

# When Facebook and Instagram are down, small businesses and big brands can suffer

March 15 2019, by Charisse Jones

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For Maatie Alcindor, Facebook is less about reaching out to old friends and more about connecting with new clients.

"Social media is very integral to my real estate [business](#)," said Alcindor, 47, who is a real estate agent based in Montclair, NJ. "I think these days it's integral to everyone's business."

So when Facebook and Instagram were down for several hours on Wednesday, she had to figure out how to communicate in a more old fashioned way. "It was like, if I'm not able to post in the manner I want to, I'm going to have send out a mailer," she said. "So I started working on a flyer."

Facebook's outage was one of the longest in the social network's 15-year history, but hours without it and Instagram wasn't just a day of missed gossip and selfies. For some it was a lost day of business, as entrepreneurs and companies increasingly rely on social media to find customers, sell merchandise, and build buzz about their brands.

The number of platforms has grown to include Alignable, which specifically targets [small business owners](#), and Meetup, which allows people to form groups for professional as well as social reasons.

But Instagram has emerged as one of the most popular social media portals to help sell merchandise or build a brand.

Instagram debuted its shopping feature in 2017, enabling users to click on a brand's tagged post or the "shop" button and then buy the lipstick, or pair of shoes that they spot and covet. Last year, the company said over 200 million Instagram users globally looked at one or more business profiles daily.

The online consignment shop thredUP "reaches millions of people organically on our Instagram, beyond our current followers," says Madeline Aaronson, thredUP's senior manager of organic growth. "Because of this, we think of Instagram as our second homepage, where many shoppers stop to check out our brand."

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Shinola, the watch and bike company that started up less than a decade ago says social media has helped it interact with its shoppers.

"Social media is a great platform for Shinola as we continue to build our business," says CEO Tom Lewand. "While we know more and more people shop using social media, the best use for us (is) to connect with our customers on a more personal basis and getting their direct feedback."

Coach live streamed a runway show featuring its pre-fall 2019 line in Shanghai, China in December. It got more than 7 million views collectively on Instagram and Facebook as well as portals like Weibo, Tencent, and WeChat. Earlier last year, it featured another fashion show

on Facebook and Instagram to drive traffic to its website for a then limited time handbag dubbed the "Dreamer."

Social media has also become a key platform and tool for the \$34 billion direct selling industry, which enables independent contractors to sell products and services for companies as varied as Isagenix and Mary Kay.

"The sales force has always been ... on the cutting edge of new media, new sales techniques, and in that regard they led the companies that way," said Joe Mariano, president of the Direct Selling Association, who noted that such platforms are especially appealing to younger sellers and business owners.

"The advantage of social media is that's where the people are and it allows you to expand your reach significantly beyond just face to face transactions," Mariano says. "Obviously you can speak to people abroad. You can speak to people across the country, and have personal and very real interactions any time the customer wants."

Bill Constain, who owns a financial firm in Ponte Vedra Beach, Fla. and is also a seller for the weight loss supplement company Isagenix says that he's gotten numerous clients and customers through Facebook and Linked In.

"With [social media](#), more and more people do business without even a phone call," he said. "It's been a great thing."

Alcindor says her primary go-to is Instagram where she not only posts pictures of the houses she's selling and neighborhoods she finds interesting, but other details that tell potential clients more about her as a person.

One day, when rain threatened to make an open house she was hosting a

bust, she taped a video of each floor of the home and posted it. "That got some people over who wanted to see it in person," she says.

If not for her business, Alcindor says that she wouldn't be on Facebook nearly as much

"If I do something on Instagram I push it instantly to Facebook," she says adding that she then monitors how people are responding. "They have analytics so you can gauge what are people responding to, so you can give them more of that.

Social [media](#) has widened her professional network as well, enabling her to get referrals from agents she's connected with in other states. And she's part of a group interested in various aspects of real estate, from investing to design, who gather via Meetup.

Next up is a vlog on YouTube with another realtor to talk about the industry.

"I'm finding all sorts of different ways to reach more people," Alcindor says.

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