



An Interview with Thomas Hutter: Organic is dead

BY TILO KMIECKOWIAK

Thomas Hutter, 42, is founder and CEO of the Hutter Consult AG. As one of the most renowned Facebook marketing experts in the German speaking markets, he consults businesses, organizations and agencies in Germany, Austria and Switzerland.

Quickly about yourself! How did you find interest in social media marketing and what fascinates you until today?

It was back in 2008 when I was working for a large Swiss agency and I was asked to dig a bit deeper into Facebook marketing. The topic really captured my interest and so I decided to specialize in that field – ultimately becoming self-employed. This is how my blog thomashutter.com came into existence. Shortly after I founded my own company. The incredible dynamic in new developments, the diverse topics and trends but also the sheer endless possibilities in social media marketing still excite me today!

As a longtime observer of the social media industry, you put out the hypothesis that organic social media performance is basically dead. Why?

I have advised my clients already for quite some time that they need to leverage social media and especially Facebook with paid media. Why should they put effort, time and money into organic reach without also pushing this content in a focused and relatively cheap way by boosting it? If we try and estimate the outcomes of paid media, the results can be estimated rather

clearly. The additional effects of organic performance can be seen as some kind of free bonus on the side.

While we're talking about this, how about the biggest mistakes organizations currently do in social media? What should they change?

There are some big, and some even bigger mistakes that organizations do in relation to social media usage. First and foremost they often still lack a coherent and well thought through strategy. Many of them think of how to entertain the community and create interactions and new followers. At the same time they tend to forget to set real goals and follow clear KPIs.

Accordingly, they commit to activities that are rather done for their own sake instead of really paying off in terms of the overall business strategy and goals – thus not creating any economic success. When a strategy is set up, a sufficient level of expertise as a basis is often missing. Businesses hire agencies and other service providers who haven't committed themselves to social media marketing in a sustainable way. This leads to the creation of strategies that miss the point of creating real business impact. When the request gets mixed in

from people asking for “organic only”, things often fail.

Another hot topic is compliance. I still see many companies that aren't aware enough of compliance risks. There is a tendency to work negligently with various platforms, and also with service providers, their employees and contractors. Clear compliance standards are a must today.

What are some of the upcoming trends for you in the areas of social media marketing and digital communication?

I can make this rather short and simple. There are three big trends for me: intelligent paid media, messenger marketing and full funnel campaigns.

With all those, it must be necessary to carefully analyze the outcomes. Which role exactly does social media analytics play for you in that regard?

Well, social media analytics help to understand the complex relations between content, reach, target groups and goals – it shouldn't be missed in any effective social media strategy. It also saves a lot of time and effort. When I think of how many businesses still add up their numbers in Excel...

What advice would you give in the field of performance measurement?

There is no such thing as a one-size-fits-all approach to analytics. Effective and successful performance measurements need to be tailored to specifically to your goals. They need to reflect all the different goals and activities that are being used within a campaign.

Last but not least – what would you want to say to all the social media marketers out there?

Professionalization and further development are key to success! There are already proven strategies and established procedures for many social media topics. The time of "eternal experimentation" is over – it may be experimented with, but it has to happen within the framework of a well-defined strategy.

Third party opinions and know-how help to make things possible where you may not know that these things are possible. Standing still and sticking to "old strategies" is simply the wrong way to succeed in the dynamic world of social media channels.

Thanks for the insights, Thomas!

