What we saw in 2016

Across the nation, 2016 was a challenging year for Social Media. New rising stars, such as Snapchat and Instagram taking the lead over Twitter gave us new insights on what 2017 has in store for us.

This was also my first full year at Midwestern State University, and the first chance to measure a full year’s worth of data. We set our focus on making more professional platforms for MSU. From YouTube to Snapchat, all of our platforms have a professional look to them that continues to grow.

When Instagram overtook Twitter, we shifted our focus to create a way to this new audience. We shifted exclusively to high-resolution photos that were taken with a digital single-lens reflex camera. In July, Instagram also allowed users to measure impressions, a stat we did not previously have access too. We learned that our audience is more diverse on Instagram, reaching different student populations. Instagram continues to innovate, but with the recent copying of Snapchat features, it seems that they want to head towards a more personal direction. Instagram prides itself on crisp photos and the ability to tell a story with one photo. We are slowly learning that this professional pride can easily translate to Instagram stories.

Speaking of Snapchat, we now know how powerful this social media is. Every time we posted something, everyone knew about it. We did live walk-throughs, showcased students across the globe, and used the idea of behind-the-scene access to create an audience. New tools for geofilters gave anyone a chance to create their own geofilters. While we do monitor this, it has been interesting to see what students create for Snapchat and the university.

With the current struggle for followers between Snapchat and Instagram, it will be interesting to see if Snapchat drops off. Instagram currently has a foothold, based on their current photo-style posts. Snapchat is trying to change the face of social media using augmented and location-based filters. Snapchat is still popular with the class of 2016 and prospective students, but Instagram is slowly gaining more users every day. Snapchat still creates a more personal presence that Instagram has not managed to steal yet, 2017 will be an interesting year for both social media.

Twitter continues to drop off the map. It serves its purpose for news and event and for question and answers from students and the community. After the outcome of the presidential election, it seems Twitter will still be going strong for a few more years. We are monitoring to see if that will translate over to new students. Twitter continues to grow for the campus and impressions lead our numbers this year. Engagement is down for Twitter though, and it seems while students see the tweet, they are not interacting with it. Twitter is no longer the strongest social media we have at MSU.

Facebook is showing some promise. While students do not use Facebook the way many of the age 30 and up demographic does, it is still valuable. In June, Facebook decided to change their algorithm to engage people, rather than pages. Our page took a hit, but engagement remained high, while impressions began to drop. This year, we will look at sponsoring some posts, to see if this will help access new followers.

LinkedIn serves our alumni base and senior students and continues to improve after it was acquired by Microsoft. It has new tools, which are not only boosting our posts, but also giving us a way to track them. YouTube continues to focus on content. We are gearing up for more video to keep up with the high demand students are looking for in 2017.
Facebook continues change

Facebook is our oldest social media. Starting in 2011, it was set up to usher Midwestern State University into the social media world. Since then, the page has evolved into a hub of question and answers, and event promotions. It continues to change the way it uses data, and it's newest algorithm change enables the user to see more personal posts from friends rather than pages. This has prompted social media professionals to seriously look at the future of Facebook’s sponsored posts as the next way to engage users.

In 2016 we created a plan for our Facebook page, learning how to use the new business tools and starting to acquire pages that are affiliated with us under one umbrella. We can now do this without having to be an admin on their page. For the future, it may be useful to do this when faculty of staff want a new Facebook page for their department, college, or organization.

The top post in 2016 easily went to the “Pokemon Go” post published in early July. Going with the trends really worked out for us in this post. In the future we will continue to monitor student trends and see if we can use them to engage with our followers.

“Pokemon Go” to this date had the largest organic reach, being seen by over 65,000 people. While we posted on other social medias, it seems that Facebook had the most impact and conversation.

Other posts that did well were the Men’s Basketball Lone Star Conference Tournament win and the drone picture of the new MSU artificial turf fields.

