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The Social Media Magnet: A New Paradigm in Inbound Marketing Instruction

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ABSTRACT

Social media has changed the marketing environment in ways that traditional marketers could have never imagined just a decade ago. It has rapidly provided a mechanism to communicate on a one-to-one level, allowing marketers to tailor specific messages and content towards a fine-tuned segment of customers. Multiple philosophies on best practices in this digital landscape have provided various methodologies for targeting these customers. During this time of change, these practices have led to the refinement of digital services, including behavioral advertising, search engine optimization, pay per click, content marketing, social media marketing, and organic inbound marketing, among specialized others. In fact, digital agencies today are for the most part narrowly niched providing only few services to a couple of distinct target segments. Hence, when a professor considers the opportunity to teach in the digital arena, the coverage of topics and the timeliness of content seem extremely daunting. The question that lay before academics is, how do we teach these tactics in a way that stays both timely and applicable?

Developed with a proven track record of teaching students to apply real world online marketing principles and strategies, The Social Media Magnet is presented as a new pedagogy for digital inbound marketing instruction. This methodology has been deployed in one university class setting for the last five years with a reputation of producing high- quality graduates in the digital marketing space. This pedagogy combines a digital online delivery system, for timely and speedy updates, with a new theory and a live online practicum to teach college students both strategic and tactical planning for digital marketing campaigns. Using website creation, social media planning tools, and email retention campaigns, students using The Social Media Magnet pedagogy learn the best practices for inbound marketing today. More appropriately for universities, the pedagogy teaches academic professors who may not live in the digital world daily through consulting and agency work, how to teach these skillsets from holistic, strategic, and tactical points-of-view. To the author's knowledge, this paradigm is the only one of its kind to teach in a real, live, active online environment where students create real content and interact with real people with real opinions, and have real campaign goals. This is not a simulation, but as real-world as it gets for teaching college students digital marketing methods. The Social Media Magnet is a new paradigm in organic, inbound marketing instruction.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Dr. Kyle A. Huggins is an Associate Professor of Marketing at Belmont University in Nashville, TN, where he has taught Social Media Marketing for over the last five years. His doctoral degree is from the University of Arkansas, and he has numerous publications from reputable journals, including *the Journal of Consumer Research*, *Journal of Consumer Affairs*, *Journal of Marketing Channels*, *Journal of Business Research*, among others. He is a social media consultant and co-owner of The Social Media Magnet.

Elliott Cunningham holds a BBA in Marketing from Texas State University, and has worked in marketing for over 20 years. He is a strategist with a successful track record of developing, positioning, creating and marketing in a variety industries, most recently in a digital context. In 2014, Elliott was nominated by the Nashville Business Journal for the Chief Marketing Officer Award for his work with a local sock manufacturer. He is currently a strategic marketing consultant and co-owner of The Social Media Magnet.