

LISTENING - THE ART OF SOCIAL MEDIA SUCCESS



Fuel Your Social Media Engagement

Conversation - n.

A talk, especially an informal one, between two or more people, in which news and ideas are exchanged.

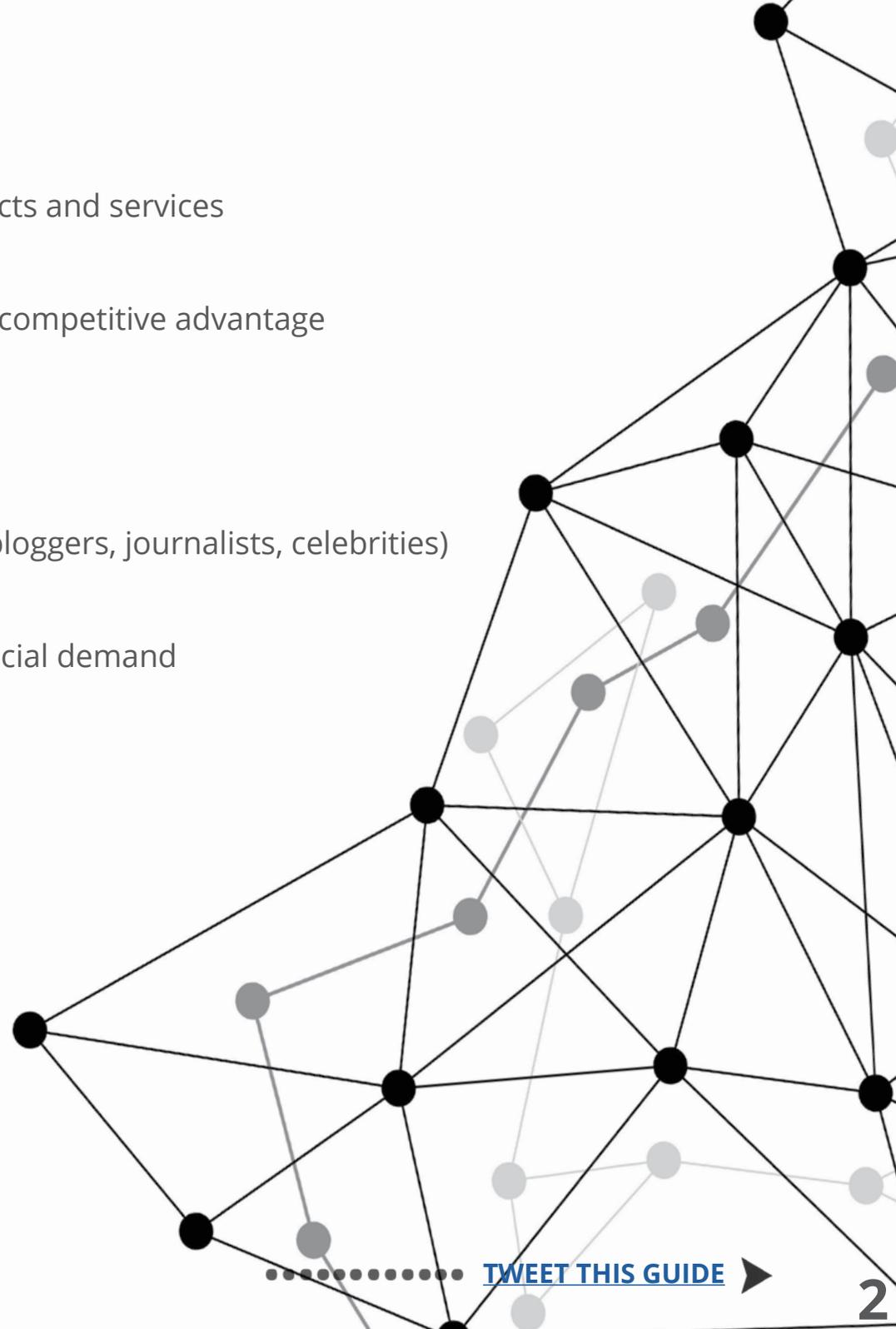
- Oxford English Dictionary

If you think of successful social media engagement in terms of a conversation between real people, then the practice of listening is not really that difficult a concept to grasp.

