



The Inside Social Media Podcast
Episode 1:
Scott Monty, Ford's global head of social media

Rick: Scott, welcome to the show.

Scott Monty: Thanks Rick. It's a pleasure to be here with you.

Rick: Appreciate you taking a few minutes to come chat with me. So, I want to kind of jump in here. You talk a lot about social media being part of an overall strategic marketing plan and I think that that's something that's kind of lost on a lot of small businesses and solopreneurs. They think that social media is just another thing they have to do because they, you know, they hear about Facebook, they hear about Twitter and so forth, what can small businesses learn from how big brands like Ford approach social media.

Scott Monty: Well, I mean, we go further than just saying that it's a part of our strategic marketing and it's really part of who we are as a company. You know, I was brought in to Ford almost five years ago under the Vice President of Communications, not marketing. So, we really started it more on the communications side to be strategic about what we do because in communications our goals are to help improve Ford's reputation and to help build purchase consideration.

And obviously those are things that feed into marketing as well, but when you think about where social fits in the overall scheme of say, the sales funnel, it's really in that upper level. It's about awareness and it's about consideration rather than about driving leads or sales. I mean obviously you're in business to sell things and to make money and that's what you hope all of this points to, but it won't work unless your company has a good reputation that people trust you and that they pay attention on what you're talking about.

So for us, you know, we don't have a separate social media strategy. We have lots of approaches to social media that support our marketing strategy and that support our communications strategy which in turn help support the business strategy. So, we're not doing social just to do social, just to check a box. We're doing it because it supports what we're trying to accomplish as a company.

Rick: Sure, sure. And I think that, you know, that's where as I mentioned, I think that's where a lot of small businesses and solopreneurs kind of get lost is that they think that they have to do it and it's sort of it sits over here in a silo and they don't do what you just

mentioned where they look at it from an overall strategic perspective and look at it as part of their overall plan, so that's a really good point that small businesses can take away from that.

Scott Monty: Yeah. And you know the other thing I would say for a lot of these people particularly the small business owners it's really all about relationships for them. I mean, their business in general. It's about building relationships with their customer base, with their suppliers and people in their community, etc. Well, when you think about social for a moment and I've been speaking about this, it hit me just a few weeks ago as I was – somebody was giving an introduction to me at some event and they kept using the word relationship. They used it like five times in two-minute introduction. I said that's interesting.

When I was in college as an undergrad, I was a Classics major and you don't usually have a lot of functional use for a Classics major upon graduation. And if you take a part of the word relationship, the Latin word that is at the core of it is relatio. Relatio. And what that means is to return or to bring back and it's funny that we're talking about social oftentimes in terms of relationship building and we think of the advanced technology that we're at, but really it's bringing business back. It's bringing it back to its very core which what lots of solopreneurs and small business owners know about.

It's about the equivalent of a firm handshake, an eye contact and your word is your bond. It's about building relationships with the people that you care about, with the people that you want to care about you and with the communities in which you do business.

Rick: Yeah. And that's really what – and I've seen a lot about what you have said and you've spoken about and social media really gives you that opportunity to get back to – just as you just mentioned, get back to the basics of communicating with your customers, talking to them, engaging with them and then listening to them and I think that that gets lost a lot of time and social media really gives you the opportunity to do that.

Scott Monty: Yeah, I think oftentimes people just look at it oh, it's another marketing channel. It's another way for me to shout at people for them to hear my message and you know what, the way things are going right now with everybody shouting at the same time.

It's like – just last weekend I had a movie night with my kids, I've got boys who were 6 and 9 and one of the movies I brought home from the library was the classic 1978 movie Superman. And there was a scene at the Daily Planet where Clark Kent, a.k.a. Superman for those of you not following along, is hearing all of these distress calls, all of these voices from around the world with his super hearing and they're all happening at the same time and he can't make out what he needs to hear based on all of that shouting.

