

Retailer**NOW**

INSIGHTS FOR TODAY'S HOME FURNISHINGS PROFESSIONAL

PULL YOUR HEAD OUT
NO EXCUSES

it's time . . .



no Blaming the *economy*
no Avoiding the **Real** ISSUES



Are You Becoming IRRELEVANT?

By Bill Napier

I'm a Baby Boomer, and I'm irrelevant when it comes to shopping for home furnishings. Sure, I may buy a mattress and maybe even a power recliner, but that's about it. My home is fully furnished!

I'm NOT your customer. Generations "X" & "Y" are your customers—all 126 million of them. They are all "wired" for the Internet and they love being social online. They consume information when they want to and they do it in a variety of ways. Today's consumer not only connects with your brand, "They use it".

The Internet changed everything for retail, and social media is changing the Internet. Again, it's about "relevant content" being found by the consumer where and when they want to find and consume it.

You may think that you're marketing to these generations, but I can comfortably say you're probably not! Here's why:

- You have an average or mediocre website at best that probably isn't even found in the three categories of search.
 - ▶ General Search
 - ▶ Category Search
 - ▶ Branded Search
- Your content is lacking, outdated or irrelevant and you can't, won't or don't keep up with it.
- You don't understand or embrace social media—the most powerful influencer on the Internet.

Today you **MUST** embrace and enact a social platform to connect with your audience, everywhere they are, and they are on the Internet all the time

There are 10 platforms you must consider to be connected and integrated into your message. Failure to do this is no different than placing all your marketing dollars in print or TV... you'll miss your audience that is not tuned into those platforms. I can't outline everything in this article, so I've focused on a few that will immediately impact your local business.

Facebook
Pinterest
Google Places and Google +
Twitter
Foursquare
StumbleUpon
Groupon/Living Social
Tumblr & Blogs
Yelp
YouTube

No change equates to irrelevance.

83%

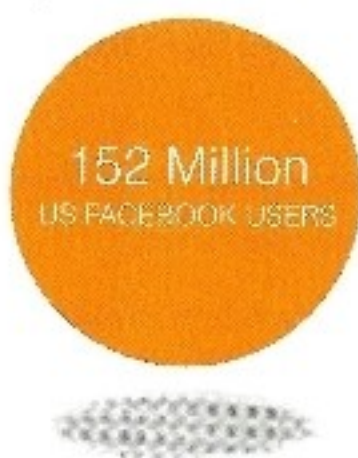
The number of marketers who say Facebook is "critical" or "important" to their business has increased in the last two years.

Facebook

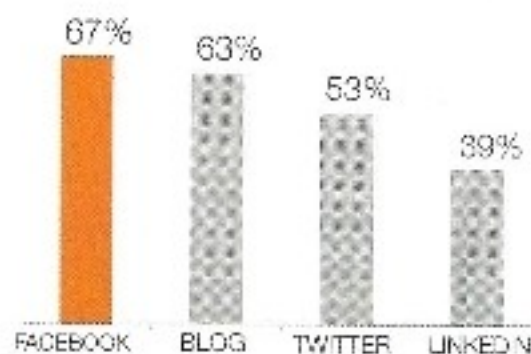
800 million active members, 152 million active users—55 percent are women

Be careful here, this is not a place to publish information that is not relevant to your audience. When I say not relevant, an example would be a post that says, "Did you know your sofa is a great place to take a nap"? This type of nonsense will quickly get you "hidden" from posting on someone's Facebook page because it's not relevant or useful information.

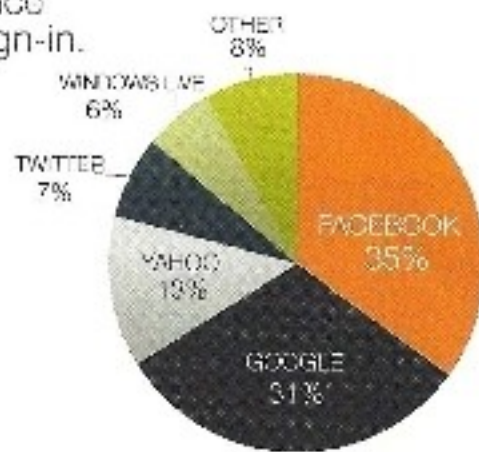
Facebook is a platform for discovery, relevance and events. It's an extension of your Internet and brand strategy, not a repetition of what's going on every day in your store or a selling platform. Ask JC Penny, Nordstrom, GameStop and other companies that opened and closed storefronts on Facebook. It needs to be fun, engaging with videos, contests, inspirational and more so people really do like you and ultimately will connect with you to transact when they are ready.



Facebook generates the most conversions for B2Cs.



Facebook has become the top choice for social sign-in.



