

A black silhouette of a person running, viewed from behind, against a solid blue background. The runner is in mid-stride, with the right leg forward and the left leg pushing off. The silhouette is centered vertically and horizontally.

**SPORTS AND SOCIAL
MEDIA PREDICTIONS
2011**

Compiled by:

JASON PECK

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INTRODUCTION

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2010 has been a great year for sports and social media. More and more athletes, teams and brands have started utilizing social media tools and platforms to engage fans. The question is no longer “why?” but “how?”

“In 2011, it’s going to be all about social activation.”

In 2011, I think it’s going to be all about social activation. While many teams and brands

have experimented with social promotions and also leveraging location-based services, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, mobile applications and group-buying

platforms, I expect even more to be done in 2011. It’s time to really start leveraging social media platforms to achieve business results (not just things like Twitter followers and Facebook likes/fans). I expect we’ll see even more teams and sponsors create unique promotions—some that are social media-specific and some that take advantage of multiple channels. Social initiatives are great, but it’s even better to have programs that leverage multiple touch points to reach and engage fans.

I hope you enjoy this compilation of sports and social media predictions for 2011. Most of the contributors from last year’s edition are back with more great thoughts, and there are a few new contributors, too. Thanks to everyone who participated, and thanks to Ash Read for helping with the layout and design again this year.

Bio: Jason Peck is a social media manager at eWayDirect, where he works with developers on the company’s platform for online communities, helps clients implement successful community and social initiatives and manages eWayDirect’s own content and engagement efforts. He’s also a huge UNC Tar Heels fan and is working on a textbook about social media for sports marketing students. You can find him at <http://www.jasonfpeck.com> or <http://www.twitter.com/jasonpeck>.

TARIQ AHMAD

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For 2011, geolocation apps will be the major trend. With the growth and popularity of Foursquare and Gowalla, among other geolocation services, it is inevitable these social media tools will gain increased usage. The ability to check-in to a location to let people know where you are and what you are doing is great. Of course, you can do this on Twitter and Facebook in terms of status updates, but to have a service created specifically for checking in will continue to grow in 2011.

“Geolocation apps will experience significant growth in 2011 among leagues and teams.”

The NBA has taken it one step further and created the NBA Turnstile app, the first professional sports multiplatform check-in application that rewards fans for attending and watching live games, and connecting them to social media platforms such as Foursquare, Gowalla, Twitter, Facebook, and Fanvibe through the league’s digital products. NBA Turnstile allows fans in-arena during games to compete against each other to unlock virtual badges, earn discounts, and receive special merchandise offers, as well as allowing fans to unlock special badges for watching nationally televised NBA games.

I feel that more professional sports leagues and teams will follow the NBA’s lead and start creating apps that allow fans to show their spirit and pride more than just attending the game or wearing your favorite team’s merchandise. However, the key is that these services have to provide tangible benefits to the fans. Instead of just offering badges, offer discounts in-arena for merchandise and concessions (similar to NBA Turnstile app). And for those cannot make it to the arena but who check-in from home? Offer them discounts from local retailers and the official online team store, as well as discounts for tickets so they can attend future games.

Geolocation apps will experience significant growth in 2011 among leagues and teams. The critical part is that these apps have to provide tangible benefits to the consumers. The more benefits these social media tools provide, the more value consumers will see for the products, and the more they will use them.

Bio: Tariq Ahmad is a doctorate student studying Sport Administration. His career and research interests include the intersection of sports/social media, and sports business, and is looking to collaborate on projects related to these areas.

TY AHMAD-TAYLOR

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This year we saw the beginnings of robust mobile applications, especially for the iPad. Yahoo issued its smart Sportacular HD application, and ESPN began to get in the space as well.

The interesting thing about these is that the real lightning-in-a-bottle on the mobile platform is live gaming, and that appears to be untapped. Any regular mobile game application with virtual currency, leader boards and social competition-promotion-prestige can generate over \$1MM per year (yes, I am looking at you, oddly-titled "Original Gangsta" game for the iPhone.)

"The next year should see more offerings that tie virtual currency into real-life outcomes."

The next year should see more offerings that tie virtual currency into real-life outcomes, which isn't betting, but social gameplay with greater interest, to be frank. This is not so much Farmville for sports, but live game betting without the betting elements. These games will be more immersive than just watching the game on TV, and more compelling than traditional social games, because they are reality-bound and time-boxed (they have to happen while the game is taking place, live.)

Very heady days, indeed.

Bio: Prior to starting [FanFeedr](#) in 2008, Ty was the Senior Vice President for Strategy and Product Development at MTV Networks' Music & Logo Group. He has more than 15 years of experience in designing for broadband, 14 years in interactive television, and 20 years in information design. Ty is a recognized authority in creating deeply engaging experiences for viewers across multiple screens. He holds more than nine patents in the fields of television and web product development.