And when you think about where we are today and about all the messages that are coming to people whether it's through traditional media, whether it's through digital or social, we're getting overwhelmed by all of this information and too often we treat social

as just this channel on which we can broadcast at people when really the great promise is the one to one or one to few communications where you can actually make an impact, where you can listen to what people need and provide it to them whether it's providing them with a laugh, providing them with useful information. Maybe it's just connecting them with another individual and it may have nothing to do with making the sale that day, but over time if you keep acting like that and if you keep providing value to people, they're going to trust you and they're going to think of you first when it's time to come back to make a purchase or a service decision with regard to a need they may have.

Rick: Yeah. Can you give me an example of when – you know, a type of a – or an instance or a campaign that you guys have run where, you know, you've really seen an uptake because of that engagement and that communication with people out there that has resulted in – you've been able to look at it and say okay, there's a connection between the social media and the engagement that we were doing there to sales of extra Y, you know, maybe it was a vehicle launch or something like that?

Scott Monty: Well, when we launched the original Fiesta Movement in 2009, it was only social media for the pre-launch portion of the campaign and we gave 100 cars to 100 people over the course of six months and told them you just have to make one video for us each month and beyond that you can do whatever you want. So, they're out there, you know, on the streets and online with this car nobody else has and they're out there driving around showing it off, having fun, making pictures, making videos, tweeting, blogging, everything and it's not Ford Motor Company that's talking, it's 100 individuals. And it's perception and it's unedited, unfiltered, uncensored.

So at the end of the social campaign there, we had a 132,000 people who learned about this and they said, you know what, when this gets to the dealerships, sign me up. Tell me more about this. 83% of those people had never owned a Ford before. Maybe even never considered Ford before. And so we're reaching a completely new demographic of a generation to people that would have not considered Ford beforehand.

Rick: Yeah. So, you get a bunch of new hand raisers out of that. I mean, did that kind of – did that exceed your expectations? What kind of expectations did you have going into such a campaign?

Scott Monty: Well, we had no expectations at all. That was the thing. This was a first of its kind and again, back in 2009, it's like the bronze age of social media, you know.

We didn't know what was going to happen. You know, we had 6.2 million views of their videos on YouTube, like 100 people, 6.2 million views. That was – and you know, they're promoting their own stuff. It wasn't us amplifying it with any paid media.

And we had, you know, 40 million impressions on Twitter, three-quarters of a million impressions or views on Flickr. Remember Flickr?

So, you know, we were thrilled just to see the volume come in the way it came in, but what happened in turn was really interesting, so not only did we achieve the awareness that we needed to achieve in terms of people reached and you know, this vehicle getting out there and getting some street credit, but at the same time Ford was also credited with being a company that was progressive and that was understanding how millennials needed to be spoken to and that was really on the cutting edge and of all things, you know, a rust belt manufacturer. You know people would not have seen that coming from Ford Motor Company. So, it really put us up, you know, on another pedestal.

Rick: Yeah, yeah. And then you guys did that two years later where you released the 2011 Explorer on Facebook and correct me if I'm wrong, but it was – I mean, that was the first time an auto company released a vehicle essentially using a social media platform so–

Scott Monty: Yeah.

Rick: – tell me more about that strategy and then also, you know, how might small businesses be able to model sort of what you guys did with that release in their own way.

Scott Monty: What drove that was – you know, we had to step back about six months in time, it was the beginning of 2010 and, you know, we were completely reinventing the Ford Explorer. This is a vehicle that practically invented the category SUV.

And, you know, it had a reputation both good and bad for lots of things in history, but here we had reinvented the vehicle. We rebuilt it from the ground up. The safety features, the quality, the technology that went into it, the fuel economy that it got, you know, completely blowing everyone away and we figured you know what, if we're reinventing the vehicle, we need to reinvent the way we introduce it to the public and you think back 45 years before that when the Ford Mustang came onto the scene, same kind of thing. You know, they actually took the vehicle apart, put it in the elevator of the Empire State Building and then reassembled it on the observation deck.

And that's how the Mustang was introduced to the world in April of 1964.

Rick: That's so awesome. I had no idea.

