



HOW TACO BELL'S SOCIAL MEDIA LIVES MÁS

A look into how Taco Bell uses social media

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BACKGROUND

Taco Bell, a subsidiary of Yum! Brands, is the nation's leading Mexican-style quick service restaurant serving more than 36 million customers each week in over 5,800 stores in the U.S. Since its founding by Glen Bell in 1962, Taco Bell has become the second most profitable brand in the country.

In 2012, Taco Bell celebrated its 50th anniversary, with the launch of the Live Mas brand campaign, the reinvention of the taco with the revolutionary Doritos Locos Taco, and the introduction of the game-changing Cantina Bell® Menu.

Taco Bell strives to put customers front and center, delivering excellent customer service, innovative and delicious products and value. In 2013, the company ranked #6 on the QSR 50 list, was named Ad Age "Marketer of the Year," and reached over \$1 billion in sales of Doritos Locos Tacos. "Live Mas" is more than a company tagline; it's a way of life at Taco Bell.

While Taco Bell is primarily a U.S. brand, Yum! Brands plans to make it their third global brand. Outside the U.S., there are nearly 300 Taco Bell units in 21 countries.



A BRIEF TIMELINE OF TACO BELL

- **1954-** Before Glen Bell created Taco Bell. He started Bell's Drive-In and Taco Tia in the San Bernadino area.
- **1962-** Glen Bell opens his first Taco Bell restaurant in Downey, CA, serving what his customers called "Tay-Kohs".
- **1964-** Retired L.A. policeman Kermit Becky becomes Taco Bells first franchisee, opening a restaurant in Torrance, CA
- **1967-** Taco Bell's 100th restaurant opens in Anaheim
- **1970-** Taco Bell goes public with a total of 325 restaurants
- **1978-** Glen sold 868 Taco Bell restaurants to PepsiCo Inc. and became a PepsiCo shareholder
- **1984-** Taco Bell introduces Taco Salad and Tacos BellGrande
- **1989-** Taco Bell pioneers the concept of linking fast-food marketing promotions with major movie blockbusters with the movie "Batman"
- **1990-** Taco Bell launches the 59-79-99 cent value initiative
- **1992-** the Taco Bell Foundation unveils the TEENS supreme program partnering with the Boys & Girls Clubs of America.
- **1995-** Taco Bell helps sponsor the first ESPN X Games
- **1998-** Gorditas are introduced to wide success
- **2002-** Taco Bell Foundation donations with %10 million mark.
- **2004-** Taco Bell introduces the Mountain Dew BAJA BLAST.
- **2013-** Taco Bell is Ad Age's Marketer of the Year

SOCIAL MEDIA OVERVIEW

In a nutshell, Taco Bell aims to be the “cool friend” to millennials. Their services and social media caters well to the 18-24 year old demographic by providing a trendy product and an even trendier social media presence.

The social media team Taco Bell has put together is contrived of individuals who live and breathe social media. These individuals are millennials themselves which makes it that much easier for them to create a connection to their fans and to stay on trend in the ever-changing digital world.

In order to keep up with their demographic, Taco Bell does everything they can to ensure an efficient and effective social media campaign. Part of this is using social media platforms to their full and complete advantage. The following pages show they more than do that, simply by catering to each platform as an individual instead of recycling material across the board as many companies fall victim to.

“There’s a place for paid social media advertising. If you have a paid, owned, and earned strategy where the three are working in conjunction with one another, then paid can be a great kick-start to the organic growth of a campaign. You need all three working together as a whole for amplification and reach.”

--Nicholas Tran, former head of digital marketing and social media lead at Taco Bell Corp.

