



# HOW TO LEVERAGE SOCIAL MONITORING TO INFORM CONTENT AND PR STRATEGY

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Data is growing faster than ever before, and by the year 2020, about **1.7 megabytes** of new information will be created every second for every human being on the planet. This is largely thanks to people's passion for creating and sharing content online.

Additionally, **more than 22 million Canadians** had a social media profile as of 2017, and that is only continuing to rise. Flourishing social media platforms and tried-and-true media outlets and blogs have set us on an upward trajectory regarding content creation.

Though people are sharing selfies and brunch pictures, they are also increasingly engaging in intelligent, meaningful conversations that brands can harness for strategic social media monitoring.

If a brand isn't analyzing social, there is a strong chance they are going to miss a majority of the conversation now and especially in the not-too-distant future.

Millennials are poised to ramp up social media volume, making it the primary means of content distribution and real-time analysis essential.

The volume of conversation may seem intimidating, but with the right strategies and proper media monitoring tools, you can build audience personas, track influencers along the path to purchase and leverage social data for a more targeted business strategy that hits your bottom line.

Companies that understand social media's impact on their brand, marketing, and PR strategies benefit in a myriad of ways. Below we'll take a look at how social intelligence helps you better understand your:

- **Target audiences**
- **Industry**
- **Brand**



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But first, let's explain a little further why media monitoring is something you should consider for your brand:

## Why Social Analysis Is Essential to Success

If you are not analyzing social data, you are missing an opportunity to generate nuanced insights faster and less expensively than via other research modalities such as surveys, focus groups, ethnographies and more. The ability to quickly hone content and messaging strategy on the fly to improve relevance allows you to pivot mid-campaign and recognize better results rather than waiting until four to six weeks after a campaign is completed.

Social data can help to connect the dots for marketers and communicators as well.

**Social media monitoring** can be used to help explain a drop in Net Promoter Scores in July, for example, or why you see a decline in sales among millennials in a specific region. The ability to align research frameworks and utilize various lenses and segmentations to view the data produces richer, more actionable findings.

Even though social media monitoring tools are powerful for businesses today, **58 per cent** of brands don't know what people do after they consume their content and two-thirds don't have contextual insights into audience behaviour. When bearing in mind that online social data is only becoming more complex, this shows an enormous insufficiency of contextual data.

Moving towards more insight into what actions, attitudes and perceptions exist and how they shift over time, or in relation to particular campaigns and initiatives, can inform strategic planning. What content drives engagement, interaction and behaviours? What drivers move a consumer along the path to purchase or influence a response to a call to action (CTA)?

Insight into consumers' habits and preferences, unmet needs, and pain points helps both marketers and communicators make better strategic decisions.

Social analysis is also vital as a PR strategy for brands. In-depth monitoring locates potential pitfalls right away so that they can be adverted or dealt with immediately. This kind of social insight also gives communications teams the ability to gauge sentiment throughout a content marketing campaign while keeping them ahead of events.

## Discover What Your Target Audiences Are Talking About

As an industry, communications is moving beyond blunt metrics like share of voice and sentiment toward contextual insights drawn from integrated media intelligence. The ability to understand perceptions about your brand and reputation risks among various audiences



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you are targeting such as customers, prospects, employees, or investors informs strategy for objective setting, content and messaging direction, operational tactics, measurement frameworks and more.

A better understanding of where you are and what you're up against competitively provides the ability to see how you're moving the needle over time. What is working against your objectives and what needs adjustment?

The enormous amount of data available via social analysis makes it easier for brands to understand the demographic and psychographic profiles of those audiences as well.

Demographic profiling helps to determine who your target audience is regarding age, sex and location among many other variables. Psychography enables you to understand that audience's personality, values and interests based on how they behave on social media. What do they post? What do they like?

Understanding both who your audience is and what they value will enable you to create more targeted campaigns.

For a long time in marketing and public relations, building personas was a time-consuming challenge. With social analysis and the amount of data it provides, persona building becomes much less resource-intensive.

In some instances, whether analyzing a real-time event or your brand in general, you may find audiences you had never considered before.

Here's how you go about it:

#### STEP 1:

#### SEPARATE BY DEMOGRAPHICS

Segmenting your target audience by age, industry, geography and other identifying factors enables you to visualize their needs better and speak to them with more targeted messages and content.

Cision recently had success with **Bayer** by separating out the demographics they were trying to reach and narrowing down their target audience. They were able to increase the awareness of the next generation with their social and digital video campaign.

Identifying the age group that is most engaged, for example, can help you provide targeted communication without bothering those likely less interested in an event with an extra touch.

#### STEP 2:

#### SEGMENT BY CONSUMER INTEREST

A picture that showcases the audience interest of your industry enables you to understand how your target audience feels about issues and reacts to the content you share.

Considering that more than half of comms pros (**52 per cent**) said their biggest challenge is determining what content is most effective, most brands need help or have opportunities for improvement.

Understanding people's interests are extremely valuable to persona building and driving sales. By gathering contextual insights

from segmented social media monitoring analysis, your brand can avoid losing opportunities and increase the competitive edge by focusing on what your audience wants to read, share and engage with on social.

