

Jumping on the Social Media Bandwagon: How to Monitor Your Brand's Presence in Social Media



By Niki Inouye

Social Media Landscape



Nearly everyone today is involved in social media to some extent. Twitter and Facebook are constantly mentioned in articles and on the news. MySpace and YouTube bands are frequently hitting it big. Regular people are able to create music, art, and books for other users to view and comment on, giving each person a chance to gain some celebrity status. Social media is different from other aspects of the Internet in that it allows people to brand themselves and connect with others from all around the world.

For companies, there is a lot of pressure to keep up with this booming marketing trend. More and more businesses want to get involved in social media but few know how. Although social media marketing is relatively easy to get involved in, there are many companies who are using this marketing tactic incorrectly and causing their business harm or wasting time. There are several steps each business needs to take before it jumps into participating in social media.

This E-book will help you find tools to successfully monitor your brand's social media presence as well as direct your attention to what to listen for, both of which are the initial steps in social media marketing.

Listen.

Before you begin monitoring your brand in social media, you need to know what to listen for.

For companies who are just becoming involved in social media, it's important to focus on listening for several things:

- A complaint or compliment that a user may have of your brand of business. If involved in social media, it's important to listen for these actions and respond to them in an appropriate manner.
- An expressed need, a question or a problem that users may have are all extremely important actions to listen for. If you can solve the user's problem, they will be very appreciative. This will lead to more success in social media marketing campaigns.
- The competitor is something else to watch for. With social media, you can see how users are reacting to your competitor's product, brand or social media presence.
- The crowd, the influencer and the thread. By knowing who is saying what, you can determine who is in control, where information is traveling, and how to get involved.



Monitoring Your Brand's Social Media Presence

There are several free and easy ways for a company to monitor its brand's social media presence. Monitoring techniques can not only determine if an audience is using social media but what social media they are using and most importantly, what they are saying about a specific brand or product.

Monitoring is important for both companies who are already using social media and those that haven't yet started because it illustrates what is being said and who is saying it. From there, a business can determine what types of social media have the most impact on the company and allows for a more successful social media campaign.

The following five brand monitoring techniques should be incorporated into every company's marketing campaign.



Monitoring Your Brand's Social Media Presence



The screenshot shows the Google Alerts (BETA) interface. At the top left is the Google Alerts logo. To the right of the logo is a navigation bar with 'FAQ' and 'Sign in' links. Below the logo is a 'Welcome to Google Alerts' section. The main content area is titled 'Create a Google Alert' and contains a form with the following fields: 'Search terms:' (a text input field), 'Type:' (a dropdown menu set to 'Comprehensive'), 'How often:' (a dropdown menu set to 'once a day'), and 'Your email:' (a text input field). A 'Create Alert' button is located below the form. At the bottom of the form, there is a small disclaimer: 'Google will not sell or share your email address.'

1. Google Alerts. Google Alert is a service which notifies you by e-mail whenever a chosen name or phrase is mentioned online. This means that you will receive an e-mail whenever someone mentions your brand (or anything you decide upon) in a blog, article, or other Web-based source. From there you can look at the source and read the information that is connected to your brand.

Google Alerts allow you to see what people are saying about your brand. With the use of social media, you can connect and respond to these users who are mentioning your brand. This allows a two-way connection between a business and its users.

Google Alerts cover a wide range of user-generated content, making it an important monitoring technique. Alerts are personalized and controllable. They are free and unlimited. However, Google Alert is still in beta phase and may be limited until fully released. Get a Google Alert at <http://www.google.com/alerts>.

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2. Twitter search. Using Twitter search is a valuable way to see what Twitter users are saying about your brand or product. By simply typing in the name of your brand into the search field, the search engine will generate the most recent tweets with your brand name within them.

Once you see what people are saying, asking or having problems with, you can respond accordingly. It is important to remain transparent and authentic when having a social media presence.

Twitter is an increasingly popular microblogging service that should definitely be monitored by every company. Twitter search can be found at <http://search.twitter.com/>.



Monitoring Your Brand's Social Media Presence

3. Google Reader. Use Google Reader or another aggregator (Web site that collects syndicated blogs, news and headlines) to automatically load new information from Flickr, Delicious, Digg and other sites. You can also set up RSS feeds for searches on your company name and industry terms with other social media sites, such as Twitter.



