

UNDERSTANDING ALGORITHMS:

HOW CONTENT GETS INTO YOUR NEWSFEED AND WHY YOU SHOULD TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THIS.

There are 5 ways people will find your content on the Internet:

- **Searching with keywords or phrases.**
- **You shared something and it appeared on their timeline.**
- **Paid advertising**
- **Going to a direct URL**
i.e. www.yourwebsite.co.uk
- **They found it by accident, or in other words: the algorithm of the platform showed it to them.**

What is important about the last point is if we have an understanding of how algorithms work, then it can dictate the type of content we produce and ultimately the action we want people to take.

Understanding algorithms over the years is tricky because we have to know that there are hundreds of factors that affect them and the platforms will never give away their secret recipe. However, not every factor is equal, so it is important to know the main things that affect the algorithm on social media platforms, right now.

Here are 4 factors that will help you understand it, especially important with online usage increasing due to COVID-19.

Affinity to a post

Almost every platform will look at how much engagement happens on a post to see if it is worth pushing out to more people. As it's the machines for each social media platform that decide what piece of content gets exposure, they look for indicators, and engagement is a starting point.

When it comes to engaging with a post you can usually do one of these things: 'like/dislike', 'view', 'share', 'comment', or 'reaction'. That essentially is what people do when being asked to engage with a post.

However they are not all treated equally. Right now a reaction is worth more than a like. The reason is because it is difficult to get true emotion from a like. If somebody said 'Feeling sad as my dog just died' and your only engagement was to 'like' the post then it might not feel appropriate. But now we have reactions so we can leave a crying face.

The platforms can find out more with reactions and that is why they are currently pushing this. This can also help the creator of the post to get a gist of the feeling towards it. However this can also be taken advantage of (Cambridge Analytica).

Type of content

If you have been on Facebook for more than five years, you've probably noticed that you've been seeing more videos in your timeline in the last couple of years than ever before. If you are on Instagram and YouTube, you are probably seeing more live videos on

your stories feed or subscribers page respectively. This is because the platforms prioritise the type of content people use.

If a new feature has been added to a platform, they need more people to use it to see if it works or if it is of interest. The best way to do this is to expose it to as many people as possible so they can try it. By exposing it to more people, the platforms have to increase the reach so if a new feature, like live video, is introduced then it can take priority over an older feature.

Most platforms love videos and images because they get the most engagement, and let's be honest here, they make a lot of money from the adverts. With images they know people will click through them quickly. Every click is a page impression and every page impression they can put an ad, which means they are making money. With videos, it is well known you can charge more for a video advert than any other type of advert.

So think about the type of content you create if you want more exposure of your content.

Time Decay

You can create a live video that gets amazing engagement but if this was last week, it is very unlikely to appear in people's news feed. Timing is everything on these platforms and you have only a short space of time to get the most out of a piece of content. On Facebook and LinkedIn you have around 19-26 hours to get the most out of your content,



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so you need to have a check list of things to do once you click publish. On the likes of Twitter and Instagram you have minutes to grab people's attention before another piece of content does.

Have a plan of what to do once it goes live. Will you put ad spend behind the content? Do you have influencers involved? Will you be doing press releases? Do you have interviews on podcasts to support this content? Do you have anyone that is likely to engage quickly? Did you post at the best time of day knowing when people are online to engage? These are just some of the questions you need to ask yourself.

Sending people off the social media platform

Have you ever seen somebody post a piece of content on Facebook or LinkedIn and state: "You can find the link in the comments"? If

so, the reason they are doing this is because the platforms restrict your reach when you post a link sending them off their platform and to someone else's.

They want to keep you on their platform as long as possible, so having a link in your main posts is something that we have seen restrict reach. Also, if you think about it, having a piece of content with a link sending you to another site is essentially what an advert does so they would want you to 'boost the post' rather than give you it for free.

Other factors

Relevancy: Plays a big part in what content can be featured in your newsfeed,

especially on Instagram. The machines will look at hashtags you use, the type of posts you engage with, types of posts you post, and similar profiles you like.

Familiar People: If you engage with the same people often, then you are likely to get them featured within your feed.

Watch Time: This is the main metric for YouTube, which is to do with how many hours people watch your content on your channel. The more people watch, the higher the likelihood that you will be featured within related videos and search.