

Tomorrow People
Digital Marketing Agency

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How to

CREATE A CONVERSATION AUDIT TO DRIVE B2B MARKETING SUCCESS

Find out how to create a conversation audit that delivers data on your personas and their pains.

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WHY AUDIT?

Businesses used to be able to dictate their story, to push their messaging out and tell people what they wanted and why. Think of this as shouting your message through a megaphone. The internet changed all that. The megaphone is gone and messaging is now transmitted through quiet conversations that engage your prospects over issues that they can relate to.

In this new landscape knowing the personas you are targeting is key to ensuring a successful and respectable conversion rate throughout your inbound marketing programme. Whether you are revisiting these personas or creating them for the first time, a conversation audit is the best way to uncover their business pains and online topics of discussion.

Listening to what your targeted personas are discussing not only enables you to create content that resonates but also to open a successful two way conversation between yourself and your prospects - guaranteeing inbound marketing success.

HOW TO GO ABOUT YOUR AUDIT?

Once you've decided to conduct a conversation audit the most important thing to keep in mind is, as with most things, to approach it in a methodological manner. The first step of this methodology? Ask yourself, 'what are you looking for in the first place?' in other words - establish your objectives.

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Deciding what it is you are hoping to achieve by conducting a conversation audit is key to the success or failure of the project. While such an audit is designed to be pretty comprehensive, the conduction of an audit without key objectives and areas of focus is likely to result in the amassing of a lot of data. Although interesting, this amount of data does not actually provide you with a comprehensive picture.

So consider, is it greater persona insight you require? Insight into customer sentiment towards your brand, a segment of your brand or one of your products? Is your area of focus all social media conversations or a combination of social media conversations and searches? Are these more relevant in one geographic area than another?

Whatever the scope of your conversation audit, its objectives need to be at the forefront of your mind.

REMEMBER:



Chose your key objectives



Chose an area of focus

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To ensure that you're listening to the right conversations, you need to determine what you're looking for. This is about adopting the right mindset. You should not approach this from your brand's point of view but from the viewpoint of your customers. To ensure you're asking the right questions, you need to decide what you want to listen to, what kind of topics you want to cover and the information you are aiming to accrue from the audit.

With the right process in place, the audit will allow you to analyse:

- What people are talking about in your sector
- If and how people are talking about your brand
- What topics and issues are driving online conversations
- If prospects want a particular product feature or service that your competitors are ignoring
- News, trends and industry topics.

Your conversation audit has the potential to generate a large volume of results and data, some of which may not be entirely relevant. You can drill the data down to critical metrics including demographic information, age group and job role. This listening exercise will give you a clearer idea of who you should be targeting when it comes to content creation.



Define a timetable

Measure your audit over a 30-day period - at minimum. This amount of time is fine for an overview of conversations, however, you will need a wider time frame if you want to look at longer term trends or identify changes that have occurred.

Decide on a location

Are you aiming just for the UK or are you analysing across multiple territories? Remember, the more territories, the more data to crunch, so consider starting 'small' before going global.

Target the right conversations

For B2B, focus your search on business and corporate conversations in the online space.

Create key industry terms and related variants

These should focus on key terms and words within your sector. So, for instance, if you are a B2B telecoms provider, you would use keywords such as: Fixed line, ISDN, VOIP, Private Circuit, Leased Line, Ethernet Circuit, VPN and Broadband.

Construct Boolean queries

Most listening tools use Boolean search logic, so it's important that you familiarise yourself with this skill if you are to achieve the right results.

The five elements of syntax that you need to understand are:

- And, enabling all subsequent search terms to appear in the results
- Or, which provides options within a search, creating a list of possibilities where only one match is important
- Not, which improves the relevancy of search results as it acts as a command of exclusion
- Quotation marks, which wrap around keywords that must be kept together, refining results
- Brackets, which give priority to particular key terms above all other elements within complex search strings.

At the heart of the process is generating topic lists which are relevant to the areas into which you wish to glean insights. Remember you only get out of it what you put in.

If you create nebulous, wide-ranging sets of keywords and topic searches, expect a raft of unfocused results that will be almost impossible to pull anything out of.

Instead, set up the right stream and the right search query. Use SEO to pin down critical keywords based on your own expert knowledge of what your customers will most likely be talking about. List as many variations as possible to construct search queries that will cover as much relevant and targeted ground as possible.

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Don’t accrue BIG DATA with small value.





