

Social Media Strategy Championship Game



VS.



**The Home
Depot**

Lowe's

Jacob Schlies

Executive Summary

This report provides a comparison and evaluation of the social media strategies employed by The Home Depot and Lowe's Home Improvement Warehouse.

The report draws attention to each social media and content platform employed by the companies including their websites, mobile apps, blogs, emails, Facebook profiles, Twitter accounts, Vine accounts, Instagram profiles, Pinterest boards, YouTube channels, and Google+ accounts. By analyzing these platforms, it is evident that both companies are trying to target women homeowners as research shows that they account for about two-thirds of all home improvement decisions and DIY (Do It Yourself) projects.

The report concludes that Lowe's employs a better social media strategy because the company is better at creating content that resonates better with the target audience and causes them to engage with the brand. Lowe's is more successful with their strategy because they are properly engaging with their audience by replying to user comments, and answering any questions posted by the users.

It is recommended that Lowe's continue to execute its current social media strategy while looking out for any emerging trends in social media and that The Home Depot take steps to improve the way the company engages with its audience.

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Background

Bernard Marcus, Arthur Blank, and investors Ron Brill and Pat Farrah founded the Home Depot in Marietta, GA in 1978. Since its founding, the company has grown to become the #1 home improvement store in the United States with over 2,260 locations and over 340,000 employees. The Home Depot is a Fortune 100 company and earned \$70.3 billion in revenue in 2013. The Home Depot accounts for 43.6% of the market for home improvement stores. On September 2, 2014 it was announced that someone had hacked into the data systems at the company and had stolen the credit card information for thousands of their customers. Since the announcement, the company has been facing angry customers on social media.



In 1921, Lucius Smith Lowe founded Lowe's North Wilkesboro Hardware in North Carolina. Lowe passed away in 1940 and left the store to his daughter. His daughter sold the store to her brother Jim, who acquired a partner and helped grow the store to have multiple locations in 1946. Today, Lowe's is the nation's second largest home improvement retail store ahead of Menard's in the Midwest. Lowe's has 1830 locations and over 280,000 employees. The company accounts for 31.1% of the home improvement market and in 2013 earned \$51.3 billion in revenues.

Companies at a Glance

	The Home Depot	Lowe's
Founded	1978	1946
Rank	1	2
Market Share	43.6%	31.1%
Locations	2,260	1,830
Employees	340,000	280,000
Fortune 500 Ranking	33	52
2013 Revenue	\$70.3 B	\$51.3 B

Audience

According to IBIS World, the home improvement market is made up of three types of consumers: professionals, DIY, and DIFM. The professionals account for around 38.8% of the home improvement market and consist of customers whose job is to build or renovate homes and buildings, such as contractors. These customers spend the majority of their money on lumber and building materials. DIY stands for “do it yourself” and the category consists of homeowners who are remodeling their home and who perform normal maintenance on their homes. This group spends the majority of their money on paint for the interior of their homes and flowers for the exterior of their home. DIFM stands for “do it for me” and the category consists of customers who purchase materials from The Home Depot or Lowe’s and hire someone else to install the products for them. This group spends the majority of their money on flooring and cabinets. The Home Depot competes heavily for the professionals and for the DIFM customers, while Lowe’s focuses mostly on the DIY and DIFM customers.



Both companies now see women as the key decision-maker as studies show that **women make almost two-thirds of all home improvement decisions**. In an article by James Kerr published this month on “management-issues.com”, The Home Depot has only recently started to focus on attracting women by changing the environment in their store to be more inviting to women and by acquiring partnerships with companies like Martha Stewart Living. Lowe’s has been trying to attract women for a while now. They do this by hiring more sales associates to walk around the store to assist customers and by having bright clean stores that are inviting to women.

Goals & Strategies

Now that both companies see women homeowners as a valuable demographic, we can expect both companies to use their social media and marketing plans to attract women. Currently both stores are running fall campaigns. The Home Depot’s campaign is called “Take on fall” and Lowe’s campaign is “Hello Fall”. Both campaigns are targeted towards women, but Lowe’s campaign seems more aggressively aimed at women as the designs feature skinny fonts and artsy leaves compared to The Home Depot’s tougher “Take on Fall” which can resonate with both men and women.

The most effective way to encourage women homeowners to make purchases is to inspire them to start a DIY project or home renovation. Lowe’s does this by using a lot of pictures of homes that look like they are ready to host a party, and The Home Depot does this by using pictures of beautiful renovations. Both companies try and stress that if you shop with them, you will save money on your project.

Although both companies see the huge value of the women homeowner, they are careful not to forget about the men. Both companies try to tie themselves to football and getting ready for the tailgate. This is an effective strategy for men and women because both enjoy tailgates and football.

Both companies have ongoing taglines as well. The Home Depot uses “Let’s Do This” which serves as a battle cry for the DIY customer. Lowe’s uses “Never Stop Improving” which is a motto for the DIY and DIFM customer.

Overall Social Statistics

53% Strength	4:1 Sentiment
30% Passion	45% Reach



The Home Depot has high strength and reach numbers on social mention compared to Lowe's. 53% strength means that the brand is being talked about frequently on social media.

The company has a decent group of people who talk about the company all the time as evident by the 30% passion rating. The only number that is troubling here is the 4:1 sentiment ratio. This means that for every four positive mentions of The Home Depot, one person mentions the post in a negative way. The 45% reach number means that 45% of people talking about the company are unique.

This may be some of the fallout as a result from the company's recent data breach as some customers have had their credit card numbers stolen in what some experts call the largest credit card theft in US history.



Lowe's sentiment and passion numbers are higher than The Home Depot's numbers. The 16:1 sentiment ratio means that for every 16 positive mentions of Lowe's, there is only one negative mention of the company. Lowe's also has a higher passion percentage, meaning that the company has a larger group of people who frequently talk about the company in a positive way. The 6% strength number means that the brand isn't being talked about that much on social media. The 10% reach number means that 10% of the people referencing the company are unique.

6% Strength	16:1 Sentiment
47% Passion	10% Reach

Scoring Method

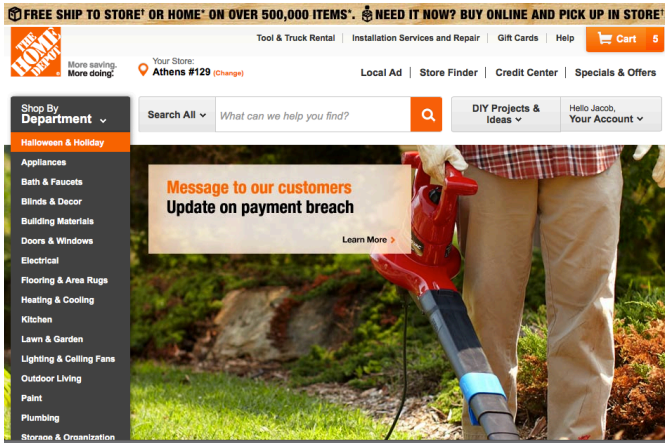
When comparing The Home Depot and Lowe's across platforms, the company utilizing the platform the best is awarded a Touchdown or a Field Goal depending on how much better one company is performing over the other. A Touchdown gives the company 7 points (I'll assume they can kick the PAT) and a field goal gives them 3 points. At the end of the paper, the company with the most points wins and is honored in the Hall of Fame along with the company's MVP (Most Valuable Platform) Content is judged on a scale of 1-5 with 5 being the highest.

