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**POV:** SOCIAL PLATFORM CHANGES:  
A BAROMETER FOR WHAT'S TO COME

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# SOCIAL PLATFORM CHANGES: A BAROMETER FOR WHAT'S TO COME

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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As we begin a new year, it's common for marketers to reflect and ask, "What's next for my brand?" and "What can I expect this year?"

Social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook and Instagram made a number of important changes last year, most of which were intended to improve the user experience. Many had similar themes, but the details can be difficult to track (that's why we're here!). What's more important for marketers than the changes themselves are the trends these updates point to.

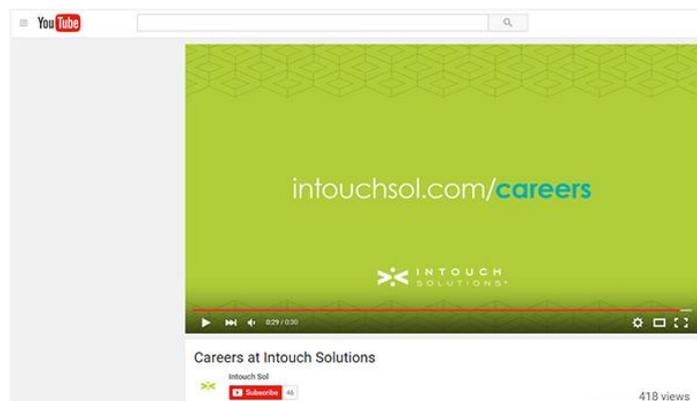
This POV highlights relevant 2015 platform changes to help prepare marketers for what's to come in 2016, with a focus on pharma. Following are some key trends that have impacted and will continue to impact the way users engage with pharma marketers in 2016.

## SOCIAL VIDEO IS TAKING OVER

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User consumption of social video is exploding. According to eMarketer, U.S. adults watch **76 minutes of video** online every day. New options available to marketers prove users prioritize visual content.

Social behemoths like Facebook recognize the importance of video. In 2015, Facebook reportedly overtook YouTube as the top video platform with more than **8 billion daily views**. This is likely due to the considerable amount of updates Facebook made last year, including reformatting its video tab, introducing 360-degree and suggested videos, enabling easier control of video thumbnails and **captions**, accounting for **user actions on**



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[native Facebook videos](#) in its News Feed algorithm and prioritizing native video over third-party content.

As we pointed out in our [top 10 trends](#) piece, live-streaming video is on the rise. Meerkat, Periscope (Twitter's live-streaming app) and Facebook Live, all introduced in 2015, allow users and brands to live-stream any moment with a mobile device. Within a year, [15 percent of the top brands](#) on Twitter have already started to stream video using Periscope, the leading live-streaming app to date.

Producing live video allows brands to show a more "human" side of their business. For example, it may be possible to live-stream an event that is already public, such as a healthcare provider panel or a keynote speech by an influencer. Considerations for incorporating video should include:

- Limited-to-no ability to moderate or delete viewer comments (at this time)
- Possibility of required integration with another platform
- Need for extensive planning, including building response workflows

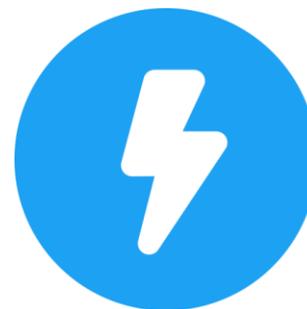
Users are clearly engaging with the format. Video is here to stay and will likely grow in use and popularity in 2016; marketers should, therefore, give it strong consideration moving forward.

## KEEPING USERS ON-SITE IS PRIORITY #1

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Social networks are realizing more and more that users prefer to dictate how they consume content, so many of last year's updates were all about control. By providing more control and more options, networks hope visitors won't navigate to other platforms.

