

SOCIAL MEDIA UNPACKED

Agriculture



Social Media Marketing

The Promising Start

Once upon a time social media was the great new thing. On social media anyone could publish anything at no cost and audiences would grow through following and getting a follow-back in return.

A few years later the 'how it started' and 'how it's going' pictures are miles apart. It is still true that anyone can publish anything for free but missing is a large, delivered audience, specifically a large, delivered audience comprising a business's target market.

A delivered audience is the number of impressions a piece of content receives. Algorithmic sleight-of-hand is the villain of the piece. Crafted by social media HQs, hidden algorithms ensured that business users, diligently having grown audiences of one thousand, ten thousand or one hundred thousand followers, had been following a road to marketing disappointment, because their delivered audiences today are a small fraction of their number of followers. 85%+ of the UK farming audience are now using social media (Ofcom); facilitating our clients' efficient access to this audience has been central to Social:Farmers' mission.



...How Can This Be?

[1] Platform behaviours

For social media platforms active users are their oxygen. Success is related to the number of active users. Their strategic plan included creating an ecosystem with each user's number of followers publicly visible to other users.

For users, business and personal, having more followers was the performance indicator above anything else. A large number of followers being better than a small number was soon a universally acknowledged truth.

Attracting users by being free yet requiring costly world-scale cloud infrastructure means the platforms have to generate income from advertising. The prospect of free marketing was a mirage to interest business.

Never intending marketing to be free, the social media platforms embedded sliding-scale slippage into the algorithms governing the relationship between an account's number of followers, and the number of followers actually seeing the content being posted. Separately, the ability of most posts to go viral is cruelly hampered by hard shrinkage of the share and retweet reach.



But through using a platform its users have opted into seeing advertising. That is the social media deal – even for private accounts.

Detail on the inner workings of social media algorithms has been hazy. Googling the subject brings up plenty of remarkably similar blogs and opinion pieces, largely unruffled by data. Wanting to know the facts, we designed a research project to collect structured empirical data at scale, and from which we reverse-engineered the core formulae governing the main social media algorithms. This is what we discovered:

Account Followers	Total impressions delivered
2,000	840
5,000	1,200
10,000	1,900

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Social media apps predicting the views that a campaign hashtag (e.g. #farm24) might have received from posts, retweets and shares don't factor into the reported numbers the minimised reality; showing instead epic exaggerations. In the same way, the relative influence wielded by perceived influencers is lower than the simple weigh-in of followers.

As the number of followers increases the sliding-scale algorithms stomp more heavily on the free reach brake pedal. As examples, a video recently posted by a well-known farming title with close to 90,000 Twitter followers achieved under 700 (i.e. 0.8% follower reach) video views.



On Facebook a video from another well-known farming title, with over 220k followers, received 1k views (representing 0.5% follower reach). To summarise, follower acquisition is not a marketing KPI.

[2] Target audience behaviours

So far, all followers have been regarded as equal. Another picture appears if we consider that for every account the followers are comprised of a mixture of target audience

and not target audience. For businesses in agriculture the target audience is nearly always those involved in farming and their influencers.

Across the accounts of hundreds of agriculture businesses the central norm is a ratio of 20% target audience:80% not target audience.

This important and often unknown imbalance has multiple drivers: few people follow businesses – TV and sport faces are more popular, and of course farming folk favour following fellow farmers, but independence of thinking is highly valued: a farmer-influencer burns through her/his influence if seen to be posting to aid a business, and the farming ambassadors' bus is now standing-room only. Or the target audience member may never see the account to be able to choose to follow it – low 'findability' is a high hurdle when twenty to thirty thousand other social media business accounts also want to reach farmers in the UK alone. Yet the most promising ground for new and renewed business is the out-of-reach non-followers.

"They're checking VAR"

Quick insight into how all content is, or is not, reaching a business account's followers is shown by the video views displayed if/when a video is posted. Almost invariably the number of video views is a small fraction of the number of followers. It is notable that shares or retweets, even from accounts with many followers, have hardly any effect on the video views achieved. Subbing GIFs, YouTubes, Vimeos or player cards for inline video is not a marketing solution.