Our stats below show that while our impression numbers went down from 2015, the engagement continued to hold steady. Facebook is really pushing for good content instead of pages just copying each other.
Facebook is also rewarding users who use video. We saw a big push in advertisement from Facebook, telling us to use video more.

While our main videos still go on YouTube, we created select videos made just for Facebook. We archived them on YouTube, but their main audience was for Facebook. We included captions within the video to match popular videos in 2016.

Starting in 2017, Facebook has created their own caption software embedded into Facebook that now can assist in future captioning. Of course, our data shows that built-in captions for Facebook videos is the preferred way to view videos.

In the Texoma Gives video, you can see that only five percent of viewers listened with the sound. This was the first video we tried using on Facebook that had voice audio. This simple experiment confirmed what we were hearing from the Social Media community, that viewers do not watch videos with sound on Facebook.

Since then, the sound has not been relevant. For the future, while we think sound is important, it is not a high-priority and voice overs should be used sparingly or with accurate captions.
Twitter hangs on

Twitter is the newest social media to be labeled the social media for "old people." It does seem that Twitter is best served by our Junior and Senior student population. The rest congregate between Instagram, Snapchat, and yes, some even have Facebook.

One trend we noticed back in November, was that after the election, negativity spiked on Twitter. Many users who left for a short few months are now back on Twitter, and it seems that they are using it merely for the sake of news. They like to know what's going on around campus, and for that reason, they still hold on to the Twitter app.

We saw the most impressions on Twitter, and while the engagement is down, that doesn’t mean we should stop posting content. We know they see it, they just don’t click anything. Videos on Twitter have seen an increase. Similar to Facebook sound is rarely turned on for videos. All of our future videos have this in mind, and carry some kind of captions.

Our followers reward us with engagement when we retweet their content, making it the only social media where we can personally show the content they are promoting. Rather than re-post the content ourselves, this continues to create a personal experience our followers like to see across all social media.

The top tweet of 2016 was about RJ Mitte. RJ retweeted this post, and it acquired over 26,000 impressions. On Mitte's account, he has over 235,000 followers. It helps when we have influencers pushing our content.

Something we should emphasize in 2017 is leveraging our student influencers. Twitter continues to be the best site for news.

Twitter sports top mentions

Mentions about MSU athletes and from them, topped a lot of our tweets. Recent graduate, Noah Fazekas tweeted the above about coming out for a game. Other athletes did similar posts for game day.

Marqui was the second top post in 2016 after he was drafted by the Arizona Cardinals. Only RJ beat him out.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Twitter</th>
<th>Jan</th>
<th>Feb</th>
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<th>April</th>
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</table>

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Learning from this data, we want to continue using the influencer reach that is our students. They are the best resource to promote Midwestern State University on Twitter.

While many students are not on Twitter, the ones that do, understand how to leverage this social media. Many will leave comments, both positive and negative about the university. We can take a university pulse from those we are following, and those that send us messages of disappointment or praise for what the university is currently doing.

Of course, the top complaint is always about parking. This past year, we have acted more on the customer service side by making sure students know where to go from business services, to financial aid, to admissions. We try and figure out the problems on Twitter first. Students have learned to ask us first to try and avoid any problems that may occur.

We have also made it a point to post important deadlines coming up, so students are aware. They understand that Twitter’s role is more customer service-based and newsworthy than any other social media.

Other top trends for Twitter in 2016 included our Pokemon PSA about not using a cell phone while driving. Other popular trends were the contests held during Finals. Students came up with creative ways to win our Finals Care Baskets. Pictured below is one of the creative photos sent to us.

We receive plenty of photos like the one above, and we do engage the person to not only welcome them to the university, but give them hashtags we use for incoming students.

We have used a variation of the #StangGang and added the number from which is their graduating class. This helps form a small community of students we hope bridges questions and answers from other incoming students. With these small communities, we see groups and communities start to form to help each other navigate the beginning of college.