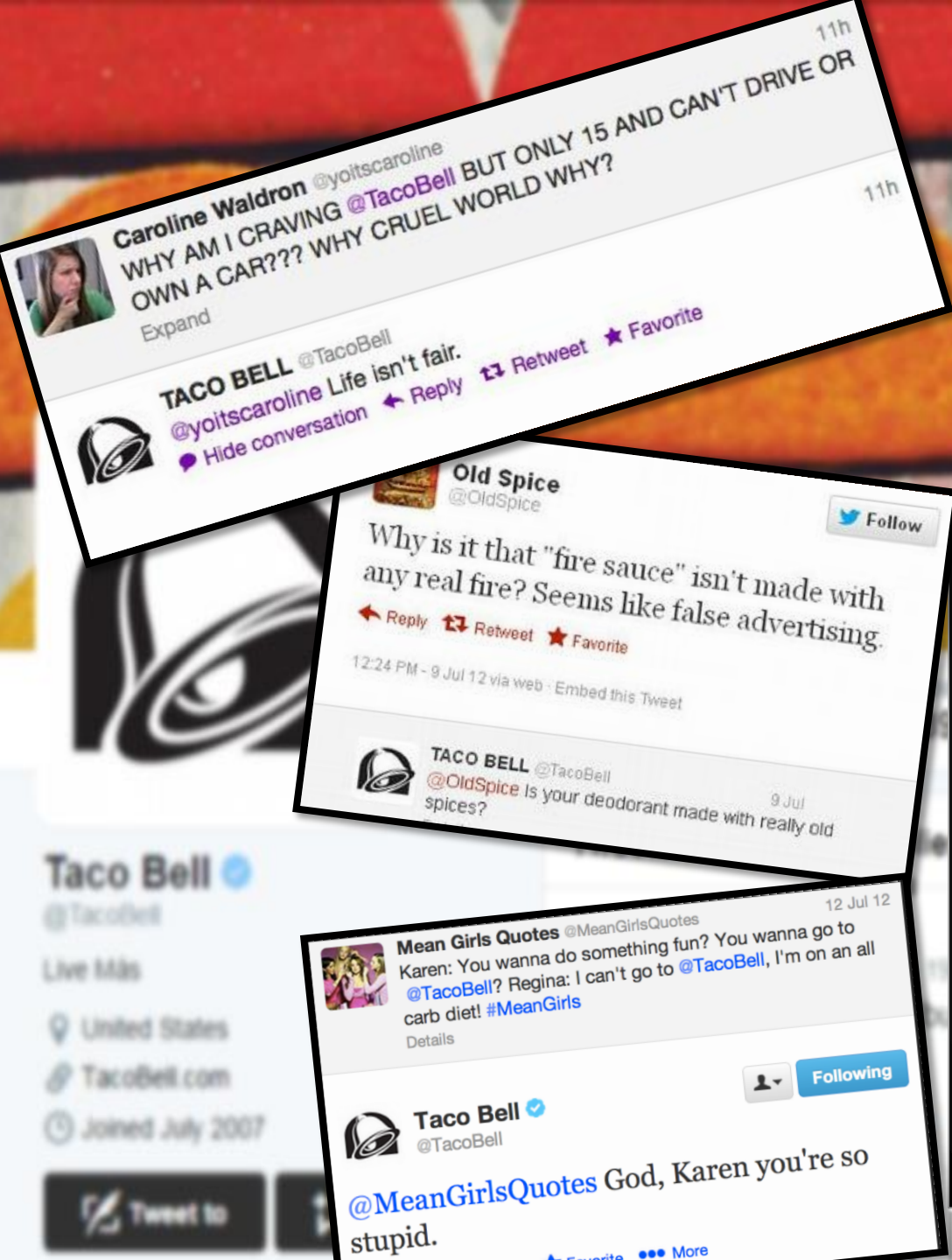
HOW IT'S DONE: TWITTER

Since 2007, Taco Bell has been taking advantage of everything Twitter has to offer. Reaching almost 1.4 million followers everyday, Taco Bell creates engaging content aimed to interact with their millennial demographic. This includes witty text posts, fun pictures, updates on the company and its products and Vine and YouTube videos.

The social media team takes care to connect directly with their fans by tweeting back at them, retweeting them and favoriting their tweets. Fans need not tweet directly at the account in order to be replied to as the social media team is always monitoring the brand.