J.W. CANNON

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In the past year, we've seen a really clear separation in terms of how corporate websites are being used, and how social media sites are being used. Social media sites are now becoming the primary place for fans to congregate and interact with teams/properties and other like-minded fans, whereas the website is becoming merely a source of information.

I believe that this divide will continue to grow almost to the point where teams/properties no longer market their website as the primary online destination to fans. How many people

have you met in recent months that include their company's Facebook or Twitter page and NOT their corporate website? Expect that trend to continue.

In addition, the triple digit growth of geo-location mobile-based social media (i.e. Gowalla, Facebook Places, Yelp!, Foursquare) cannot be ignored, but surprisingly sports organizations haven't completely cracked that nut - nor has anyone from a marketing perspective for that matter.

You're always going to have narcissist fans (like myself) that have this need to tell people where they are, and "check in" at sports venues, team stores, events and just about everywhere they go. But what incentives are there for those fans to continuously interact with the brands? Consumers aren't just settling for being the "Mayor" any longer. Experimentation in this arena is about to go into overdrive, with more special ticket/merchandise sales, offers, contests and giveaways in order to encourage repeated interactions over time. You are going to see more property specific "badges". You'll see more ways to "check in" with a property without actually going to a game. You'll see more property specific Facebook and mobile device apps than ever before - particularly ones that have built-in upsell capabilities and ones that capture information. However, if these don't succeed this year, I think they'll go the way of the dodo in the sportsbiz space. I'm anxious to see how this trend further develops.

"Experimentation in this arena is about to go into overdrive, with more special ticket/merchandise sales, offers, contests and giveaways in order to encourage repeated interactions over time.."

Bio: J.W. Cannon is a veteran marketer and sponsorship professional with over 10 years of experience in engaging consumers with high-profile brands such as The Home Depot, Bank of America, AutoTrader.com and ING. J.W. is currently the Director of Sponsorships at ING U.S. Financial Services - a Dutch financial services company. Find him on Twitter at <http://www.twitter.com/cannonjw> or connect with him on LinkedIn at <http://www.linkedin.com/in/jwcannon>.

PETER ROBERT CASEY

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Oh, how I wish I could predict the future. As the clock strikes midnight on January 1st, much of the social sports landscape will look eerily similar to December 31st. Months will pass, however, and I think (and hope) we'll see a deeper and more integrated use of mobile activation from sports teams and properties.

The mobile usage and ownership numbers are staggering - 70% of the world's population now has a mobile phone, including nine out of 10 people in

the States. From January 2010 to March 2010 alone, 314.7 million phones were sold worldwide, including 54.3 million smart phones. Nineteen percent of all phones sold now are smart phones.**

"I think we'll see a huge spike in daily ticket/promo offers, QR codes and competitive social games on mobile platforms in the sports industry."

When you couple these figures with fans' increasing demand and consumption of sports content via mobile web/apps, a perfect marriage is in order. There will be more check-in/location-based apps for sports teams and companies to reward customer loyalty and capture data, and I think we'll see a huge spike in daily ticket/promo offers, QR codes and competitive social games on mobile platforms in the sports industry.

It's bound to happen, and I think 2011 is the year.

**Source: Gartner

Bio: Peter Robert Casey is a Social Media Specialist for the [New York Knicks](#), and digital scribe who covers the interplay of basketball and social media for The Huffington Post and [PeterRobertCasey.com](#). An alumnus of Columbia University and SUNY Oneonta, Peter was the first media credentialed microblogger in college basketball history after receiving a press credential to cover St. John's University men's hoops exclusively through Twitter: [@Peter_R_Casey](#).

STEVE COBB

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"Geolocation", "Group Buying", "Social Gaming" and "Virtual Goods" are a few social media buzzwords you will hear circulating throughout the sports industry in 2011. Each of these categories hit the mainstream news cycle this past year with companies like Foursquare, Zynga and Groupon battling for headlines in a race for reach and revenues. 2011 will be the "Year of the Deal" for fans and Facebook Places will be a major player given its

"Mobile isn't going anywhere. In fact, it's going everywhere."

combination of geo-location and group buying with 500 million plus users. Mobile isn't going anywhere. In fact, it's going everywhere. Sports teams, leagues, brands and athletes are as focused as ever on accessing fans through their smart phones and harnessing the power of "Geo".

Geolocation platforms have already facilitated several creative and convincing sponsor activations for both teams and athletes. The Patriots, Vikings, and Redskins ran promotions on SCVNGR and Foursquare this past year in the NFL alone, and you will see dozens of other teams across the big four leagues dabble in the space to engage fans and add value to corporate partners.

