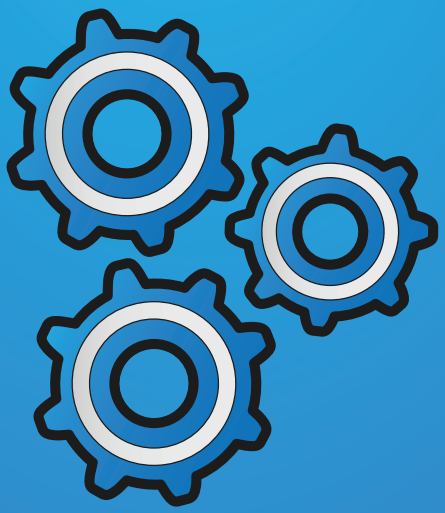


# GETTING LIKED AND GETTING DATA



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# GETTING LIKED AND GETTING DATA



## THE NEW SOCIAL MEDIA EXECUTIVE

Social engagement is now an essential dimension to every B2B marketing campaign. According to Circle Research[1], 78 per cent of marketers now include a social media stream when targeting business prospects. Twitter is used the most, (85 per cent using), followed by LinkedIn (77 per cent) and Facebook (67 per cent). At the same time, 46 per cent of B2B marketers are using webinars (source: Content Marketing Institute[2]).

Marketers who can get their brands talked about and adopted as part of that social conversation see real benefits, with 40 per cent of business buyers turning to social media for vendor-related information, such as pricing, product descriptions and expert engagement (source: IDG[3]) . Little wonder that companies in the FTSE 100 had worked to attract 14 million followers to their corporate Facebook pages and 1 million followers on Twitter by the end of 2011 (source: The Group[4]) .

But winning engagement in the social space is only part of the challenge. To develop prospects through the early stages of their interest and progress them towards purchase and then retention, marketers need to be able to continue the conversation outside of social networks.

That means capturing contact data with the associated permissions to use it. Without that data dimension, marketing in social networks is a broadcast activity that lacks the potential to target, profile and track.

And this is where problems can arise. Social networks are possessive of their users, even if they are keen to get their hands on advertisers' budgets. Business users of those networks are also in the early stages of understanding how any personal information they provide online may or may not be used by third parties.

Understanding what data can legitimately be extracted from social networks — through authorised APIs and via socially-enabled content like webinars — is one side of turning social engagement into direct marketing. The other side is devising tools and tactics that draw business executives out of those networks and into the brand's own domain, where data capture can take place in a clear and informed way.

This whitepaper considers how brands can use webinars as an asset within social marketing campaigns to both engage with business prospects and customers and also to capture contact and profile information on prospects.

1 "B2B Social Media Marketing Report", Circle Research, 2012
2 "B2B Content Marketing Benchmark, Budgets and Trends", Content Marketing Institute, 2012
3 "Study finds supply chain slow to adopt social media", BtoB April 2012
4 "FTSE100 companies have 14m Facebook fans", The Group, February 2012

# GETTING LIKED AND GETTING DATA



## GETTING INTO THE WALLED GARDEN

Social networks are all about connecting people. For B2B marketing, they provide an ideal platform for providing content, links and events and building a community of interested parties. Any business brand will want to get into more direct contact with those followers — which is where the problems can begin.

It may come as a surprise, but Facebook does not allow marketers to freely access fans' data on the social network. With 845 million users worldwide, those user profiles look like a critical asset for a business that needs to return value to the shareholders who backed its recent IPO — which may explain why the company is guarding that data so carefully.

At present, a brand that sets up a company page in Facebook can only see aggregated data on its followers — such as age bands and cities of residence — using the Insights API. This is the same data set that is provided when a Facebook Like button is added to socialised content, such as a webinar. Users who participate in that event can press the Like button to let their friends know they enjoyed it — the website producer will get anonymised, aggregated analytics on the type of people who have liked it, but no specific data on them.

The path to more direct information is via the Graph API, which can call up profile data from individual user pages (and programmed to run such calls in batches). All the items on a user page (likes, status, friends, etc.) are treated as data objects, as are the connections between them.

However, there are limits to this. Only public information within a Facebook user page can be obtained immediately. Typically, this will be first and last names (and photo). At the next level, information that a user has decided to share with everybody on the social network can be obtained via an access token that has to be requested from the individual. The deepest level of specific items of data, such as email address, will require extended permissions.

If these access tokens and permissions can be won — through social apps, for example — then data can be drawn down to the database via the API. At that stage, it will still need to be mapped onto a conventional database to be usable by marketing. This can be laborious.

However, the data sharing culture online is still in its early days. As Facebook itself explains: "There is a strong inverse correlation between the number of permissions your site requests and the number of users that will allow those permissions. The greater the number of permissions you ask for, the lower the number of users that will grant them; so we recommend that you only request the permissions you absolutely need for your site."