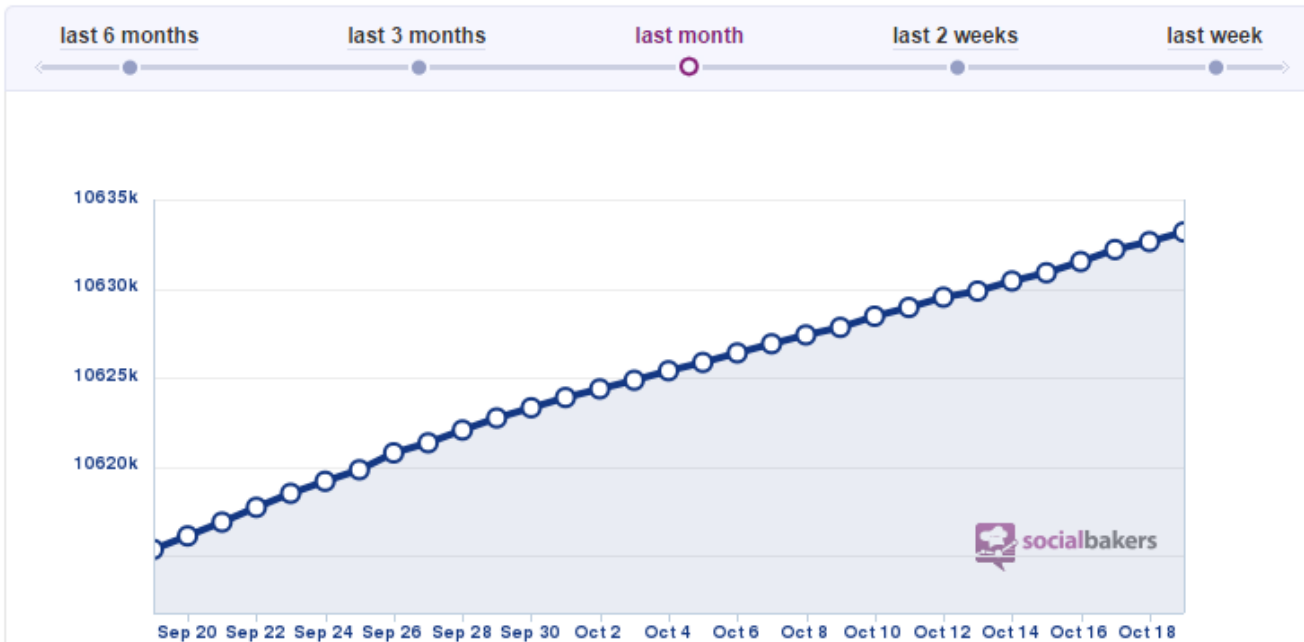
Taco Bell's tweets are fun and easily retweet-able. A lot of their tweets have to do with pop culture (i.e., "Mean Girls" references, slang usage and trend following). Taco Bell will talk to anyone on Twitter, from big name companies to celebrities to the girl next door. They even take the time to acknowledge customer dissatisfaction.

Taco Bell has several hashtags that fans use. These include #livemas, #tacobell, #tacobellforever, #team(mild, hot, fire, verde) and many more.



HOW IT'S DONE: FACEBOOK

Taco Bell Fans



Where Twitter is their interaction board, Facebook serves mostly as an announcement board for Taco Bell's current and upcoming products. Taco Bell's Facebook fan page features tantalizing pictures of their products as well as their commercials and links on how to donate to their community outreach projects.

The fan page is updated at least every few days and keeps with the "cool friend" image fans know and love. While less frequently updated, the posts still garner at least a few thousand likes and a couple hundred shares.

Taco Bell is frequently seen replying to the fans who comment on their posts, whether complaint or not.

As seen in the chart to the left, these tactics continually grow Taco Bell's Facebook fan base.