The 1st Half

Content Marketing



Website



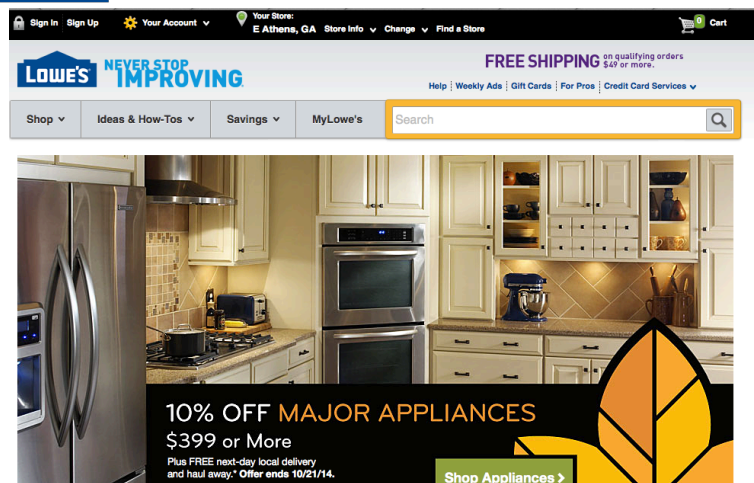
Overview: The Home Depot's website is fairly easy to navigate. It allows you to create an account so that you can save items to a shopping list and it allows you to sign up for email updates. From data obtained from Alexa.com, most of the site visitors are women and the site surprisingly attracts a below average number of men. This is strange because men dominate the contractor/ construction business. Because of the data breach at the company, the home page has been set on this screen since the start of this project. We assume that this picture will normally change to feature different products. The site allows visitors to read ratings and reviews about the products and it allows the visitor to check the product's availability in the store near by. The site

receives most of its traffic in May and June and has recently received an above average amount of traffic likely due to the data breach. The site also has a feature that allows visitors to chat with a sales associate.

Audience Development: The Home Depot promotes its website in everything it publishes, from commercials to social media.

Time & Cost Considerations: The Home Depot has invested a lot of money into keeping their site up and they have employees manage the page and assist customers who have questions.

Overview: The Lowe's website is also similar to other ecommerce sites. Lowe's emphasizes the use of photos for their site. The image on the home screen changes depending on the deals being offered and matches the current campaign the company is running. According to Alexa.com, about 90% of the visitors to the site are women. The site features a simplified design that is easy to navigate. Like The Home Depot's site, the Lowe's site allows visitors to purchase items online, read ratings and reviews, and check store availability. Lowe's also allows customers to order products online and get the items delivered to their door by the Lowe's delivery truck as long as the product is in stock at their local store. The site gets the most traffic in May. The site also has an account system called MyLowe's which allows customers to remember the specifics of their past purchases.



Audience Development: Lowe's also promotes their website in everything it publishes.

Time & Cost Considerations: Lowe's spends a lot of money and time on their website. They have somebody hired to update special deals every day and to change the picture on the home screen when new deals are being offered.

Measurement

	The Home Depot	Lowe's
US Rank	82	157
Global Rank	410	746
Bounce Rate	30%	19%
Avg. Time on Site	5:17 m	5:18 m
Quality of Layout (1-5)	4	4.5

(Data estimates from Alexa.com)

Ruling on the Field:



Lowe's Touchdown



Lowe's has the better website. Its sleek design and simplified menus are exactly what the target audience likes to see. The reason that The Home Depot's site rankings are so high probably has something to do with the recent data breach the company went through. The Home Depot's site is organized well, but the company should try to incorporate more pictures in the layout to help the customer come up with ideas for their home. Lowe's also wins because they have a much lower bounce rate. The Home Depot's high bounce rate may be caused by customers arriving on the home page and not being able to find what they are looking for.

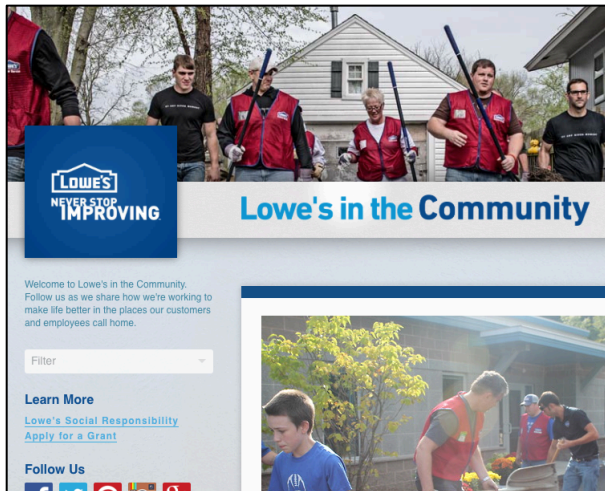
Blogs

Overview: The Home Depot has a blog titled “The Apron Blog”. The blog features posts about DIY projects, outdoor ideas, and the company’s “style challenges”. The blog is hosted on the company website and the company writes a new post every weekday. The blog aims to give the audience ideas for social gatherings and holidays. The content is aimed at women homeowners, especially those that enjoy hosting parties.



Audience Development: The Home Depot promotes its blog on its website and different social media platforms.

Time & Cost Considerations: The Home Depot spends a good amount of time creating content for their blog. The design is simple and doesn’t look like it costs a lot of money.



Overview: Lowe’s has a blog titled “Lowe’s in the Community”. The blog is hosted on Tumblr. The blog talks about ways that the company is helping the communities around their stores and the disaster relief efforts it takes part in. The blog is aimed at customers who value community service and helping those in need. Unfortunately the blog does not generate a lot of engagement and the company only writes one or two posts a month. The company organizes its posts into four categories: community, disaster relief, education, and environment.

Audience Development: Lowe’s only promotes their blog on the bottom of their website.

Time & Cost Considerations: Lowe’s does not put a lot of time or money into managing their blog. From the pictures on the blog,

it looks like the company puts in a lot of time helping the community, but the company only writes one post about that project.

