Tomorrow People
Digital Marketing Agency

Listening in: How to Use Social Tools to Create Content Which Converts



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The digital era has heralded an irreversible shift away from traditional campaigns to real time marketing - an approach powered by social media, which is rapidly evolving into a sophisticated set of capabilities around real time social listening.

This isn't just about listening to what customers are saying on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and other social platforms. Rather, it's about engaging with them as these conversations happen: responding, delivering content and making offers to them.



It is a sobering fact that more than 90% of consumers have discontinued communications with a company because they received irrelevant messages and promotions - according to an estimate by Forbes.

Content shared by prospects on social media, however, provides the key to addressing this.

Real time social listening offers invaluable insight into the tone of voice, format - video or infographics, for example - and platform that a business' content should use. And it can provide invaluable insight into competitors' content marketing strategies, too.

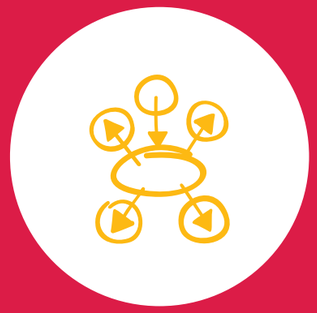
Yet, the challenge for many is perfecting the best social listening approach.

For while today's marketers acknowledge the importance of inbound marketing, a recent survey by Tomorrow People suggests 55% don't feel their content is achieving maximum ROI.

Worse, just 51% rate their own ability to provide content to customers and prospects appropriate for each stage of the buying process at 5 out of 10, or less with just 15% awarding themselves 8 out of 10 or more - according to a study carried out by Salesforce.

An estimated 60% of marketers were using social listening in 2013 and a further 24% plan to do so in 2014. Yet just 31% of marketers in the same study believe their social listening is fully effective.

To avoid this happening to your business, consider the following six steps to success:



1. Think strategically



2. Open your ears



3. Assemble the best tools available



4. Understand what to search for



5. Don't be shy



6. Make it a habit

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1. Think strategically

Don't underestimate the importance of social listening. It is a critical driver of inbound marketing effectiveness and as such, should be approached and developed strategically.

Your social listening strategy should be built from the ground up - putting in place a framework that not only utilises the most appropriate tools for your particular needs, but ensures your systems and structures are in place for insights gained to be put to best use.

Remember, listening must have an outcome.

> "Greater clarity accelerates a business' ability to understand customers social interaction about it and respond accordingly."
> Forbes.

Old marketing systems often treat customer interactions as transactions that are stored in IT silos - something a cloud-based marketing platform can help address, enabling marketers to develop the closely integrated customer experiences they want to deliver.

2. Open your ears

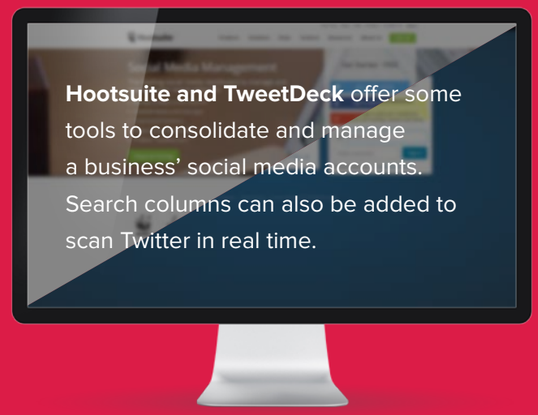
> "Social media is no longer just an option"
> Social Media Today.

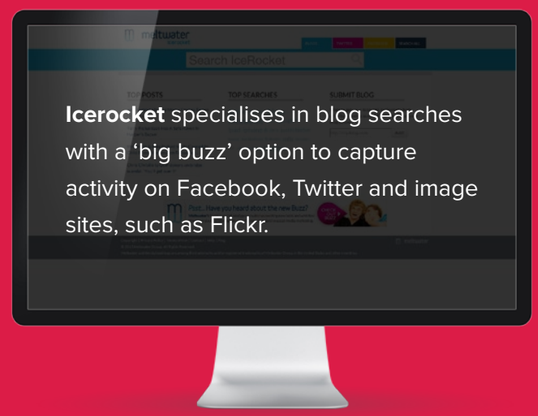
All businesses should get social, and those who already are should consider ways to take it to the next level. A good marketing cloud, for example, will provide a business with a central window on social conversation about its brand.

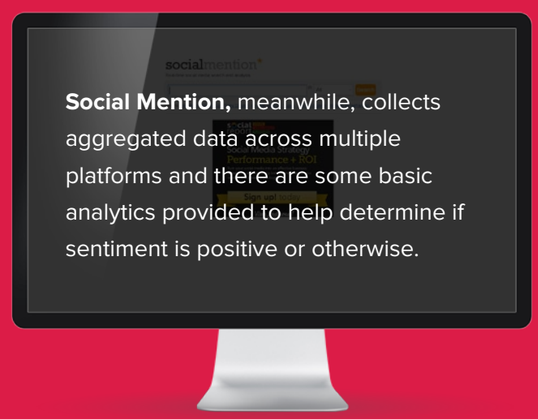
3. Assemble the best tools available

A growing array of paid-for listening systems - Radian6, for example, and Brandwatch - are now available. Many of them were assessed in a Forrester's recent 'Enterprise Listening Platforms' report.

An array of free social listening tools can be useful, too. Google Alerts provides an automated, entry level way of knowing when a website is posting about a product or brand.







None of these tools on its own is a definitive solution, as each provides only part of the picture. Running a fuller selection daily will mean that it can take only minutes to catch up with anything new.

Don't forget, testing different social listening tools is the best way to assemble the most appropriate toolkit for each business' individual needs.

4. Understand what to search for

Aside from company and brand name, a business should add into its search terms variations (including misspellings of each) along with key staff names, slogans, messages and strap lines.

By the same measure, remember: language can be a tricky thing.

So broaden your language to understand those latest abbreviations and emoticons.

Choose appropriate text and language processing analytics to help decipher when, for example, a word such as 'bad' means what it suggests ... or the opposite.



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5. Don’t be shy

As and when appropriate, be prepared to jump into conversations, post blogs, read articles and so on. Follow up and interact. Customers appreciate the transparency - and the fact you’ve been paying attention.

Because if you really want to see results, you need to listen and respond strategically - according to a recent study by Hootsuite.

Don’t be overly sensitive should someone have posted something negative, though. Do consider the context of the updates and conversations you listen in on.

Ask yourself: are consumers reaching out to you directly, or just venting to their friends?

6. Make it a habit

Take time each day to check what is being said about the business online. In social media, any response that isn’t immediate risks being too late.

Social listening: The key to content which converts

Social listening is the key to getting strategic content right which, in turn, will dictate a business’ inbound marketing success.

Getting it right enables a business to build customer (and competitor) knowledge, gain competitive advantage and monitor what leading influencers are saying about it and its competitors.

In today’s always on digital world, real time marketing is built on real time listening. Tomorrow’s winners will be those who best understand and most effectively capitalise on this.

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