



2020 Trends and 2021 Predictions

This guide summarizes the challenges social marketers encountered in 2020 and leaves you with advice from our speakers for 2021 and beyond.

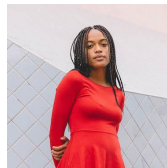
As the saying goes, “The only constant in life is change”.



In 2020, you and your team were challenged to think differently, modify carefully laid plans and pivot your social strategy. As this year comes to a close, it's time to take what you've learned and start building a new map for 2021.



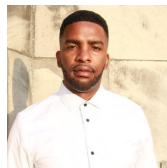
Daniela Vieira
Senior Director of Digital & Social
Fluent360



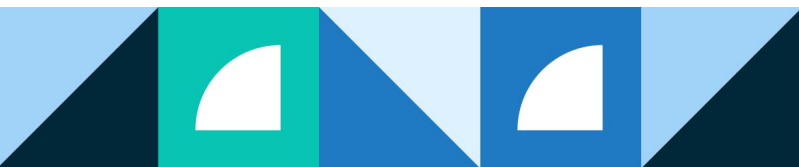
Celeste Scott
Social Media Coordinator
Squarespace



Kamillah Jones
Brand Marketing & Social Impact Leader
New Teacher Center



Javid Louis
Senior Vice President, Digital Strategy
DKC



New challenges in 2020

A lot of meaningful insights were uncovered in this session. We distilled each speaker's 2020 experience into challenges, trends, key takeaways and predictions:

Increasing consumer expectations

With the cultural spotlight on their leadership and actions, consumers to be more critical of brands in 2020. With higher pressure on brands to be vocal, *"It's time to align on not just a social strategy but a company strategy,"* says Daniela Vieira.

Current events impacting consumers

Navigating a social calendar during this year's events has been a challenge for all planners. Javid Louis says, *"Throw the rulebooks out. Many of us have shifted from a 30 day calendar to 1 week calendar."* Now is the time to avoid burning hours on long-term planning when you know things can change at the drop of a dime.

Choosing the right content

"Brands learned they can't be all things to all people and started to shift their focus to sharing content that is useful vs. entertaining," Vieira says. Understanding when to post something vs. when to stay silent is new for many teams.

Industry shifts call for digital innovation

"Whole industries have had to pivot to adjust to today's challenges and consumer expectations," says Kamillah Jones. Companies were forced to shift their thinking and *show up*. This is a moment for brands to be as authentic as they've ever been.

Hint: Learn more about how to define a [brand mission](#) and the importance of [brand voice](#)

Social media trends in 2020

Increased use of video content

“This year, brands have shifted to share content in more strategic ways and places,” says Celeste Scott. Both long-form and short-form video are among the most shared content on social media. Your audience wants to hear from your leadership team and consume content in a more entertaining way.

Hint: Check out [7 steps to a successful social media video marketing strategy](#)

Emphasis on brand voice and authenticity

This isn't the first time--and it's not the last time--brands have had to take a look at themselves. *“While consumers want change now, there is still time for brands to take action and be true to themselves,”* notes Scott. Consumers tend to gravitate towards brands whose values align with their own and whose actions pay off the brand promises.

Hint: Check out [How to deliver brand authenticity & create connection on social](#)

Useful content vs. engaging content

Many brands saw a shift in their content pillars. Focusing more on providing useful content vs. engaging content. Kamillah Jones says, *“Don't try to be all things to all people but rather stay true to yourself as a brand.”*

Hint: Check out [What is content marketing & why is it important?](#)

The importance of listening

“This was a year where people who weren't familiar with social listening, and ways to become in tune with target audiences, realize that you can go to sleep at night and the conversation will change,” says Javid Louis. Listening to how your audience reacts to your content and the happenings in the world is critical to inform your strategy. In 2020 we saw sentiment change overnight, to stay on top of it we need to utilize the right tools.

Hint: Check out [40 unique ways to use social listening to make an impact on your business](#)

Looking forward: 2021 predictions and advice

Listen, listen, listen

Being a good listener is an invaluable skill for marketers, in life and on social media. When you listen (and listen well), you learn what makes people tick, what their challenges are, how they view the world around them and so much more. “We can’t plan for much but we can begin to understand how people are feeling,” says Daniela Vieira.

Say what you mean and take action

Authenticity is crucial to creating meaningful connections with your audience. Brands should not be operating as business as usual. “*Reflect on who you are as a brand and take action on who you want to be moving forward,*” says Kamillah Jones. Listening to your audience’s needs and expectations can shed light on the best way to engage them in your brand..

Infuse your leadership into your content

Consumers are looking for executive leaders to be vocal and speak up. “*Audiences are hungry for more video content to better understand the big decisions and relevant opinions of the people behind the brands,*” says Javid Louis

A lot can still happen

“*How people feel about what is happening in the world can change based on what happens in the final months of 2021,*” says Celeste Scott. Now is the time to listen in order to understand what, and how, changes in our culture are affecting your brand’s audiences.



Do more with Sprout

This year has been unpredictable but we learned together by taking things day by day. We are evolving into better marketers and becoming more prepared for the challenges we face. Although we don't necessarily have all of the answers, we have experience and data to help guide us in the right direction.

[Chat with a Sprout Specialist](#) and start preparing for 2021.

