

# BACK TO THE FUTURE

7 tips to help retailers get social commerce right this time

With the rapid growth of social media in the early part of this decade, many marketers, including retailers, saw an opportunity. They surmised that the millions of consumers who had voluntarily raised their hands and declared themselves “fans” of a brand would be the perfect audience to sell their products to. Better still, the entire shopping experience — from product discovery to checkout — could occur within the very same social networks where consumers were spending the majority of their time. A win-win situation, right? Not exactly.

What retailers didn't realize was that consumers weren't looking at traditional social channels like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Pinterest as a primary place to shop and be sold to. Instead, they went to those sites to be inspired and creative, and to communicate with other people and brands. After all, it's “social” media. And thus social commerce 1.0 was a bust. Consider that within a year, Gap, J.C. Penney, Nordstrom and GameStop all opened and closed Facebook storefronts.

**This raises a very valid question:** Why is social commerce all the rage when, historically, it's failed to succeed?

- **Consumer shopping behaviors have changed:** Consumers are now connected 24/7, thanks in large part to the growth of smartphone adoption. Consider that 91 percent of smartphone owners ages 18-29 access social media sites/apps on their phones at minimum once a week, [according to the Pew Research Center](#). The more time consumers spend on social networks, the more exposure they'll get to brands and their products, and the more likely they are to be inspired to make a purchase.
- **The ubiquity of the “Buy” button:** At its advent, social commerce was pretty much relegated to Facebook. Now, Twitter, Pinterest, Instagram, YouTube and other channels have added commerce capabilities to their platforms. The choices consumers have to engage and buy from retailers via social media are growing.
- **Retailers have learned from their previous mistakes:** Rather than taking a hard sell approach, retailers are integrating their products into the social conversation by creating and sharing lifestyle imagery. Gone are the days of uploading your product catalog to Facebook and expecting consumers to click “Buy.” Action starts with aspiration.





# 7 Tips to Ensure Social Commerce Pays Off

**While social commerce is a viable new revenue source for retail brands, many have yet to take the plunge. Here are some tips to make the most of your efforts:**

- 1. Make it visual.** Consumers are far more likely to react to images than to text. Consider that images are processed 60,000 times faster than words. Therefore, it's always a good idea for you to complement your message with visual content — photographs and videos that speak to your target audience. Image-centric social networks such as Instagram and Pinterest offer great opportunities for brands to showcase products and drive sales — visually. It's no wonder that the majority of top retailers are already active on these networks.
- 2. Listen, interact and build community.** Every social network is its own community with its own rules for interaction. To get involved, spend some time observing and listening to see what the rules of engagement are. For example, have community members been brought together via a unique branded hashtag or emoji? Focus on interacting with people and building relationships, rather than pushing sales and promotional messages. Those will come in time and have their place, but you need to become a member of the community first.



3. **Adhere to a new 80/20 rule.** Don't be mistaken, you can — and should — promote your offers on social media; just make sure you're doing so within reason. The 80/20 rule is a good one to follow: While 20 percent can promote specific offers, the other 80 percent should promote experiences, emotions and an overall lifestyle. Your fans will jump on a good offer, but they won't stick around if all they see is your latest sale or newest product.
4. **Leverage fan photos.** For marketers, user-generated content offers a powerful and plentiful way to reach consumers with images of real people enjoying a brand's products in the real world. Asking for and posting customers' photos — with their permission, of course — on social, on site and even in your stores builds trust and helps influence future purchase decisions.
5. **Identify your brand advocates and influencers, and put them to work.** According to a recent study by influencer marketing platform The Shelf, offers shared by trusted advocates convert at rates three to 10 times higher than offers that are shared by brands themselves. In other words, consumers will be more willing to act if someone they trust tells them to do so. Encouraging key customers and influencers to promote your products with their social communities will drive awareness and engagement among new consumers.





- 6. Make it easy to shop.** The always-on shopper discovers products anytime, anywhere, from Facebook and Instagram to their favorite brands' blogs. Capitalizing on this discovery means making it easy to go from a picture on a social channel to the corresponding product page on a brand's website. For example, the [Curalate Like2Buy](#) solution enables millions of Instagram users to quickly and easily shift from the mobile app to an ecommerce site, turning social engagement into an opportunity to drive traffic, conversions and revenue.
- 7. Showcase top social imagery on your brand's ecommerce site.** Some of the most inspirational images are born of social descent, and yet they're often noticeably absent from the ecommerce environment. This is particularly true for product pages, which traditionally have been characterized by standard stock photos from manufacturers — i.e., product on a white backdrop. Don't limit your product shots to the professionals! Complementing your stock photos with rich social imagery is a powerful combination that will drive increased engagement, conversions and revenue.

Consumers' attitudes and behaviors toward social media have changed in recent years. In fact, many now prefer the ease and convenience that comes with discovering a product on social media — most likely from an eye-catching image — and being able to quickly and easily buy it. While social commerce represents an untapped revenue source, many retailers are still exploring the most effective ways to execute it. Follow the tips above to meet the demands of today's evolving consumers — and improve your bottom line in the process.



Curalate is the leading visual commerce platform used by hundreds of the world's most loved brands. Together, the five main components of the Curalate platform help drive engagement, traffic, and revenue from visual conversations by turning pictures into points of purchase.



### **IMAGE INSIGHTS & ACTIONS DASHBOARD**

Analytics, community management, publishing, and promotions across the visual web.



### **FANREEL**

Feature fan, editorial, social, and influencer imagery in shoppable galleries on-site to drive conversions and revenue.



### **LIKE2BUY**

Instantly drive traffic and revenue from Instagram to your brand's website.



### **REVEAL**

Enable consumers to discover and shop the products they love by simply pointing to them within blog pictures.



### **ADS**

Launch more effective Instagram and Facebook ads with proprietary audience data from Curalate and the images you've already productized for Like2Buy, Fanreel, and Reveal.