The power and potential of location-based services knows no boundaries. By the end of next year, you'll be hard-pressed to find a major sports venue that doesn't allow the purchase and delivery of concessions to fans without leaving their seats. Several teams already offer this convenience such as the Philadelphia Phillies in a partnership with Aramark and MLB Advanced Media. Teams are constantly striving to elevate the in-game experience in order to sell tickets and have expressed no reluctance to leveraging the latest geolocation technology to achieve this goal.

Teams have also shown they're not averse to offering group discounts to fans through services like LivingSocial and Groupon. NBA teams such as the Wizards, Mavericks, Nets, 76ers and Thunder have all presented their local Groupon subscriber base with a "Deal of the Day" to purchase premium tickets at a major discount (sometimes over 50%) with the hopes of creating new fans who might not otherwise ever attend a game. Despite concerns that these uber-discounts will upset season ticketholders, expect to see more creative and unique deals being offered as underperforming teams can't discount the power of collective buying.

There's no denying that social gaming has proven to be a cash cow and time vacuum when executed correctly – if you don't agree then explain FarmVille and its 55 million monthly active users. In 2010, games on social networks became a billion dollar business and the sports world jumped on board the gaming train led by ESPN, EA Sports, the NFL, New York Jets, and (of course) Chad Ochocinco. Expect to see more industry players enter the space next year as engagement numbers and sponsor satisfaction surveys from the first wave of sports social games make the rounds.

With social games usually come virtual goods. It's been proven time and again that fans will buy their way to victory if given the opportunity. The adoption of Facebook Credits has also breathed new life into the virtual goods market on the world's largest social network, enabling companies like Cameo Stars to seize the monetization opportunity. Drew Brees, Tony Romo, and Dale Earnhardt Jr. are just a few of the A-list athletes on their celebrity roster that have filmed "mini-cameos" for fans to purchase and share with their friends on Facebook. Similar services that enable athletes to monetize their social influence will sprout up in 2011 as agents are eager to earn incremental dollars off their socially successful clients.

Bio: Steve and the social marketing agency he co-founded, [Activ8Social](#), are at the forefront of sports marketing and social media. Steve led the planning and execution of several groundbreaking sponsor activations, featuring athletes such as Rajon Rondo of the Boston Celtics and Reggie Bush of the New Orleans Saints, that leveraged social platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Foursquare and Stickybits to create real world fan experiences. His work has been featured on ESPN.com, Mashable, and InsideFacebook.

ESPREE DEVORA

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In 2011 Action Sports brands will transfer their energy from being pissed that Zappos is tainting the market reducing in store purchases to creating an online store of their own.

If they get really savvy they'll hire some fancy web developer to configure a "geo location" feature on their website so the location of each buyer pops up on the screen as they make a purchase like Amazon does. The shop owners will then begin to think global and move away from

"The industry is changing. I know we have done things one way for a super long time. But there is no going back now."

being strictly local.

Since worldly thinkers go big or go home site visitors will be able to log in to pay for that new Burton's snowboarding jacket and ROME board using Facebook connect eliminating the need to enter in all their name and number details from scratch. The purchaser will then have an option to share their new loot with their friends.

How about this. I haven't seen this done before... What if that buyer could make a short web cam video about their shopping experience after clicking "buy now" which was automatically uploaded to your official YouTube brand channel with product information and company name automatically inserted in the description followed by a short link of that video that syncs like bit.ly to the customer's Twitter and Facebook with an option to share with their cyber friends.

Did I lose you at Facebook Connect? Probably. The industry is changing. I know we have done things one way for a super long time. But there is no going back now. You must ride this tidal wave best you can or else it's going to take you out.

Bio: "the Girl who Gets it Done" ~ just your every day business nerd ... people hire my internet marketing agency when the random dude on Craigslist didn't bring in the results they were looking for ~ I'm the innovator behind [ZEXsports.com](#), an action sports event search engine. A little bit crazy, but always smiling. Photo by Jessy Plume with InTraffik.

BRIAN GAINOR

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The sports marketplace will continue to be driven by new technologies, real-time engagement, smarter decision making, and industry conglomeration in 2011.

From a mobile standpoint, hot trends to watch in 2011 include geolocation-based services (Facebook Places, Foursquare, Gowalla, team/league SM platforms), smart phone applications delivering exclusive content (FanVision, Yinzcam),

mobile couponing (Groupon, Living Social), augmented reality mobile applications (Layar), and teams experimenting with QR Code technology in their stadium settings and online.

In the social media space, Facebook and Twitter will continue to be readily adopted and leveraged by sports properties, resulting in many organizations hiring specific personnel to oversee social media and new technologies. Social gaming will remain a popular focus, with many organizations creating interactive gaming tabs on their Official Facebook pages to engage and reward fans while incorporating team partners in new ways.

