A recent Pew study found that seven-in-ten Americans now use social media. This shouldn't come as a surprise. Social media has existed for the better part of 15 years. It is entrenched in our societal fabric. Companies have invested billions in understanding and weaponizing its marketing potential to capture young audiences. Today, no product or advert is without its own hashtag or handle icon.

Yet, our industries seem averse to adopting social media. A cursory search of the number of downstream accounts on Twitter pales in comparison to that of retail or technology companies that saturate timelines globally. This is especially troublesome when you consider that 44% of the public view the oil and gas industry negatively. While traditionally TV ad buys would be used to improve or even shape public opinion, today, Millennials are 2.5 times more likely to watch a video online as opposed to one on television.

Conversely, opponents of our industries seem to have mastered social and digital technologies. Boasting millions of followers, activist accounts combine for greater readerships than the *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, and *Washington Post* put together. Posts from these groups can be leveraged for more influence than months of shoe-leather lobbying on the Hill or in state legislatures.

Underscoring this point, 2016 will forever be dog-eared in the pages of history for the influence of social media in politics. With a single tweet, the President of the United States can start a war or send a company's stock price crashing. For this reason alone, our industries should be devoting resources to social and digital media, developing response strategies, and adapting to changing currents.

Not to scare you, but Millennials now make up more than 80% of Congressional staffers. In less than two decades, they will hold a majority in the House and Senate. It is imperative to reach this digitally native generation and its successor, Gen Z, in a proportionate way to our competitors if there is any hope for lobbying efforts to be effective in the 2020s. In short, the time to be #social is now.

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