

How Two Brands Generate Hundreds of Thousands in Revenue on Social Media, Big News from Twitter, New LinkedIn Ad Formats, and More!

Looking to catch up on the latest social media news, but short on time? We have you covered! This week (episode #113) we're chatting about all of this and more:

- How two brands are using social media, particularly Instagram and Instagram Stories, to generate hundreds of thousands of dollars in revenue and why it may not be as difficult as you think.
- Instagram is testing a brand new stand-alone shopping app that could put them in the same conversation as massive ecommerce platforms like Shopify, WooCommerce, and Magento.
- LinkedIn launches a powerful ad format for businesses called Dynamic Ads. We're breaking down exactly what they are and what they can do for your business.
- Big news on the Twitter front. They are releasing a feature that will allow users to switch between a chronological and algorithmic timeline. We've got all of the information you need to know.

Join 18,000+ weekly listeners for the Buffer podcast, The Science of Social Media, where we bring you the latest and greatest in social media marketing news, updates, stories, insights, and actionable takeaways.

Let's dive in!

How two brands generate hundreds of thousands in revenue on social media, big news from Twitter, new LinkedIn ad formats, and more [complete podcast transcript]

What follows is a lightly edited transcript of the conversation between Hailley Griffis and Brian Peters.

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revenue on social media

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Brian: Hi everyone! I'm Brian Peters and this is The Science of Social Media, a podcast by Buffer. Your weekly sandbox for social media stories, insights, experimentation, and learning.

Hailley: Welcome to episode #113, I'm Hailley Griffis and this week we're bringing you the latest and greatest in the world of social media and marketing, starting with a couple of case studies on how two companies used social media to generate hundreds of thousands of dollars in sales, plus some big news from Twitter.

Brian: We'll also be diving into exciting new LinkedIn ad formats as well as Instagram's brand new shopping app. Tons to talk about, thanks for joining us from wherever you're tuning in – let's kick off the show!

Part I: How two brands generate hundreds of thousands in revenue on social media

Hailley: It was a cold January morning in Berlin, Germany, and Jonathan Courtney was feeling a bit stuck.

Nearly six years had passed since he founded design agency, AJ&Smart. And though the business had been a huge success – winning multiple awards and a roster of big-name clients – Jonathan felt there was much more to come for his agency and team.

“But what?” he wondered to himself. “How can we take AJ&Smart to the next level?”

Brian: Jonathan decided to make a bold move.

He wanted to share everything that happened at AJ&Smart on social media platforms like Instagram, Facebook and YouTube, giving followers behind-the-scenes access to the agency.

Now, 18-months later – and despite the initial pushback from advisors – AJ&Smart has generated in excess 2 million in revenue from clients who first discovered the agency on social media.

Hailley: “We all had what I guess you call ‘real jobs’,” Jay Perkins told us.

Back in 2013, Jay worked at Bigcommerce, an e-commerce software provider where he learned about what it takes to have a successful online business.

But Jay could only hold back his entrepreneurial ambitions for so long.

Brian: After kicking around business ideas for a year-or-so, Jay and his two business partners decided to take the plunge and launch an online store of their own.

Fast-forward to 2018 and Kettlebell Kings is a leading kettlebell equipment supplier based in Austin, Texas, generating mid seven-figures per year in revenue – with much of its new business coming directly from leads generated on Instagram.

Hailley: So what do AJ&Smart and Kettlebell kings have in common?

They both use social media to drive consistent brand awareness, leads, and eventually sales. Hundreds of thousands in sales.

Brian: Lets start with Kettlebell Kings.

Today, Kettlebell Kinds get around 400-600 leads per week from social media, with half coming from Instagram.

Jay Perkins explained to us that most of their biggest deals and business development relationships have come through Instagram – they have even signed deals with national gym chains from leads generated on the platform.

Hailley: Getting to this point is a lot more attainable than you might think.

First, Jay and his team are ‘very strict on the posts that go into their feeds’

The first step to a successful Instagram marketing strategy is creating content for your Instagram feed that your audience wants to see and engage with.