Additional hot topics to watch for in 2011 include the adoption of dynamic pricing models, the impact potential lockouts will have on leagues, teams, players, owners, and local communities, shifts in sponsorship/marketing spending due to new figures released by the 2010 U.S. Census, the continued emergence of sonic branding, University-operated networks and reality shows, the evolution of fan generated content, and the emergence of new, powerful industry engines as conglomeration takes place in college athletics and amongst media rights holders (particularly the Comcast-NBC merger). The Barclays Premier League and UFC will continue to rise in popularity in the United States, as will sports blogs, iPad applications, and promotional initiatives offering a chance to win truly unique experiences.

2011 will be an extremely exciting year for fans, marketers, and sports properties... let's just keep the NFL and NBA in play.

“In the social media space, Facebook and Twitter will continue to be readily adopted and leveraged by sports properties, resulting in many organizations hiring specific personnel to oversee social media and new technologies.”

Bio: Brian Gainor founded [Partnership Activation Inc.](#) as a means to provide sports business professionals with consultation of industry best practices and innovative sponsorship/marketing concepts. Since its inception, Brian has used [PartnershipActivation.com](#) and the [Partnership Activation 2.0 Newsletter](#) as portals to educate and network with those working in sports business around the globe.

DARREN HEITNER

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As of writing this comment for Jason's 2011 Sports Social Media Predictions, my Twitter list titled, The Master Twitter list of sports agents/agencies, has 317 people following it. More impressive to me is the fact that the list is tracking over 110 sports agents and agencies. Whereas social media sites like Twitter and Facebook were shunned by many in my profession only a year ago, the smart people and companies have realized that if they do not jump aboard the bandwagon, they will be left behind.

“Student-athletes will be instructed to seriously monitor what they write on social networks.”

While the numbers are a testament to the growth of social media's importance in the sports agency profession, I believe there is still a long way to go. Instead of “company line” Tweets sent out by interns at large agencies, more CEOs and Presidents at these firms need to be writing the messages themselves and show some personality behind the agencies they operate. More and more agents are doing this, and benefiting from it. 2011 will bring increased openness to a field that gradually is becoming more understood by the general public.

Another thing that will change is the way that social networks are used by the players who agents recruit to become their clients. Now, more than ever, the NCAA, various states, and the federal government are interested in learning about existing relationships between student-athletes and sports agents, enforcing their rules and regulations, and protecting amateurism in college athletics. Student-athletes will be instructed to seriously monitor what they write on social networks. Marvin Austin will be used as a reference by Compliance Offices around the country.

Bio: Darren A. Heitner, Esq. is an attorney based in South Florida. He is the Chief Executive Officer of [Dynasty Athlete Representation](#), a full service sports agency, and the Founder/Chief Editor of [SportsAgentBlog.com](#), a sports agent industry watchdog publication.

KATHLEEN HESSERT

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I was talking with a client (D1A Athletic Dept) the other day about how to execute some of the social media strategy we developed for them in 2010 when we hit on a concept that I think will take shape and gain momentum in 2011. I'm calling it "intelligent social media". More than cool & fun, innovative, short lived, or even more than monetized, "intelligent social media" will offer greater value to fans and brands alike. And it will attract fans to come back again and again because it provides true value for them not just the brand. In 2011 brands need to dig deeper and stretch farther with social media strategy and tactics. "Intelligent social media" will be like skipping from kindergarten to middle school demanding

"In 2011 brands need to dig deeper and stretch farther with social media strategy and tactics."

more close alignment with business goals and consistent, comprehensive monitoring of the social media landscape.

With lockouts in both the NFL and NBA looming, I believe thought leaders in sports are recognizing that social media can- when done well- provide an invaluable and maybe only connection with the fan even if/when lockouts become reality. With that in mind, while slashing budgets in other areas some teams are actually beefing up social media and in one case, have hired someone on my staff to become their Director of Social Media.

Many major brands both personal and corporate in sports that led the market in social media initiatives in 2010 were doing so largely blind with little to no real business intelligence on how it was all working or not working. I expect more wide adoption of social media monitoring tools like BuzzMgr™ to be employed to find, listen, and more intelligently engage & lead fans. The practice will not only enlighten the brands but enrich the fan experience as teams, sponsors, leagues, and media turn to their customers for input on product development, customer service, etc. Think about sports programming actually being developed around what the fans want instead of what big wigs think will sell. Wow what a revolutionary thought!

There's no denying that two other trends will join intelligent social media, monitoring, and hiring social media staff in 2011, especially in sports where passion and community reign. Social games and leveraging mobile apps will pervade the sports marketplace. We want and need some fun to lift the cloud that the economy has had on our lives and we want to take the passions in our lives with us wherever we go- that means mobile. If not, we're going to be making jump shots wearing very heavy ankle weights.

Bio: The founder & President of [Sports Media Challenge](#) is one of the earliest adopters of social media in sports. Kathleen Hessert gained international acclaim as "the woman who taught Shaquille O'Neal to tweet". Her vision led to development of [BuzzMgr™](#), an online listening service to mine, monitor and analyze internet word-of-mouth and brand conversations then expanding into social media strategy development and execution for clients including ESPN, Big Ten Network, Penn State, the NFL, the ACC and others.