Measurement

	The Home Depot	Lowe's
Avg. Facebook Shares	50	Unknown
Avg. Twitter Shares	20	Unknown
Avg. Comments	15	1
Quality of Content (1-5)	5	3.5

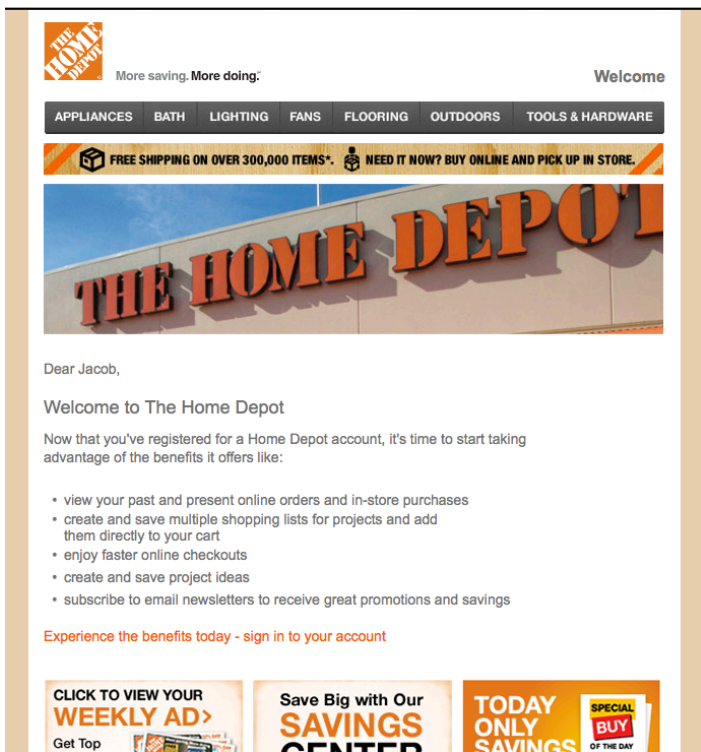
Ruling on the Field:

The Home Depot Touchdown



The Home Depot's blog is way better than the Lowe's blog. The company is able to get their audience to engage with them and the company creates new content every weekday. In order to keep your audience coming back to your blog, you have to create new content as often as possible. Lowe's can improve their blog if the company writes more posts about the projects they already do. For example, if the company does a service project for tornado victims, the company could write a post about what the community was like before the storm and what happened during the storm, how Lowe's came up with the plan to help, the project itself, and then a post about how life is now better in that community thanks to Lowe's. Lowe's also needs to do a better job of promoting their blog.

Email Marketing



Overview: The Home Depot uses email to target all of their customers, especially the professionals and DIY segments. The company sends six different newsletters. These different newsletters talk about general specials from the store, the local ad for your nearest store, a newsletter for professionals, a "how-to" newsletter, a special buy of the day, and a gardening newsletter. Each newsletter has a bar across the top of it giving readers the links to different departments in their store. At the bottom of the newsletter, the company has links to its Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, and YouTube accounts and a link to the company's app in the app store. For some reason the company does not link to its Google+ page, its Instagram account, and its Vine account.

Audience Development: The Home Depot only promotes its newsletter on its website.

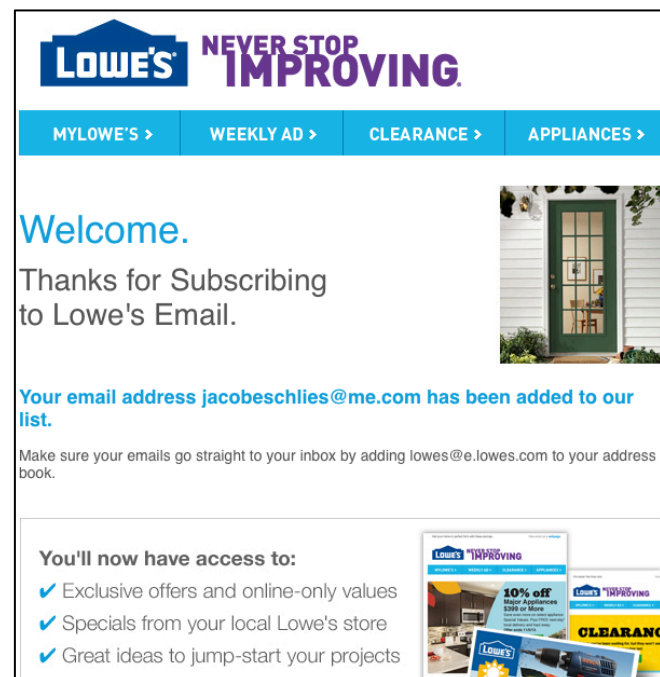
Time & Cost Considerations: The Home Depot doesn't spend more than an average company on its emails. Judging by the lack of promotion for the email service, it doesn't look like the company really sees email as a good way to market towards their target audience.

Overview: Lowe's uses email to target professionals and DIY customers. The company sends six emails with different topics. The topics include a general email about in-store specials, a newsletter for professionals, a newsletter about indoor projects, a newsletter about outdoor projects, a newsletter about weekend DIY projects, and a gardening newsletter. These emails are very image-centric and have a sleek design. At the top of their newsletters the company has a simple bar with four links and at the bottom of the email, the company promotes its app, its blog, and all of its social media accounts except for Vine.



Audience Development: Lowe's only promotes its newsletter on its website.

Time & Cost Considerations: Like The Home Depot, Lowe's probably doesn't put in any extra time or money than a typical retail store already spends on email marketing. Lowe's doesn't promote the newsletters enough to get more customers to sign up.



Measurement

	The Home Depot	Lowe's
Different Newsletters	6	6
Quality of Content (1-5)	3	3.5

Ruling on the Field:



Lowe's Field Goal



In reality, both companies don't promote their newsletters enough and don't use them to their full potential. Lowe's barely clears the uprights and makes a field goal from the 50 yard line because they have more links to their social media platforms than The Home Depot. The company should always give links to all of its social media profiles. Lowe's also has better topics for their emails. While The Home Depot has an email for "local ad" and "how-to", Lowe's has emails for different interests like "Indoor" and "Outdoor".

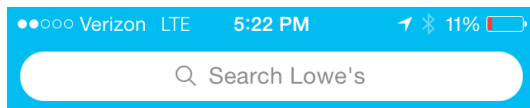
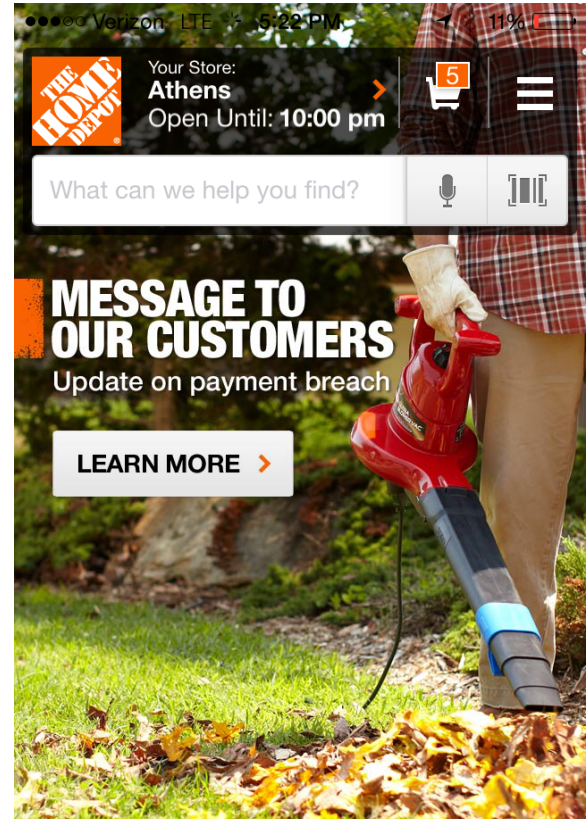
Mobile Apps

Overview: The Home Depot App allows customers to purchase products on their smartphone, find items in the store, scan barcodes to learn more information about products, use voice recognition to search for an item in the store, and create a shopping list that gives you the location of every item. Perhaps the coolest feature of the app is the “Toolbox section” which allows users to measure the size of nuts and bolts, measure distance, and more.