### STEP 3:

#### FILTER

Filtering data enables brands to sift through and find the needle in the haystack, which is the person most interested in your content. With the right social analysis, you can automate that search and act as a magnet to find that needle, filtering through layers of data to find your target consumer.

Retailers, for example, might want to have filters for mothers, fathers, millennials or Generation Z, among others. This identifies the needs, wants and pain points of each group, and provides the messaging and content to introduce them to your brand and its offerings.



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## Better Understand Your Industry and Competitors

At the most basic level, social media monitoring and analysis will show you what messages, content and tactics competitors use on which channels and how their audiences respond. You can use these insights to inform your own communications strategy, whether it's to compete with them directly or to pivot the strategy you're using.

Synthesizing these conversations enables you to identify what resonates, and what doesn't, with a particular audience. From there you know when to engage with them in a specific moment or whether to change content strategies.

Here are four steps to better understand your industry through social analysis:

### STEP 1:

#### PLAN IN ADVANCE

The key to being able to react quickly to social media involves taking time to think about and set up your program to get the relevant, valuable data you need.

To make analysis easier, structure your data and listening focus around the user handles, topic hashtags and industry keywords you want to evaluate. Analyze even the smallest

competitors because the most significant innovation and disruptors could be coming from them. To build those filters, speak with subject matter experts or third-party analysts, like Cision, who can help with consulting on what's necessary for your branding and communication needs, while utilizing best practices to ensure you have a system optimized to bring in the most relevant content.

#### STEP 2:

#### CAST A WIDE NET

One mistake many make in social analysis is focusing only on the branded conversation. Traditionally brands look at themselves and their competitors but are missing opportunities at thematic or industry levels to uncover emerging issues, up-and-coming competitors and unmet needs of consumers. Social media provides such a vital resource comms can tap into to maintain or gain a competitive advantage.

Remember, people may not mention your brand by name or use the hashtag you so carefully crafted. Cast a wide net to include misspellings and parodies of your brand's name to enable you better to catch all that is relevant.

For example, if your brand needed to identify new potential customers, you wouldn't want to limit yourself to those already interacting with your social posts. With a strategic social analysis program, you could focus on conversations around similar topics and among competitors' followers to understand what motivates people to get involved in the discussion. Pinpointing those motivators enables your brand to expand its communication and content strategies to include them, thereby increasing the size of your audience and eventually your customer base.

#### STEP 3:

#### BENCHMARK AGAINST COMPETITORS

Understanding the performance of your campaigns and engagements versus your competitors provides an idea of the true effectiveness of your communication.

For example, if you're only focusing on the share of voice, you may think you're losing the social media battle. But without moving past the quantifiable data to the quality data, you won't be able to truly know how your brand stacks up against your competitors.

Your analysis should include looking into how often your competitors post on social media, what do they like or favorite, what types of posts do they comment on, how they respond to their audiences as well as the type—and context—of content distributed.

#### STEP 4:

#### ANALYZE PRE/POST CAMPAIGN

An event, or a campaign, may only last days or weeks, but if it's successful it will have ripples long after the end date. It's best to analyze for at least two to three times as long as you think the conversation will be happening, even if that's after the campaign has ended.

Even if there isn't a lot of buzz about the event long after its conclusion, you may be able to use the remaining chatter to pinpoint those who are genuinely engaged and cater future campaigns or messages to them.

## What This Means For Your Brand

Social analysis allows you to listen in on what your identified audiences and competitors are talking about organically and

inexpensively. No posed questions, no multiple-choice answers, no drawn-out focus groups that drain both your time and budgets, but genuinely unrestricted, direct-from-the-source insights on what matters to your customers and prospects.

Some of the most profound insights are in discussion forums where people have a shared purpose. They come together, establish trust and build relationships, and then their discussion spans topics or issues that drew them to a community in the first place. This behavior provides an excellent opportunity for very inexpensive research that is unprompted and quick.

From these conversations, you can gather detailed information about your audiences unfiltered sentiment towards your brand. You'll be ahead of the curve when it comes to uncovering emerging trends, identifying adverse reactions and preventing potential crises that arise.

Then you can create a plan to pivot your messaging as needed to harness the positive results, as testimonials for your product or service, create relevant content and address the unmet needs.

## Social Media's Importance Poised to Grow

**Eighty-eight** per cent of 18-29-year-olds indicate that they use some form of social media in 2018. That share falls with older age groups, but social media growth has **increased** in general over the past few years.

Millennials and Gen Z are making social the primary means of communication, and for the most part, older generations are accepting social media as a necessary part of daily life too.

This will only become more prevalent as social platforms develop new ways to engage consumers. For example, Instagram now has a built-in shopping feature, and Snapchat's face filters can be bought by brands for customization.

This will only become more prevalent as social platforms develop new ways to engage consumers. Social intelligence is essential today but is going to play an exponentially more significant role in business, and it will happen in short order. Today more than 60 per cent of North Americans use social media. In a generation, that number very well could be closer to 100 per cent.



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