marketingoptions
INTERNATIONAL

Stop, Look and Listen.

Why **social media monitoring** matters in **B2B marketing**

An essential guide to discovering insight that could transform your strategies and tactics.

With over 50 million LinkedIn[1] members, 75 million people on Twitter[2] and almost 600 million Facebook[3] users, B2B marketers can be 100% certain of one thing about social media: somebody, somewhere is talking to your customers and prospects about your brand and what you sell.

How do you break through the billions of conversations to find the ones that really matter? And how does this help you develop 'closed loop', penetrative marketing?

86% of B2B organisations used social media in 2010[4], but how many really know what was achieved with their spend? This White Paper shows you how to find out – and how you can use the insight to improve the return for your business.

This White Paper addresses the principles, methods and benefits of monitoring social media. It tells you all you need to know about:

- **Why monitoring social media helps marketers**
- **What your target audience wants to talk about**
- **Where they are in the buying cycle**
- **How to improve 'fit' with your target audience**
- **When your audience is most active in social media**
- **How to tell who is influencing the market**

[1] http://www.twitterrati.com/2010/01/26/75m-twitter-users-but-growth-slowing/
[2] http://blog.linkedin.com/2009/10/14/linkedin-50-million-professionals-worldwide/
[3] http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/technology/2011/01/facebook-hits-600-million-users-facebook-executive-says.html
[4] http://www.bizreport.com/2010/05/report-b2b-firms-embrace-social-media.html

Why social media monitoring helps marketers

- **How do you know if you are using social media in the most effective way?**
- **How do you pick out conversations most relevant to your company?**
- **How do you turn 'market buzz' into actionable marketing strategies?**

If you are using social media for marketing, you need monitoring services to tell you what is going on in the market.

Social media monitoring – often called 'Listening' – filters and analyses posts of every kind from right across social media, according to keyword-style criteria that are customised to your brand, industry, competitors and so on. Listening is carried out using automated tools to interrogate data gathered and warehoused by the software providers. There are many of these tools available, mostly as free utilities or SaaS (Software as a Service). You can also outsource the task to a marketing or PR agency, who typically use a combination of different tools and charge research and analytics fees.

Listening provides detailed, specific and above all current market research information that you can use to accurately steer strategy planning and engagement tactics. The way to get the most benefit is to carry out monitoring both as part of your planning and throughout your social media marketing engagement activity.

At the planning stage, a 'Listening Report' gives you a comprehensive and actionable snapshot of all conversations concerning your customers, your brand and your industry. Typically providing an analysis over a 1 - 3 month period, the Listening Report offers context and an understanding of what is making your market move at the social level. The findings can then be fed directly into your marketing strategy.

You can use a Listening Report to help define your objectives in social media marketing, because it identifies the main themes and business issues that your customers are focused on at a given moment. But it is vital that Listening doesn't end at the planning stage: you need to monitor continually if you are to understand and respond to changes in your market, indicated by trends within the conversation space.

Once you have established the context of your market and what it is actually talking about, the next hurdle for B2B marketers is to engage effectively in the right social groups. In other words, you need tactics to find the right conversations and get involved in them as quickly as possible – so that you can engage with the participants as successfully as possible.

A programme of continuous listening – or 'Buzz Monitoring' – facilitates this on an ongoing basis. It gives you a detailed real-time snapshot of the shape of the social market relevant to you – even pulling out specific individual conversations, bloggers and sites. Buzz Monitoring takes place continuously, and reports are typically provided on a daily or weekly basis, or even as real-time alerts if appropriate.

The beauty of Buzz Monitoring is that it offers bespoke insight and guidance on how best to join the conversations and turn them into tangible and strategised marketing activity.

> Listening Reports give you a comprehensive and actionable snapshot of all conversations concerning your customers, your brand and your industry.

What your target audience are talking about

- **What main drivers are most important and urgent to your audience?**
- **Which are the most prevalent pain points?**

Discovering the answers to these questions through a programme of Listening will help you to understand exactly what your audience is looking for. You can then tailor not only your social media activity but also other marketing campaigns. Listening will enable you to make sure your content addresses real priorities and concerns for your customers and prospects – and so leads to enhanced marketing effectiveness.

For example, last year a high-tech company was focused on initially positive market response to an increased service offering around a key product. But while a Listening Report supported this positive feedback, it also revealed an underlying negative issue about the incremental cost of service licensing that went along with the enhanced offering. Understanding this meant that the company could tailor its messaging and adopt an appropriate stance in its ongoing communications.

> Listening will enable you to make sure your content addresses real priorities and concerns.

Where they are in the buying cycle

Listening helps you figure out where prospects are in the buying cycle. Knowing this will improve both the targeting and effectiveness of your social media marketing.

