<Blog title>

**SOCIAL MEDIA: THE INCREASING IMPORTANCE OF VIRTUAL NETWORKS IN BUSINESS**<Blog body copy>

Long gone are the days of social media being just a fun new way to chat with friends and family. The medium is a behemoth of an industry of its own. This arguably first exploded off the back of networks like SixDegrees (1997-2000), MySpace (2005-2009) and Facebook.   
  
Businesses in every field have had to learn - and keep up with - how people are connecting, and the platforms they’re using to do so. And, if you’re a business student, this changing landscape is laiden with opportunity. A whole new career path can quickly unfold as the goal posts continue to shift. All it takes is recognising and readying yourself for it. Especially as…   
  
<Section heading>  
**It’s never been more important for businesses to embrace social**  
  
I spoke with Samaneh Zamani, who studied at Hult and moved from San Francisco to London, UK to kick-start her career. I was keen to get her opinion on why social media is crucial for businesses. Sam is currently a Community Manager at a top London advertising agency.   
  
“Social media offers businesses a wealth of opportunities to speak to new and existing audiences.   
  
Currently, of the 7.5 billion people on the planet, 3.196 billion are actively using social media. That’s 42% of the world's population – and it's still growing. There was a 13% increase in social media users from 2017 to 2018 alone.   
  
On average, people are spending 2-3 hours on social media per day, which averages out to 1 in every 3 minutes. This also means that people are spending more time on social than they are watching TV.   
  
<Pull quote> **“Social media is the modern day Yellow Pages” – Sam, Community Manager @ FCB Inferno, London**  
  
Users are not only taking to social channels for entertainment and stay up to date on news, but they are also going to research products to buy. How many times have you looked up a restaurant on Instagram, only to find they don't have a page, and immediately removed them from your consideration? Social media is the modern day Yellow Pages.” – Samaneh.

<Section heading>

**Massive TV and print budgets could soon be a thing of the past**  
  
Businesses can be so much more more reactive, relevant and timely using social media. The medium means they can relate on a personal level to consumers. And, in a time when phone screens have become vice-like, “what happens on the screen is a personal experience”, shares Samaneh. “With the level of targeting now available on social media, businesses have the opportunity to speak to specific audiences, as well as trial new messaging, branding, creative, and promotions, in a controlled manner, rather than committing to massive budgets on TV and in print”.   
  
<Section heading>  
**More users = more innovation = more business opportunities**  
  
Natasha Woolsey, an London-based digital strategist, is testament to the need for businesses to harness social, and also to how working in the industry can fit around your life. I was curious to hear her perspective on how the landscape is changing...  
  
“It's predicted users will grow by over a million each year over the next five years, so unsurprisingly more and more businesses are now turning to social media to target their audience. Reaching these vast numbers have instantly paved the way for some significant changes for example so far in 2018: Instagram TV. No doubt AR and VR will become fundamental to social in due course.” – Natasha.   
  
Natasha has made social work for her, complementing an extensive background in PR and marketing with extra training with Digital Mums to future-proof her skills. The flexible nature of online networks means the industry works for her as well as her working for it. There is room to fit your work around you – it’s not called ‘social’ without reason.  
  
**Unexpected opportunities are out there**  
  
While scandals like Cambridge Analytica are inexcusable, opportunity can also rise out of their ashes. Changes in data regulations - like GDPR - also give way to opportunity. How so? With these cases, there’s been a surge in need for legal professionals in the industry. Five or ten years ago, you’d likely never have thought these roles exist.   
  
**Take the next steps with Hult**  
  
Whether you’re looking to complement existing skills or start from scratch, Hult have a course that fits your needs. And like social media, the curriculum flexes each year so to stay relevant to trends and what students want to study. Find out more about the current offering from Hult below.  
  
Digital and Social Media Marketing (undergrad)  
  
Digital Marketing (postgrad)  
  
Customer Acquisition Through Digital Marketing (postgrad)  
  
Digital Marketing Analytics (postgrad)

-------  
  
<Bio>

**Natasha Woolsey**   
  
Since graduating from Digital Mums she has enjoyed working with a wide variety of clients from Etsy UK to The Benyon Estate, De Beauvoir Block, Fount London, The Indytute, The Archivist, Primo Toys. She is currently working with PhotoboxUK and Body Studio.  
  
<Bio>   
**Samaneh Zamani**  
  
Originally from Vancouver, Canada, Sam completed her Masters in International Marketing in 2016 at Hult San Francisco, then made the move to London, UK to pursue her dream of working in advertising. As a Social Community Manager at FCB Inferno, Sam manages BMW UK's social channels, working to develop content strategies across platforms while ensuring the brand is at the forefront of innovative social in the automotive industry.  
  
<Bio>   
**Clare Scott**  
  
An experienced freelance writer and content strategist. Her work spans many industries – from luxury fashion at Net-a-Porter, to travel and airlines at Thomas Cook. She works with brands, start ups and individuals to create and develop their tone of voice and editorial content.