EXAMPLE CONVERSATION AUDIT TOPIC LIST:

- **Brand names:**
  Tomorrow People, Hubspot, Eloqua
- **Products and services:**
  Inbound marketing, marketing automation
- **Theme, topics and sectors:**
  Lead generation, content marketing
- **Personas:**
  Marketing director, Marketing manager
- **Pains and issues:**
  Lead quality, marketing ROI, sales and marketing alignment
- **Filters and exclusions:**
  Exclude financial services sector
- **Other considerations:**
  English language only, 3 month period

REMEMBER:

- Define a timetable
- Decide on a location
- Target the right conversations
- Create key industry terms and related variants
- Construct Boolean queries



Having set your key objectives and outlined your area of focus, you now need to justify the need for a conversation audit to the board or to your clients. Be prepared to explain why you need to achieve the objectives that you have set out. Do you need deeper understanding of your targeted personas because your content just isn't hitting the mark? As with step one, think about what it is you are trying to achieve, why and then demonstrate this in real terms to the board.

Think - is your research valuable to other departments? How will this research impact on departmental collaboration? Collaboration can increase ROI while spreading the cost throughout the business, a very persuasive element that will convince the board to buy-in.

The business case you present to the board, and to clients, should emphasise the vital information that can be uncovered by listening to a variety of channels.

Your business case should highlight that a conversation audit can help you to:

- Understand the pains of your personas and the solutions they seek
- Identify what kinds of features and products prospects want from the services in your sector
- Highlight recurring themes, pertinent topics, trends and issues that your personas discuss
- Locate which channels your personas use and where you can target them.

A conversation audit can also help you strengthen your own offering as it brings the opportunity for:

Intelligence gathering and the ability to uncover the strategies your competitors are deploying to drive customer satisfaction

Customer observation, enabling you to detect their sentiment towards products and services and if there are any weaknesses you need to address.

Each of these opportunities raised by the conversation audit can be utilised and strengthened by each team. Your conversation audit will contribute to a powerful and engaging B2B marketing strategy which delivers ROI. Pitch this business case to the board for sign off and you'll be ready to create your conversation audit.

EXAMPLE CONVERSATION AUDIT BRIEF:

Department:	Marketing	Product	Customer Service
Objective:	Shape 2016 content strategy	Develop social media training programme	Hubspot training pack
Key Questions:	What are the key trends people are talking about, and what terminology should we be using? Are there any media titles we could partner with? Which industry forums should we be focusing on?	What are the recurring issues for B2B marketers re: social media? What resources are already out there for social media marketers? How many prospects are enquiring about social media tips online?	What are the most common queries for new Hubspot users? What resources are already out there for Hubspot users? What support do our competitors offer? What format should our training materials be in to reach the widest audience?
Insights:	Keyword volume Conversation sources Most engaging messages	Keyword volume Common questions re: social media Content examples Sentiment analysis	Content formats and channels Common questions re Hubspot Most engaging messages Competitor monitoring Content examples Sentiment analysis



Listening in on multiple social channels can be time consuming, especially when building a holistic view that is created manually.

There are several online conversation audit services available which enables you to enter your themes and keywords for roll-out before heading out and trawling the internet. This brings back any relevant data for analysis.

Free services:

Examples: Mention.com, buzzsumo, Hootsuite listening streams. The ideal starting point to begin experimenting with audits, these free services give users access to a limited range of channels to analyse conversations. The services will give you a useful overview of what the key conversations are and which are driving engagement.

Paid services

Examples: Radian6, Synthesio, TalkWalker
These are the full-fat monitoring services which offer a host of powerful social listening tools and present large volumes of data in an easy-to-analyse form, including charts, rankings and more. Predictably, you can expect to incur a cost for accessing such conversation audit powerhouses - but if you have undertaken the first stage correctly, the resulting data can pay dividends in ensuring successful B2B marketing campaigns.

