Facebook, Twitter Help Publishers Find Their Audience

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On Facebook and Twitter, a significant percentage of users get news they would not have read elsewhere

Building from their strengths as places where millions of people connect with friends and family, Facebook and Twitter have taken evolutionary steps to become publishing platforms for news, video, photos and entertainment content.

â€œUsers are learning that the more they share, the more they discover,â€• said eMarketer senior analyst Paul Verna in his new eMarketer report, â€œFacebook and Twitter as Media Platforms: News, Video, Music and Games.â€• â€œAnd the more they discover, the more likely they are to turn first to Facebook for content they used to get elsewhere.â€•

Since late 2011, Facebook has been gradually rolling out its Timeline interface, which puts greater focus on media activity compared with the previous iteration of the Facebook newsfeed. The experiment thus far seems to be successful. According to a report from Simply Measured, as of February, worldwide content engagement on Facebook has gone up by 46% compared with before Timeline. Twitterâ€™s addition of the Discover tab to its navigation menu was also designed to encourage interaction among users and published stories.

Even before Timeline, Facebookâ€™s strategy has been to use social apps to draw users into the media space. This has proven to be a winning formula for Facebook and media partners such as The Washington Post, The Guardian, VEVO and Spotify, as well as Zyngaâ€™s FarmVille, Facebookâ€™s first mega gaming hit.

â€œWhether through the efforts of media companies or the unprompted sharing activity of users, more media content is making its way across the social web. This trend has put Facebook and Twitter at the center of the media ecosystem and turned their users into active participants in the content loop,â€• said Verna.

According to the Pew Research Centerâ€™s Project for Excellence in Journalism, 39% of Twitter users said most of the news they got on Twitter in January 2012 was not material they would have read elsewhere. On Facebook, the corresponding percentage was a bit lower at 34%. This means that, by eMarketerâ€™s estimates of the Twitter and Facebook user bases in 2012, more than 11 million Twitter users and more than 48 million Facebook users are getting news on those services.

Added Verna,
â€œMarketers who are savvy about how to use Facebook are focusing â€¦ on the siteâ€™s strength as a content portal, its viral power and its ability to deliver qualitative and quantitative feedback on brand campaigns.â€•

The full report, â€œFacebook and Twitter as Media Platforms: News, Video, Photos, Music and Games,â€• also answers these key questions:
- How are media and entertainment companies using Facebook and Twitter to distribute and market their content?
- How are consumers using these sites to access and share digital content?
- How are Facebook Timeline and Twitter Discover affecting content sharing on the sites?

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