HOW IT'S DONE: INSTAGRAM



A quick look at Taco Bell's Instagram profile shows pictures that look as if they could have been taken by anyone which provides an accessibility to the company for their fans. The Taco Bell social media team keeps the Instagram photos fun, hip and carefree which directly matches what their demographic is likely to be posting on their own accounts.

Their Instagram account has over 480 thousand followers with each of their 600 posts getting tens of thousands of likes and hundreds of comments.





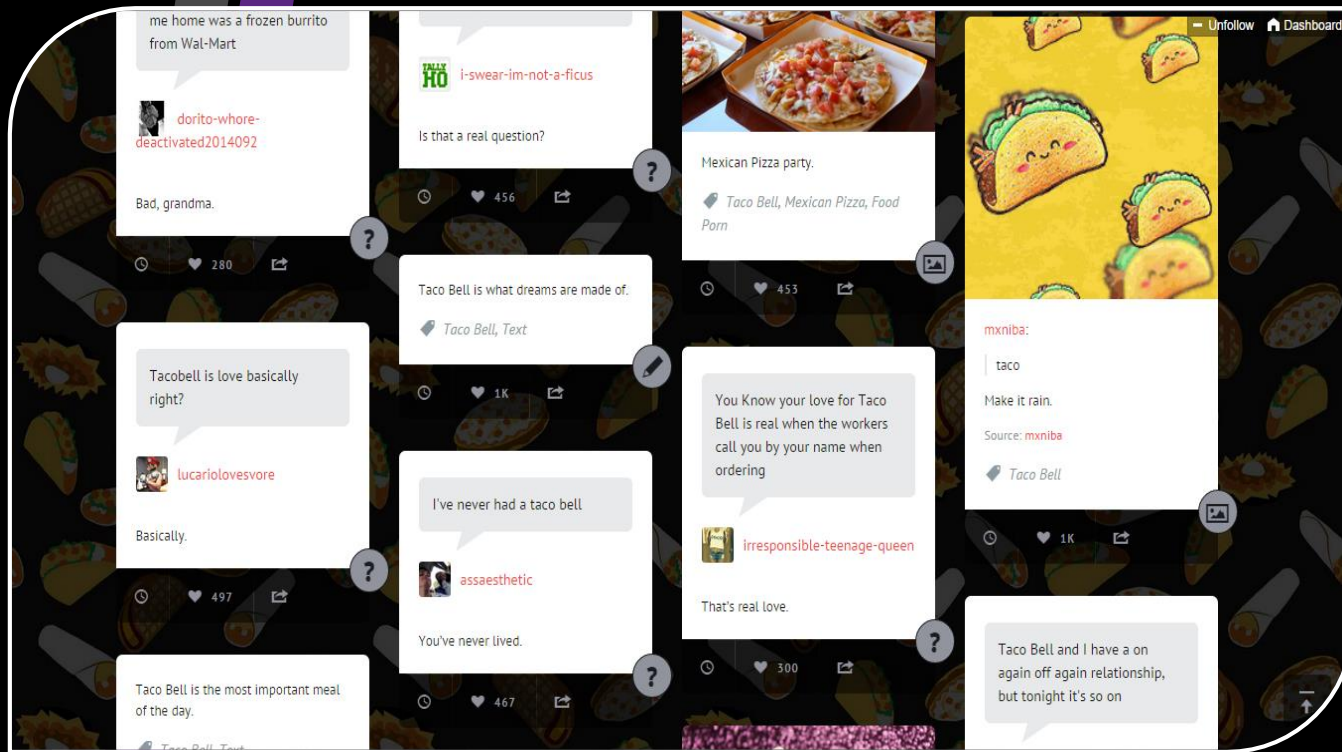
HOW IT'S DONE: SNAPCHAT

In 2013, Taco Bell was one of the first brands to venture onto Snapchat.

Taco Bell has estimated they have over 200 thousand friends on the app (there is no way to see exactly how many). According to Nicholas Tran, former digital marketing and social media lead at Taco Bell Corp., up to 80 percent of Taco Bell's followers open its Snaps, of which over 90% view them in entirety. A lot of the time the Story is just a 5-minute photo collage.

