

Unleashing the power of social media to drive positive change

By [Michelle Wynne](#)

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How many times a day do you check your phone? If you're anything like the rest of the world, it's at least 58 times a day - equating to over three hours spent staring at our screens every single day. So what is it exactly that is keeping these little boxes glued to our palms and such an indispensable part of our day?



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They have the power to connect us to the world – and this is exactly what we're using them to do: access the unlimited world of information available to us. Mobile internet traffic currently makes up over half of total global online traffic at 51.65%.

Where is that traffic going, though? For an overwhelming majority of us, it's social media. There were nearly 2.5 billion social network users around the world in 2017, and that number is only growing.

Of these users, over 2.4 billion are monthly active Facebook users – the most popular social media platform globally – and one billion people worldwide access Facebook using mobile only. Instagram, meanwhile, has over one billion monthly active users, while Twitter has about 330 million.

The implications of having that number of people sharing those kinds of platforms are massive – because spending time on social media is more than just watching cat videos on Facebook, looking at holiday photos on Instagram, or vigorously debating with strangers on Twitter.

Harnessing the power of social media for good

These platforms broadly have the potential to drive positive change for individuals, businesses and broader communities by improving and streamlining the way we connect and work, as well as creating opportunities to do good.

There are countless examples all over the world, but one that really stood out for me was the Tweetsgiving initiative that raised enough money in the space of 48 hours to build a classroom in Tanzania.

Another example centred around education but closer to home is the #CodeREaD initiative, which aims to improve the literacy and reading rates of children in South Africa. Although the campaign features several interventions, one of the key ones is starting a literacy movement in the country with an online book club driven by digital and social media platforms. This has the potential to help empower and teach more of our young people to read, and build a reading culture nationally.

Youth empowerment has been identified as a priority for both the public and private sector in South Africa, and social media is an important way to create change in this area. We also have our own example at HMD Global, home of Nokia phones: our partnership with skateboarding superstar, medallist and World Record-holder Jean-Marc Johannes.



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Driving social goodwill

We are seeing first-hand how social media can help young people kickstart and build their careers. Jean-Marc and HMD Global first connected through social media, and organic engagement through the community created has seen the partnership thrive as we both strive to reach our shared value: aspiring to keep improving. Social media and mobile phones allow us to do that.

What these examples show is the unwavering ability of social media and mobile phones – mostly in conjunction – to drive social goodwill and create collaborative partnerships and communities that can help build careers and simplify how we work and communicate by enabling us to do so in real-time.

There can be no doubt that social media and mobile phones have emerged as a powerful force to tell important stories and drive change by bringing like-minded people together and allowing them to engage, plan and collaborate in ways we haven't thought of before.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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