



social media strategy for new media marketing

Interview with Ryan Osborn, NBC

David Peck: All right. It's David Peck here and I am here today with Ryan Osborn, Director of Social Media at NBC News. Thanks for being here, Ryan.

Ryan Osborn: Hey, Dave. How are you? I'm okay. Thanks for having me.

David Peck: No problem. I'm good. I want to thank you for taking time out of your busy day because I know you're a mover and a shaker. We had to set this up about a week ago and I e-mailed you and it takes a couple days to get back. But you're busy, I take it.

Ryan Osborn: I appreciate the opportunity to talk about my new role here at NBC and a couple things we're doing. Yeah, we've been busy. We're doing some exciting things that we're proud of and it definitely makes for some long days but it's some cool stuff.

David Peck: All right. So before we get to what you're doing at NBC, let's back up. The way I see it, at least from my opinion, you have what could be considered a dream job. You are the Director of Social Media at NBC News. How does one get to do that?

Ryan Osborn: It kind of came about in an interesting way. So I was a Producer at NBC's Today Show where I was focused on producing television and I had developed a personal interest in social media. By no means any kind of expertise, but I'd just started using Facebook and Twitter and Foursquare on my own time. I went to South by Southwest and realized the way these tools are going start to be used by news organization. Specifically, the first place where the light bulb went off in my head was around Twitter.

So I came back and talked to a bunch of people within the building about starting a Twitter account around the Today Show. What's interesting about the evolution of Twitter within our organization is that, originally, it was thought of as purely a marketing tool and we were going to use it as and RSS feed and share stories through it and not necessarily add a human behind it. I was the first said to say let's put a human voice behind with this. Use this to share some of our stories, but at the same time listen to kind of what people are saying about the show. The Executive Producer Jim Bell was very supportive, which is a lesson I've learned in that anything you do in social media if you don't have buy in from the boss unfortunately you're not going to have a lot of success. Luckily I was in the position where he was very supportive. So I started watching the show every morning and tweeting along with it and slowly but surely we found an audience and the – that's kind of the story. As far as how I got my job, so I was still producing TV, but presenting this voice within social media behind the show and as an organization as we evolved and realized the value of it, they created this position and I applied. There's some other people who applied, I know externally and I was lucky enough to get it. So, it is a very cool opportunity, it's a ton of work but it's something I'm really excited about and I'm totally honored to have it.

David Peck: Well, congratulations by the way for getting this job.



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Ryan Osborn: Thank you. Thank you. That was a really long answer.

David Peck: No, I...

Ryan Osborn: It's a long story, I guess.

David Peck: No, I think – I find it interesting. I mean, people would kill for this job. If my opinion, I mean...

Ryan Osborn: Yeah, it's interesting. It comes with its sacrifices, I mean when you become the public kind of face of social media for a brand I think you sacrifice your own... whether it be sharing kind of your personal, like I on my personal Twitter feed now, I still share music and movies and things that I'm thinking about but I'm definitely always thinking about also how that fits in the big picture of the company and so it's totally exciting and I'm totally honored to have, but I also love to talk about the kind of you know the sacrifices involved and the challenges that I see in front of us.

David Peck: Well you also have the disclaimer of course on your personal brand since you mention that up. Doesn't reflect anything from NBC, you have think about that?

Ryan Osborn: I do, yeah. And I should learn that from a lot of people at the New York Times who were first to do such things as "re-tweets aren't endorsements, and you know the opinion of my own."

David Peck: Alright.

Ryan Osborn: Because I'm a big fan of kind of encouraging people within the organizations to be themselves, than I definitely add myself in the space but it's just a – as I take it on this more public role, it definitely it requires a little more thought.

David Peck: So, I got several questions for you that you made me think of. So, when we talk about NBC News, we're talking about all properties, the Today Show, the Evening News.

Ryan Osborn: Right, we're talking about the Today Show, Nightly News, Meet the Press...

David Peck: Oh...

Ryan Osborn: Dateline. We work very closely as far as our digital properties which are a joint venture with Microsoft so we work very closely with them...

David Peck: Okay.

Ryan Osborn: ..on MSNBC.com.

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David Peck: Alright, you've got a lot territory to cover.

Ryan Osborn: Yeah. I mean it's all about team building and as much as you know, I've had some small successes within social media, I'm really trying to educate others and empower them to use the tools from themselves.

David Peck: Oh...