Taco Bell uses the app to promote the companies new features, such as the \$1 Cravings Menu and contests.

Snapchat provides an easy and creative way to interact with fans that many brands are coming to rely on. Taco Bell takes advantage of the app by giving the users content they won't see on other platforms. They take careful steps to make sure the users have fun, palatable content to keep them engaged in the brand across all platforms.



HOW IT'S DONE: TUMBLR

Since the Taco Bell demographic is in the 18-24 year old range, having a blog on Tumblr is a must. The Taco Bell blog features their “cool friend” text posts that can be found on both Facebook and Twitter but offers a more candid interaction with fans as well as taco-themed GIFs that can’t be displayed on other social media platforms. The blog page is less frequently updated but still reaches at least 3 thousand followers.

Followers of the Taco Bell blog can ask the company questions through their “Ask” box and, if replied to, can get a witty answer back.

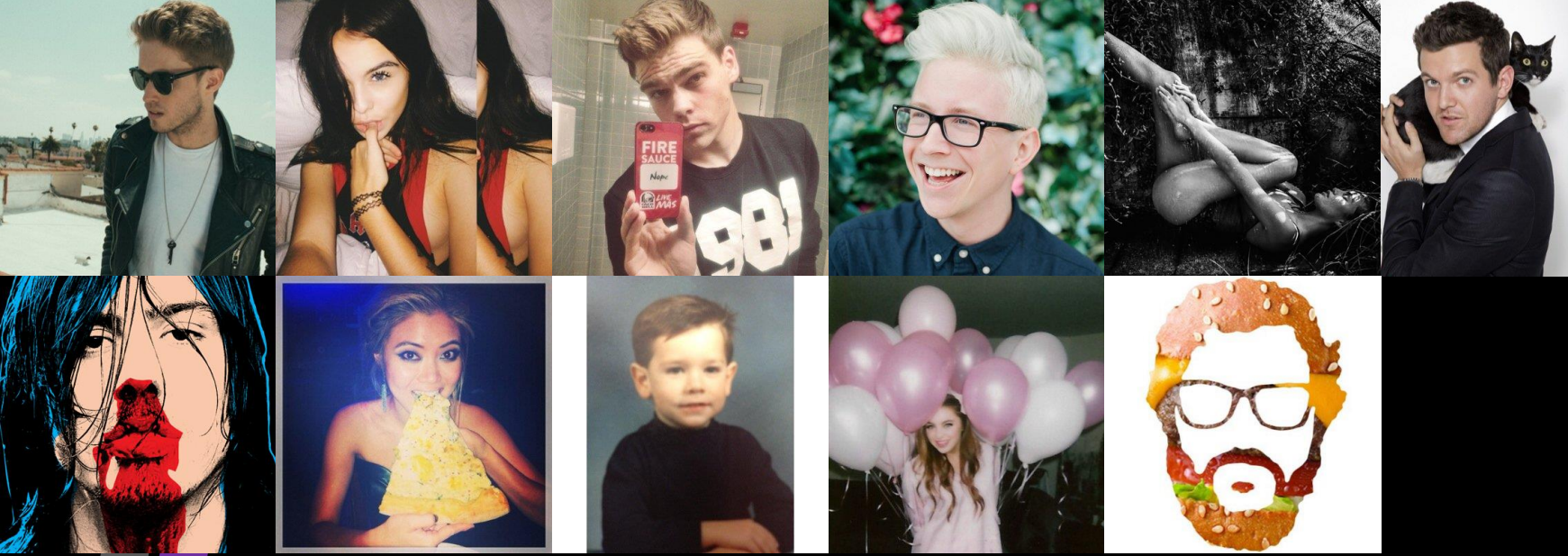
HOW IT'S DONE: YOUTUBE, VINE AND INSTAGRAM VIDEO

Taco Bell uses these video platforms to visually communicate with their fans. These platforms allow for creativity and ingenuity, which when used effectively, really sets the Taco Bell brand apart from the competition.