Every day there are countless millions of conversations started on social media. A small but (thanks to economies of scale) potentially significant number of these conversations may be relevant to your business in terms of reputation and revenue. These conversations directly address you brand, your products, your employees, your company culture and your reputation. If you are not listening to the social web, you are failing to use the most powerful aspect of the medium (the very social fabric of the network) and potentially ignoring the voices of the people who should matter most to your organisation – your clients, your prospects, your partners, the media and the wider general public.

Listening is **vital** if you want to:

- Gauge your publics' perception towards your brand, products and services
- Monitor your competition, benchmark sentiment and gain competitive advantage
- Manage customer service issues and maintain reputation
- Engage with high profile influencers and thought leaders (bloggers, journalists, celebrities)
- Develop new products, services and strategies based on social demand
- Find new customers (and retain existing ones)



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Social media takes much of the **guesswork** out of business, it brings us much closer to the communities we serve and it makes us more likeable and approachable, but only if we listen.

Consider This:

Social media has changed the way people interact with brands. Successful business is now often generated on the back of very real human engagement which helps to build trust, drive loyalty and create an environment where business can be conducted. It might sound ironic but social media technology is actually humanising the way many of us do business.

Building a Listening Strategy

Listening doesn't have to be complicated. A simple search across the various social networks for relevant brand terms can deliver useful intelligence. However, the more considered your approach to listening, the greater the potential to develop new opportunities.

For organisations hoping to develop more advanced listening strategies, technology - blogger databases, social media monitoring and analytics and social CRMs - will help drive efficiencies and facilitate the detailed reporting and analytics required to ensure engagements are tracked and objectives are met.

Note:

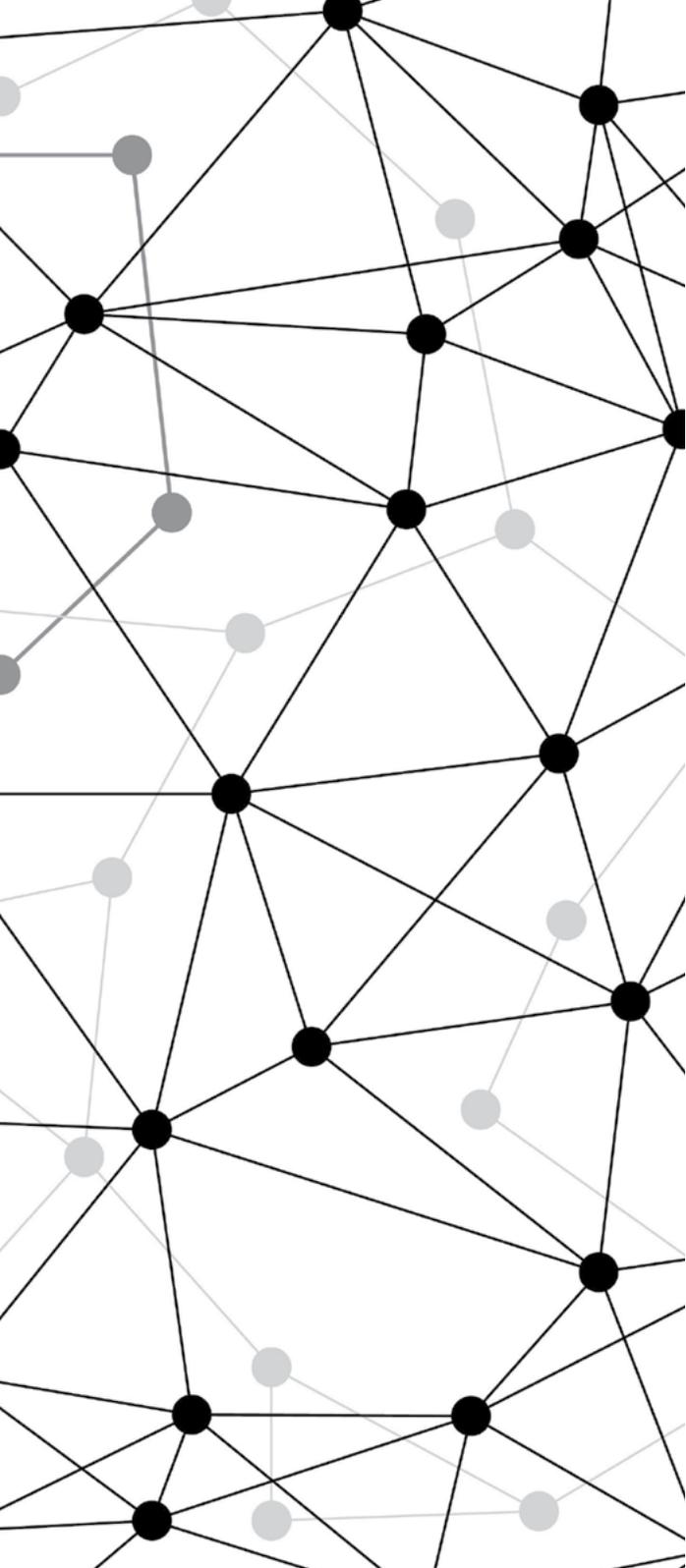
Setting clear objectives will help you understand your success, optimise your listening strategies and guide any future engagement with your audience. Contrary to popular belief a positive Return on Investment (ROI) from social media can be tracked across numerous areas of your business including: sales, marketing, PR, HR and customer support/services. It's just a case of knowing where to look and having the right tools to track the results.

