

The fad that changed the Internet forever

December 1 2010, By Jeff Herring and Maritza Parra

Remember back in the early days of the Internet (which, our favorite reader, seems a strange thing to say) when so many people said all this online stuff was just a fad? Remember when IBM said that it could not see a use for more than a few desktop computers?

Oops.

One of my first online mentors, Tom Antion, a multi-millionaire thanks to the Internet, tells a great story about this. A woman came to one of his workshops and said she thought the Internet was just a fad. The next year when she came again, after having some success, and seeing Tom's massive success online, the same woman said "The Internet is really not just a fad is it?"

HISTORY REPEATS ITSELF

And now we have this thing called "social media marketing." Already it has changed the landscape of the Internet forever. And once again people are saying it is just a fad.

These people are wrong.

Though I do understand their skepticism. The first time a friend and colleague told me about Twitter, because I trust this person, I checked it out and opened an account. And then my first thought was "Who cares what I had for lunch today?"

Then I saw the enormous potential of Twitter for building traffic and leads, for customer service, reputation management for small businesses and for building a brand. One of our students enjoyed a 1,204-percent increase in business for her jewelry business from one [holiday season](#) to the next, using only Twitter to achieve this ROI. It cost her \$0 to advertise her jewelry on Twitter since opening and operating an account is free.

This stuff works.

So let's look at some broad real life numbers here. There is a website called Alexa.com that ranks other websites based on the amount of traffic, or visitors, to that website. Number one is the best place to be, and that position is held by Google.

Now check out these numbers:

Facebook is the No. 2 website, second only to Google, and [Google](#) is scared.

YouTube is the No. 3 website in the world.

Twitter is the No. 10 website in the world.

So three of the top 10 most visited websites in the world are social media sites.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR BUSINESSES, CONSUMERS

When we work with small businesses, both online and offline, to create their social media marketing campaigns, one of the things we focus on is

visibility. The good news is that as a small business you do not have to be found all over the Internet. You just want to be found by potential customers in your niche or area of expertise. [Social media](#) marketing is a quick and relatively inexpensive way to do just that, and it puts you directly in contact with consumers.

For instance, when potential clients or customers see you on Facebook, [Twitter](#) and YouTube for example, it communicates that you are the "go-to" person in that area. Share small pieces of your expertise or your product benefits there and invite people interested in more to your website.

For consumers, you often get direct access to a company's creator, owner, seller or a rep that can quickly and directly answer your questions and respond to your concerns.

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