LEWIS HOWES

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Social media is no longer something the 'cool kids' are doing, but rather something all sports teams have to do if they want to succeed going forward. In the last year, we've seen teams do some interesting experimenting with various campaigns using Twitter hashtags and geolocation networks. Going forward, we'll continue to see more of that and I see mobile and social media meshing even more. There will start to be actual numbers and statistics to back up what works and what doesn't. 2011 will be an interesting year where creativity will continue to thrive, yet social media will start to gain solid

support with evidence that it does in fact work.

The major trend to watch for is the rise of mobile in sports. Everyone knows that 'mobile is the future' but we're starting to see the future being formed. No matter if you're live at a sports arena or at home watching a game, you're not looking at the big screen ads and commercials anymore, you're down typing away with your phone, sending a tweet or a text. How sports teams can first recognize and then engage with this medium will be extremely interesting to watch. Sports marketers are going to have to be bold and pay a lot of attention to how fans are interacting with their devices when the games aren't on.

In short, 2011 is a year where sports marketers have to combine their jock competitiveness with their inner geek in order stay ahead of the game. One thing is for certain. If those in sports don't start using social media better, their competition will start to beat them out on the business side of things.

"2011 is a year where sports marketers have to combine their jock competitiveness with their inner geek in order stay ahead of the game."

Bio: Lewis Howes is the author of two books on the topic of LinkedIn. He is the founder of the [Sports Executives Association](#), a sports business education and networking forum, as well [SportsNetworker.com](#), the largest online collaborative resource of sports and social media marketing information.

ROB KATZ

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It is clear that social media has even further evolved in our consciousness, as an online community collectively but certainly in the sports world specifically, as a real-time information source and outlet for connectivity - to celebrities, to media, friends, to resources, to brands. Log on to Twitter or Facebook around any major sporting event and your feed will read like a play-by-play with 140 character editorials mixed in.

“The opportunities to drive conversations, develop unique engagement opportunities and track and measure results in real-time takes social media across the barrier from a content source to a meaningful (nay necessary) business application.”

As we move into 2011, with the continuing rapid growth of social media sites, particularly Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn, I will look for more of a convergence in the form of integration and content flow between social media and traditional web sites. Our team has been involved in the development of a national sports organization’s web platform that links a national sports entity with its various constituencies, including youth sports coaches, parents and participants, and will launch this spring. Throughout the process we have worked to find ways to allow users to access content and interact in several different ways with social media being a key component.

I also look for 2011 to be a year of further growth in activation and engagement. Brands and sports personalities/properties have begun to use social media for unique content and interaction opportunities. Old Spice (@oldspice) leveraging their successful ad campaign with the “Old Spice guy” developed more than 120,000 followers on Twitter and created more than 200 video responses on YouTube that became viral sensations, including this one to Alyssa Milano (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-oEIH6M_5i4) that alone had more than 1.2M views. Pittsburgh Steelers safety Troy Polamalu (@tpolamalu) has more than 650,000 fans on Facebook, 71,000 followers on Twitter and an additional thousand people are following an account for his hair (twitter.com/troyshair) that plays off well on the popularity of his ad campaign with Head & Shoulders. And a final example, Nike’s Write the Future campaign helped create tremendous buzz online for the World Cup (of which they were not an official sponsor) and their Facebook page aligned with the campaign by offering chances to young players to get discovered.

As we move forward, the opportunities to drive conversations, develop unique engagement opportunities and track and measure results in real-time takes social media across the barrier from a content source to a meaningful (nay necessary) business application.

Bio: Rob Katz is currently Chief Business Development Officer with [Prometheus Sports](#) and has more than 16 years of experience in senior sales, business development, media/web and marketing roles. Since beginning his career with the Florida Marlins during their inaugural season, Katz’s career includes work with the Tampa Bay Rays, VF Corp, Homestead-Miami Speedway (ISC), the PGA TOUR’s Ford Championship at Doral, co-founder of Convizion (Collegiate Images) and working with Pontiac on launching its successful “Game Changing Performance” campaign. You can connect directly on [LinkedIn](#) or [@robkatz](#) on Twitter.

MIKE MAHONEY

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Social Media in Sports will continue its growth in 2011 with two main themes, the hiring of social media coordinators for sports teams and the growth and improvement of Wi-Fi at stadiums and in order to improve the fan experience via interaction with Twitter and phone apps with in-stadium video options.