Ryan Osborn: So, that's you know a big part of it and building – what's interesting is you know you could have somebody from editorial who really believes in social media, you could have somebody from communications and public relations who believes in social media. You could have somebody from marketing, so of the teams are going to cut across departments and it's how you bring those people together and get everybody else on the same page but that's been interesting for me.

David Peck: So, let's talk about some of the – what I consider the wins, we'll back up here to what we are working on today show, you created the, I just saw them on the today show twitter account, let us start with that.

Ryan Osborn: So, in some form it had already started, a guy named Jon Accarrino, who since left the company but he built a system and created @todayshow as an automated feed. Working with him we realized that there was almost a backlash. People asking who is this bot not following me.

David Peck: Okay.

Ryan Osborn: But the key there was really getting the support of the Executive Producer Jim Bell. It was such a win to have him early see the value in it and it is not an easy sell to within organizations to kind of turn the voice over, the voice of the brand, whatever the space maybe to a younger employee. I was just so grateful for that kind of opportunity. That was a very early win, and the day that feed really it started being taken a lot more seriously was the day that the plane landed in Hudson.

David Peck: Okay.

Ryan Osborn: The US Airways flight. And I was, I was in the newsroom, WNBC was the New York affiliate, the NBC affiliate had broken out with coverage, it was unclear if there were any survivors, there was a plane that landed on the river, it was right in that window and no one really knew what was going on. So, I went to, at that time I was obsessed with the search.Twitter.com, Summize, and typed in "plane crash" and found the Janis Krums and got in touch with him and used his picture on air. When we put him on air, he did an interview with Peter Alexander on MSNBC that afternoon.



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David Peck: Just for those who did not know, who's Janis Krums?

Ryan Osborn: He was the – he was the guy on a ferry boat that was the first to go by the plane which was in the river with the passengers on the wings. And he took a pretty cool photo, I don't mean to say it's cool, because it could have been a huge tragedy. But an interesting photo that showed that you know there were survivors and it was real moment for citizen journalism. I've spoken with the Yanis since and I don't know, you know whether – it's just interesting how you know photo like that becomes an iconic image of an event.

David Peck: So, I wanna recap quickly here.

Ryan Osborn: Yeah.

David Peck: This is great case study here.

Ryan Osborn: Uh-hum.

David Peck: So you used twitter dot search to locate someone from the plane. You reached out to them via Twitter?

Ryan Osborn: Yeah. Right.

David Peck: And then dispatch a reporter?

Ryan Osborn: It was an @ reply from the Today Show account, "Hey, can you?" I think it was "Hey, can you call me maybe" and I think I put my desk number on it. And so he called and he was explaining things that we already had a reporter from the WNBC who didn't have a live shot who was there. And he was able to confirm so that we were able to put photo on there.

David Peck: That was amazing.

Ryan Osborn: That was a pretty cool moment. That was one of those moments when you just wonder at the power of social media and just the reach of any moment someone capturing it and being able to share within your organization exponentially growing every day.

David Peck: That's...

Ryan Osborn: And that was one of those– that was pretty incredible.

David Peck: So let's move on the all happier thing here a little bit so.

Ryan Osborn: Uh-hum.

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David Peck: In regards to, we'll move on but the Twitter of Today Show featuring the personality, that's your personality coming through. I mean it's like you said kiss butt. I'm not trying to kiss you butt but it's true.

Ryan Osborn: Yeah, yeah.

David Peck: I'm reading some of the comments, what do you – you're asking questions, you're engaging, you're wishing people happy birthday.

Ryan Osborn: Yeah. I mean part of the real appeal of the show is that our anchors do such a good job in letting their personalities come across. And you know, so you know, we realize that in order for our brand to succeed online in some ways we need to be the same. In what I refer to as a para-social voice where you know there's a real human there that's gonna laugh along with you and something funny happens on a show.

David Peck: I'm reading right now. Could you quote, could you do the forecasting in ways that Matt responses here that Stephanie was stuck in an elevator which happened this morning?

Ryan Osborn: Right. And that actually since I moved on to this new role there's now a couple of producers who are keeping the feed Zoe Marcus and Adam Miller who are really the voice behind what we created together that they've been able to carry on. So it's pretty cool I think and I think what particularly interests me is how we create that voice elsewhere. It has really worked on Twitter and I think that's the experience people want to see as they watch the show.

David Peck: Right.

Ryan Osborn: So you know where else will we put that?