In an effort to have Twitter be top-of-mind for new trending stories and to compete more efficiently with Facebook, in 2015 Twitter introduced Twitter Moments, a feature that allows users and brands to curate and follow live events. Users can follow a Moment without following individuals who are tweeting about a variety of other topics. Twitter also introduced two embedding tools, Publisher and Curator, to make it easier for brands to embed their proprietary





Moments and tweets on their own assets instead of embedding competitor posts.

Facebook added to its News Feed Preferences functionality, providing users a way to prioritize what they see first in their News Feeds. It also updated its discovery capabilities, allowing users to see any public post, person or page if they search for it, and is testing topic-based feeds. If users are happy with what they consume on Facebook, there is no need to visit another platform. Facebook's goal: if a user wants to see something, provide it so the user can talk about it. If a user doesn't want to see something, they never have to see it again. Except ads. Sorry, users.

Facebook has upgraded its offerings to include Instant Articles as well. This feature is currently only available for iPhone users with the most up-to-date version of the Facebook app, and only a handful of publishers (for example, *Buzzfeed*, *Slate* and *National Geographic*) can create Instant Articles at this time. When a user clicks on an Instant Article, instead of being taken to the publisher's website and away from Facebook's ads, users can instantly access the full article without ever leaving Facebook. In turn, Facebook offers publishers help in selling and serving ads, while maintaining a clean reading interface for users. When users are done reading, they are directed back to Facebook where they can continue exploring (and generating Facebook ad revenue). Audience consistency is reassuring to marketers who join a platform; they know their audience won't up and leave the minute the marketers join.

In addition, marketers may be able to leverage publishing updates to curate content hosted on social platforms to engage with and retain their own audiences. For example, marketers with an unbranded diabetes Twitter handle may be able to create their own Twitter Moment around World Diabetes Day, exposing new audiences to their channel.

## MORE USER CONTROL OVER CONTENT CREATION

Twitter acknowledges there's an inherent barrier for its platform compared with competitors: the 140-character limitation. Over the past few years, Twitter has been figuring out new ways to give users the ability to share more than 140 characters with updates like Twitter Cards, multiple photos and unlimited characters in direct messages. In 2015, they continued to allow users to add context in tweets by introducing [Quote Tweet](#). Any user who wants to add comments in a native retweet can now do so. Intouch anticipates Twitter will continue to explore ways to give users more control, like by increasing the character count [from 140 to 10,000](#).

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## INSTAGRAM IS COMING OF AGE

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As we pointed out in our blog post [Pharma's Jumping Into Instagram](#), new monitoring and moderation capabilities and analytics tools make it easier than ever for companies to compliantly engage with users and track channel performance over time. With more than [400 million users](#) as of late 2015 and new ad-targeting features, Instagram is primed for marketers to join in 2016.



We already know that users are posting healthcare-related content with hashtags like #diabetes, #cancerawareness and #cancersucks. HCPs are starting to appreciate the [value of visual platforms](#), and corporate accounts have allowed pharma to tiptoe into Instagram as well. Now that monitoring and moderation capabilities exist, and disease-awareness pages have acted as an FDA-compliant proof of concept, Intouch expects many pharma marketers to add Instagram to their social ecosystem in 2016.

## OPPORTUNITIES FOR PHARMA TO EMBRACE CHANGE

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Change that places more control in the hands of users may seem daunting, but it is actually a good thing for marketers, *and* for pharma.

The new ways users can produce and share content may provide more avenues for users to engage with brands, and new technologies and platforms offer enormous potential for pharma to participate in genuine, intentional interactions with target audiences ... audiences who want to see their content and who may have purchase intent.

It's imperative to remember, however, that content for the sake of content is useless. It must meet a need and provide value for users. If it doesn't hit a nerve, users will click onward and away.

It's imperative to remember, however, that content for the sake of content is useless. It must meet a need and provide value for users.



We expect the “feature race” and the rise of new social platforms to continue into 2016, with platforms adding functionality similar to or duplicative of other platforms within months of major updates in an effort to retain their current users and entice others away from competitors.

If you're ready to explore adding social to your marketing ecosystem or have any questions about how to leverage these updates on your platforms, please reach out to your Intouch Solutions representative.

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