Given this recommendation and the multiple steps required to extract information from individual users, it is likely that linking out of a Facebook page into a webinar registration site will prove to be more effective. It will also allow you to set the specific information elements that you require in the format you want. This will make matching to an existing database far easier.



## GETTING INTO THE WALLED GARDEN

LinkedIn contact details are more accessible. First-party connections can be downloaded as a .csv file and loaded into Excel (or other databases). But the much larger business audience is to be found in issue-specific groups. Since the members of these groups do not necessarily have direct links with each other, the data can't be exported.

Instead, contact information on the members of each group would have to be cut and pasted. A number of applications exist which offer to do this in a high-volume, automated way.

However, there are issues "scraping" of open source data from social network pages, whether on LinkedIn or Facebook.

In theory, this information has been published by business executives in the public domain and is therefore an open source for anybody who wishes to use it. In practice, the value of scraped data can be questionable — does a business executive who joins a LinkedIn group and publishes his or her email address expect to be contacted directly by other third parties within that group? If not, have they published their main work email address or an address they never check? (Equally, followers on Facebook may have set their information sharing preferences to closed, but if one of their friends has a more open setting, this can publish their information in the public domain.)

The legitimacy of scraping is especially questionable in the European Union. Research agencies and technologies are developing rapidly in the United States to enable brands to scrape data, since there are fewer legal issues there. That may place European marketers under pressure to adopt this technique, but great caution should be exercised before investing heavily into it.

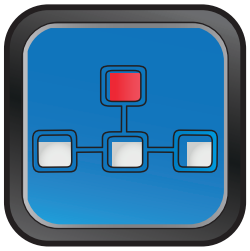




## MAKING YOUR WEBINAR A SOCIAL EVENT

Much of the content that social network users add to their personal pages is self-generated — photos, videos, blogs and tweets. Increasingly, however, they are also using third-party generated content to help give their social page more depth. Social apps are a prime example of this

Another is brand-generated content. LinkedIn members repost and share a wide range of material that is relevant to their professional activities — and, by extension, to their connections, too. Providing high-value content that can be shared socially deepens the engagement that B2B marketers are looking for. Webinars fit right into that social marketing dimension, as they often deliver deeper, expert insights and tips that make the person sharing the webinar appear to be better informed.



## THE RISE OF THE SOCIAL APP

If you have given a presentation and used SlideShare to make it available to the world, then you already know about social apps. Many social networks make it easy to embed these simple tools into user's' pages as a way of encouraging their use of the network itself.

Social apps add value to the experience and can be used by B2B marketers to engage prospects and customers or by those individuals themselves. The big advantage is that apps become familiar to their users, so deploying one as part of a B2B campaign does not put any extra obstacles between the prospect and their sign-up, registration, participation or purchase.

Social apps can very rapidly attract large numbers of users, but they are expensive to create, and the risk of failure is high. An unused app does nothing to drive positive results in a marketing campaign.



## THE ROLE OF THE SOCIALISED WEBINAR

Webinars are an ideal asset for the socially-enabled marketing campaign. First; they sit naturally in a category that Facebook users routinely post about — events. So a mechanism already exists for a brand with a corporate page to create and list an event and get it liked or shared by all of its followers. That generates an aggregated data stream about the profile of those fans. UPS is using webinars within its custom-built Facebook page to show companies how logistics can help them grow their business, for example.

Secondly, the webinar itself takes place outside of the walled garden of the social network. That means users who register directly on the webinar landing page can be pre-qualified, and the data capture process can be started there then further qualified through engagement devices that should be built into the webinar itself.

Socialising a webinar should always be a two-way street. Most marketers running a webinar will create a bespoke landing page where prospects can register. It is a simple matter to include social sharing buttons that allow those visitors to click a Facebook Like or LinkedIn Share — the webinar will then appear on their profile page, leveraging the viral potential of the social network in an ideal way.

Networking can be taken further by allowing Facebook comments to be added or other social network linking to be used, (such as retweeting). If the brand is already active in these different social spaces, the webinar event becomes part of the ongoing content that followers look for.

The webinar itself should naturally be advertised via banners on any social network company page. The data captured on business executives who click through from these ads becomes an important part of understanding which parts of the marketing campaign have been most effective at driving traffic — something social networks often struggle to prove. Providing a benefit for clicking through should be part of that promotion, such as offering an additional whitepaper or presentation download.

Promoting the event within the company page on Facebook should be part of the marketing build-up before the webinar. Adding updates or notifying followers about key points will maintain the momentum, although care is necessary not to overdo this. As well as having links to the webinar landing page within the company page, Facebook also allows brands to create an event. By adding a Share button to this, followers can distribute the information to members of their own network — many of whom might not yet be direct followers of the brand.