Google Places and Google+

Google+ 90 million users. It's Google and you need to embrace it because 78 percent of search are on Google. Be there and be relevant to Google everywhere.

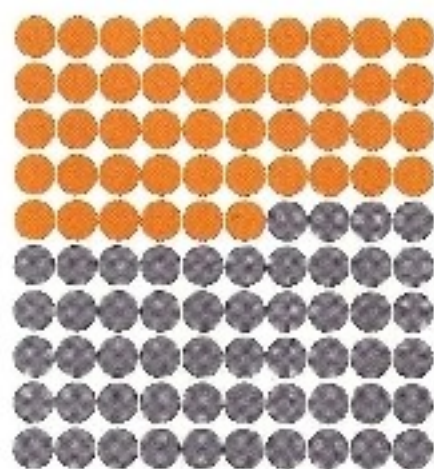
75%

of users never scroll past the first page of search results

20%

of monthly Google searches are for local businesses

46% of daily searches are for info on products or services.



63% of companies using social media say it has increased marketing effectiveness

Twitter

250 million tweets per day—55 percent of women are sharing what their thoughts, likes and experiences with their followers.

Pinterest

10 million+ active users and its estimated 97 percent are women. This is the hottest new social platform out there. **Home is the No. 1 pinned element**, and you must have a strategy for this platform!

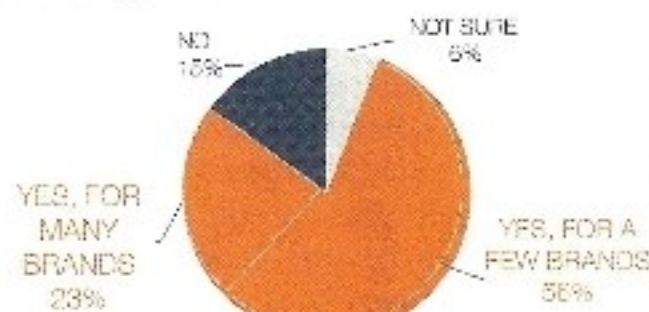
Foursquare

Over 15 million users, 40 percent are women. This is an easy to use platform, which is growing rapidly. It's an awesome platform for driving traffic/in-store promotions and rewarding customers when they come to your store and "check in".

StumbleUpon

18 million+ members. StumbleUpon helps you easily discover new and interesting stuff on the web. Tell them what you like, and they'll introduce you to amazing web

79% of US Twitter users are more likely to recommend brands they follow.



pages, videos, photos and more that you wouldn't have found on your own. They'll show you web pages based on that feedback as well as what similar "Stumblers" and the people you follow have Like or Disliked. Yep, it's a web aggregator and this is perfect for home furnishing retailers.

Groupon/Living Social

Groupon – 83 million subscribers – 16 million users
Living Social – 26 million+ subscribers

With the cost to get someone into your store hovering around \$130, this is a great "event" promotion for new customer acquisition and more. This can be used much like how grocery stores use "end aisle" promotions and specials. Drive people to the store with a ridiculous "priced promotion"—say a sofa(s) "at cost". You won't lose any money, but you will get people to visit the store and potentially fill their room with tables, chairs, rugs and more that may carry higher margins.

Yelp

Yelp is an online city guide that helps people find cool places based on the informed opinions of a vibrant and active community of locals in the know.

As of June 2011, more than 53 million people visited Yelp in the past 30 days, that's potentially 636 million/year. Yelpers have written over 20 million local reviews, 83 percent of them rating a business 3 stars or higher.

Retailer's Reaction

At Tepperman's we believe that our customers are our most valuable resource, and social media is simply a new set of tools with which we can cultivate our existing relationships as well as develop new ones. Our current and future customers have a wide array of needs (including questions and problems). These new tools strengthen our ability to listen to our customers, understand their particular needs, questions and challenges, and then facilitate a resolution—whether by answering a question, providing additional resources and education, solving a service need, or finding just the right item(s) they're looking for.

Noah Tepperman, Tepperman's, Ontario, Canada

55% Companies that blog have 55% more website visitors

Tumblr & Blogs

Tumblr has 9 million+ members

Over 500 million people worldwide read/subscribe to blogs

Blogging is the new “news you can use” platform. People subscribe to them because they want to aggregate information “they want, when they want it”.

- Statistics state that 57 percent of retail businesses have acquired a customer through blogs. (Hubspot)
- Companies that embrace blogs get 88 percent more leads than those that don't. (Hubspot)
- Blogging improves your rank on Google and other search engines.
- Blogging helps establish your authority and reputation in your niche.
- Blogging gets tons of new traffic which you can target for your products or divert to your website.
- Blogging helps establish a targeted loyal customer-base which you can tap into in more than one way.
- Blogging helps build your email list as readers often subscribe to your feed or newsletter.
- Blogging helps spread the word about your business or its products.