Audience Development: The Home Depot promotes the app in the store, on their website, and in their weekly circular.

Time & Cost Considerations: A lot of time and money went in to making sure this app can function. The company likely hired developers to create the cool features on the app, and the store associates spent a lot of time taking inventory and making sure that products in the store were in the location that the app tells customers they are in.



Athens Lowe's

Change Store

Open until 10:00 PM tonight.

Buy in app & pick up in store.



Overview: The Lowe's app is very easy to use and almost feels natural to navigate.

The layout is similar to Facebook and the app even features special content that the user can scroll through to see. The Lowe's app also allows customers to create shopping lists and find the locations of the items. Users can also make purchases in the app and have the items shipped to their house. Users can also scan barcodes on products to learn more information and watch videos about different projects.

Audience Development: Lowe's promotes its app in the store, on the company website, and in the weekly circular.

Time & Cost Considerations: Lowe's has likely put in the same amount of money and time into this app as The Home Depot has put into their app. The Lowe's app is updated with new features more frequently than The Home Depot's app.

Measurement

	The Home Depot	Lowe's
Stars	4	2.5
# of Reviews	31	8
Rating from Apple	4+	4+
Quality of Content (1-5)	4	5

Ruling on the Field:



Lowe's Touchdown



The Lowe's app is better because it is easier to navigate, faster to download and it has content on the app. Unfortunately the app has poor reviews right now because the company recently released a new update of the app. The reviews in the app store seem to be from users who may not know how to use the app or even a smartphone. I tested both apps out in the store and both got the location of products correct. Lowe's promotes its app in the store much better than The Home Depot. Both apps could improve by allowing customers to import a list of products and then give the customer a list of different products that are more specific so that the customer wouldn't have to manually enter each item on their list.

Half Time – In Store Comparisons



I visited The Home Depot store on Epps Bridge Parkway in Athens. When I walked into the store, I was able to connect to the Wi-Fi and download their app without an issue. But the only reason I knew that they had an app was because of my research and not because of a sign in the store telling me that there was an app available. In fact there really weren't any signs promoting social media except for the sign on the left that was posted above the urinal in the men's restroom.

Nevertheless, the app worked well in the store and I noticed that at the bottom of the weekly circular, the company promoted its social media platforms.

The store seemed kind of dark and there were a lot of men who I assumed to be contractors that were going down the aisles

and grabbing exactly what they needed without having to search for the product.

The Home Depot needs to improve on promoting their social media presence and their app in their stores.

Right as you walk in the door at Lowe's you see the display in the picture on the right which promotes the Lowe's app and encourages you to pick up one of their weekly circulars. The display is very large and is hard to miss. I also noticed similar signs posted throughout the store in places like the garden center and by the kitchen design center.



At the bottom of the weekly circular the company was promoting its social platforms. As I looked around the store, I noticed that the end cap banners matched the cover photo on the Lowe's Facebook page. The store was well lit and bright and I noticed a few contractors and a lot more women than The Home Depot. The women were buying curtains and painters tape, and some were looking at Halloween decorations. There were plenty of sales associates walking around assisting customers.

Lowe's is doing a good job with promoting its app in the store, but it could do a better job promoting its social media in the store.

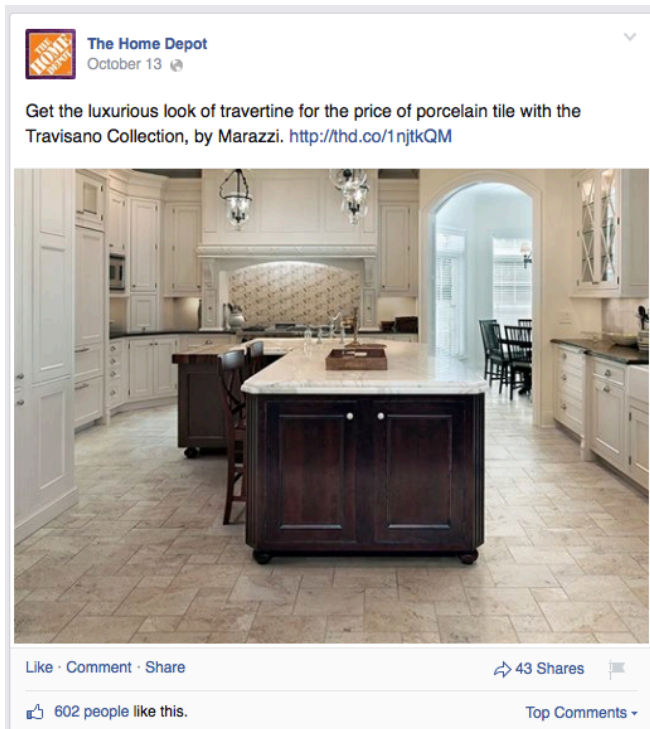


The 2nd Half

Social Media Marketing



Facebook



Overview: The posts on The Home Depot's Facebook page tend to target homeowners who are interested in renovations. The company regularly posts about its installation experts and the good deals available for purchases like tile or hardwood floors. The company seems to try to post at least 3 times each week and they seek to inspire people to buy and to engage with them. Unfortunately, due to a recent data security breach, many customers relentlessly attack the company on virtually every post. The company also fails to resolve most of these customer complaints, leaving them festering for the world to see. The company also always tries to tie in some type of purchase you should make at The Home Depot.

Audience Development: The Home Depot increases their audience size by advertising on Facebook and encouraging customers to like their page in their weekly circulars.

Time & Cost Considerations: It doesn't seem like the company spends a lot of time or money on Facebook. Most of the links just take the user to the website ecommerce page rather than a blog or video.

Overview: The posts on the Lowe's Facebook page also tend to target homeowners just like The Home Depot, but they are more geared towards women homeowners. This is evident by the sleek, skinny fonts and soft colors used in the images posted to the page. The company typically posts about idea inspiration, DIY projects, discounts, and tips and tricks for home improvement. The company posts about 6 times per week. Like all big businesses, Lowe's has some angry customers. To help prevent these angry people from hijacking the page, Lowe's created a special tab called "Rant or Rave" where the customers can vent their feelings. This is excellent because it helps keep negative comments on posts at bay. Lowe's is also very engaging with customers on the page and replies to all comments in a timely manner. The majority of their posts don't talk about buying merchandise from them, making them come across as more of a friend than a salesman.



Audience Development: Lowe's increases their audience by advertising on Facebook and encouraging customers to like their page in their weekly circulars.

Time & Cost Considerations: Lowe's clearly puts a lot of time and money into managing their Facebook page. They have someone hired to reply to every comment and answer questions. The links attached to posts take you to different Lowe's created content across different social and content platforms.



Measurement

	The Home Depot	Lowe's
Page Likes	1,667,846	2,966,486
Avg. Post Likes	550	4,000
Avg. Post Comments	23	120
Avg. Post Shares	30	250
Quality of Content (1-5)	3.5	5

Ruling on the Field:



Lowe's Touchdown



Lowe's is the clear winner here. They are putting in a lot of time to making sure that their brand is represented well on Facebook. The number of likes and shares that they receive is clearly a result of their quality content. Lowe's has an audience almost twice the size of The Home Depot on Facebook despite having fewer physical locations around the world. The Home Depot is trying to deal with the fallout from a data breach that leaked financial information about their customers. They are doing a very poor job addressing their consumers' issues on Facebook and by ignoring them, they are on full display for anyone who reads the comments on The Home Depot's posts.