Brian: In the Instagram feed, Kettlebell Kings focuses on sharing educational content and workout examples – this strategy has helped it to amass an audience of over 79,000 followers.

It also reposts images and videos from customers and this user-generated content angle has lead to the hashtag #kettlebellkings being used more than 20,000 times on Instagram

Hailley: Next, Kettlebell Kings features and reposts 10-12 customers who tag us on a daily basis through stories.

It’s a win-win because being reposted by the Kettlebell Kings account is highly engaging and rewarding for those featured and it also encourages more and more customers to share their content on Instagram. And it provides their team with an unlimited stream of great content.

Brian: Cool so quick recap, Kettlebell Kings focuses on creating consistently quality and engaging content for both the Insta feed and for Stories.

But that's not all... In order to capitalize on all of the views, they'll include CTAs to "swipe up" in some of their Stories.

Hailley: Once a viewer swipes up, they will be taken to a landing page or an article where they can read more about a topic and enter their email address for more exclusive content.

These pages tend to convert visitors to email addresses at around 25-45 percent, depending on the traffic source. So 100 visits would generate between 25 and 45 new leads, on average.

Brian: Finally, once the visitor has shared their email address it will be entered into one of many email workflows Kettlebell Kings has designed to serve helpful email drip campaigns about kettlebell workouts and techniques from experts.

Jay explained to us that they have unique workflows depending on how someone has entered our system. All of their email workflows are about building value and trust with new leads.

Hailley: And that's the key.

Kettlebell Kings purposely includes product photos in its emails but rarely sends offers or tries to make a sale. Instead, providing high quality content is the number one goal.

Brian: It's amazing what can happen when you invest in great content.

Now AJ&Smart is another social success story. The AJ&Smart team was inspired by Gary Vaynerchuk's mantra of 'Document. Don't create'.

Hailley: Once Jonathan and the AJ&Smart team had decided to embrace social media, they went all in. "We invested almost all of our profits in building our brand," Jonathan told me.

And though his strategy was a little out there for a creative agency – most agencies keep their cards close to their chest – there was a strategic reason behind it.

Brian: “We’re in a commodity market,” Jonathan told us in an interview. “We could compete on price or just rely on the quality of our work. But he didn’t want to do that.

Jonathan wanted AJ&Smart to stand out alone in the field of design agencies. He wanted the business to have its own brand.

Hailley: So they decided to focus on making one channel really great. That channel is Instagram.

‘Instagram is their social media hub’. As Jonathan explained to us, it’s a super low friction way to create content and a great way to get started.

They use Stories mainly to provide an authentic look at what the agency is like day-to-day and tries to show as much of what’s happening in real-time as possible.

Brian: And guess what?

When the AJ&Smart team goes to visit a client, the client already knows the whole journey and what the agency is all about.

And when it comes to their main Instagram feed, they post highly curated content that’s focused on design-related hashtags the agency wants to reach.

Hailley: Here’s the catch.

Jonathan openly admits that long-term social media success rarely happens overnight.

After a couple of months of investing heavily in social media marketing, AJ&Smart had only picked up a few hundred followers here and there. It took about eight-months in total before

potential clients would contact the company saying they found it on Instagram, YouTube or any other social channels.

Brian: Jonathan told us, “If I hadn’t have been patient I’d have given up long before we started to see the benefits of social media. If you’re just focused on the numbers, you’re not going to succeed.”

By focusing on humanizing the AJ&Smart brand and by documenting instead of only creating, they were able to generate more than 2 million in revenue directly from social media.

Part II: Instagram working on a brand new standalone shopping app

Hailley: Just when we thought Instagram was all out of new features, sources from The Verge tell us that they are working on a new standalone app dedicated to shopping, The app – which may be called Instagram shopping or something similar – will let users browse collections of goods from merchants that they follow and purchase them directly within the app.

Brian: At this point, the potential Instagram shopping app is still very early on in the development stage and so there’s no timetable for release yet, but we do believe that Instagram is well positioned to make a major expansion into e-commerce.

More than 25 million businesses already have Instagram accounts, and 2 million of them are advertisers.