David Peck: Yeah. Cause I should point out that for people listening that you have over 623,000 followers on the Today Show feed which is phenomenal when you compare it to your competition. The Early Show that has 12,600, that's 12,600 versus over a half a million and...

Ryan Osborn: So I do just want to make a point of and I've thought through the follower count of lot. Early on, we were growing very organically and then we got put in the Twitter Suggested User List. And so just like any numbers that suggested user list, they did inflated. It is just an important point and I know one of our competitors got put on suggested user list before we did. So while they have a lower engagement rate from some other metrics that I have seen, I wish that Twitter never created that list.

David Peck: You and a lot of other people.

Ryan Osborn: Yeah.

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David Peck: You got disclosure in Ryan, you're fine

Ryan Osborn: Yeah

David Peck: Personally this my opinion, I think it has to do with your engaging people on the today's show feed where – you don't have to comment. The Early Show is just reposting videos, there's nothing on the Early Show feed that I didn't get if had I watched the show that morning. You're getting me tweet fall of photo's commenting fun quotes, we can wish in happy birthday, making fun of people, making fun of yourself, which I'm a big fan of, self deprecating humor and not taking yourself so seriously, but so...

Ryan Osborn: I mean and lot of that comes with – you know, we've been very comfortable, we have the support of the show and so you know we're very comfortable there and I think that comes across to the audience, so it's great to hear that you're responding to it.

David Peck: It's working.

Ryan Osborn: But I think that's one of the lessons that I've learned in social media you know, you need to react, you need to be the human behind the brand. You can't just blast out your message and not have fun with it and not show people that you're listening..

David Peck: Shouting is that what I call it, but yeah.

Ryan Osborn: Yeah, it's brutal. You know it's still happening everyday on the majority of accounts that you see brands set up ... you know?

David Peck: All day long.

Ryan Osborn: I think it will continue to happen. I hope it doesn't hurt the great thing that we've all worked to create.

David Peck: Agreed. Let's – so, okay, we've talked about this issue a lot. What things – how are you using social media and the Nightly News or Meet the Press or Dateline, yeah, just some examples?

Ryan Osborn: Dateline is a really good example, we've partnered with the social checkin service called TunerFish which I'm really excited about. So they are a company that allows viewers to check in to what they're watching and share out on Twitter and Facebook and earn a badge or get some rewards. So people are earning their Dateline Detectives now if they check in to that during Dateline which I think is kind of a cool idea and a space that I'm watching closely, it's been called Four Square for TV. There are some other competitors but the deal we did with TunerFish taking interest me. We did a Facebook partnership with the Today Show around the



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wedding which will kind of evolve as we start more of that programming. We're looking at some other deals that unfortunately I can't talk about yet.

David Peck: No problem.

Ryan Osborn: It's really interesting kind of meeting with the different shows and there's already kind of teams in place who have some really smart ideas but just looking at each individual brand and figuring out what's the right fit, part of the challenge of working with what some might call "old media" or broadcast media...

David Peck: Traditional media.

Ryan Osborn: Yeah, you don't want to out innovate the audience with any kind of initiative. It has to make sense to the core consumers and the core viewers. So that's always something that I'm thinking about.

David Peck: Right, you want to keep it simple. You don't want to make a more – if it's there, it's great.

Ryan Osborn: Right.

David Peck: Totally.

Ryan Osborn: I mean, I get pitched all this super heady ideas that kind of make sense to the geek in me but you think them through and it's like you know would these make sense to my mom who's watching.

David Peck: Is she going to get it?

Ryan Osborn: Most often unfortunate as much as I'd love to do it, the answer is probably no.

David Peck: And if she's going to care? That would be the other quest.

Ryan Osborn: Yeah. Yeah, and you know so it's – it's interesting to – you know I'm totally excited by it and I think we have a lot of room to renovate but it's really interesting. We did a Foursquare deal with Today Show which is also exciting around our concert series and people will come down to the plaza and get badges which is cool and we also have another prize worth – people get the third badge in our sequence. Our lawyers don't allow us to say what the actual prize is but we'll give them a real world prize.

David Peck: A real... not a virtual good, that's good.

Ryan Osborn: Exactly, yeah, not a virtual good.

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David Peck: Is there something you did in social media that didn't work and I don't know if you can answer this.

Ryan Osborn: Yeah.

David Peck: Is there – is there something you do associate that this didn't, you'd started going you know what, I'm going to back off this is a swing and a mess.