You can do this by analysing conversations in different media – such as comments on a blog post, or tweets around a particular issue – and tailoring your content accordingly. This can help eliminate hours of valuable time in preparing posts or other content intended for different stages of the buying cycle.

For instance, many companies – focusing on lead generation – instinctively create marketing materials around the 'initial consideration' stage. But if Listening shows that prospects are already making product comparisons, the content will be off-target.

Taking the earlier example of the software company: having identified price as the subject of discussion among customers, Buzz Monitoring highlighted the real issue to be the complexity of multi-licence pricing. In this instance, Listening helped the company transform messaging from 'objection-handling' to 'pre-sales support' – delivered to the customer precisely where and when it was needed in the buying cycle.

Social media monitoring enables you to:

- **Separate and tag conversations and then match them up to specific conversation types (such as product review, news item, company outreach, complaint, etc).**
- **Decide how to adapt marketing tactics to address the hot topics and biggest buzz in the market.**

Buzz Monitoring then allows you to keep track of the customer's next priority as they move forward in their buying journey.

> Listening helps you figure out where prospects are in the buying cycle. Knowing this will improve both targeting and effectiveness.

How to improve ‘fit’ with your target audience

It is unwise to assume that using correct industry terminology is enough to connect with your audience. Social media is conversational and people refer to everything in a fairly colloquial way or using abbreviations and acronyms as short-hand.

It is highly beneficial for you to use the exact same terminology and abbreviations for two reasons:

1. **Aligning your language with the market makes it more likely that your content will be discovered and recognised in searches.**
2. **It makes it more likely that your audience will associate your brand with the product/ service they are talking about.**

In 2010, two well-established technology companies were using two different phrases to describe identical competitive services. Listening showed that, across social media, the term ‘data security’ was attracting ten times the number of posts of the rival phrase ‘data protection’. Once this was revealed, the rival company were able to change tack with the wording in their own content – and by using the *lingua franca* of the marketplace, they were able to infiltrate search results previously dominated by their competition and get more traffic for themselves.

A Listening Report can present such findings in a ‘conversation cloud’ to identify the common language being used. A ‘conversation cloud’ (see figure 1) is like a tag cloud in that it enables all the words being used around your industry to be highlighted and weighted according to their usage: the bigger the word appears in the cloud, the more it is being used.

You can then drill down into the terminology on an ongoing basis with Buzz Monitoring, to see with word-precision the current buzz around topics relevant to your business.

> Aligning your language with the market makes it more likely that you will be discovered in searches.



Figure 1: Sample conversational cloud

When your audience is most active in social media

You can target your social media engagement activity more precisely if you know what times of day, weekdays, or when in the month your audience are more active in social media themselves. It's a question of topicality and simply 'being there' at the right time. If you can ensure your messages reach people at the most relevant times, you will achieve much higher brand impact.

For instance, if you tweet about an upcoming event, you will reach a lot more eyeballs during working hours than you will late on Sunday evening. That tweet will get lost in the noise on Monday morning. This is especially important if you are targeting different regions and time-zones.

A real-life example was another software company who identified through Buzz Monitoring a lot of activity in their communities on Tuesdays. Previously believing that conversations were being led by official company press releases and associated news articles, Listening revealed that it was in fact tied to the periodic release of security patches on what the market had come to call 'Patch Tuesday'. Knowing this meant the company could not only streamline engagement activities and eliminate wasted hours, but also tailor messaging and content appropriately to the context of the conversations.

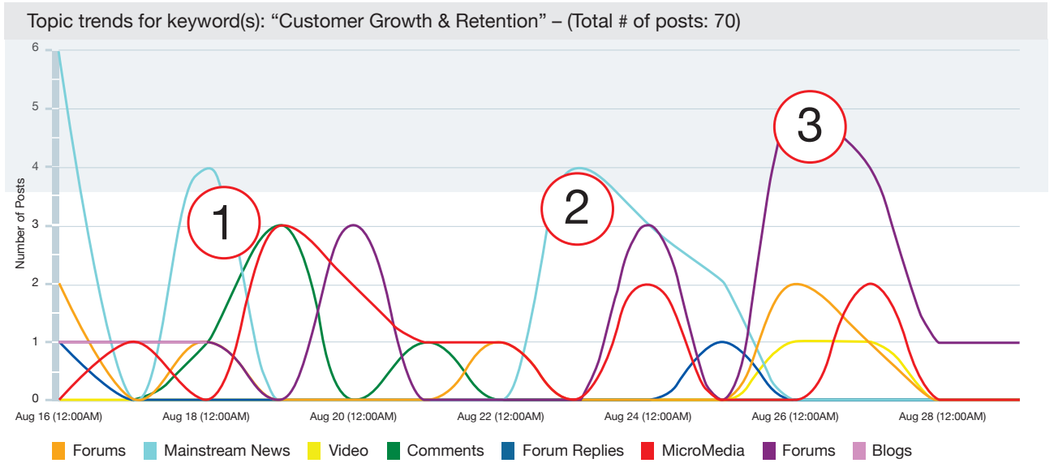
A full Listening Report will enable you to understand the periodicity of conversation in the marketplace. Buzz Monitoring can then help you keep on top of nuances that may occur – so that you are always ready to engage at the right time, enabling more effective resource planning and often saving time in implementation.

