

KEITH TOMASEK

Self-employed social media strategist

BY TODD DEVLIN

KEITH TOMASEK TRACES his passion for social media back to his days as a magician. Really. As a teenager growing up in Montreal, the now-54-year-old did street performances and staged magic shows at kids' birthday parties and local events.

"To be a good magician, you have to be able to see things that other people don't — even when it's right in front of them," says Tomasek. "My natural interest is finding out what's behind the curtain and deconstructing things to see how they work. That's how I became interested in algorithms."

Deciphering algorithms is key in today's social media world, as insight into how the algorithms work — on Facebook or Twitter or Instagram — can make or break an organization's social media campaign, and even decide whether a business succeeds or fails.

Tomasek knows algorithms. And now, with his new social media management and consulting firm, he's using those skills to help clients achieve their social media goals. After dabbling in the field for a few years, including giving presentations at events like the International Ticketing Association Conference in Anaheim, Calif. in 2016, he officially launched his consulting business last September.

The Londoner has worked with clients in public health, insurance, the travel business and politics, but he has a soft spot for organizations in the arts. He's worked with the Grand Theatre and the Stratford

SpringWorks Festival, and he handles social media for an accomplished Canadian performer who tours the country.

"A big part of my business is consulting with arts organizations to help them sell tickets, and also training their staff on social media," says Tomasek, who studied theatre at John Abbott College. in Ste. Anne-De-Bellevue, Que. "I teach them how to tell a micro story, or how to take a better photo or create a better graphic."

If it seems unique that a 54 year old often finds himself teaching millennials how to better use social media, it shouldn't come as a surprise. Tomasek can remember using social media as far back as the early 1990s, when message boards and forums first became popular. As a lecturer at Western University, Tomasek served as co-ordinator of the digital communications program in the faculty of information and media studies.

"A lot of what I taught at Western goes

into my training for organizations," he says. "I always start out by doing top-level training on social media, including all the latest information and how to build an audience. And I'll do an audit. What have they been doing on social media in the past? Then we'll look to the future."

Most organizations have a social media presence, but the reality is that many don't use those platforms in a way that maximizes their ability to get their message out.

"It's really easy to spend money on Facebook advertising, but it's really hard to get good results," Tomasek says. "Unless an organization really knows what they're doing, their stuff might barely be getting seen — let alone generating profits."

"The nice thing about digital media, though, is that if you create a strategy, you can monitor it quickly and make changes based on the response you're getting. In that way, it's kind of like performing. If the audience is falling asleep, you'd better change your act."

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