

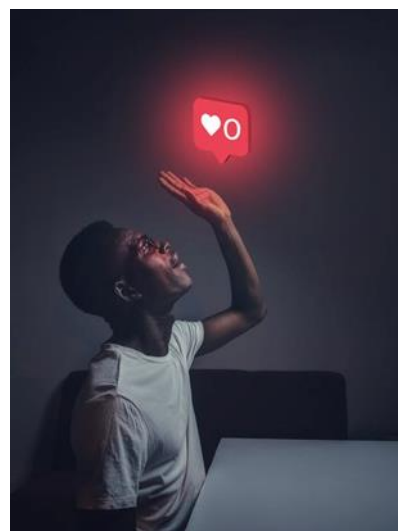
Social Media – Friend or Foe  
By Brandon Hoffmann-Morris

Where would we be without social media? It's hard to think of a world void of social media, at least for those of us that have been born during this Digital Boom. Prior to the mass adoption of the Internet, social media did not really exist, not in the same way it is present now. For example, go and watch Back to the Future. Not only being a classic and a must-see film for everyone, but you will also not find one mention of social media, even when they travel to the future! I



can hear Marty's voice in my head simply saying, "I guess you guys aren't ready for that, yet but your kids are gonna love it". Such a great quote and movie but alas, whilst I would love to spend all day talking about the Back to The Future Trilogy, we must get back onto the topic at hand. Is social media marketing's new shiny tool or are we overestimating its impact?

We live in a technology driven world, and this is prevalent for the business world. Entrepreneurs leverage technology for their own use and to benefit their companies. The traditional brick-and-mortar business model is dying, no part in thanks to e-commerce, and in the same way social media can be 'killing' the traditional marketing strategies of a seemingly by-gone era of business. Traditional methods of marketing, such as TV and print, are non-interactive and, while it can reach a broad audience, that's part of the problem, it's broad. Social media allows companies to interact with their consumers directly, even through personalised messaging, and can either reach a huge audience or directed to a certain niche. Going a step further, I can create a personalised campaign on social media to directly target my ideal customer profile (ICP) for next to nothing, whereas traditional marketing techniques



are extremely high costs and if they don't work, well I wouldn't like to explain those findings to my boss.

Social media marketing opens new avenues for businesses to extend their marketing campaigns to a vast audience for extremely low costs, great but is it all it's cracked up to be? To quote the great William Shakespeare, "*most friendship is feigning, most loving is folly*", and he is speaking, of course, about social media. While it's true that social media marketing is a powerful tool for a company to possess, it is not always better or effective. For starters, you need to have the right team behind the wheel of a marketing campaign (e.g., our amazing digital marketing team at Hayward Miller. I know, it's a shameless plug but it's true!), and you need to know who your ICP is otherwise you are not going to get great results. One can say that while the costs of conducting social media marketing are low, you must put in more time and effort into this, than compared to traditional marketing, and time is a valuable resource for companies.

Revisiting the question I posed at the beginning, is social media marketing's new shiny tool? If we're strictly talking about SME's then the answer is a no brainer, social media is the way to go. Establishing a two-way connection with customers, through a personalised campaign would resonate stronger than a traditional TV advert or one in print, since you are going to be able to reach a larger audience over a longer period, significantly increasing your promotion of new products and services. After all, this is the Digital Age and to bring this full circle, in the words of Marty McFly "*Sounds pretty heavy*".