YouTube

1,800,000,000 (yes, that's a trillion) video views/playbacks in 2011—158 million/month

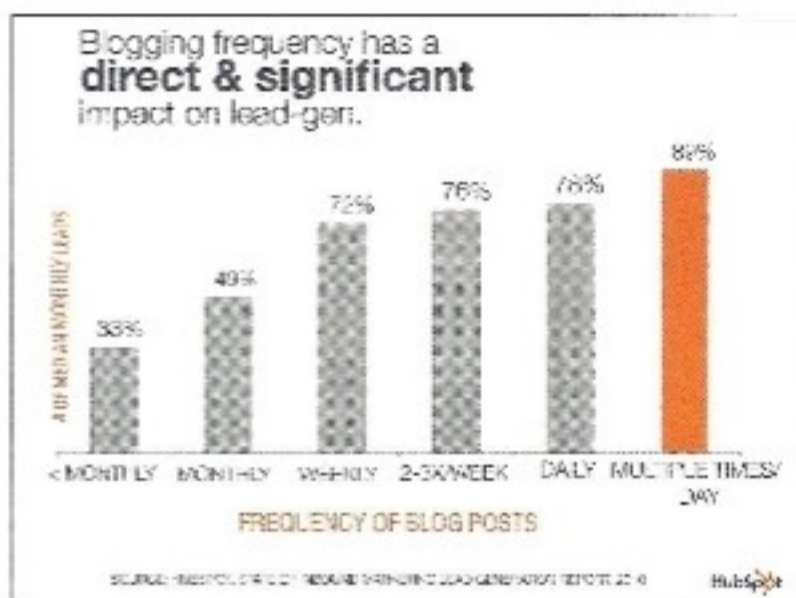
Have you seen The Red House's quirky YouTube video? It's garnered close to 4 million views and they are selling a ton of furniture, t-shirts and more. Research shows that women gravitate towards humor, animals and babies in videos. Videos on YouTube that have these elements garner the highest views. Use this platform to be “real” and fun, delivering relevant content in a way that differentiates your store from the typical “price off” format. Create a brand that people will share and like.

On YouTube you have the ability to share your brand's story/history, product videos, commercials, fun events, your staff, before and after design elements and more. *Don't be boring, be relevant.*

continued on p.34 ▶

88% B2C companies that blog generate 88% more leads.

US Internet users spend **3x** more minutes on blogs & social networks than on email



Retailer's Reaction

My company, Slater's Home Furnishings, is not against Facebook or Twitter, or any of the other social media site but we also don't feel it is valid use of our time at the moment. The average age of our customer is 63, and less than 4 percent of our customers are 40 and under. For some reason in our market, not many people in the 45 and under age group can afford, or have interest, in high-end furniture.

We have done some customer surveys regarding the Internet and found that most of our customers use the Internet to research products and dealers of the items they are interested in. Very few make these purchases online and very few of our surveyed customers use Facebook for anything else other than keeping up with family. Lastly, we don't have the time to dedicate to social media—I believe that to be on social media, and not have it current, would be worse than not having it at all.

-Tom Slater, Slater's Home Furnishings, Modesto, CA

...you will not just be punished; you will be punished with impunity.

I realize this is a lot of new information, but if you don't integrate your retail or manufacturer brand with these platforms you will become irrelevant... very quickly. Think Blockbuster, Montgomery

Ward, Borders and many more that did not adapt and did not change with the consumer.

As PriceWaterhouseCoopers stated a few years back: If a retailer does not recognize the changing dynamics of

the consumer, how they shop and connect with brands, you will not just be punished; you will be punished with impunity.

No change equates to irrelevance.

I leave you with my favorite quote which helps define the situation with social media,

"You cannot think yourself into acting; You MUST act yourself into thinking." **NOW**

About the author: For over 25 years, Bill Napier has been creating, guiding and deploying successful marketing campaigns in a variety of industries. For the past 12 years Bill has been focused in the home furnishings industry, having directed Ashley Furniture's marketing, and many other major furniture brands and home furnishing suppliers including the premier web-based home furnishing solutions provided by FurnitureDealer.net.

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that make peo
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business or t
making some**

**Save Money...Check! Save Time...Check!
Increase Sales...Check!**

Check guarantee, electronic check processing and innovative payment programs such as Multiple Check are designed to increase cashflow, streamline your deposits and improve customer service.

With electronic check processing, you deposit checks from your desktop, saving time and money. Multiple Check lets you accept 2-4 checks for a single purchase and deposit them up to 90 days later. These services help your business sell. Contact us today to get started.

We're pleased to work with these associations. Ask us about member discounts.



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