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SearchBlog

Brian Solis: Context, Rather Than Content, Is King

Laurie Sullivan, Aug 27, 2010 01:35 PM



On Thursday Google boosted an attempt to make the Web real time by launching a dedicated engine that locates content on Twitter and Facebook -- but social media expert Brian Solis said such efforts could prove futile. Context rather than content has become king -- and consumers will find the most valuable engines and social media sites have the ability to index for relevance rather than real time.

Traditional search, real-time search and social search remains disconnected from social media, Solis told a packed room at an event Thursday night hosted by Linked OC, an organization for Orange County, Calif. business professionals. And because he and millions of others can't spend time searching for information in more than three places, the future of search becomes contextual and lives in semantics, matching results not only based on the "likes" of the person searching on the Web, but also those of socially connected friends.

Solis, the author of the book "Engage," explained how social media is more than just a gimmick, but rather a tool to change the experience of customers and people who influence their decisions "That's transformative. It will change business from the inside out, from the ground up," he said. Tools will assist search and social to unite the Web, but they are not the influence. He pointed to an iPhone application with "[digital intuition](#)" dubbed my6sense.com. It aggregates RSS feeds. The more someone interacts with content from a Twitter stream, for example, it starts to change, not based on real time, but relevance.

Solis talked about how social media allows marketers to identify when people begin to have insight about a product or service, how it allows ad execs and marketers to document the buying cycle, and that marketing's fifth "P" represents people. Explaining the process, Solis began with a search box or tools from Radian6 for 30 days to see how many conversations occur around specific keywords. Breaking out the conversations, he looked at how they influence the business. Are they used around customer services, marketing, financial, or general questions? He also identified how social media continues to become similar to social science and psychology, and suggested taking advantage of the five "Is" of social marketing: intelligence, insight, information, ideas, and interaction.

So, marketers first need to identify with the "me" in social media. Solis said "context has become king, not content, and you may have to change your story to connect with varying social consumers." In the future, marketers won't connect to individual people, but rather contextual networks or "niche works," a Google strategy Solis said that continues to gather speculation. "We are now at the end of the 15 minutes of fame," he said, looking out across the audience. "It will become yours to define."

Solis reminded marketers they market to an audience who has an audience who has an audience, who might even have an audience. They connect with individuals they want to know. Perhaps those connections represent something they want to know, respect, trust and adore. This is why marketers must figure out not only how to connect with people crafting their own network, but connect with those whom those folks connect with as well, because most feel a responsibility for passing along content to those who connect with them.

Although some may not want to read this, Solis said the landing page will become more important because marketers need a place to shape the experience and introduce a click to action to have something to measure against. The Twitter box represents more than what someone had for lunch. It represents an opportunity to cause measureable action.