Fully utilising the capabilities of advanced Listening also allows you fully to understand exactly what triggers conversations at certain times.

Social media monitoring provides you with 'topic trends' – a clear visual representation of peaks and dips in conversation, and when they occur. You can drill down into these peaks and dips to see actual postings – and so discover why they have occurred (see figure 2).

It is very useful to ascertain whether there is a significant rise in activity directly after company press releases, or whether the industry responds to specific product queries in forums – and any number of other market-specific drivers for intensified social media conversation, such as key blog posts or analyst reports being issued. This is valuable information that you can use to plan engagement tactics with subtlety and precision.

Social media monitoring provides you with 'topic trends' – a clear visual representation of peaks and dips in conversation, and when they occur.



1. Aug 19th: Tweet: increase Your customer satisfaction with New ERP Software http://bit.ly/bgOZID #erp

2. Aug 23rd: News: Research and Markets: Enhancing Loyalty Through Customer Centricity http://bit.ly/bm3V3J

3. Aug 26th: Facebook: BK Boreyko, CEO, has a strong reputation not only as a corporate guy but also as an outstanding field leader. Vemma is a product driven company http://millionclub.vemma.com, with double digit growth and a high customer retention rate.

Figure 2: Sample topic trends graph

How to tell who is influencing the market

Listening and analysing social media activity also tells you who to monitor and engage with, by uncovering who your audiences consider to be the most influential voices. This often brings up some intriguing and valuable insights – not least that, in social media, customers are highly likely to listen to and trust each other's experiences.

Last year a leading UK professional services firm wanted to increase their presence and attract new leads through social media. The Listening Report they conducted revealed a referral from the popular technology website 'TechCrunch' in response to the question 'Does anybody know a good accountancy firm specialising in the Tech Industry?' This highlights the fact that opportunities out there may be missed by not monitoring perhaps less obvious – but nonetheless key – industry influencers, in this case TechCrunch.

It's vital to monitor and engage with industry influencers whether they are promoters or detractors. Doing so gives you some means to proactively shape opinion in the market, rather than reacting to it.

Advanced filtering capabilities are available that enable influencers to be prioritised according to network activity around them, such as their followers or subscribers, the comment-count on their blog articles, and a host of other criteria. This gives you qualitative data about who is influencing the market, to help you devise highly effective engagement tactics that develop authenticity and trust around what you have to say.

"It's vital to monitor and engage with industry influencers whether they are promoters or detractors. Doing so gives you some means to proactively shape opinion in the market, rather than reacting to it."

Summary

Listening is about knowledge. And knowing the which, where, what, when and who within social media is essential to moving beyond having a presence ‘because you should’, to developing an informed, targeted and measurable strategy as an integrated part of your marketing mix.

Stop before directing your marketing activity to the wrong customer requirements. Look at what your audience is doing within social media. Listen to their questions and priorities.

A Listening Report and regular Buzz Monitoring are the most cost-effective, time-efficient and resource-aware ways to monitor and direct engagement effectively in social media.

The findings of a Listening Report and regular updates provided by Buzz Monitoring can be fed directly into your marketing strategy to close the loop – and ensure that industry and customer feedback informs future tactics and strategy.

> It is clear that a social media strategy can generate measurable results. But on top of that, it provides measurable market intelligence that can be relied upon to continuously review the channels and platforms used.

About MOI

Marketing Options International have taken over 10 years’ user-centric digital marketing and social media marketing experience in delivering effective and measurable customer engagement and demand creation. Our digital services range from HTML emails, website design, PPC and banner advertising through to social media consulting, social media engagement, search engine optimisation and mobile app development. We create digital marketing content that delivers real value to your target audience, through microsites, webinars, videos, iPhone/Android apps, virals, user polls, eBooks and much more.

For further information, please contact:

Stuart Morgan
Digital Marketing Director

e: stuart.morgan@mointernational.com
t: +44 (0) 1932 233000

Marketing Options International
Walton Reach
Manor Road
Walton-on-Thames
Surrey KT12 2PF

www.mointernational.com

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