Scott Monty: So, you know, we've got a history of doing some dramatic things at Ford with major introductions and we felt that the Explorer, you know, very significant vehicle and it had an opportunity to return to its original roots. So, we thought well you know what, we're not going to introduce this at an auto show. Let's look at who we're trying to reach, you know, families, young professionals. You know, we looked at the demographic and we looked at where Facebook was at the time. Again, this is mid-2010 so even now, it's light years away from where we are but still significant numbers. So we said let's reveal it on Facebook, but we didn't just do it on Facebook. We had “IRL” opportunities, in real life reveals as well in each city simultaneously and then we bought media in each one of those markets and had a PR going on in each one of those markets.

So, it was a complete integration of paid, earned and owned media altogether and that makes a difference because it's awfully easy to just let advertising do its thing and let PR do its thing and let social do its own thing and hope that they're all on parallel, but it's when you're crossing paths, you know, it's like – I hate to use another movie from our childhood, but remember Ghostbusters. They said don't cross streams, right. Well in today's world with regard to media, you have to cross streams.

And having the paid media to amplify some of the cool stuff that's going on in social or even to amplify some of the earned media that's come out of it, you know, highlighting press stories about us.

So, the point here is that we learned that merging your paid, earned and owned media together made a huge difference and particularly when you're a small business and you have a shoestring budget and don't have that much to put toward paid media, well you better make it count. You better make it advertising that show something people care about.

You know oftentimes in social, we're – we default to simply being advertisers. We're proud to announce that. Well, let's think about what social is. You want people to take your message and carry it. Well, why are they going to – what's going to incent them to post an ad about your company?

What if you posted something that made them look good, you know, like made them look like the smartest person in the room or made them seem clever because they were the first person who found the next, you know, gangnam style or Harlem shake or you know whatever the next video craze is.

You know, how do you think like a consumer and think about what makes them resonate with something emotionally rather than something that you're so excited about because you've been working on it for three years.

Rick: Sure, sure. It really puts you in the – it makes you – it forces you to put that like you just said, put that – put the consumer hat on, put your customer hat on rather than thinking, you know, I need to do this because I think this is the way to do it rather than, you know, listen to and try to see what your customers want and then give them that and then social media allows you or is one avenue to do that.

Scott Monty: Right. When you boil it down like that, it's really not rocket science.

Rick: Yeah, yeah. And then also what you just said, I mean it goes back to what we started talking about is that social media is not in its own silo. It's part of an overall integrated strategy to do that and as you mentioned with small business where they don't have necessarily, you know, a big budget for paid advertising that they better make it work. Well, social media aligned with that can help amplify that, so it just takes it that much further.

With so many different social media outlets out there, you know, it can be really overwhelming to small businesses. You know you have your Facebook, so obviously you have Twitter, you Google+ and so forth, how does Ford treat the different social media outlets considering there's a different voice to each one? You know a lot of small businesses out there think that well, I can post the exact same thing on Twitter that I will on Facebook and the same thing on Google+ when really they're each one of them kind of has their own voice.

So, how do you guys treat that, you know, that each of the different outlets and again, how can small businesses sort of model that?

Scott Monty: Well, I think the core of it comes from being active participants, not as a brand just as an individual. You know first of all, that gives us the ability to just observe what goes on to understand the norms of the community and I've said this before and it's kind of trite, but social media isn't too dissimilar from a cocktail party and the type of cocktail party that you go to whether it's the fraternity house kegger or the refined country club reception or just a bunch of old friends getting together.

It's a different setting in each one of those. The attire is certainly different. The topics of conversation are different. The music being played in the background is different and it's up to you to conduct yourself in a way that corresponds with what's going on around you.

So being active participants in these communities allows us to observe that. But it also gives us the credibility as practitioners to be able to not only be seen as members of the community, but also as thought leaders in some way and when you take that and apply it to your business, you know, it's not easy to separate the brand from the individual many times, especially with a small business, right.

You know your local CEOs of small businesses, they're inextricably linked to their companies and that's good. That's what you want. So when the company comes in as a supporter, as an advertiser, as a participant in the discussion, it's not as abrupt as it might otherwise be because you know the founder is there, you know the chief marketing officer is there as a representative and as a participant. And for us, you know, we know what flies on Twitter with these quick updates that need to be really really timely.

That doesn't work the same as it does on Facebook or on Google+ and you know our Facebook community, very mainstream. Our Google+ community, a little more cutting edge, right. So, it's simply by being an active participant that we learn these things over time.