Rules of Engagement

Listening will reveal a number of opportunities and threats.

While engagements will vary, they will very often fall into the following categories:

- 1** Customer Endorsements: Happy days, somebody likes what you do and they want to tell the world about it. A simple “like”, re-tweet or quick “thank-you” will suffice. However, you might want to keep these mentions in your back pocket for useful quotes and testimonials.
- 2** PR Wins: Share, share, share.
- 3** PR Fails: Best left well alone. Don’t pour fuel on the fire of negative press. Instead use the lesson to learn from your mistakes and build better products/services.



- 3** Business Leads: People may never have heard of your company's name but they know they want your products or services. Find them on social media, engage them in conversation and sell more.
- 4** Support Cases: Solve a problem for a client and they will tell their friends (see #1) and perhaps stay with you for life. A resolved problem may also generate an upsell opportunity (see #4). A support case not dealt with in a timely manner may result in a customer complaint (see #5)
- 5** Customer Complaints: Take these offline as quickly as possible and resolve. In this totally connected world (where your clients all know each other), a single spark of dissent, if not doused completely, has the potential to rapidly turn into a wildfire damaging reputation, relationships and profits. Conversely, a resolved complaint may have the ability to yield an endorsement and could even become an upsell opportunity.



TOP TIP

Not all mentions are created equal. Some brand mentions will warrant further engagement others are best left alone. Setting clear objectives for your listening strategy will help you better understand when, how and who should manage each engagement.

Who Should Manage Your Listening Strategy?

Your listening strategy should be managed by people within your organisation who are qualified and able to either respond accordingly to social media mentions or quickly and efficiently pass on the message for the attention of another member of staff. This means responsibility for social media engagement will ultimately sit with **multiple departments** within your organisation including your sales, marketing, PR, product development and senior management teams.

In larger organisations social media listening will sit comfortably within a contact centre/call centre environment. In smaller organisations, a marketing or PR lead role is best suited to manage the process. Having technology in place to distribute tasks generated from social engagement across your enterprise and track future engagements will ensure opportunities do not slip through the cracks and reputation and revenues are protected.

Warning:

Junior members of staff or office interns are not ideal candidates to manage your social media activity. Let them learn your business first before setting them loose on your clients and other important contacts.

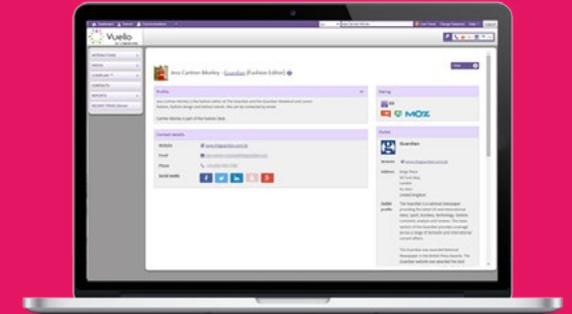
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