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The table below shows the monster target-audience crunching effect when the platforms and farmer target audience behaviours are combined.

Account Followers	Total impressions delivered	Total farming target audience impressions delivered
2,000	840	168
5,000	1,200	240
10,000	1,900	380

(The total number of impressions includes share/retweet impressions)

So, posting content on an agricultural account with ten thousand followers may reach, on average, somewhere around 380 of the desired target farmer audience.

Houston, we have a problem.

Most of what has been passing as social media marketing has been imaginary marketing.



Is Free Social Media Worth Using?

Imagining a dartboard gives an idea of the working of the social media platforms' algorithms. (Facebook/Instagram and Twitter work in identical ways.) If the board is the followers of an account, the bullseye is the followers most frequently being shown content.



Artificial intelligence decides who is in the bullseye, with the liking of previous posts or tweets carrying the greatest weight.

Unlike dartboards, the account bullseye is not a set proportion of the whole board. To generalise for business accounts: as the number of followers increases the relative size of the bullseye shrinks.

To complete the analogy we must also regard the pub wall around the dartboard. An area extending out from the board is the greater portion of the big picture: all the non-following members of the target audience.

The bullseye followers are the account's closest social media friends and allies; these followers are shown most of everything published. Outside the bullseye the audience sees content less frequently, much less frequently, or the most likely of all, never.

So for keeping friends and allies in the know and receiving their regular likes, yes, free social media is worth using – bearing in mind that views of their onward shares and retweets (and likewise your own shares and retweets) are being stymied, almost completely, by the algorithms' cloak of invisibility. For individual businesses a better answer will come from a re-framing of the question: Is producing content that will be seen by only a small number of desired observers fulfilling any marketing function?

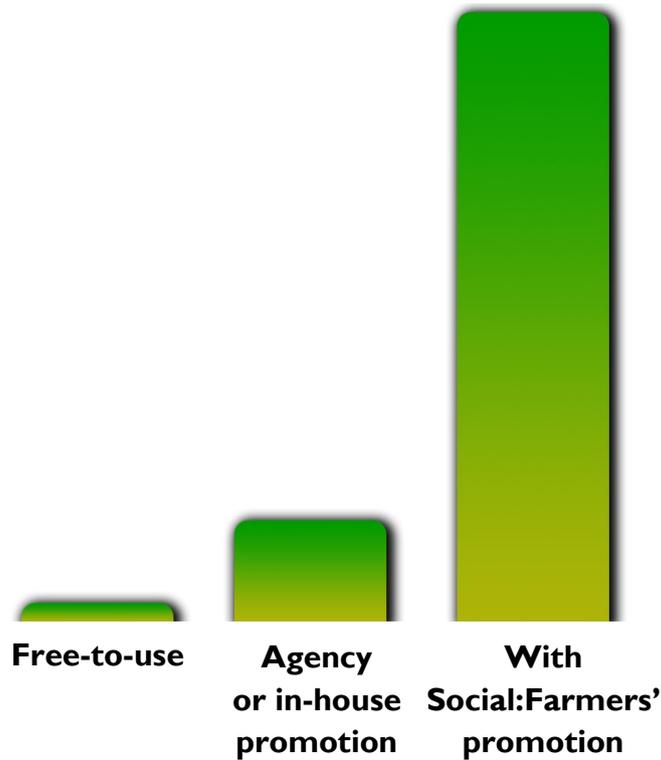
If there is one vital social media marketing skill, the one providing the best starting-point for big picture marketing decision-making, it is the ability to accurately quantify the real numbers of target audience seeing content. Reach is king; content is the pawns.

Social:Farmers' Audience Targeting

Facebook/Instagram (one common promotion platform)

As the largest combined platform Facebook/Instagram promotion is an essential part of any social media marketing strategy. Facebook and Instagram use a common promotion interface which looks the business but if set to target farmers strangely manages to deliver an abundance of general public (each one to the +£ benefit of Meta).