The final dimension of socialising a webinar is encouraging participants to create their own social content around it. Tweeting before, during and afterwards is one dimension of this, as is posting comments on the company page

## THE ROLE OF THE SOCIALISED WEBINAR

and their own profile page and sharing any content that is made available from the event (such as slides or a recording of the webinar).

Socialising in this way creates a data trail that can be tracked back from webinar registrations to social network sources. Marketers can understand where they are finding the best traction with their followers and which content resonates most.

To take this to the next stage — identifying those individuals and capturing personal information with appropriate permissions on them — the webinar itself should be viewed as the key point of data capture. It is customary to ask individuals to register in advance in order to participate in the live webinar. At this point, key demographic information such as gender and job title can be captured, as well as contact information (address, email address) and permissions to market through those channels.

Further qualification of those who participate in the webinar can be built in to the event. Links to further information downloads and post-event exit surveys generate specific information on those individuals who have been pushed further along the buying cycle by taking part in the webinar.

Events can be recorded and made available for viewing on demand. (This sits well with certain social networks like Pinterest, which recognises video as one of the four categories of content that users can post.) If access to the webinar recording is completely open, then those internal engagement devices and links become even more important. If registration is required, then data capture can happen in the usual way.



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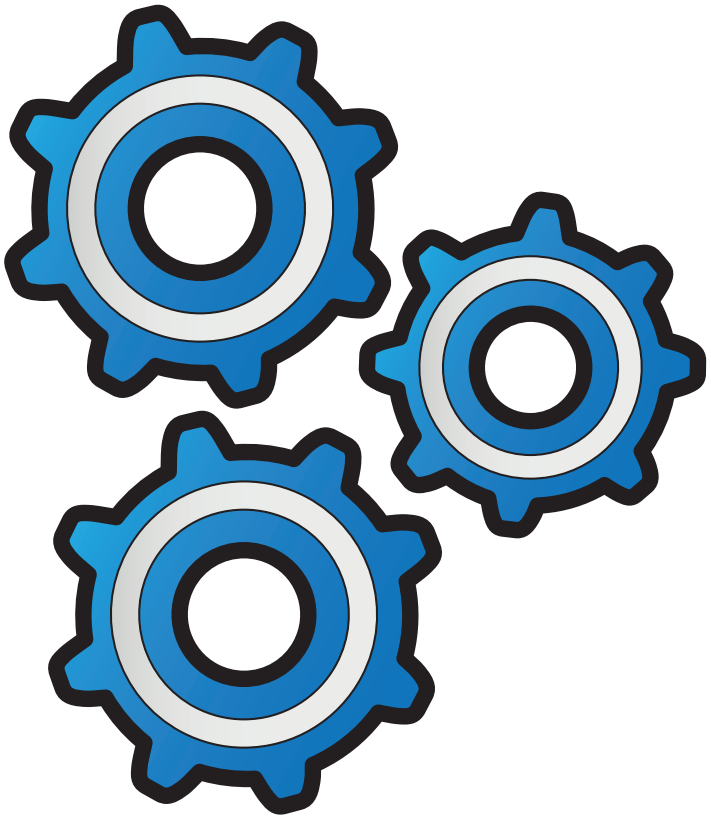


## SUMMARY: GET LIKED, GET DATA

If webinars are already part of your B2B marketing plans, then understanding how to socialise them and using those links to drive data capture will add further benefit and successful outcomes. If your marketing already has social media activity, but is not currently using webinars, then they represent a valuable opportunity to extend engagement and advocacy programmes beyond the walled garden of the network and into the owned space of the brand.

To make this work, it is important to incorporate social tools into webinar promotion that business users are already familiar with and accustomed to using — Facebook Like and LinkedIn share buttons, retweeting prompts, etc. These start to tie the event back to the online follower community and create a two-way interaction.

It is also essential to provide as many opportunities as possible for business users to provide their profile and contact information directly to your brand. Ultimately, this is how potential prospects can be further marketed to and developed into customers. Since social networks are keen to hold onto this data for themselves as much as possible, it is up to marketers to provide compelling reasons for users to engage directly. Webinars sit right at the heart of that process.



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## About the Author

David Reed, consultant editor for marketingfinder.co.uk, is also the editor of DataIQ, the journal of data management, editor of the IDM Journal of Direct, Data and Digital Marketing Practice and course editor for the IDM Award in Data Management. He also founded The Data Governance Forum to represent, inform and connect end-user organisations which manage personal information and are looking to maximise its value to their business. David has a 20-year track record in journalism covering data and direct marketing in the UK. In recognition of this, he was elected to the DMA (UK) Roll of Honour in 2004, the only journalist and non-practitioner to join the list.

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