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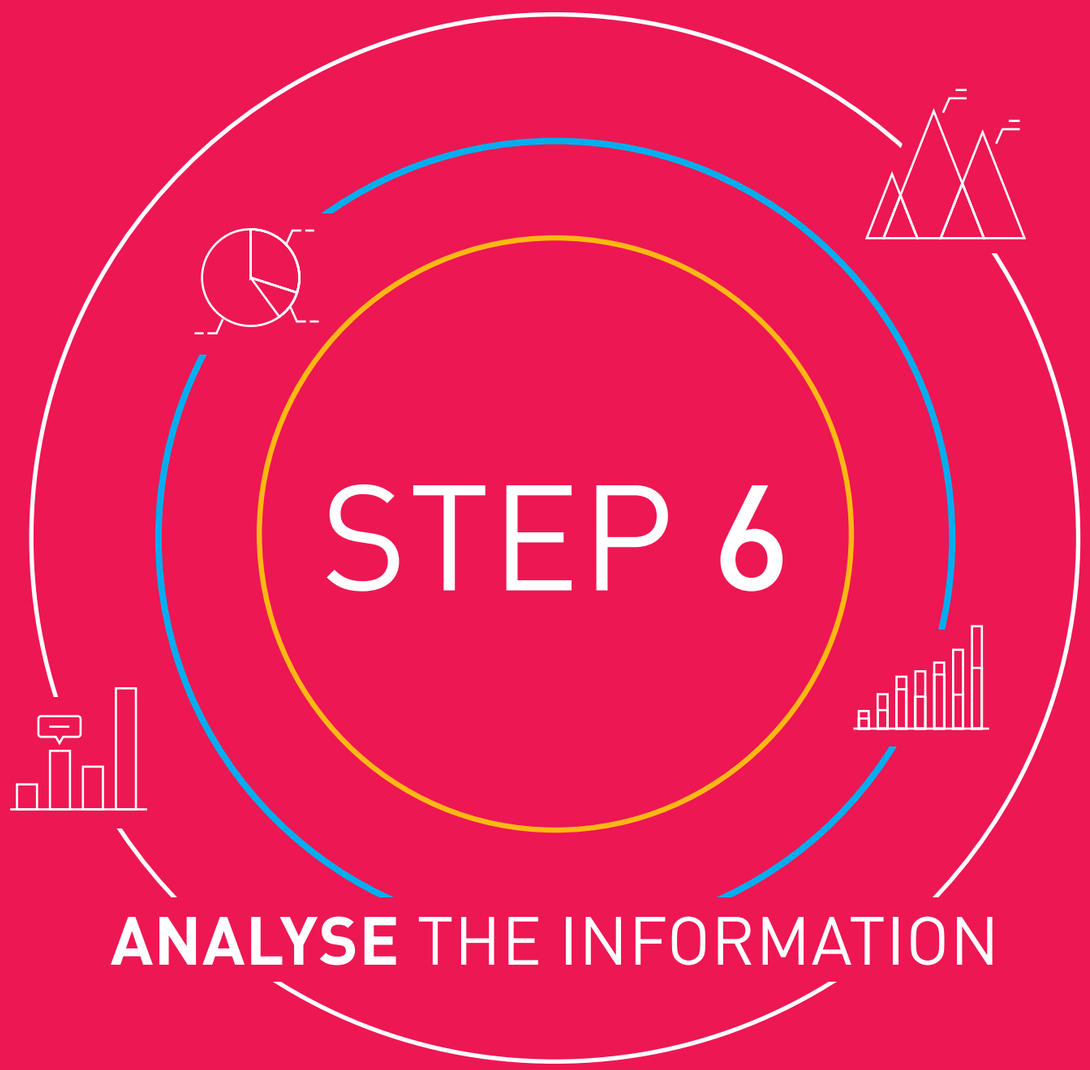


The internet contains an ever growing volume of content, from competitor blogs through to the tweets of your personas. The results your conversation audit provides the first time round might not meet your expectations. For example, your personas might be discussing industry news more than they are a specific pain that you are able to solve.

It may be that you need to allocate more time to your audit as thirty days didn't provide the depth of knowledge you needed. It may also be worth revising the key terms you have used, as well as how you have created any boolean searches.

If the volume of data is too high, you will need to invest more time in drilling down the scope. While the board may raise concerns about potential time inefficiencies, it's essential that you invest the time in getting this listening exercise right and creating maximum effect from your conversation audit.





STEP 6

ANALYSE THE INFORMATION

Once you've gathered all of the information from various channels, personas and have listened to your competitors, you should pay attention to what is being said and exactly what it means. During a successful conversation audit, it is not enough to pay attention to statistics and numbers alone. While your personas may have mentioned "ISDN lines" 250 times in the past 30 days, for example, this information is meaningless unless you know exactly what they are saying. Is it a solution they're looking for? Is it something that's disrupting their business?

When you look at what is being said, what it means and how you can interact with your personas around it, you are creating a conversation audit that drives B2B marketing success.

Example output:



A recap:

- Establish your objectives
- Define the scope
- Build a research objective business case
- Find your tools
- Refine your results
- Analyse the information

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TAKEAWAYS:

A conversation audit enables you to engage your prospects with relevant and engaging information.

A clear objective and scope is vital to ensuring that your data is meaningful.

Select the right tool to meet the demands of your conversation audit.



Now that you know to to create a conversation audit why not see how else you can improve your B2B strategy - download

HOW GOOD ARE YOU AT INBOUND MARKETING?

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