



STAY ON TOP OF CHANGES IN SOCIAL

> Social media changes fast, and it's important for florists to stay aware of updates, tweaks and new platforms. The way you reached customers a month ago may be quite different from how you connect with them today. The only way to make these platforms work consistently for your business goals is to understand how the platforms themselves work. Here are some recent updates in the social space.

Vero Revs Up

One relatively recent change to consider? An entirely new social media platform.

The social media network **Vero** has been around since 2015, but it's garnered a massive increase in publicity lately, throwing its hat in as a challenger to Facebook and Instagram.

The site's design has a similar feel to Instagram (heavy on visuals, with a sleek design). When it launched, Vero had some problems, including crashes and log-in challenges. Most of those have been resolved, and many users, disenchanted with how changes to Facebook's and Instagram's algorithms have meant that information no longer appears strictly chronologically, are checking out the new site: Vero recently reported more than one million users in a 48-hour period. (Instagram has 500 million-plus daily users; Facebook has 1.57 billion.)

What's behind the rush to Vero? The site has promised that its feed will always be chronological, and the site doesn't use ads. Instead, Vero charges users a small annual fee. (The company offered the first 1 million users accounts "free for life," and because of "extraordinary demand," has since expanded that offer.) Companies on Vero can have dedicated "buy" or "purchase" buttons, with trans-

actions handled in-app via a Stripe account. (No word yet on whether Vero will eventually link up with PayPal, too.)

My advice, with any new platform: Try it, in moderation, and don't pull any resources from existing successful efforts. Keep your expectations in check. Vero (and other new platforms) could be the next big thing, but the space is competitive. It may never help you reach the audience you're targeting.

Other Updates on Existing Platforms

Here are some other changes I think every florist should be aware of:

Twitter. Twitter has been slowly rolling out more features to improve the user experience. While some digital marketing experts say the site is falling behind other platforms that are adding options such as stories, Twitter remains the go-to place for instant access to breaking news and customer service connections (including complaints).

In addition to bumping the **character limit** per tweet from 140 to 280, Twitter also added a **"save to bookmark"** functionality. This means users can more easily save tweets for later reading. The change also makes it easier to share tweets as a direct message with another user and on another platform, including Facebook, or via text.

Facebook. Over the past few months, Facebook had been testing its **"Explore Feed,"** a feature that segmented users' feeds, so that their main feed showed only posts from friends, and a second feed had a mix of posts from businesses and news publishers.

The goal was to help users connect more with their friends, but the experiment had an immediate, negative im-

pact on companies in test areas: Their organic post reach fell to almost nothing. Not surprisingly, those companies began looking for other advertising options outside of Facebook. That experiment has been curtailed.

Another change to the Facebook algorithm: The company is now demoting posts, giving them less reach when they use **"Engagement Bait"** phrases (e.g., "Share this post" or "Tag a friend"). This change is in line with the company's effort to reduce spam content. (Check out more about engagement bait and best practices for avoiding it at safnow.org/moreonline.)

Instagram. Instagram has been trying to beat Snapchat at its own game. They started by using the idea of **"Stories,"** a concept first made popular by Snapchat, and have recently started testing an app called **Instagram Direct**, which is solely for messaging.

Instagram will also soon let you **share an Instagram post from anyone on your feed to your own stories.** This move will let companies utilize user-generated content. For example, if your shop uses a branded hashtag on your arrangement cards, you could find every photo posted to Instagram using that hashtag and add it to your own story to showcase your arrangements. 🌺

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