Rick: Yeah. Did you guys go through sort of a testing period on each one, try to figure out – you know, I know on Google+ you guys were one of the original brands on there, but did you guys go through kind of a testing period if you will on each of the platforms to see, you know, what works best, what people engage with the best on there, that sort of thing?

You know one of the biggest questions I get from people especially when it comes to Facebook is how many times should I be posting on there, how should I – how do I get, you know, how do I increase engagement, how do I get more people talking on there? Did you guys go through sort of a testing period?

Scott Monty: Yeah. It's called everyday. You know, the community around us, the platforms, they change on a regular basis and the membership there changes as well and it's not just enough to think that well, we figured it out last year so it's got to be the same this year.

We're always testing. We're always looking at stuff. You know every week my team comes back with metrics and I say well, this was our best performing post and this was our worst and you know we saw engagement go here, here and here. I mean, you know, we're always looking at the metrics and that's the beauty of this stuff, is you can get immediate feedback or near immediate feedback on it where you know you can't with a billboard or with yellow page advertisement or television or whatever.

So, we're constantly testing and refining based on what the numbers tell us.

Rick: Yeah. I mean in the end I mean you guys are ultimately about moving cars, you know, so how does Ford measure that return on investment from all of your social media efforts?

Scott Monty: Well, it's not too dissimilar from the way we measure traditional communications actually. A lot of it is – it's volume, you know, we look at the number of people talking about us. It's certainly sentiment. Now, are they saying good things about us? Are they saying bad things about us?

And how are things resulted? We also look at an event or campaign by campaign basis. You know, what did people think about us before? What did they think about us after and how are we able to move the needle? You know remember I said social for us is much more on the upper reaches of the funnel. So, how do we change awareness? How do we change purchase consideration for people? You know I think there's more desire than ever now to push the metrics further down that sales funnel, but again it has to go execution by execution because we don't ask what the ROI of advertising is or of PR. We ask about certain executions and social should be no different.

Rick: Yeah, yeah. Everyone tends to get hung up on numbers when it comes to social media, number of Facebook fans, number of Twitter followers, you know, how many friends are in your Google+ circles and so on. What would you say to a small business that, you know, maybe only has a couple thousand fans or followers or whatever who might be looking at a competitor with you know maybe 10 times as many followers or fans or whatever?

And that kind of – I don't know, it kind of freaks them out a little bit, you know – and I think that when it comes to numbers, numbers doesn't – they don't tell the full story as far as when it comes to number of fans and Twitter followers and so forth, what would you say to that small business who doesn't have as many, you know, fans or followers as maybe one of their competitors?

Scott Monty: Well, I would say if you're chasing likes, if you're chasing followers, if you're chasing fans, you're chasing the wrong thing. You know a friend of mine, a woman by the name of Katy Payne who does PR measurement has been doing this for a long time all the way back in 2009, 2009 mind you. She said, "You know, we've been measuring website traffic as hits and that's what we hang our hats. How many hits did we get?" She said, "Well, I think hits, it's taken on a new meaning in this day and age. It's actually an acronym, H-I-T-S, how idiots track success."

And it's so one-dimensional and when you think about the likes on Facebook. What's a like, but a digital grunt. It's the minimum commitment you can get from somebody.

Hey, check out this photo. I mean, how much effort does that take? It should be a meh button. You know, I mean because that's what it's become. But think about – I mean if you want to keep the Facebook for a moment, think about the three mechanisms you have for looking at engagement and of course, they'll call it virality. They'll call it a number of things, whatever the measurement du jure is coming out of Facebook insights.

But like, comment and share and as I said, like is the minimum requirement, the minimum commitment you can get from somebody. A comment, well, that's a little more, you know, unless it's the guy that goes "first", but getting people to actually engage more and when you get them to share well, they're taking your message and now they're running with it.

Right, so right there you've got a tiered system where you can actually – you say maybe a like is worth one point and a comment is worth three points and a share is worth 10, right. Now, you've got a rating system just within Facebook to help yourself determine what's been the most successful.

Rick: Yeah, interesting.