Influencers will continue to shape the way Twitter works, and as we learn how to harness these accounts to aid us in sending out information, it will continue to make Twitter relevant to everyone.
Instagram is the new king

Instagram is enjoying success not only at Midwestern State, but everywhere. At the beginning of 2017, Instagram was heralded for competing with Snapchat in story view. The rivalry between both Instagram and Snapchat will only escalate in 2017, and whoever comes up with the best technology for their platforms will come out on top.

Instagram has the luxury of reaching different type of students. There is something for everyone, and everyone has something they like to follow. Instagram changed their algorithm early last year, and like Twitter, the tops posts will appear at the top instead of in chronological order. This has actually helped our posts be seen. We don’t have to be as precise when scheduling a time to post, but the pressure is on to always have something that is appealing for our students.

Instagram also reaches students who have not yet set foot on our campus. It’s the only social media that has regular contact with new students coming too or looking at MSU.

Some of the best pictures from Instagram have been taken using the drone. Seeing campus from another point-of-view gives us a better chance to engage our followers.

Instagram also has a new story-feature that is similar to Snapchats. We have begun to utilize it, but until recently, we had never seen stats that compare to what Snapchat gives us. We will continue monitoring this in 2017 since the story feature wasn’t added until late last year. There is also a new live feature that we have access too. The only problem is that the live feature does not save the videos for later. It is live and then it is gone. We are looking to see how we can use this for future events or if we want too.

Instagram caters to everyone, and we only see this app continuing to grow in 2017. We are leaning heavily on it for pushing out content at the same speed as Snapchat.

### New Impressions at Work

Our impressions gave us a hint of who saw what. When we used more unique hashtags, our impressions went up. This is a new measurement tool we have not previously had. Starting in late July, we saw that our numbers were a whole lot higher than we originally thought. People not following us see our posts just as much as those who choose to follow us. We think this makes it a great tool to showcase to potential students not only in the city of Wichita Falls, but Midwestern State University.

Top posts for Instagram this year were either pictures taken from the drone or at the Fantasy of Lights.

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<thead>
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Snapchat plays by own rules

Snapchat inserted itself as a top social media in 2016. While Facebook, Twitter and Instagram have long been the usual social medias to use, Snapchat has pushed itself into the big three spotlight, and has created a big four. This will continue in 2017 as we see Snapchat try and move up in the rankings of social.

This year, we have done Snapchat takeovers, real-time Q&As, and custom-made geofilters. Geofilters are filters that appear in certain locations throughout the world. We have a select few around Midwestern State and Wichita Falls. These only work if you are inside MSU and the same goes with having to physically be located in Wichita Falls.

Snapchat does not offer any type of analytics except for geofilter data. Even then, this is very limited and up until late December, they only tracked data on paid Geofilters. Last year we spent $511.18 on geofilters. This year we allocated $500 from our budget since we knew we would use about this much for custom geofilter for larger student events. Geofilters were used over 800,000 times for both paid and free geofilters. While paid only accounted for about 350,000 of that, they were very specific to certain events.

Our popular geofilters were for Graduation. These were the more costly ones, ranging between $25-$35. Homecoming and other ones, ranged between $10-$20. We even created some for football games and playoffs that ranged between $15-$25.

While this is a small investment, geofilters help spread our name out to those not at MSU that will see a branded Snapchat story. Plus, they are really popular with students and it is something they talk about extensively.

In 2017, we are trying a new way to track analytics. Last year, we tracked a select few stories. We also did Snapchat takeovers, where a student would takeover our Snapchat account and give us a day-in-the-life story for all MSU students to see. We always did monitor this, and had a lot of good feedback. The most popular story this year was probably the Legacy Hall real-time Q&A. We saw at least 18,000 views from that one day of questions. These kind of events will continue in the future.

Snapchat has a lot of uncertainties, but it’s still one of the most popular social media around. We need to pay attention to it’s future.
The rest of the socials

LinkedIn and YouTube are relevant, but hard to pin down. It seems that people watch more funny videos than informative videos on YouTube. LinkedIn doesn’t affect our students until their senior year or when they become alumni. We do pay attention to both social media, but we do not give them as much attention as we do to the big four.

