

SOCIAL MEDIA FOR BUSINESS: HOW TO LISTEN, LEARN AND LEVERAGE

This is the second in a series about social media in which we examine using the social web effectively for business, and look at ways to improve marketing performance by applying research methodologies to identify actionable items in the oceans of data out there

In [our first paper in this series](#), we discussed using social media effectively as a business marketing tool by developing and implementing a strategy, then measuring the effectiveness of your campaigns. A well-positioned social media strategy will create an endless stream of data that must be analyzed to capture insights for use in every part of your organization.

So, how do you translate all of this data that you monitor and collect across the social web into usable insights?



Applying insights gleaned from monitoring social media to improve the speed and quality of customer service and provide a more personal touch has become a standard of social media listening. Marketing and PR departments listen, engage and dispatch messaging, and sales departments uncover and create leads. Human resources departments qualify and recruit candidates.

But what about the story being told about your business or brand in real time from the people who matter: your current and potential customers, clients and other stakeholders? Are you filtering the signal from the noise well enough to hear it? Do you know what is being said, what it means, and how to respond?

Filtering the signal from the noise means uncovering insights as you listen that can help you*:

- Measure effectiveness of marketing initiatives
- Identify consumer segments
- Identify category/brand issues
- Discover unmet needs
- Find inspiration for product positioning and advertising





Themes evolve from the comments and chatter on the social web that will pique your interest and raise questions you'll want to ask.

With dynamic monitoring tools such as [Radian6](#) and others, you can query the data you are monitoring to drill down and reveal deeper insights beyond the [quantitative](#) metrics, like volume and demographics, to the more [qualitative](#) metrics, such as sentiment, key influencers, and more specific content, including actual quotes that, through [qualitative research](#) analysis, will help you answer some of your questions, and refine and raise others.

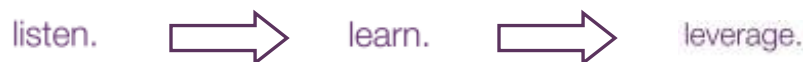
The questions that social media listening illuminates about your business or brand are best asked and explored using traditional and emerging market research methodologies, including:

- [Immersive research](#)
- [Branded online communities](#)
- Crowdsourcing
- [Virtual or traditional focus groups](#)
- [Online bulletin boards](#)
- [In-depth interviews](#) online, face to face or by phone
- Mobile ethnography



Listening can add value to the process in these ways*, amongst others:

- Defining a target market
- Identifying previously unknown consumer segments
- Identifying issues to explore further
- Exploring a potential new category
- Exploring an overarching topic, such as healthcare or sustainability, that can be used as insight for new marketing, product or service initiatives



Listening for insights using social media, formulating questions from what you're hearing, and using market research to engage in a conversation with your customers, clients and other [stakeholders](#) to probe for answers to these questions will lead to the actionable findings and recommendations you will utilize to transform your brand, products, marketing strategy and more.

Other Summer Spotlight Series installments:

- [SOCIAL MEDIA FOR BUSINESS: HOW TO LISTEN, LEARN AND LEVERAGE, Part 1](#)
- [TOMORROW IS SOONER THAN YOU THINK: A RUNDOWN OF MARKET RESEARCH'S 21ST CENTURY SOLUTIONS](#)



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