Farming audience reach – Facebook/Instagram



Including overlap (most Twitter users are also Facebook/Instagram users but not so much vice versa). Facebook/Instagram rates per impression per post vary, typically ranging between £4 - £10 per 1000 impressions.

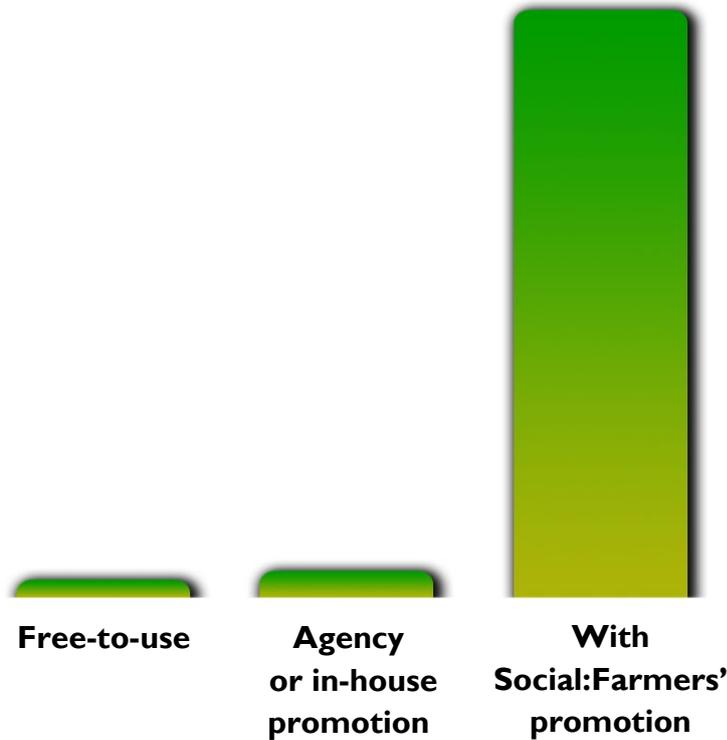
Twitter

Not for nothing is open and accessible Twitter the social media platform of choice for announcements from governments, leaders and even royalty. The term social media underplays the real communication transformation – direct media is a superior adjective. 'A' now communicates with 'B' shortcutting the heritage route of PRs-journalists-editors-distribution. For UK agriculture, 85%+ of whom are using social media, Twitter's popularity is clear, with continuing linear growth amongst UK farming users.

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But Twitter lacks any in-built means of promoting to farmers with viable accuracy. Early on, quantitative research had shown us that free-to-use Twitter could never be a marketing channel. Devoting a year's time to primary research, development and trialling we developed a unique solution: Social:Farmers' Twitter farming reach methodologies.

Farming audience reach - Twitter



Our methodologies can be applied to any account to instantly transform business marketing to farming audiences.

Social:Farmers' Twitter farming audiences

- Arable/crop/tillage farming; on-farm and influencers
 - Dairy farming; on-farm and influencers
 - Beef & Sheep farming; on-farm and influencers
- UK, USA, Canada, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, France, Germany, Spain, Italy, Netherlands, Brazil, Colombia, Argentina

Also farm veterinarians, monogastrics, the amenity sector and others

Twitter's rate for audience impressions is between £2 and £4 per 1000 impressions. Like Facebook/ Instagram, campaigns can be switched on/off or set to spend a capped budget.

Social: Farmers



Social media promotion has the advantage of being push marketing (proactive), so eclipsing website SEO and PPC pull marketing (reactive) by two to four orders of magnitude (that's even with our SEO associates being top-ranked in the world).

After all, why labour to bring people to a website once when the marketing may be sent to the audience on every day of the year?

On the current upward trajectory, by 2024 spending on social media promotion will be greater than the whole of the rest of digital marketing combined. This is because social media promotion presents content automatically to chosen audience(s) whenever they check in on their preferred social media platform. So zero need to wait for a search to ever be conducted.