Scott Monty: And I would put that up, you know, as a thought process and none of this stuff is nailed down yet. Nobody has the corner in the market on any of this stuff.

But put that in place rather at looking at well, how many likes do we have. Well, who cares? You know, how many likes is our competitor? Well, who cares? Are they engaging people?

Rick: Yup. That's a really – I love that. I love that it's a unique way of looking at it in assigning a sort of a point system to it and I think that that's something obviously that, you know, you don't have a Ford to be able to do that. Anybody can do that. I love that.

You know, we've been talking about sort of what small businesses can – you know, tips for small businesses and sort of on a general sense here. Now, we've been talking about budget, too.

So, small businesses obviously don't have the kind of marketing and social media budgets that big brands do. You know, what are – you know, let's bullet point this. With that in mind, what are the top three tips that you would give to a small business or online entrepreneur trying to grow their business using social media?

Scott Monty: Wow. First, you've got to listen and that doesn't take a budget.

You can do that with Google Alerts and with Twitter search and again simply by being a member of these communities and maybe it's a discussion forum. Maybe it's a vertical within your industry that has a particular dedicated website or a discussion board, but it starts with listening because by listening that will tell you where you need to be. If your customers aren't on Twitter, you shouldn't be on Twitter and so on and so forth. So certainly listening is the first thing. The second is and as part of that listening, look at what kind of content they're engaging with. Look at the stuff that actually inspires them. What are they chatting about? And you can start by looking, not at the broad customer base, but maybe some leaders in the industry. Look at what your competitors are doing. Look at what people are responding to.

Look at what some of the leaders that you – who you admire in your industry are sharing, right and then start thinking about a content strategy to support your business, how you as a business owner or as a storyteller a.k.a. marketer or communicator, because that's what we all are, we're storytellers, can make yourself stand out and again, make yourself stand out in a way that resonates with the consumer and again, this works in B2B or B2C, you know, and large or small. What's going to inspire them to go back and take action, to share something, to comment on something, to engage you as the person on the other side of that in a conversation?

All right. So, you've got listening. You've got content strategy and then I think ultimately, you know, tying it back into your business, how do you actually make – how do you take actionable insights out of all of this? You know, how do you react as a business owner based on what's going on?

So, based on what people are telling you, how do you maybe change your product offering, change the way you do a service? You know if you're listening to people, not only to understand where you need to be and how you need to do it, but if you're listening to people in terms of making your business better then that's going to inform your own product cycle or your own service philosophy and help you improve that business.

Rick: Love it. Love it. That is gold. That is gold. You know we talked about two campaigns, the Explorer launching on Facebook and then also the Ford – the Fiesta Movement, so let's look at – let's try to look at one more example and I realize there can be different measures of success of a social media marketing campaign, that part of the

overall integrated campaign. But in your mind, what's one example of a really successful campaign that you see and then why do you think it was successful and it doesn't have to be Ford necessarily?

Scott Monty: When you look at— I mean, they've gotten a lot of kudos after the Super Bowl, but they were doing this before. You look at Oreo as a brand. They last summer had a program called The Daily Twist and this was part of their 100th anniversary celebration. You know, Oreo as a cookie, as a snack, has been around for 100 years. And how do you celebrate 100 years of a cookie?

Well, it's kind of ridiculous question when you think about it and we're sitting here discussing the historical importance of a cookie, but the point is Oreo has been with us throughout the better part of the 20th Century and has been part of the highs and lows of particularly American culture. And so what they did is they set out — this is a combination of the brand team and four agencies banding together. You normally don't see agencies playing nice together. Usually they're battling for funds.

Well in this case, Oreo threw everybody together. So, we're all going to be in this together and we're going to create a campaign where we're going to have a single piece of content everyday and it was expressed through, you know, a Facebook tab that they have, but there was also a site as well and you can scroll through the calendar and see 100 days of Oreo images.

And some of them were pre-planned, you know, the fourth of July and you know different things in history that happened and whatnot, but they also did a really great job of responding to what was going on in popular culture at that point in time, so the Olympics, of course, they had stuff planned for the Olympics but they also responded to certain teams or sports that were being highlighted or whatnot.