Ryan Osborn: That's interesting. I mean, I think probably everyday. But I think part of the challenge of working in social media right now is you really have to try things to see if they're going to succeed which is really pretty scary for you know big established organizations and if we weren't failing at things I'd probably be worried. But I'm trying to think of what's a good example of something that's – that failed...

David Peck: No, I mean horribly failure, just you know what.

Ryan Osborn: Yeah.

David Peck: We're going to do it again. We did it once then we're done with that. Well I noticed Today, not to go back to the Today show but – where we're at.

Ryan Osborn: Yeah this morning.

David Peck: You rolled out tweets on air and Matt Lauer was reporting tweets this morning.

Ryan Osborn: Right.

David Peck: You get feed...

Ryan Osborn: Yeah, that was actually I mean so that's again you know that team of Zoe and Adam and actually the senior producer as they are watching that story develop of the flight attendant you know quitting his job and sliding down to fire escape. They were watching Twitter and you know whether is trying to look for guest they didn't find any or seen that reaction, actually there's a surprise reaction actually people thinking that hey this guy might be some kind of hero and...

David Peck: Yeah.

Ryan Osborn: And he should host SNL so he was interesting to kind of to see them read those tweets this morning and push the story forward with them. I think a lot of times like you can talk about integrating social media in the broadcast media and a lot of times it doesn't push the story



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necessarily forward, I think that was a really a good example this morning of – it made sense and...

Ryan Osborn: I was actually watching and it was cool to see that.

David Peck: You made a comment in passing and said you were looking for a guest, you couldn't find one until you went to the tweets?

Ryan Osborn: They were actually when I was – I – I walked through last night to say hello to Zoe that they were look – their first place when I heard of you know that stories to see if you know if any passengers were tweeting in there you know because it's a perfect tool for our bookers as you know in that window when news is breaking.

David Peck: Oh that's hard... yeah.

Ryan Osborn: You know you can – you can – if you are using the right search terms you can often find somebody if not on the plane you know at the airport or...

David Peck: That's – that's amazing, I didn't think of that, that's how you're finding these guest where people. I know you mentioned about the Hudson but and you're moving forward, that's how you operate.

Ryan Osborn: Yeah, I mean Facebook the same way that you're going to be searching everyone's status updates, we've used a couple of times. The Michael Jackson.. At his memorial they had a lottery when they get updated his memorial we found one of our guests through social media. You know I won tickets to Michael Jackson.

David Peck: That's amaze.

Ryan Osborn: Those examples are getting more and more common, and almost actually not even noteworthy anymore, because they are so so common.

David Peck: Let's.

Ryan Osborn: And then, that's like to me the real power of Twitter, search is just something that so many people overlook. You know, they get in their stream, they start thinking about, you know, who they're following, what they're going to say, and you know, that real time search is just...

David Peck: God send?

Ryan Osborn: It's a journalist's best friend.



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David Peck: Yeah.

Ryan Osborn: Yeah, it's really pretty unbelievable.

David Peck: So, speaking of journalism, journalist, I want to touch on that real quick. All right, you come in you're just up and coming kid. You got all the stuff going for you, how do you salvage reporters to start up twitter accounts to get involved?

Ryan Osborn: Yeah.

David Peck: You and I...

Ryan Osborn: It's interesting. It's a question I get a lot especially now that I've kind of moved to out of specific show in some ways, you know, it can be more challenging because I grew up at the Today Show in a lot of ways and I've really strong relationships there, so as I kind of branch out and get to know, you know, I do know the rest of the news division but meeting others and, it's always interesting talking about people if they're not as necessarily engaged. Not like I could ever tell anyone that they needed to but I would ever do anything like that.

I just try to tell them the successes that I've had and how I think you can be a powerful tool and how you can use it in the way you want to use it, there's no rules, and I don't mean rules in the sense of us as an organization, I mean, your voice is your voice, and I think a lot people lose sense of that and they think that the spaces are already full and that everything's been done but, you know I think us as individuals, we all have a lot to gain from engaging and cultivating communities around what we're trying to do.

David Peck: Do you have that rules as an organization and if so, can you talk about them?

Ryan Osborn: We clearly have standards and a lot of policies in place that I know a lot of people work really hard on that are always evolving and it's really hard to create kind of blanket statements that are going to be suitable in every one of this situations. Yeah, those rules are in place. We need to do a better a job of kind of educating people about them and they keep people feel comfortable about them and we don't have any kind of policy where people have to sign something, I know other organizations have done that...