Nearly all teams will begin to hire full time social media coordinators, perhaps even two or more per team with the number of tickets needed to be sold a primary driver. The teams that

understand social media marketing know that is a 1 to 1 enterprise not a

mass messaging tool and if you are going to transfer the effort into ticket or merchandise sales you must engage individuals. These coordinators will need to be empowered to offer special ticket prices or be able to include additional benefits like player meetups or behind the scenes tours to get new customers in the door. . Look for Facebook data mining to offer fan birthday specials via messaging as one example. For teams whose tickets are in higher demand, the social media coordinator will be focused on branding and content distribution rather than ticket sales. They will give fans exclusive access not to be found in traditional channels. Expect team personnel to be more active listeners on Twitter to gather customer feedback and help solve problems on game days. Another part of the social media coordinator's role will be strategy and training on how to spread its use throughout the organization.

The second theme I see for 2011 will be tackling data access for fans on game day in order to provide fan benefits like posting tweets on the stadium video displays as well as providing access to team smart phone apps for video applications. This is a major challenge at all arenas and stadiums today, whether it is Wi-Fi or 3G on mobile devices. There is a desire to improve the game experience for fans in stadium to compete against HDTV and 3DTVs at home. The key will be giving fans access to exclusive content on handhelds in their seats, normally a Smartphone. Yinzcam and FanVision are both tackling this now with half of all NFL teams offering one or the other for some percentage of fans. For football this content will include, Twitter feeds by hashtag, custom video angles and replays, fantasy stats and sponsor promotions. In order to provide this stadium will need to figure out the data model. Teams will have to decide if they will install Wi-Fi for the entire crowd or limit it to specific areas.

Bio: Mike Mahoney is a sponsorship sales executive based in Charlotte, NC with six years of sponsorship sales experience for a professional sports team and a total of 14 years of sales experience including stints at FedEx and SAP America. Mike will also occasionally appear as a guest blogger on TheBusinessofSports.com.

RUSSELL SCIBETTI

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My primary prediction for social media and sports in 2010 was based around goals and measurement. After seeing the spike in participation across the board in 2009 and 2010, I might have been a bit early in my prediction. While several sports organizations have taken steps towards defining specific revenue goals, budget items and analytical measures around their social media efforts, we still seem to be squarely in the “playing around” phase, and this is ok. We all agree about the general value of social media – we’re not quite ready to define the specific value. So in a way, I’d almost like my initial prediction for 2010 to carry over into 2011.

Beyond that, I have two predictions for the coming year:

1. Fans become more refined in their social media usage

Just as sports organizations have been experimenting, so have the fans and consumers on the other side. The initial novelty of connecting with teams, athletes, brands and other fans in this new way led many users to jump into as many different sources as possible. Think of all the options available right now for a sports fan:

- Twitter: Follow the team, players, media outlets, other fans
- Facebook: Join a group, like the team and player pages, talk to other fans
- LinkedIn: Join a group, connect with other fans
- YouTube: Watch videos from the team, league, brand, players, fans (or create your own)
- Web: Thousands of websites and blogs dedicated to your favorite sports topics
- Other: Private social networks, email newsletters, text messaging, mobile applications, podcasts, and who knows how many more emerging options

With this tremendous array of options and only so many hours in the day, the fans will eventually need to make decision as to what they like and what they don’t like. I believe that over the year, the fans will be more refined in their social media choices, and we need to pay attention. While organizations want to do everything they can to be wherever their fans are, they will also need to evaluate what social media tactics and channels generate the most engagement and lead to more revenue and better service. And if we pay attention, the fans will tell us by how their usage of social media changes. This leads to my 2nd prediction...

2. Social CRM becomes a hot topic

Now that organizations know their fans are active in social media, they want to figure out the best way to leverage that in their mix of sales, service and marketing efforts, and social CRM is an important aspect of that. Teams, leagues and brands will actively try to identify which of their customers are using which social media options, bring as much of that information into their own customer databases, and then tailor their marketing and communication plans accordingly. The entire premise around any CRM efforts is to build a one-to-one relationship with each current and prospective customer, and engaging with them via their preferred social media channels is a logical extension of that.

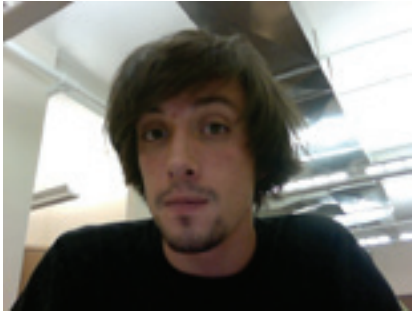
“Organizations will need to evaluate what social media tactics and channels generate the most engagement and lead to more revenue and better service.”

Bio: [Russell Scibetti](#) is the founding editor of [TheBusinessOfSports.com](#), an industry blog that covers a wide range of current topics in sports business. He has worked with multiple colleges and professional teams in the areas of database marketing, customer relationship management, market research and technology-based marketing. He has a B.S. in Computer Science from Rutgers University and an MBA from the Arizona State Sports Business program.

