

By Digit Scans co-founder and [BerryBroad](#) Juanita Gaglio

✘ *Have a new produce item to introduce? New recipe, usage tips or would like to know more about your customer on a limited marketing budget? If you had a way of reaching 10 million people to give them that product message would you utilize it? That 'IT' is technology in various forms from social media to smartphone mobile apps and has revolutionized the way we do business.*

It has been said that the produce world is the last to embrace change, whether it is analyzing product movement through category reviews or developing and maintaining a Facebook page and Twitter account.

It was in the not-too-distant past that produce business was conducted mainly by telephone and fax, and I'm sure when the first fax was sent in 1971 few would have imagined transactions would end up being conducted in a matter of seconds through either email or smartphone transmissions.

Not only can a company quote commodity pricing but their customer can view product photos in 'real time', allowing decisions to be made in seconds. Technology has been moving at mega speeds leaving companies and employees to quickly adapt or get left behind. Business rewards in terms of profits and global growth, go to those companies who have the vision to integrate technology with their sales and marketing strategies.

Today, technology can be viewed as a detriment or a boon to businesses as the produce business landscape changes. At a time when there are fewer distribution points due to retail consolidation and stiff competition, while consumers try to sift through conflicting information about health benefits and food safety, there has never been a better time to raise your profile through the latest technology.

How have consumers' shopping habits changed? Through engagement, "Old School" is telling the consumer that your product is the best; "New School" is making connections with your customer and increasing sales through third party endorsements. The top FMCG (fast moving consumer goods) companies have realized the value of engaging and retaining their customers through social media. For example, Coca Cola, Nestle and Kraft Foods all have Facebook pages where the customer immediately learns about where they are based, revenues, the company's mission, its social causes and product lines.

The Food Marketing Institute's (FMI) U.S Grocer Shoppers Trends report this year identified key drivers affecting the food retailing landscape for years to come. The first two

are social media and mobile technology. This emphasis was backed also by another consumer research company Capgemini, which found 30-40% of smartphone users have downloaded a barcode scanning application.

New school is the consumer telling companies what they want in terms of flavor; they're saying they want no seeds, less juice in tomatoes; they want nutritional value but easy eating at the same time, and they also want to know how to prepare different products. If you are able to take the time to help consumers with their needs, in return they will reward you for listening by broadcasting their delicious eating experience on Yelp or Facebook.

So what's the big deal? Well, the average Facebook user has 130 friends you could reach. So think twice, or maybe even three times, if you are even entertaining the idea of 'wait and see' while your competition quickly amasses 20,000 Facebook and Twitter followers and finds out who is using their product through mobile produce app scans. Companies cannot afford not to be 'trend setters'.

According to Gokal Rajarm, product director of Facebook ads, one Brand (company) recently got 50,000 Facebook fans after an advertising Facebook campaign, but the company was surprised that it later got 40,000 more fans after the campaign ended from friends of the original 50,000.

Here are some more facts about how the technology game is changing through social media:

- Last year Facebook surpassed Google for the top ranking for total time spent online
- Facebook grows at over 10 million users a month and sits at number two on web traffic rankings according to Alex.com
- Facebook has also become the third-largest video website with 46.6 million viewers
- 71.2% of all U.S. internet users are on Facebook
- 48% of young Americans said they found out about news through Facebook
- In 20 minutes 1,000,000 links are shared on Facebook

The global produce community has the most to benefit from this shift to technology at their fingertips. We have the most interesting stories to tell about our products; where they come from, their attributes and how to prepare them, not to mention cross-promoting items with dry goods. And who knows? Maybe in the future we'll be waxing nostalgia for Facebook as



we move onto the next trend.

*Do you have a fresh produce social media success story to tell? Let us know at [info@freshfruitportal.com](mailto:info@freshfruitportal.com) or contact the BerryBroad via her [website](#).*

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