Rather than continually loading Twitter search, you can set up an RSS feed for a specific Twitter Search to go straight to an aggregator. To do this, click the RSS icon after you complete a search. From then on, search results will be sent to your aggregator.

In addition to Twitter, you can also set up an RSS feed for specific industry-related LinkedIn question categories to go to your Google Reader. Answering these questions will help increase your social media presence.

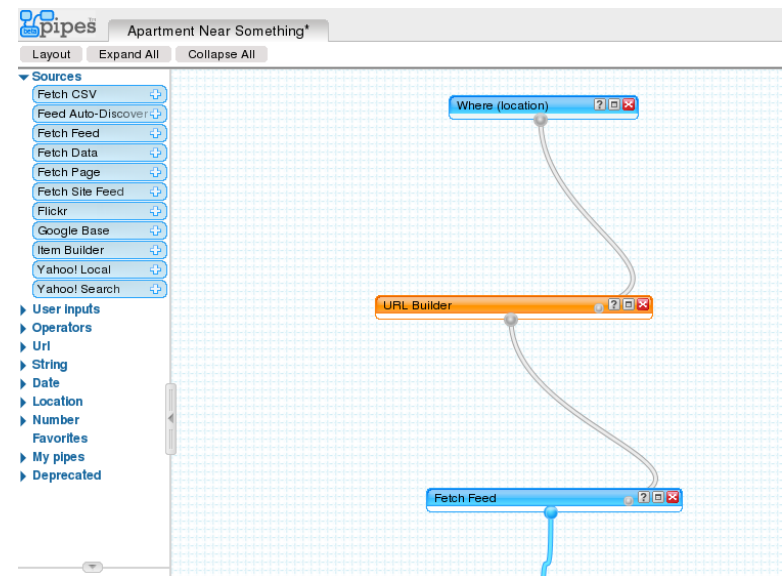
Google Reader is a great tool to help collect information that you need from a variety of Web sites, saving you time and effort. This is different from Google Alert because it doesn't go to your e-mail and you can subscribe to each blog or other source individually. You can sign up for Google Reader at <http://www.google.com/reader>.

Monitoring Your Brand's Social Media Presence

4. Yahoo! Pipes. Although Yahoo! Pipes is still in beta phase of development, it is a social media tracking tool that has recently become extremely popular. Unlike Google Reader, Yahoo! Pipes aggregates, manipulates, and mashups content from around the web.

A mashup combines data from one or more sources into a single integrated application, unlike RSS feeds which is typically text information. Often times, companies use Yahoo! Pipes to monitor multiple feeds but only have alerts when a feed reaches high activity levels.

It is important to use more than one monitoring tool in order to obtain and catch the most conversations about your brand. Yahoo! Pipes is an excellent tracking tool but is still in beta phase and may be limited until fully released. Yahoo! Pipes can be found at <http://pipes.yahoo.com/pipes/>.

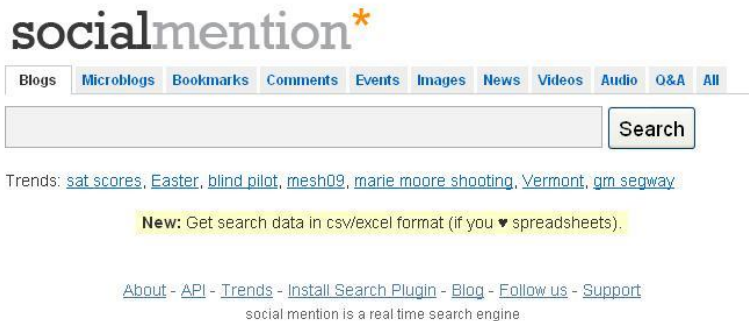


Monitoring Your Brand's Social Media Presence

5. Social Mention. Social Mention is a social media search engine that searches user-generated content on the Internet such as blogs, comments, bookmarks, events, news, videos, and microblogging services.

Although this tracking tool features e-mail alerts and RSS feeds for updates, Social Mention is different than Google Reader, Google Alert and Yahoo! Pipes in that it provides users with real-time updates. You do not have to wait for an e-mail or your aggregator to read the information.