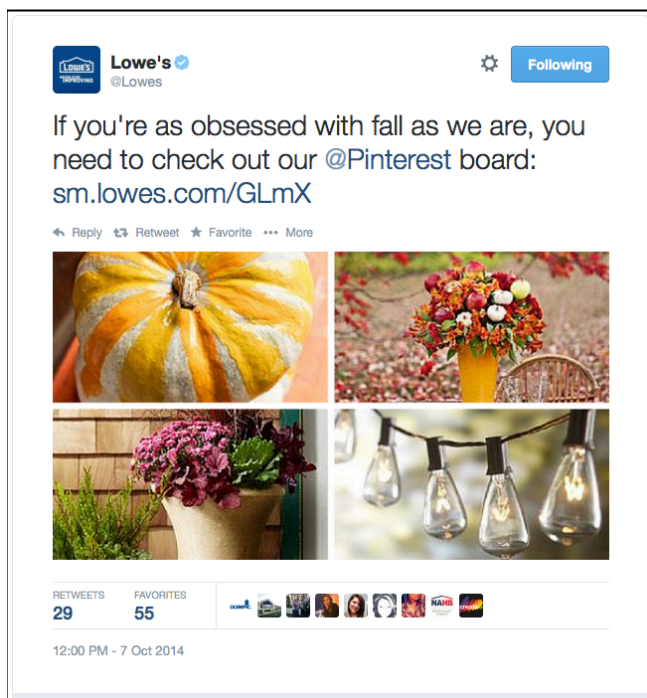
Twitter

Overview: The Home Depot uses its tweets to target homeowners, sports fans, and women. The company tweets about 6 times a day, which is perfect when you look at the lifespan of a tweet. The Home Depot uses its sponsorship with ESPN's College Gameday to engage with sports fans on Twitter. Followers compete to become The Home Depot's "Tailgate Titan" by getting followers to vote on the best tailgate host for the College Gameday game. The company is able to be a part of trending topics naturally because of their association with College Gameday. The company also targets women homeowners by tweeting about DIY projects and idea inspiration. The company also tweets about how they help veterans and about their employees.



Audience Development: The Home Depot runs ads on Twitter to get users to vote for the "Tailgate Titan" and to follow their company.

Time & Cost Considerations: The Home Depot's marketing team is doing a good job at incorporating the College Gameday sponsorship effectively into their Twitter feed. The company is not responding to its customers' complaints however.



Overview: Lowe's uses its tweets to target women homeowners. The company tweets about tips for your home, DIY projects, and about content on the company's other social media accounts. Lowes tends to tweet about once or twice a day. The company will also tweet about special deals in its stores and attach a link to the tweet taking the user to the product description on the company website. Lowe's also incorporates Vine into their Twitter account. (I'll compare Vine accounts next) Lowe's is also very good at responding to customer complaints and compliments on Twitter. Unfortunately, Lowe's doesn't have as many followers as The Home Depot.

Audience Development: Lowe's attracts new followers by engaging with current customers, who tend to re-tweet the company's response, and by advertising.

Time & Cost Considerations: Lowe's puts a lot of time and money into monitoring and responding to its customers' tweets. It doesn't seem like Lowe's spends time making exclusive content for its Twitter account like The Home Depot does.

Measurement

	The Home Depot	Lowe's
Followers	236 K	175 K
# of Tweets	18.3 K	34 K
Avg. Re-Tweet	25	15
Avg. Favorite	23	20
Quality of Content (1-5)	4.5	3.7

Ruling on the Field:

The Home Depot Touchdown



It was a tough call, but The Home Depot has the advantage here. Because the company is the main sponsor for ESPN's College Gameday, they are able to be a part of natural conversations on Twitter. Every Sunday, the company tweets a picture of the next city on the College Gameday show and tries to pump up the fans. The company also is able to share a video each week featuring ESPN analyst Kirk Herbstreit who breaks down the weekend's top game. By tying its brand to the college football conversations, The Home Depot is able to attract more followers and reach more people with their tweets. Lowe's does a great job with Twitter too but unfortunately, they aren't a part of the conversations most people are having on Twitter. Even though The Home Depot gets the touchdown for Twitter, they should take note from Lowe's and learn how to respond to angry tweets from customers on Twitter.

Vine



Overview: The Home Depot uses Vine to share little tips for home improvement. Most of these tips were gardening tips for the spring as the company frequently used its hashtag #SpringMadeSimple. These videos look fun but they don't have sound and don't receive high loop numbers compared to the vines created by Lowe's. The Home Depot is trying to target homeowners with a garden with their posts on Vine. It is hard to tell how often The Home Depot posts to Vine because the company hasn't posted since May.

Audience Development: The Home Depot is not doing anything to grow its audience on Vine.

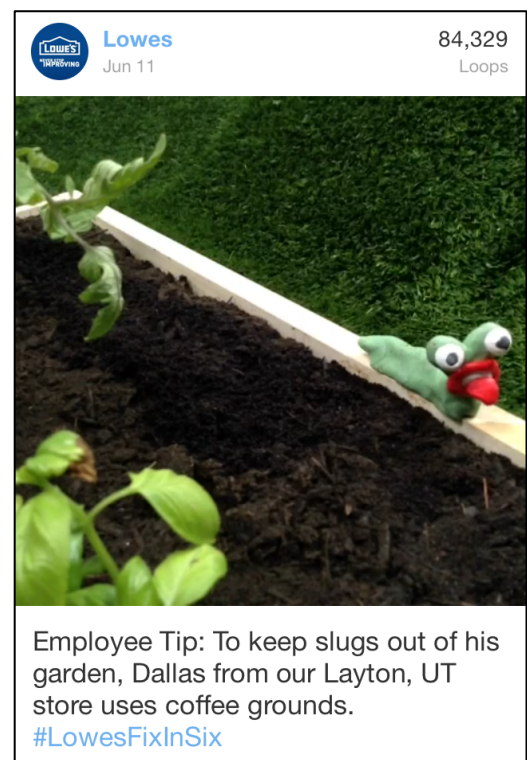
Time & Cost Considerations: The Home Depot was creating Vines quite often this spring and then abruptly stopped posting to Vine in May. This raises questions about whether the company decided to stop using the platform or if they don't have much of a budget or time to make videos.

Overview: Lowe's uses Vine to share short tips and tricks for home improvement. The company is targeting young homeowners with tips and tricks to help them save money. Lowe's does a great job incorporating their Vines with Twitter. The company tries to make one video per month for its #LoweFixInSix campaign. The campaign features many useful tips that most people haven't heard before like the post on the right which helps keep slugs out of your garden.



Audience Development: Lowe's attracts new followers by encouraging people to submit their tips for the #LoweFixInSix campaign. The company also shares their Vines on other social platforms.

Time & Cost Considerations: Lowe's puts a decent amount of time into creating their Vines. They likely film several at once and then wait to release them each month. It doesn't seem like they have a lot of time and money allotted to creating content for Vine. Although they don't put in a ton of time, the content that they create is good quality.