Hailley: Four in five Instagram users follow at least one business. Creating a standalone app would allow the company to provide a dedicated home for an increasingly popular activity on Instagram while also expanding opportunities for revenue.

Brian: And of course, in true Facebook fashion, they could introduce more tools for merchants who are building their

businesses on Instagram, entering into the space with major e-commerce platforms like Shopify and WooCommerce.

Hailley: As always, we'll keep you posted here on the Science of Social Media.

I don't know, Brian, I find myself shopping on Instagram more and more.

Brian: Oh totally – me to. I was just thinking about that the other day. I think I shop more on my mobile phone now than I do on my desktop which is a huge shift for me.

Part III: LinkedIn launches powerful new Dynamic Ads format

Hailley: Alright, next up, LinkedIn has just launched a brand new ad type called Dynamic Ads.

They're actually really neat. According to LinkedIn, "Dynamic Ads help you build deeper relationships with your audience by automatically customizing your ad creative with the publicly available information from LinkedIn member profiles – adding visibility and scale."

Brian: So essentially with Dynamic Ads you can personalize the ad creative to feature member profile details such as their photo, first name, company, and job title. LinkedIn says this will "capture your audience's attention in a way that standard display ads can't."

Early results sound promising too as LinkedIn has shared that Dynamic Ads have shown up to 2X the click-through rate of traditional display ads.

Hailley: With Dynamic Ads, you just need to write your ad copy, set up the creative and then LinkedIn will automatically personalize your campaign for each person you target.

Dynamic ads are available in three different formats –

Follower ads, Spotlight ads and Content ads – and can be used across your marketing funnel to connect with prospects at different stages of their journey.

Brian: If you'd like to read more about Dynamic Ads or get started with some experiments, head on over to the Buffer blog where we've got the inside scoop on everything you need to know.

Part IV: Twitter allowing users to switch to a chronological timeline

And last, but not least, and this one sort of went viral this week, is that Twitter will, yes you guessed it, soon allow you switch between a chronological feed and algorithm feed.

Hailley: Now you will be able to uncheck a box in settings reading "Show the best tweets first," which will completely revert your timeline to chronological.

Twitter said that they've learned that when showing the best Tweets first, people find Twitter more relevant and useful. However, they've also heard feedback from people who at times prefer to see the most recent Tweets.

Brian: Ultimately their goal with the timeline is to balance showing you the most recent Tweets with the best Tweets you're likely to care about, but we don't always get this balance right.

However, and Hailley we've talked about this before, is that I think this is one of those "be careful what you wish for situations" – I'm not sure if people realize just how useful and valuable the algorithm is.

Hailley: Thank you so much for tuning in to the Science of Social Media today.

If you ever want to get in touch with me or Brian, we're always here for you on social media using the hashtag

#bufferpodcast. You can also say hi to us anytime and hello@bufferapp.com

Brian: Yes we would absolutely love to hear from you all.

And a huge thank you from myself and Hailley – we just passed the 18,000 weekly listener milestone and could not be more excited. You all are the reason we do this every single week. So, keep up the awesome work.

Lots more to come in 2018 so stay tuned. Until next Monday, everyone!

How to say hello to us

We would all love to say hello to you on social media – especially Twitter!

- Hailley on Twitter and Hailley's Website
- Brian on Twitter and Brian's Website

Thanks for listening! Feel free to connect with our team at Buffer on Twitter, Buffer on Facebook, our Podcast homepage, or with the hashtag #bufferpodcast.

Enjoy the show? It'd mean the world to us if you'd be up for giving us a rating and review on iTunes!

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About The Science of Social Media podcast

The Science of Social Media is your weekly sandbox for social media stories, insights, experimentation, and inspiration. Every Monday (and sometimes more) we share the most cutting-

edge social media marketing tactics from brands and influencers in every industry. If you're a social media team of one, business owner, marketer, or someone simply interested in social media marketing, you're sure to find something useful in each and every episode. It's our hope that you'll join our 18,000+ weekly iTunes listeners and rock your social media channels as a result!

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