SAM TAGGART

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Sponsors Get Involved

In 2010, athletes, teams, and leagues were thought to be doing a good job in social media simply for having a presence on Facebook or Twitter.

In 2011, that won't be enough. Brands will be expected to interact, provide good content, and grow userbases. Those that succeed in developing large, active, and engaged communities will be rewarded through

sponsorship dollars. The brands that don't, won't. It's that simple. When Team X has 385,000 likes on their Facebook page, with thousands of interactions every single day, Sponsor B, who only has 12,000 likes and 48 interactions per day, is going to see this and think to themselves, "How can we get involved?" In the end, sponsors have money to spend, and it's trendy (and smart) to spend in social. In 2010, teams and sponsors started building their online brands, in 2011 they begin to collaborate in meaningful ways.

"While emerging platforms will be hot, don't think any of this will replace the importance of Facebook and Twitter in sports."

Facebook & Twitter vs. Emerging Technologies

While emerging platforms will be hot, don't think any of this will replace the importance of Facebook and Twitter in sports. They are still the big guns, and I don't expect that to change in 2011. That being said, if anything else has a chance to take off, it's the geolocation space. In March 2010, the New Jersey Nets were a part of the first geolocation campaign involving a professional sports team. Later in the year, the NBA got involved with Gowalla, the Patriots got involved with SCVNGR, and the Redskins got involved with Foursquare (to name a few). With the announcement of Facebook Deals in early November 2010, geolocation is set to make a bang in early 2011. It's just a matter of whether or not it will stick.

The Rise of Mobile

Mobile is going to be huge in social media (in general, but also in sports) in 2011. Everything is trending that way. Smartphone users are on the rise. And more and more, smartphone users are using their phones for accessing social networks. So, expect a greater number of athletes, teams, and leagues to develop and improve on their own mobile applications, as well as look for opportunities in the mobile space (keep an eye out for Texting.ly, Group.Me, & FastSociety, among others).

Bio: Sam Taggart is a project manager at VaynerMedia, a digital agency that focuses on social media consulting. Over the past 18+ months, Sam has worked with the NFL's New York Jets, the NBA's New Jersey Nets, the Arizona Cardinal's Kerry Rhodes, and former NBA player / current ESPN basketball analyst Jalen Rose. And he loves Philadelphia sports.

TREVOR TURNBULL

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We witnessed an incredible amount of growth in the adoption of social media by sports entities in 2010. Most notably was the impact that the 2010 World Cup & 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympics had on the global awareness and adoption of social media as a major news source for sports fans. These two events were coined as the "Social Games" due to the fact they were the first global sporting events where social media played a major role in the distribution of news that offered fans exclusive, behind the scenes access to the athletes, teams and action surrounding the events.

"In 2011, we will see further integration of traditional, emerging, mobile and social media by athletes, teams, leagues and events."

Check out some of the amazing social media stats from these events:

2010 World Cup: <http://www.worldcupblog.org/world-cup-2010/world-cup-2010-social-media-stats.html>

2010 Vancouver Winter Olympics: http://inventorspot.com/articles/vancouver_social_media_olympics_outpace_beijing_37789

That being said, we also saw an incredible amount of push back (particularly by the IOC) over media rights. After all, both of these global sporting events generate millions of dollars from media companies that pay for the rights to broadcast the games. In the case of the 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympics, we saw the online community rally to build their own media outlet called the True North Media House (<http://truenorthmediahouse.com/>). This initiative was spearheaded by a number of social media trailblazers that have been trying, since the 2008 Beijing Olympics, to encourage the Olympic committee to embrace social media journalism.

Social media has impacted sports to the degree that fans are now expecting to have exclusive, behind the scenes access to their favorite athletes, teams, leagues and events. And, 2010 was a monumental year that saw social media raise the expectations of sports fans for all athletes, teams, leagues and sporting events in the future.

The sheer number of people on social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter and YouTube can't be ignored. And, the fact that many of these people are now accessing their information on smart phones presents an amazing opportunity for marketers. As a result, we have started to see marketing budgets shift towards emerging, mobile and social media in 2010. In 2011, we will see further integration of traditional, emerging, mobile and social media by athletes, teams, leagues and events. The opportunity for sponsors in 2011 lies in their ability to associate their brands with these sports entities by leveraging the influence that athletes have over their fan base and tapping into the inspiration that is inherently associated with sports.

Bio: Trevor Turnbull is the Founder of **T3 CONNECT**, a passionate team of Sports Marketing Pros that help athletes, teams and sponsors influence, inspire and connect to their audience with measurable, integrated marketing solutions. T3 CONNECT's unique approach combines traditional, emerging and social media that helps clients enhance their existing sales & marketing efforts and generate new revenue opportunities.

BRENDAN WILHIDE

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I think the sports industry's use of social media has grown tremendously over the last two years. Even a year ago most pro teams were on Facebook but only a few had launched official Twitter accounts. Today nearly all pro teams and leagues maintain official accounts on both sites and are expanding into YouTube and content on their own websites.