Measurement

	The Home Depot	Lowe's
Followers	8,158	21,282
# of Posts	34	67
Avg. Re-Vine	15	150
Avg. Likes	100	1,500
Total Loops	2,632,895	10,439,911
Quality of Content (1-5)	2.5	5

Ruling on the Field:



Lowe's Touchdown



Lowe's dominates The Home Depot when it comes to Vine. Their #LoweFixInSix campaign is highly successful because it generates a lot of re-vines and loops. It seems like The Home Depot may have given up on Vine, by analyzing their posts, it was hard to see a general strategy. Lowe's should try to make more videos for Vine rather than just making one per month. Just scrolling through their videos made me want to keep watching more.

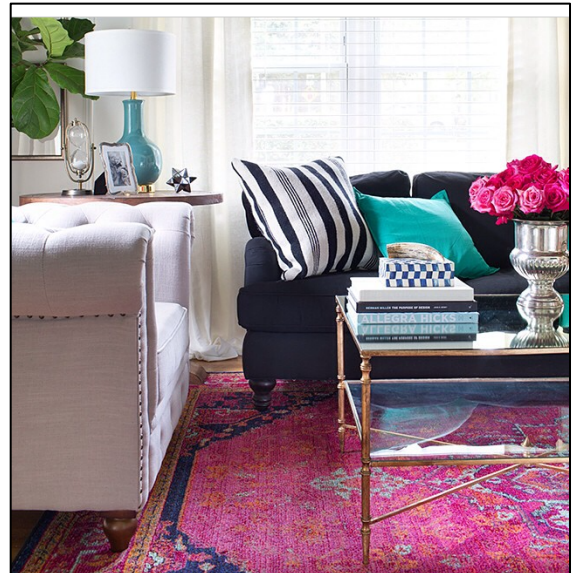
Instagram

Overview: The Home Depot uses its Instagram account to inspire ideas for home renovations and DIY projects. It was hard to find their profile at first because several stores have created their own profiles. The Home Depot is trying to target women homeowners with its photos. The company is always trying to go for the “cuteness factor” with its photos. The company often posts a picture of a room or a DIY project and then attaches a link to the product description on the company website or a link to a blog post. The Home Depot seems to try to post at least one image per day.



Audience Development: The Home Depot’s Instagram account was so hard to find that the only reason I was able to find it was because of the Instagram logo in their weekly circular.

Time & Cost Considerations: The Home Depot marketing team seems to have a good portion of their time and money budgeted towards Instagram. The pictures that they post look very good and attract the audience that they are looking for.



♥ 802 likes

● [homedepot](#) [@hunted_interior](#) mixed modern and traditional design to create a dramatic new living room with help from [@homedecorators](#). Get everything for this transformation here: thd.co/livingroom. [#HomeDepot](#)



♥ 994 likes

● [loweshomeimprovement](#) A wall of natural stone tile adds the perfect amount of texture to this bathroom. See more info on the stone tile by clicking the link in our profile. <http://like2b uy/loweshomeimprovement> (link available in profile) [#Lowe's](#) [#Stone](#) [#Bathroom](#) [#Inspiration](#)



Overview: Lowe’s also uses its Instagram account to inspire home renovations and DIY projects. Lowe’s posts photos about once or twice a day. The photos are of beautiful projects that homeowners would want to incorporate into their home. The company uses the photos to not only inspire their audience but to also give them tips on how to improve their homes. The images contain links to the company website and to other social media platforms. Lowe’s is unique because they let various Instagram users “take over” the Lowe’s account and post images of DIY project ideas that they completed. This gives the profile a change of flavor every now and then

Audience Development: Lowe’s does not do a super great job growing their audience on Instagram. On their print ads, they leave Instagram off of its “Follow us on” list. They are good at sharing their photos on Facebook though.

Time & Cost Considerations: Lowe’s definitely puts time and effort into having a good presence on Instagram. The reason that they don’t have as many followers as The Home Depot is because they don’t promote their Instagram account.

Measurement

	The Home Depot	Lowe's
Followers	73 K	47 K
# of Posts	753	669
Avg. Likes	800	750
Quality of Content (1-5)	5	5

Ruling on the Field:

The Home Depot Field Goal



It was tight again, but The Home Depot was able to punch in a field goal over Lowe's. Both companies are pretty even when it comes to Instagram except when it comes to number of followers. The Home Depot has 26,000 more followers than Lowe's. Considering that Lowe's isn't as big as The Home Depot, this number seems about normal, but flip back and look at the Facebook numbers. Lowe's has almost twice as many Facebook likes than The Home Depot, they should be able to attract this audience on Instagram. The Home Depot earns 3 points because they are able to reach more people than Lowe's on Instagram. The Home Depot probably prefers to use Instagram because it isn't a hostile environment like their Facebook page.

Pinterest



Overview: The Home Depot uses its Pinterest board to provide inspiration and ideas for home renovations, DIY projects, gardening, house parties and tailgates. The target audience for The Home Depot's Pinterest board is women who

host social gatherings and women who want to redesign their homes. The company has many boards sharing ideas for party decorations, baby nursery ideas, and more. One interesting thing that the company does is that it lets designers help make boards and compete against each other in "style challenges". Some of The Home Depot's pins could be improved by changing the wording around. For example, the pin on the left makes me think that all the company wants to do is sell me a Dremel tool. If the text is rearranged to "Personalize your pumpkin for the perfect Halloween display! Use a Dremel tool to help you cut detailed designs into your pumpkin" it doesn't feel like they are trying to sell Dremels.

Audience Development: The Home Depot mentions their Pinterest page on other social media platforms and asks customers to follow their boards in their weekly circular.

Time & Cost Considerations: The Home Depot does a decent job with Pinterest. It seems like they are putting in a good amount of time to create boards. They need to spend a little more time with

writing captions that positions the company similar to Martha Stewart instead of a retail store trying to sell Dremel tools.

Overview: Lowe's is similar to The Home Depot in that it uses its boards to inspire ideas for home renovations and DIY projects. The company also targets the same audience as The Home Depot with its boards. But what makes Lowe's stand out to me is that they understand that these women who are planning parties need more than just ideas for table decorations, they need ideas for what food to serve at the party. By posting more than just ideas for home improvement, Lowe's is able to reach its audience more effectively because the company isn't just trying to sell tiles for you to use as a place card. The boards that the company creates help get the audience to engage with them.



Audience Development: Lowe's attracts new followers by promoting its boards on other social media platforms and by asking customers to follow them in their weekly circular.

Time & Cost Considerations: Lowe's puts in an effective amount of time and money into Pinterest. They took some time to come up with a great strategy of how to engage with the audience.