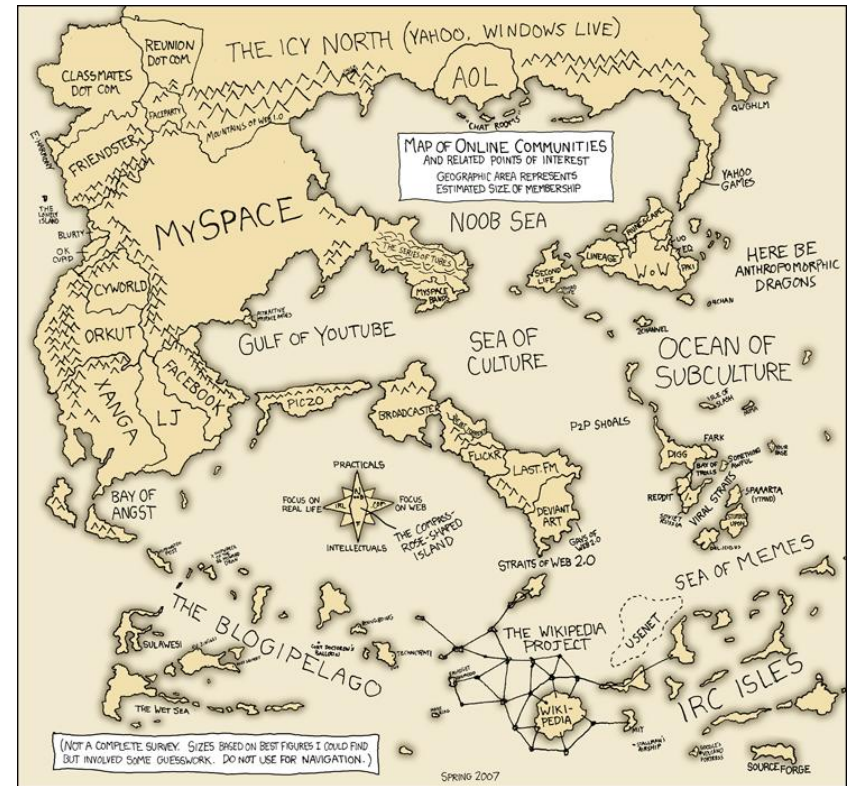
Search results on Social Mention are tracked from numerous popular social media sources, including Google blog search, Twitter, Delicious, FriendFeed, Flickr, Digg, and YouTube. Social Mention can be found at <http://www.socialmention.com/>.



There are many different tools that can be used to monitor a brand's social media presence and it is important to use multiple tools to cover all the different user-based content on the Internet. The five covered in this E-book are some of the basic and most popular tools used today.

By monitoring social media and listening to what users are saying, companies can understand where people are communicating and what they are saying. Both of these aspects are important in understanding how to successfully use social media marketing.

Although monitoring and listening are the first steps to take in social media marketing, they are also steps that must be continually taken throughout the entire campaign. It's important to continually monitor what users are saying about your business because it will constantly be changing.



Next Steps

Now that you have learned how to listen and monitor your brand using social media, you must learn to respond and participate appropriately.

Tips for successful social media marketing:

- ❖ Be authentic and transparent. Don't pretend to do or be something that you aren't. If you lie, it will catch up to you.
- ❖ Provide information that your audience will be interested in. This will create more interested and interactive users.
- ❖ Find your audience and provide to them. Do not use every type of social media tool solely to gain exposure.
- ❖ Respond in a timely manner. The quicker the response, the better.
- ❖ Have fun. Social media is used by people because they enjoy it. There is no reason that you shouldn't either.

SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING MADNESS



Good luck with your monitoring, listening and all the other steps that you will take in the social media marketing process. Please contact me if you have any questions.

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Sources

Alston, David. "Top 10 Reasons Brands should Listen to Social Media." Web. 26 Apr 2009. <<http://www.radian6.com/blog/80/top-10-reasons-brands-should-listen-to-social-media/>>.

Corliss, Rebecca. "How to Monitor Your Social Media Presence in 10 Minutes a Day." Web. 26 Apr 2009. <<http://blog.hubspot.com/blog/tabid/6307/bid/4663/How-to-Monitor-Your-Social-Media-Presence-in-10-Minutes-a-Day.aspx>>.

Images:

Social Media Bandwagon: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/matthamm/2945559128/>

Social Media Cartoon: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/hubspot/3196650975/>

Social Media Landscape: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/fredcavazza/2564571564/>

Social Media Map: <http://xkcd.com/256/>

Woman Listening: <http://www.theadvocates.org/one-minute.html>

Woman Researching: http://cache.boston.com/resize/bonzai-fba/Globe_Photo/2008/05/09/1210381563_7091/539w.jpg