David Peck: Right.

Ryan Osborn: ...like, you know you can't break news on Twitter or and you need – we don't see any of anything like that.

David Peck: So and – and then everybody does their own tweeting? There's no – because I think that question a lot.



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Ryan Osborn: Yeah, no.

David Peck: ... about other people, celebrities and these are

Ryan Osborn: I mean that's actually been – as much as like the Today Show account and kind of that voice behind the brands is really, really interesting like – I think the more I learn the more people want to connect with real humans.

David Peck: Agreed.

Ryan Osborn: I always think it's strange when you're in a meeting and the idea of creating some kind of social media initiative comes up and a lot of people's first reaction is to say, "oh, you know is there an intern or can we get someone else?" My reaction to that is always, no one's winning...

David Peck: Right.

Ryan Osborn: The organization is not winning, the personality is not winning the... And actually I don't want to that mis-quoted. I haven't been in the town a meeting but it's always surprising to me when that comes up and I always discourage and we don't do it. Ann keeps her feed she does a really good job I know, you know, she – that's her and that's ...

David Peck: So I guess, she's a huge Twitterer.

Ryan Osborn: She does a really good job on Twitter. Yeah, she totally gets it and just done a really good job. She used that their cover stories in Iran and Haiti and she really, really has done a great job. Chuck Todd in Washington at the White House he really just another, he just does a great job, Andrea Mitchell in Washington. We have a couple of cameramen. Jim Long in Washington.

David Peck: You just stole my side there absolutely.

Ryan Osborn: A guy in Atlanta named Dwayne Scott is in NBC News crew. They just are doing such great work and kind of sharing this stories of their talent throughout the day and, you know, responding to people and learning, you know, learning from people and it just to awesome to watch.

David Peck: Well I should – I probably should be around in 20 minutes here since you probably wrapped this up. Is there anything I didn't ask you that you want to share anything coming up, what people aware of?

Ryan Osborn: I wish I could share more.



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David Peck: Are you ready for the wedding? You got something going on with the wedding you mentioned?

Ryan Osborn: Yeah that's a big, big Facebook partnership. We're working with the developer named Involver and our team at msnbc.com has been huge kind leading that initiative, we're doing all of exciting things. It's interesting because as much is like, you know, you label it a dream job earlier and it is – it's pretty cool but also the challenges and just and you know focus you on, setting goals and just making sure that, you know, we're always meeting them as, you know, something that I'm trying to focus on and I give our organization a lot of credit for giving somebody like me, you know this opportunity because, you know I was – I'm young and I was a Producer and I don't pretend to be a total social media expert, I'm very passionate about it and I love kind of connecting with people but I'm always kind of learning and so that's kind of – that's all I have to add. I wish little more.

David Peck: I will say it Mister, it's not a dream job. I'm here at the last 40 year, I do notice your pictures with you at the Olympics I think, is that your Olympic jacket?

Ryan Osborn: That was in Torino. That was in our Torino control room.

David Peck: Okay, so you were there. Let's just keep that in mind.

Ryan Osborn: I was there. Yeah I know, I know and I know and I – that was a cool experience. The Olympics are always – I went to Beijing too which was also great.

David Peck: Okay.

Ryan Osborn: So, you know, I don't know. I – you're totally, you're right.

David Peck: And I know you're working, I got that and I do one of them.

Ryan Osborn: Yeah, no, no, no. No, I totally – I...

David Peck: I'll make you do this, I'm in Robert City and I might go to San Francisco about 20 minutes south in a few weeks so I'm really excited. All right so we could find Ryan Osborn if you don't mind I'll pimp you out here at twitter.com/rozzzy, how do we say it rozzzy? So...

Ryan Osborn: Yeah, rozzzy and I'm actually debating whether, I think I might be able to get a [@ryanosborn](https://twitter.com/ryanosborn) but I'm holding on to rozzzy for now, just they – it's kind of worked in and I don't know, we'll see so if anybody hears this and has any opinions about that, let me know. So you can find me – you can find me [@rozzzy](https://twitter.com/rozzzy) and also, you know check out our NBC accounts and let me know, you know what you guys think.

David Peck: All right, well thank you for your time and good luck with your new job.



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Ryan Osborn: Thank you Dave, I really appreciate the opportunity.