Measurement

	The Home Depot	Lowe's
Followers	189,688	3,471,334
# of Boards	52	64
# of Pins	7,331	3,425
Avg. Re-Pins	50	75
Quality of Content (1-5)	3	5

Ruling on the Field:



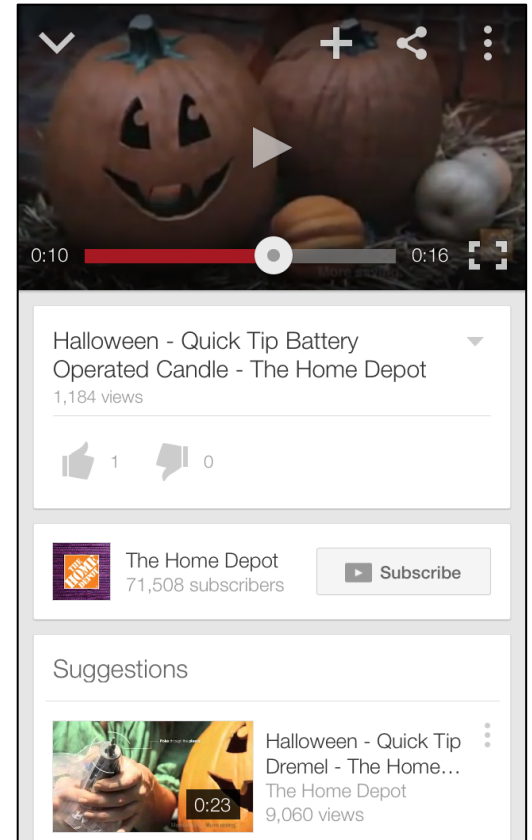
Lowe's Touchdown



Lowe's takes The Home Depot to the cleaners when it comes to Pinterest. The company's audience is about 17.5 times bigger than The Home Depot's audience. Lowe's is also in the better position because users look at them as an expert instead of a retail store. The company even pins photos of things that don't directly benefit the store, but are relevant to what the audience is doing with things they can purchase from Lowe's. Sure, you can't buy brownie mix from Lowe's, but you can purchase a new oven from them before Thanksgiving so you can bake those brownies.

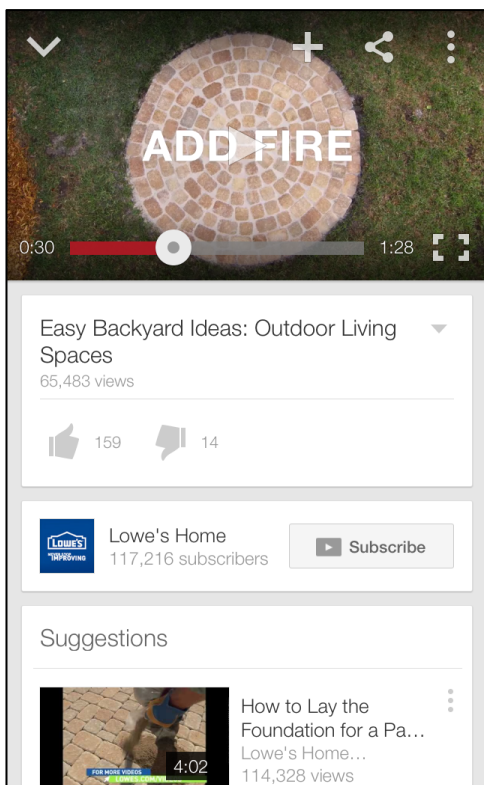
You Tube

Overview: The Home Depot has a great looking You Tube channel. They have a lot of videos ranging in topics from how-to videos to tips and tricks, to idea inspiring videos. The target audience of their You Tube channel is made up of almost all of their customers except for contractors. The how to videos help husbands learn how to tile a bathroom floor so that they can do projects themselves and the idea inspiring videos help the wives come up with a plan to renovate the house. The channel is very effective and really only has two flaws. Some of the videos are broken up into 3 parts and it can be hard to find all three parts of the video. The Home Depot should just put all three parts of the video together since there really isn't a limited amount of time for these videos. Another criticism is that some of the videos are too short and would be better if they were posted to Vine instead of YouTube, like the video on the right. The Home Depot tends to post about 5-7 videos per month.



Audience Development: The Home Depot promotes its You Tube account across several different social platforms as well as in their store and in their weekly circular.

Time & Cost Considerations: The Home Depot puts in an appropriate amount of time and money to their You Tube channel. However, the channel would be better if it were organized a little differently.



Overview: Lowe's also has a great You Tube channel. They post the same types of videos as The Home Depot and their most popular videos are the how-to videos.

Lowe's videos aren't broken up into different parts and include annotations to another video that the viewer may find interesting. Lowe's publishes about 15 videos per month to its channel. The target audience for their channel is basically the same audience as The Home Depot's channel. The only criticism with Lowe's channel is that some of the actors in the videos seem cheesy, but you can't expect to have academy award winning actors in a 5 minute You Tube video about installing a toilet. Overall, the videos are short and informative and look really good.

Audience Development: Lowe's attracts new viewers by sharing videos across several of its different social media platforms, promoting in the store, as well as in their weekly circular ad.

Time & Cost Considerations: Lowe's definitely puts in the right amount of time and money into their You Tube channel. Lowe's also takes the time to reply to viewers who post comments saying that they had an issue with the project.

Measurement

	The Home Depot	Lowe's
Subscribers	71,508	117,216
Views	33,299,483	49,357,637
Avg. Views	24,000	30,000
Avg. Likes	65	105
Quality of Content (1-5)	4	5

Ruling on the Field:

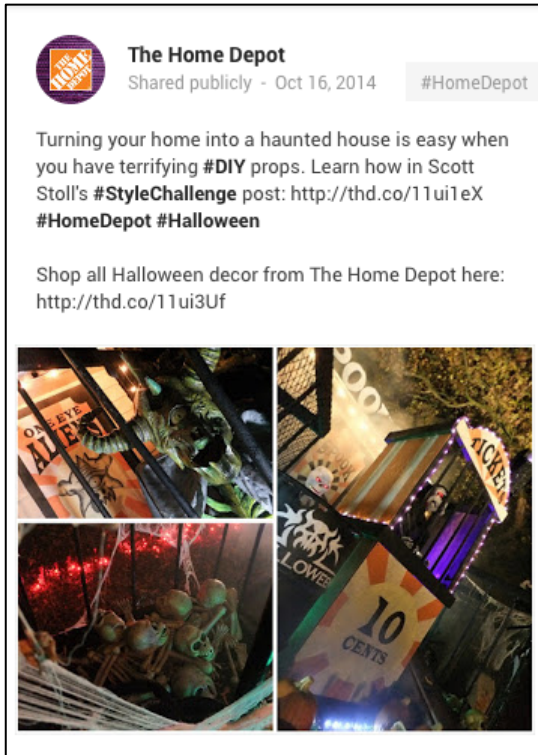


Lowe's Touchdown



Lowe's makes it into the end zone with its YouTube channel. The quality of their content helps attract more subscribers to the channel. The channel is also very easy to navigate and it doesn't separate the videos into several different parts. The thumbnails all look attractive and the length of their videos isn't very long. The company is also very effective at when they release videos. For example, since it is fall, the company is posting videos about how to get your home ready for the winter and how to take care of your yard in the fall.

Google+



Overview: The Home Depot uses Google+ to reach younger homeowners with and without children. Their Google+ page has posts that are directed towards both men and women rather than just posts targeted towards women. The

Home Depot posts about DIY projects, children's workshops, tips for home improvement and ways to give your home a tech upgrade with LED bulbs, Wi-Fi connected water heaters, and more. The company posts about 6 times each week but does not reply to comments. Luckily for The Home Depot, there are almost no angry comments on their page.

Audience Development: The Home Depot promotes its Google+ page in its weekly circular, on its website, and on its YouTube channel.