Starting with YouTube, it’s where the Mustangs Minutes are uploaded. From there we distribute the content to Facebook and Twitter. When we create videos specifically for Facebook, Twitter or Instagram, we also upload them to YouTube. While these are not meant to gain viewers on YouTube, it does create an archive for students who may stumble upon this later on. With our better Snapchat stories, we also upload those to YouTube in a separate playlist and archive them, while posting them on the Midwestern State University Social Media website page.

YouTube continues to grow with subscribers and is still the king of online video. We did some live videos over the summer and saw a great turnout with questions from new students coming to MSU. This will be something we continue in the future, but we will be looking at the Facebook live platform for this in the summer of 2017. We will however continue to archive this on YouTube for future viewers.

LinkedIn was bought by Microsoft last summer. While LinkedIn is our least popular social media, it does have over 21,000 followers, beating every other social media we currently have. Facebook is trailing at 12,000 followers. LinkedIn has begun rolling out new tools for university pages, but as of January 2017, they have not completely been installed for member view.

We post local news content on LinkedIn from our local sources about MSU. This trend has worked great in the past and we will continue until LinkedIn decides to roll out more tools. LinkedIn’s value comes in being able to identify alumni and where they work and live.
2017 and beyond

In 2016, we learned how the algorithms work for each social media. It was different than in 2015 when we had a honeymoon period for social media and it was hard to track new numbers without having a full year of data. While our impressions were up in 2015, and down in 2016, our engagement stayed at about the same. We are looking to continue to raise our impressions without sacrificing our engagement.

Twitter will continue to give us the most impressions, just based off the way the platform works. In 2017, we have already begun tracking Snapchat and Instagram different than the last two years. Our numbers are looking great, and it should add to our overall analytics to know where to direct attention in the future.

Videos on Facebook continue to show promise. We have set up a calendar that will concentrate on videos for Facebook that are no more than one-minute long and separate from the Mustangs Minutes. In 2016, we did this for the MSU-Burns Fantasy of Lights and for Homecoming and saw high engagement. Facebook has a new built-in caption system that will aid us in creating videos with captions, since our data shows that almost 95 percent of our viewers do not use sound.

Instagram is an account with a lot of potential and we are trying our best to utilize it for a 2017 audience. We continue to monitor the new stories for Instagram and use the newly available analytics provided to us to track impressions and engagement.

A few things we picked up from 2016, are that our students enjoy seeing pictures from our drone, they like to know more about their professors and programs, and they also like special social media events that are run through our channels simultaneously. Our first one of the year will be the Squirrel Appreciation Day in late January. These were very popular last year, and we will be adding more days like this in our Social Media calendar.

We are working with the Registrar’s Office for Graduation and continue to improve the social experience. We are working on creating a Twitter and Instagram wall for Graduation in May 2017, and possibly a live feed through Facebook Live.

In turn, we are looking at ways to engage the new class of 2017. We are currently trying to figure out a way to create a large group database, since this class is very group-centric. It would have to be on a platform they’re used too. Snapchat has some promise, but we are still testing their group features. This class is anxious to attend Midwestern State though according to their posts on social media.

Live video is on our watch-list. While we have done stuff in the past, it was with Periscope. We now have access to Facebook Live, and they recently updated their platform to support desktop access. With the proper equipment, it will seamlessly work to create a multiple camera set up for Facebook Live. We are working on developing content that will fit this social media and also the audience. Facebook Live is one of those social media that has the potential to reach multiple audiences, much like it’s sister, Instagram.

Twitter has talked briefly about an edit button. This is our number one wish for the future of Twitter.

AJ

This data was collected from analytics provided by our social media accounts and also through tracking that we have kept all year long in 2016. The data is attached to the end of this report. Please let us know if you have further questions by phone or email.