Making a Business Case for Snapchat

By Christopher S. Penn, VP of Marketing Technology, [SHIFT Communications](#)

There's a fundamental rule in [marketing](#) and business: we cannot manage what we cannot measure. Unfortunately, Snapchat is not yet measurable in a meaningful way. Other than raw story views, marketers have no information, data, or analytics, and thus no insights, to guide their Snapchat efforts. There are no clickable links or provided metrics; [Snapchat](#) offers the same quantitative metrics as a roadside billboard. We cannot determine what users react to like we can on Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, or Pinterest.

If we cannot measure, we cannot manage. If we cannot manage, we cannot make a strong business case for investing time, people, or money into Snapchat or any other unmeasurable platform.

The best or, in this case, least-ineffective alternative to measuring Snapchat is to survey users about how they use the platform to interact with brands and determine how Snapchat influences their decisions – and that's just what we did at SHIFT Communications. Our field survey revealed that commercial intent does exist, but is weak in comparison to other social channels.

For example, we asked frequent Snapchat users how many brands they follow on Snapchat. More than two-thirds of frequent

Snapchat users don't follow any brands. If you're looking for an audience who is eager to follow your brand on social media, Snapchat isn't your platform. Users are simply not interested in following brands on the service.

Even though a small minority of users follow brands on Snapchat, we also wanted to know whether they ever chat with a brand. We asked people who follow at least one brand, "How many times have you chatted with a company/brand account on Snapchat in the past 3 months?" More than 6 in 10 users who follow at least one brand have not conversed with a brand in the last 3 months. This result is logical: if users don't commonly follow brands, it's unlikely that brand engagement would be high.
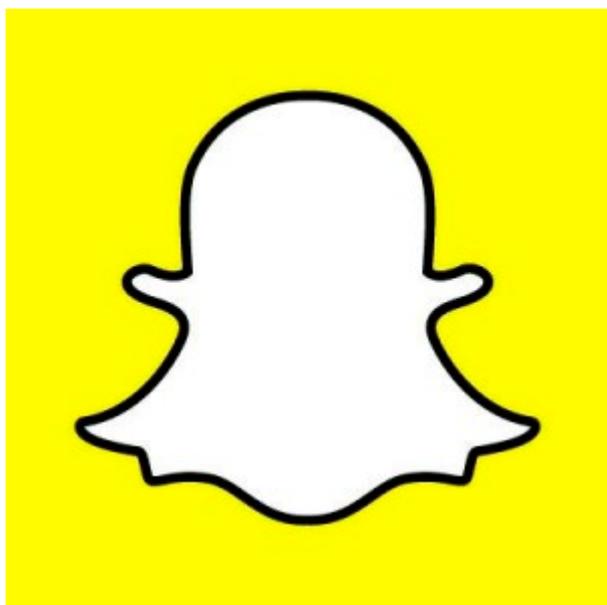
As we continued our study, we found Snapchat does not appear to:

- Trigger awareness, and thus consideration
- Provide information during the evaluation phase
- Inspire a purchasing decision
- Create loyalty or satisfaction with the brand throughout the journey

We must reluctantly conclude that investing heavily in Snapchat does not make sense at this time. Should Snapchat choose to provide marketers with actionable analytics and insights that address these four major concerns, we would

revisit our conclusion.

Does this mean Snapchat shouldn't be included in your marketing strategy at all? Not necessarily. There's no harm in minimal investment, experimentation, and defensive "plant the flag" branding to ensure that your brand is ready if Snapchat does evolve.

Tracking the Untrackable

If you must prove ROI or demonstrate the business impact of your Snapchat efforts, consider using direct calls to action such as coupon codes or other trackable redemption mechanisms to capture real actions taken. Snapping a coupon code that users can screenshot and redeem at the register will tell you how many engaged users took action.

Finally, consider running a longitudinal survey of your own audience to ask them whether they would consider following or engaging with you on Snapchat. Segment your survey into two groups: your best customers and everyone else.

When Will Snapchat be a Viable Marketing Channel?

Any platform that merits serious consideration by marketers requires the three As: Advertising tools, Analytics tools, API tools. Currently, Snapchat offers a mediocre advertising experience for the average advertiser. It offers no real analytics. It offers no authorized, public API. When Snapchat offers a robust suite of the above requirements, we'll be the first to jump in.

About the Author: Christopher S. Penn is an authority on digital marketing and marketing technology. A recognized thought leader, author, and speaker, he has shaped three key fields in the marketing industry: Google Analytics adoption, data-driven marketing and PR, and email marketing. Known for

his high-octane, here's how to get it done approach, his expertise benefits companies such as Citrix Systems, McDonald's, GoDaddy, McKesson, and many others. His latest work, Leading Innovation, teaches organizations how to implement and scale innovative practices to direct change.

Christopher is a highly-sought keynote speaker thanks to his energetic, informative talks. In 2015, he delivered insightful, innovative talks on all aspects of marketing and analytics at over 30 events to critical acclaim:

- *Seriously, I think @cspenn is the smartest #socialmedia marketer I've ever met.*
- *Freaking love @cspenn this guy is beyond smart yet is engaging & can simplify it… Awesome stuff!*
- *@cspenn You have an uncanny knack for bringing relevance and sense of numbers at data. Loved your keynote and session at #SMMW15.*

Others who recognize Christopher's work include:

- *Forbes Magazine and MediaPost recognized him as one of the top 50 most influential people in social media and digital marketing from 2012-2015.*
- *C-Suite Networks named him a Social Media Legend in 2015.*
- *PR Week named him one of the Innovation 50, the top 50 most innovative communicators in the world in 2015.*
- *PR News named him Social Media Person of the Year, Social Media Icon MVP, and Agency Professional of the Year in 2014.*

He is a founding member of IBM's Watson Analytics Predictioneers, co-founder of the groundbreaking PodCamp Conference, and co-host of the Marketing Over Coffee marketing podcast.

Christopher is a Google Analytics Certified Professional and a Google AdWords Certified Professional. He is the author of

over two dozen marketing books including bestsellers such as Marketing White Belt: Basics for the Digital Marketer, Marketing Red Belt: Connecting With Your Creative Mind, and Marketing Blue Belt: From Data Zero to Marketing Hero. His new book, Leading Innovation, is available at *LeadingInnovationBook.com.*