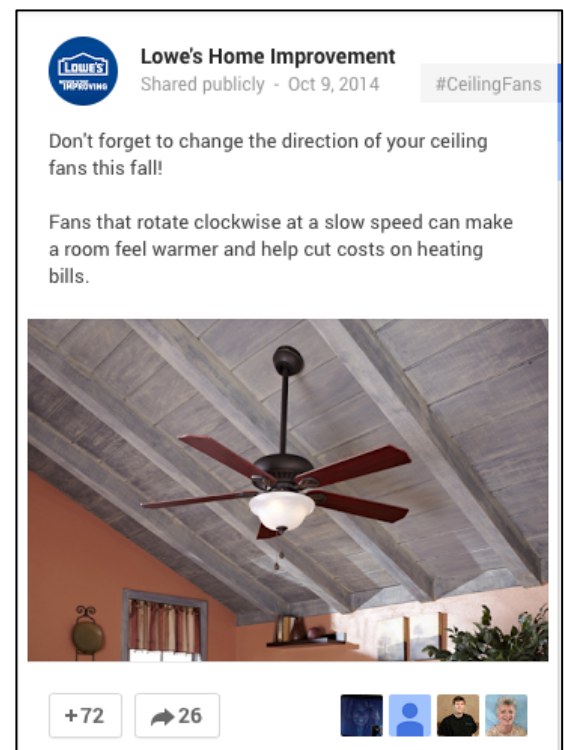
Time & Cost Considerations: The Home Depot has spent some time studying who is using Google+ and has realized that the users are typically more early adapters, and like to have the latest technology in their home. The company also knows that these customers likely have younger children so they post about ways to entertain children.

Overview: Lowe's uses its Google+ page to target younger women homeowners who are driven by technology and are interested in DIY projects. The company writes posts about what to do after moving into a new home, how to make your home a "smart home", and idea inspiring photos. Lowe's does a very good job with integrating posts from their other social media platforms on their page such as Vine and Pinterest. The company tends to post 3 times a week and like the rest of their platforms, they are very good at responding to user comments. Although the company is targeting women, many of the posts can resonate with men such as the post to the right.



Audience Development: Lowe's attracts new followers by promoting its page on their website and by asking customers to follow them in their weekly circular.

Time & Cost Considerations: Lowe's also put in a good amount of time studying Google+ and who uses it before coming up with a strategy for the platform. The content on the page is good but it isn't created intentionally for just Google+. It's important to integrate posts from other social platforms, but it's also important to spend extra time and create content that's unique for each platform.



Measurement

	The Home Depot	Lowe's
Followers	574,199	608,240
# of Views	31,259,346	18,680,087
Avg. +1's	55	80
Avg. Shares	7	10
Quality of Content (1-5)	4	4

Ruling on the Field:

Lowe's Field Goal



Lowe's is forced to settle for three as The Home Depot also has a pretty good Google+ page. Both companies know who their audience is on the platform, both post to the page on a regular basis and engage with their audience. I give Lowe's the edge because they respond to users' comments and their engagement numbers are a little higher. Both companies receive a 4 for content because The Home Depot could improve on integrating content from other social platforms and Lowe's could improve by creating content unique to Google+. The Home Depot also needs to start replying to their users' comments. By doing this their engagement numbers should go up as it will encourage other users to engage.

Hall of Fame



Scoreboard

	Website	Blogs	Email	Mobile App	Facebook	Twitter	Vine	Instagram	Pinterest	You Tube	Google+	Final
The Home Depot	0	7	0	0	0	7	0	3	0	0	0	17
Lowe's	7	0	3	7	7	0	7	0	7	7	3	48

The Champion

Lowe's wins the Social Media Strategy Championship in a blowout game against The Home Depot with a score of 48 – 17. Lowe's is the champion because the company puts forth a lot of time and effort into managing their online presence. Lowe's is very good at creating content that resonates with their target audience.

The company is also very good at engaging with their customers by replying to tweets and Facebook comments and by sharing content that makes their audience want to share the post with their friends.

The content that Lowe's publishes on social media helps build a relationship between the company and the audience. Sometimes the company doesn't even mention that they have an item that they want to sell which makes them fit in with your friends on social media instead of sticking out like an advertisement.

Because the company takes the time to address customers' needs and complaints on social media, Lowe's is able to have a very good sentiment ratio (16:1) and a good percentage of passionate fans (47%).



Most Valuable Platform



Lowe's MVP is by far its Facebook page. The company spends a large amount of time posting to the page and replying to their users' comments. The platform is the place where their audience interacts with the company the most. Lowe's does a great job addressing complaints and even created a "rant or rave" tab for customers to share their experiences with the company. If you read some of the comments on the posts on the Facebook page you will see Lowe's answering all sorts of questions that you wouldn't expect the employee running the social media page to know off the top of their head such as "What paint color is that in the picture?" The company is also very aware of what makes their customers happy and angry. Lowe's does a great job of promoting its Facebook page in all of its publications and communications.

Key Takeaways



How Lowe's stays ahead: Lowe's is already doing a great job with its social media strategy. The company should work on its blog and email marketing so that they can be better positioned as the best home improvement expert in the industry. **The company is in the fourth stage of digital marketing evolution and engaging with their customers on social media.** If the company works on improving their email and blog, they can move more smoothly into the fifth stage of the evolution, marketing automation. Moving into this stage will allow the company to see how their customers interact with the brand and which channels are the most

effective for different customers. In order to maintain the edge over The Home Depot, the company should also stay up to date with emerging social platforms and technology. For example, Lowe's should look into using iBeacons in their stores. iBeacons would allow the company to push notifications onto their customers' smartphones. These messages can be updated throughout the day and can promote different "flash sales" to help the company move inventory and increase revenue. Companies like Piper are pioneering the iBeacon technology and have already started to deploy beacons in test markets.

In some of the evaluations of the platforms, the number of page and average post likes were judged. While some marketers may believe that it is more important to have higher numbers than it is to have quality content, in the case for Lowe's, the company has created good quality content and the content has helped to increase the page likes and post likes.

How The Home Depot Gets Better: By looking at the scoreboard on the last page, it looks like The Home Depot has no chance of catching up to Lowe's when it comes to social media. But the company really just needs to make a few changes to the execution of their social media strategy to compete better with Lowe's.

The Home Depot must improve on replying to the comments that their audience leaves on their social media platforms. Social media is a two-part communication tool. The first part is the company posting content and the second is the customer engaging with that content and with the brand. By not responding to customers, The Home Depot isn't engaging with its customers and encouraging brand love. The company is also allowing rabid angry customers to hijack the message the company is trying to convey. This can deter a lot of customers away from the brand.



The Home Depot is currently in the beginning stages of the fourth stage of the digital marketing evolution and is trying to engage with their customers. In order to move towards marketing automation, the company needs to enhance their social media strategy execution. The company is on all of the right platforms and is targeting the right audience that they need for success, but they are not properly engaging with these customers.

Engaging with customers lets them know that you think they matter and are important. If a company engages with a customer, that customer is more likely to do business with the company as long as the engagement ends on a positive note. Even though the company is currently the #1 home improvement store in the US right now, it will need to improve its social media presence in order to stay relevant with millennials.