- The Taco Bell **YouTUBE** channel has 21.5 thousand subscribers and well over 3 million views on only 41 videos. Taco Bell uses YouTube to promote contests, to help fans get to know their influencers and for their commercials. View counts on the videos range from 902-1,509,757.
- The Taco Bell **Vine** channel has 147 thousand followers. This channel features comedic 6-second loops showcasing their products. The channel feature a lot of their influencers as well as some fan-generated content.
- Because of time restrictions, Taco Bell has used **Instagram Video** for the purpose of hyping up releases of full content videos available on YouTube. Instagram Video is also used to promote more user-generated content and promote user participation on other social media platforms.

HOW IT'S DONE: GOOGLE+ AND PINTEREST

- Though the platform has not been widely popular, Taco Bell can still boast almost 1 million followers and over 9.7 million page views on **Google+**. The Google+ Taco Bell page has the same posts that can be seen on Facebook, with just a fraction of the interaction.
- The Taco Bell **Pinterest** page has just over 2 thousand followers. Though it doesn't reach a very wide primary audience, the page has boards featuring fan work, their drinks and funny Taco Bell eCards.



INFLUENCERS

Taco Bell has implemented a unique influencer strategy in order to connect more with fans and to reach a wider audience. The company actively seeks out key influencers for the Taco Bell brand—people with a large following, who are innovators and can provide amazing publicity.

The most notable influencer use to date is the breakfast phone campaign. The Taco Bell social media team went into their following and selected 1 thousand people to receive their exclusive breakfast phone. With the breakfast phone, Taco Bell could call their chosen influencers at any time and send them on a mission that would ultimately garner “free” publicity. In return, Taco Bell would send the influencers rare gifts (see: waffle taco onesie). Not to mention the fact that of the millions of fans, only 1000 got the goods, ergo, they got something to brag about. This campaign generated a lot of buzz for the Taco Bell breakfast and leaned even more to the “cool friend” vibe.

Taco Bell has key influencers who constantly interact through witty banter with them on Twitter. This opens the conversation to all of their followers and is an easy way to reap in favorites and retweets.

HOW IT ALL TIES TOGETHER

By taking all of these platforms and building up a following, Taco Bell has created a social media presence that dominates. The Taco Bell social media team knows how important it is to create content suitable for the platform.; the team is always working to create new content that will entertain their fans and promote interaction.

This interaction is award winning and looked up to by many brands.

“Taco Bell's challenge now is keeping up its momentum and higher consumer ratings. Sales are up so far this year, but lag 2012's growth. In the second quarter U.S. same-store sales were up 3%, still relatively good for an industry that continues to struggle post-recession.”

--Ad Age, 2013

LESSONS TO LEARN FROM TACO BELL'S SOCIAL MEDIA

- **Create creatively-** Make sure to cater to each specific platform and try to stay away from recycling material.
- **Use resources-** Great content doesn't require a lot of money, just creativity. Taco Bell created an Instagram video that got over 17 thousand views by just putting down their sauce packets.
- **Know your demographic-** Cater to what they want or they'll find what they want somewhere else.
- **Interact with fans-** It's the whole point of social media. No one is going to be interested in a page that doesn't recognize them as a person.
- **Find your Taco Bell breakfast phone-** It doesn't have to be as elaborate or costly as sending out a thousand phones, but it does have to have intrigue.
- **Be authentic-** At the end of the day, fans just want to know that the product they're supporting is human. Genuinely interact with the fans and watch how much buzz it curates.

WHERE TACO BELL CAN GO NEXT

It can be argued that Taco Bell is doing brilliantly as far as social media is concerned—they are building up their brand image while gaining loyal followers. In future, they really just need to keep on doing what they're doing.

Unfortunately for Taco Bell, there is always a possibility of failure. The most important thing Taco Bell can do in order to prevent failure from happening is to keep in touch with what is trending for their demographic of millennials. So far, Taco Bell has been a certifiable master at doing this, but part of a millennial's life is the ever-changing trends. If Taco Bell is not careful, they could jump on the wrong social media bandwagon and lose their status as social media marketing leader.