“The other major shift I’ll think we’ll see within the sports industry in 2011 is a tipping point for geolocation and group buying services.”

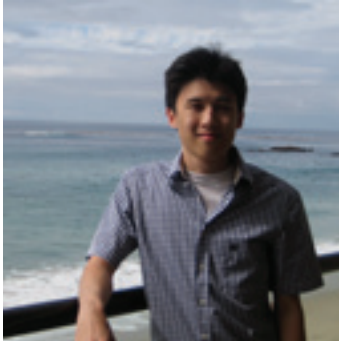
I believe teams and leagues will continue to take ownership over their content through social media in 2011. Some of the very best teams already do this: they create buzz around their brands through their engagement via social media. The best teams put original content on their YouTube channels and use their Facebook and Twitter pages to grow that content virally. The NBA's Minnesota Timberwolves are one of the best organizations at promoting original content this way. It used to be that teams would need the media to come out and do a story about a player or a promotion but today's social media largely gives an organization that power on its own.

The other major shift I'll think we'll see within the sports industry in 2011 is a tipping point for geolocation and group buying services. Foursquare and Groupon lead the way now but neither one has fully captured the geolocation space yet. I predict more and more teams will interact with fans at their venue through unique, real time geolocation promotions.

The technology which teams use to engage fans is always changing. Perhaps some new service will come along and change everything again in 2011. The one thing that won't change is the innovative uses of technology that we've seen teams create in the past few years. Fans are passionate about their teams and the teams will continue to reach these fans and stoke their passion.

Bio: [Brendan Wilhide](#) is currently co-authoring a textbook on social media due for publication in 2012. He is the founder of [Sportsin140.com](#), a nationally recognized website about social media use in the sports industry, and is a contributing writer to [SportsNetworker.com](#). He also writes about Mac and iPhone applications for [Macworld.com](#). He is a diehard Cleveland Indians fan.

JOSEPH YI

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Apple and Pixar co-founder, Steve Jobs, once said, "innovation distinguishes between a leader and a follower." Looking forward to 2011, we will see more sports teams abandon the 'follow the leader' mentality and become leaders themselves. Now that most, if not all, sports teams have adopted social media as an integral part of their marketing and branding efforts, sports teams will begin to innovate new ways to interact with their fan base. While there are sports teams that are so called 'industry

"Social media will become a bigger asset to sports teams when it comes to sponsorship dollars."

leaders' when it comes to social media, the problem is that there are too few.

In addition to more sports teams taking the initiative to create rather than replicate content and strategies, social media will become a bigger asset to sports teams when it comes to sponsorship dollars. With Internet advertising budgets expected to increase in 2011, sports teams should begin considering how they can maximize their social media assets. From Facebook to Twitter, sponsorship teams have had a difficult time figuring out the best way to 'sell.' It's not that sponsors don't want to be part of a sports team's digital fan base, but rather they don't know how much they should spend nor what the potential ROI would be.

To counter this, sponsorship teams should approach social media assets the way a real estate agent thinks about selling a house in which a team's main website is the house and their social media assets are the garage. On its own, the garage is hard to sell, but when coupled with the house, it's an easy sell. A great example of a team that was able to do this during 2010 were the Sacramento River Cats who were able to successfully partner with 2K Sports by bundling their Official Fan Engagement site (<http://my.RiverCats.com>) with their Facebook and Twitter accounts.

Lastly, 2011 will be the year where sports teams and leagues shift toward a more global approach. With the number of Facebook users in countries like Indonesia, France and Turkey growing at a rapid rate and Twitter climbing in traffic rank, teams and leagues will begin to focus more on developing content and strategies that not only grab the attention of local fans, but also the out-of-market fans. By leveraging these out-of-market fans, teams will be able to grow in influence and extend the reach of their brand. From both a branding and business standpoint, this is extremely appealing.

Bio: Joseph Yi has 7 years of experience working in social media and the digital space and is the Social Media and Marketing Solutions Manager at [GAGA Sports & Entertainment](#), a technology company whose Fan Engagement Platform helps sports and entertainment brands engage fans and funnels all of their fan relationships to a brand-cohesive micro-site for data collection and monetization. Prior to GAGA, Joseph specialized in brand management and social media marketing strategies for organizations and brands like Nielsen and Consumer Trend News. Additionally, he is frequently invited to be a guest speaker and panelist at universities and social media conferences and has mentored notable sports industry professionals regarding their social media assets. Read more from Joseph on his blog, <http://josephayi.com>.

CONCLUSION

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I hope you enjoyed these thoughts and predictions. Thanks again to everyone who contributed.

Please let me know if you'd ever like to chat or if there is ever anything I can help you with. You can find me at:

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Happy holidays and I hope you have a great 2011!