maggiore is president and CEO of Innis Maggiore, founded in Canton in 1974 and today the nation's leading positioning ad agency, building strong brands for companies in competitive markets here and across the country.