As long as Taco Bell's social media team keeps up with the trends and maintains their status as the "cool friend," Taco Bell will stay prominent in social media and continue to build their brand loyalty.





PHILANTHROPY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH



Taco Bell believes in giving back to the community and does so through various methods. One way is through social media. The company uses their platforms to raise awareness and donations for their philanthropies.

- About **Taco Bell Foundation for Teens**: Since 1992, the Taco Bell Foundation for Teens has inspired and enabled teens to graduate high school and reach their full potential through its programs, partnerships, and direct financial assistance. Taco Bell's support has impacted the lives of more than one million teens by:
 - Offering core programs that motivate teens to stay in school and provide job training to help them identify career opportunities and interests.
 - Partnering with like-minded community organizations and ambassadors proven to have a measureable impact on the lives of teens.
 - Providing grants and scholarships so that teens have access to the resources they need to reach their full potential.
- About **Feed the Beat**: Since 2006, Taco Bell and its Feed The Beat program have helped support more than 800 up-and-coming artists and bands, while helping fans discover new bands and bands discover new fans. Feed The Beat supports these artists in various ways, from no-strings-attached free food on tour to boosting exposure and giving them a stage.
- About **World Hunger Relief**: Taco Bell teams with its parent, YUM! Brands, Inc., and other YUM! Brands affiliates to help provide over 90 million meals to hungry families through programs such as the United Nations World Food Programme.

RESOURCE GUIDE

- <http://www.tacobell.com/Company>
- <http://www.yum.com/brands/tb.asp>
- <http://blog.sumall.com/journal/taco-bell-better-social-media-marketer.html>
- <http://digiday.com/brands/taco-bell-trying-cool-friend/>
- <http://www.adweek.com/news/technology/snapchats-crazy-engaged-users-cant-resist-message-taco-bell-159677>
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- <https://www.facebook.com/tacobell/timeline>
- <http://mashable.com/2014/05/29/taco-bell-marketing-strategy/>
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- <http://encorealert.com/blog/taco-bell/>
- <http://www.feedthebeat.com/>
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- <http://adage.com/article/special-report-marketer-alist-2013/taco-bell-ad-age-s-marketer-year/243852/>
- <http://www.pinterest.com/tacobell/>
- <http://www.socialbro.com/blog/spotlight-taco-bells-social-media-strategy>
- <https://plus.google.com/+TacoBell/posts>
- <http://www.adweek.com/news/technology/taco-bell-buys-its-first-instagram-ads-push-waffle-tacos-156582>

PHOTO CREDITS

- Title: tacobell.com
- Background: cummingsbrandnew.com
- Timeline: Grand opening- brandstories.net; Glen Bell- tacobell.com
- Social Media Strategy: business2communities.com
- Twitter: collegehumor.com, abcnews.go.com, blog.hubspot.com, facebook.com
- Facebook: socialbreakers.com
- Instagram: enjoygram.com
- Snapchat: mashable.com, popsop.com, blog.telegraphbranding.com, popsugar.com, room214.com
- Tumblr: tacobell.tumblr.com (my own screenshot)
- Influencers: twitter.com
- Where They Can Go Next: tacobell.com
- Philanthropy: behance.net, pkmncollectors.livejournal.com, edibleprogress.com
- Get in Contact: csu301d.wordpress.com
- End Page: vidcon.com, b-sides.tv

GET IN CONTACT WITH TACO BELL

Taco Bell takes the consumer to heart. If you have any questions, concerns, praises, needs, wants, desires, jokes, stories, videos, pictures or ideas, please reach out to us by whatever means necessary.

Tacobell.com

Facebook: facebook.com/tacobell

Twitter: @TacoBell

Instagram: @TacoBell

Vine: @TacoBell

Pinterest: Taco Bell

Tumblr: tacobell.tumblr.com

Google+: Taco Bell

Snapchat: tacobell

YouTube: Taco Bell





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