

Why marketers should diversify with private social media—even if they can't advertise on it

Article

As marketers look to increase audience reach and stay away from the whims of any singular platform, private social media networks offer another avenue.

The audience is already there. Interest in private social media exploded during the pandemic and has continued to grow over the past couple of years, according to a new report from **Trust Insights**,

Some of the more popular private social media platforms include Discord (used by 9.2% of Americans at least once a week or more), Signal (8.2%), Telegram (8%), Slack (6%), and Twitch (6%).

- Discord in particular is climbing up the ranks. The platform's **US mobile usage** more than doubled between 2020 and 2022, which puts it in competition with Meta's messaging platforms Messenger and WhatsApp.

One key feature of private social media platforms? No ads. But that doesn't mean marketers should ignore them.

Social listening. As marketers, you should know what people are saying about your brand.

"Consumers will be having conversations with or without you," said Christopher Penn, co-founder and chief data scientist at Trust Insights. "You want to know about it."

And as social media continues to fragment, it will become much harder for marketers to reach audiences in one place. Private social media guarantees "reliable reach," said Penn, meaning you know that when a message is put in front of your audience, they will see it.

No better time: As people flee from Twitter, Penn predicts they will move into spaces and communities that make them feel safe and appreciated.

"People want to spend more time talking to people that are like them," said Penn. "Private social media is a natural extension of that."

Let's talk strategy: Penn shared a few pieces of advice for marketers looking to explore private social media.

1. Build your own community and nurture it. By creating a designated space for your audience, you can be a part of their conversations instead of merely listening in.
2. Understand this isn't a short-term endeavor. "It's going to be a poor sales channel," said Penn, "but that's not its aim. In private social media, you have to provide a lot more value than you take."

3. Resist the temptation to build your own app or platform. “You don’t want to be one more thing on someone’s to-do list,” said Penn. Build where the people are, so that you’re integrated into their lives.

What private social networks offer:

- **Privacy.** These social networks are not open to the public and you must be a member of a community to view its content. In addition, search engines don’t index the contents of these platforms, meaning SEO is useless.
- **Chronology.** Content is shown in the order that it’s posted, which can mean a lot of scrolling.
- **No algorithm.** Unlike Twitter and Instagram, there is no algorithm that dictates what content is served to users.
- **No ad revenues.** Rather, these platforms make money in other ways, which can include premium features or subscriptions.

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