Social media marketing meanwhile will be increasingly appreciated as a more valuable, fully controllable and a fully integrated part of marketing campaigns and ongoing brand awareness. In particular, videos and integrated active graphics will become the new marketing normal with audiences far bigger than other digital options.

Q & A

We are interested in farming audiences, which platforms should we be promoting on for social media marketing?

Firstly it depends on which country. For the UK as an example and rated in terms of reaching farm decision-makers: Facebook is the most important by some margin, it's the largest platform with the greatest share of decision-making farming users. Twitter is second, and Twitter farmers tend to have the higher farm yields and are more likely to be early adopters of technology. Instagram and TikTok are the fun-zones for younger audiences; both scoring low for having many farming decision-makers. The Instagram demographic is light on males; TikTok holds the youngest demographic. LinkedIn is popular with farm supplier personnel and research bods but not very much with farmers.



We're using social media promotion, what is the best way of measuring the accuracy of our targeting?

Facebook/Instagram promotion targeting is controlled by an algorithm which delivers a large collateral audience of false positives – people not linked to farming – greatly diluting visibility to the farming audience. (The platforms' profits come from quantity only.) The Twitter targeting features offer no solution for reaching the farming audience. It may look like they should work but they don't. Many have tried.

To measure targeting accuracy on any platform: study the 'likes' and using bio and other clues group into target audience and public. This target:public ratio is the best indicator of accuracy of promotion targeting. Negative comments are serious red flags of 180° mistargeting. Facebook, Instagram and TikTok provide easy likes from non-farming people – a bit of a marketing elephant trap.

Is there any way of measuring the influencing effect of social media marketing?

Commonly, distributors and dealerships fulfil the last mile of the distribution role – which makes the numeric measurement of direct influence from central brand marketing somewhat difficult to track. Clients selling direct, and deploying our creatives coupled with our targeting are selling to farmers from their social media every day.

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How does social media marketing compare with using other marketing methods?

Farmer impressions per £ spent is an interesting way of comparing bottom-line marketing effectiveness. Circumstances alter cases but our ballpark estimates (from bespoke telephone research of farmers) per £100 spend are: Social:Farmers' accurate targeting social media promotion (16k farming audience impressions); standard social media promotion (3k); print advertising+PR (2.5k); shows and events (0.15k).

Email is similar to free-to-use social media; reaching established friends and allies but not so effective for reaching the important, wider audience, low open rates limit email's marketing potential.



Because social media is seen sequentially (i.e. we read a message, then another, then the next, and so on) this guarantees 100% focus time on your promoted content.

When not ad-blocked, digital ads are irksome distractions when we're reading on a phone screen, or on bigger screens, are touchline 'hey-I'm-here' exhortations for attention. No-one ever read a page, online or in print, to check out the ads.

Social media promotion delivers the highest volume of continuously audience-interesting content. When judiciously promoted, brands and campaigns stay front-of-mind.

If it's good marketing practice to be where the audience is spending time then accurate social media promotion is the perfect solution.

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Clients We Have Helped

Since 2014 we have specialised only in social media marketing in agriculture. As the leading specialists we have been delighted to be able to work with a wide range of businesses.

- Videos, Images and Graphics
- Joint Account Management
- Unique Accurate Reach
- Tracking and Reporting
- Social Media Masterclasses
- In-house Social Media Training



How We Can Help

Social media promotion now represents 30% of all digital marketing spend and with the growth curve heading skywards at 20% per year, social media promotion spending in 2024 will exceed the rest of digital marketing combined.

We are the leading digital agency specialising in social media marketing for agriculture.

	Social:Farmers	Others
Hands-on UK arable & livestock farming and time in PR	✓	X
Asset library of 38,000 recent farming videos and images	✓	X
1100 successful social media promotions	✓	X
100% of focus is on social media marketing in agriculture	✓	X
80 unique research studies in agricultural social media	✓	X
Vast reference library of 2014/22 social media creatives	✓	X
Globally the most accurate farming audiences available	✓	X

Interested in a free, no-obligation demonstration of our systems and methodologies in action? Then we'd be delighted to hear from, just call or drop us an email.

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