You know when Neal Armstrong and Nora Ephron died last year, they had a tribute to them and this is all using the cookie.

And it isn't an overt, you know, go buy Oreos. It was the cookie featured in an image that emotionally connected with us in some way.

And some of the images were completely over the top and tremendous others kind of fell flat, but they did it consistently over 100 days.

And of course, you know, not only did they do that, but they're doing what they normally do on Twitter and Facebook and their website and everything. So, it was really an interesting mix of content and context over the course of 100 days that I think allowed Oreo to really — to as much as it could own even more of the public consciousness. And I think they've got like 32 million fans on Facebook or whatever.

Rick: Yeah, it's — yeah, it's so much and when — I remember when they did that because everyone was talking about it. I mean, that's the whole idea is that—

Scott Monty: Right.

Rick: – you know, it means the press is picking it up and people are talking about it and sharing it, I mean a brilliant campaign definitely.

Scott Monty: You know it was interesting with that I talked with somebody at Facebook and they said they missed the big opportunity. All of the conversation that was generated by Oreo was completely organic. It was all word of mouth and if Oreo even on some select days not everyday, but on some select days if they hit some of that content with a paid promotion on Facebook, it would have gone even wilder.

So, you know, again, note to self, eat your own dog food, you know, earned, owned and paid.

Rick: Exactly, exactly. Scott, last question for you here, you know, what are the trends in social media that you're seeing over the next say two years and then how do these – how do you think these trends are going to affect small business?

Scott Monty: Two years wow. I'm lucky if I can predict two months.

Well, I think the conversation we just had about content is a big one and what we're starting to get into there was I've heard this pop just over the last month or two, this notion of real time content, that brands are watching what's going on in the wider world around them and then producing content to respond to that and of course, you want to be part of the memes. You want to be part of what people are talking about. But you don't want to be clumsy about it.

I think if anybody had a chance to watch what was going on particularly on Twitter during the Oscars, you had brands that were falling over themselves trying to be part of the conversation and the point is they were trying too hard.

They were showing up with preconceived notions of what people were talking about of canned images that they just happen to pop out at the right time rather than to listen to people and to respond to what they were saying.

So and I recently wrote about this, again, using the cocktail analogy. It takes great self control, self-awareness, cultural awareness and almost a sense of humility to be able to pull off wit. You know you can't be responding to every single comment out there with something that you think is funny because it wears thin very quickly. But if you sit back and you observe and you prepare yourself and then you hit them with a zinger, again, being able to read your audience takes great judgment to do that and brands that are falling all over themselves trying to be part of this real time content creation are going to get clumsy.

So, I think that's one thing, it's content creation and "real time marketing." The other – and I think this is more problematic for marketers particularly but certainly for individuals as well -- it's what I talked about earlier in the program, this notion of just being drowned in data and information and content coming at us which again gets back to my first point why being a good judge of when to put out content is important. Because quality matters over quantity and as we continue to see all of these brands jumping on board with whatever the latest trend is we're going to get deluged in stuff and I think what's going to happen is people are going to withdraw. We're already seeing people taking a break from social networks.

We're seeing people kind of, you know, cull the number of apps on their phones and the number of networks they belong to, well you better remember that as marketers. You know, you better be in the places that matter and have the right conversations rather than having all of the conversations everywhere.

Rick: Yeah, yeah. That's great. That's great. Scott, I can talk to you for hours here, but I'm not going to do that to you. I really appreciate you're taking a few minutes to talk to me today. You know thank you, thank you so much for being on the show. I really really appreciate it.

Scott Monty: Well, that's great. I mean, you have some great questions Rick and you know I know you've got a great audience and it's been an absolute pleasure to be part of this.

Rick: Awesome, awesome. Actually before I let you go, where could people connect with you Scott or the Ford brand?

Scott Monty: Well, they can find Ford particularly in the social space at social.ford.com and then all over the usual social networks, but Social.Ford.com is our hub that we control. You can find me at ScottMonty.com and of course on Twitter @ScottMonty.

Rick: Cool. Awesome. Scott, thank you again, really appreciate it.

Scott Monty: All right. Take care.