

MEYOCKS MINDSHARE

A SOCIAL LANDSCAPE IN RAPID EVOLUTION

By Kelli Calkins

Social media in 2026 is no longer just a marketing channel, it's shaped by economic pressure, cultural shifts, platform changes, and rising consumer expectations. Audiences are more selective with attention and spending, prioritizing trust, transparency, and community over polish or scale. Platforms continue to change how content is discovered and monetized, while creators redefine influence.



VIDEO KEEPS EVOLVING

Short-form video still drives discovery, but it rarely builds loyalty alone. Platforms are increasingly rewarding longer, value-driven content that keeps audiences engaged. Viewers are spending more time with fewer creators and favoring substance over speed, such as deep-dive explainers, founder or expert conversations, long-form product education, live video, and behind-the-scenes content.

Key Takeaway

Use short-form video to attract attention, but invest in longer, value-driven video content to build loyalty and retention.



REDDIT IS ON THE RISE

AI-powered search and chat tools are increasingly pulling content and information from forums and community platforms. Brand visibility in communities like Reddit directly influences AI visibility. Authentic, helpful participation consistently outperforms branded promotion. Consumers expect genuine, person-to-person interaction, and always-on engagement builds authority AI systems recognize.

Key Takeaway

Community presence fuels AEO. If you're not active where conversations happen, AI won't surface your brand.



AI OPINIONS CONTINUE TO SHIFT

AI is now a creative partner that enables scale, personalization, and efficiency—but its use can also influence trust and brand perception. The key question isn't whether brands should use AI, but how audiences perceive its use in public-facing content. Transparency, testing, and audience research are essential, as reactions vary widely by demographic and expectation.

Key Takeaway

Balance is critical—use AI to scale thoughtfully while preserving authentic human voice and trust.



EGC CONVEYS AUTHENTICITY

Employee-generated content builds credibility, culture, and trust. What feels like a "loss of control" is often authentic brand storytelling. The most effective programs empower employees with guardrails, not scripts, and reward participation through recognition and amplification.

Key Takeaway

Channel employee voices with intention. Authentic advocacy outperforms polished control.



SOCIAL COMMERCE ISN'T SLOWING DOWN

TikTok Shop continues to outpace expectations, especially with Gen Z and Millennials, driving impulse purchases in beauty, wellness, and lifestyle categories. Amazon remains dominant for home goods, books, and electronics, but younger audiences increasingly buy directly within social platforms.

Key Takeaway

Social commerce is a real revenue driver. Platforms like TikTok are shaping how younger audiences discover and buy.



TRANSPARENCY BUILDS CREDIBILITY

Deinfluencing conversations have surged as consumers openly discourage purchases that don't meet expectations. Negative experiences, especially around customer service, refunds, and unresponsive support, fuel distrust. Transparency and responsive human interaction are now credibility requirements.

Key Takeaway

Deinfluencing is a trust signal. Brands that lack transparency or customer support will be publicly challenged.



INFLUENCERS STILL DOMINATE

Creators are projected to surpass traditional media in ad revenue, with most consumers purchasing products and services based on influencer recommendations. Authenticity drives performance: personal storytelling, behind-the-scenes content, collaborations, and micro-influencers resonate more than polished celebrity endorsements.

Key Takeaway

Influencer success depends on authenticity and trust, not follower count alone.



PRIVATE COMMUNITIES FOSTER EDUCATION

As public feeds become crowded and transactional, brands are shifting toward owned, private spaces that prioritize depth over reach. Smaller, niche communities foster trust, loyalty, and meaningful two-way engagement while reducing reliance on algorithms.

Key Takeaway

Prioritizing connection with followers and consumers builds stronger relationships and long-term loyalty.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kelli Calkins is director of social media at [Meyocks](#).

Kelli has 10 years of experience in social media strategy, content development and influencer marketing. Her career spans across diverse industries such as agriculture, food systems, healthcare, education, finance and manufacturing. Kelli is also an influencer and media contributor with features on TMJ4 in Milwaukee and multiple podcasts focused on social media trends and food systems.

