

As Pinterest Meets With Marketers, Evolving Business Model Gets Clearer

Pinterest Isn't About Social, It's About the Visual Web and Search

By:

[Eric Fulwiler](#)

Published: [May 24, 2013](#)

ERIC FULWILER

Pinterest held its first “partner event” during Internet Week in New York on Wednesday, assembling a crowd of 300 marketers, digital- or social-agency types and others as it took a step down the road Facebook and Twitter walked before, recruiting big marketers and agencies into an inner circle with access to the platform’s resources, strategy and more.

The most interesting development, however, was the clear vision that was woven through speeches from the partner and product team, brand success stories and a quick appearance from co-founder and CEO Ben Silbermann. Pinterest doesn’t see itself as a social media platform. It is not an alternative to Facebook, Twitter or Instagram for consumers or marketers. It is positioning itself in the world of Google and search.

Pinterest is, at its core, a tool for indexing the visual web, much like Google’s roots as a tool for indexing information and meaning on the web. While most people use Google for factual answers, though, Pinterest is about the search for inspiration, helping people discover the things they love through other people. And with a mission like that, we start to get a clearer sense of how the company's business model will evolve.

It is looking to help people find fulfillment through newly discovered "things" they love, which can then lead to real-world action and purchasing. It's about demand generation instead of demand fulfillment.”

>As most missions are, it's a lofty, if inspiring, goal. But Pinterest is well-positioned to take advantage of the rise of the visual web, an evolution that does lend itself to the inspirational over the factual. Let's face it, we don't look at thousands pictures of puppies, food and beach vacation homes for answers. We're looking for ideas and motivation. The visual web is about discovery -- instead of quick, direct-response answers and actions.

Brand needs to acknowledge the rise of the visual web -- beyond just Pinterest -- and incorporate it into their marketing strategies. Images are the key value getting exchanged around the social web, which has real implications for how we understand and leverage search engine

optimization. Search is increasingly tied to social media and content, a trend that has people increasingly talking about not SEO but SAO -- social aggregation optimization.

At its most basic level, SAO requires doing everything you can so content can perform better around the social web. Brands need to think in terms of content, not just page ecosystems and keywords. Marketers should be asking themselves where content lives and how discoverable and shareable it is. The visual web has a human heart, fulfilled through not only algorithms, but individual curation and context as well.

That takes a different perspective than marketers emphasized before.

As a business, Pinterest is positioning itself to take advantage of the growing convergence of content and commerce. Its new [“rich pins.”](#) which can include information such as recipe instructions or prices and where to buy, are a perfect example of this convergence and the possibilities of Pinterest to help people do the things they love in real-life after discovering them on the platform.

You'll no doubt soon see Silbermann and the partner team take further steps to help brands and agencies along this same path.