Social Media Metrics

The Beginner's Guide

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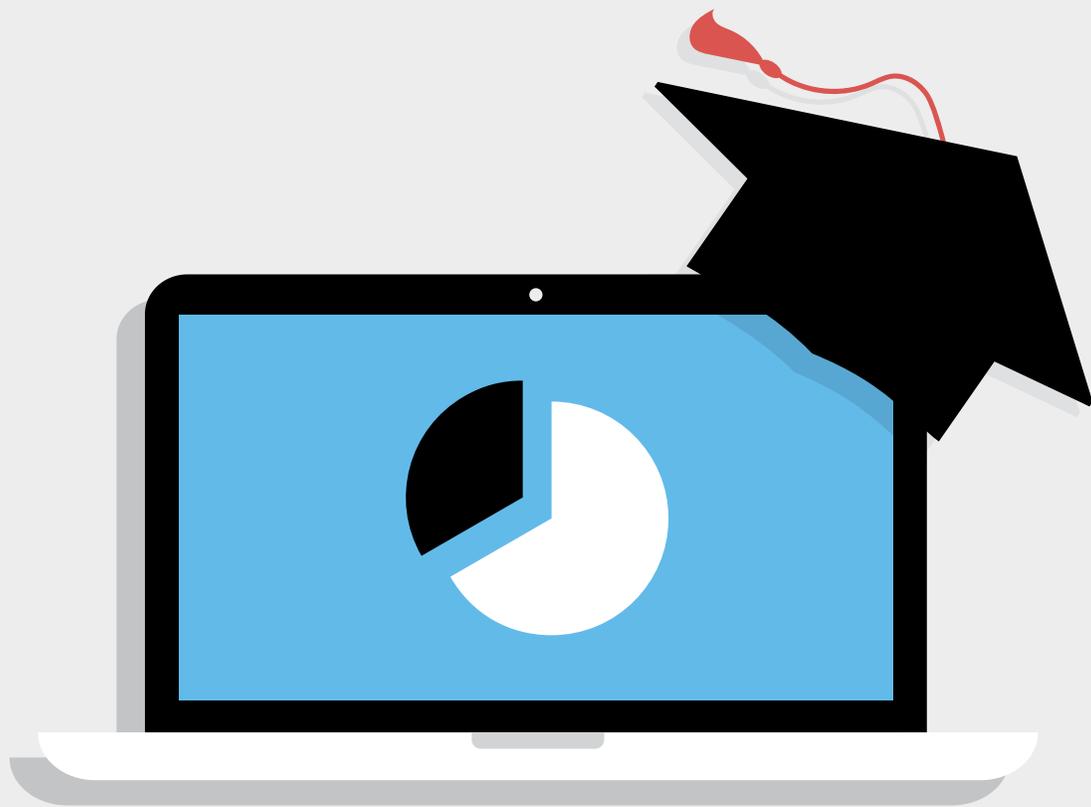
The Beginner's Guide to Social Media Metrics

Social media can be an incredibly important business tool. Tracking the right social metrics around your industry, company, products, competition and more can provide important insights into your positioning, your impact within your industry and the effectiveness of your tactics and strategies.

In this **Beginner's Guide to Social Media Metrics**, we'll help you get started with social analytics by breaking down the metrics you need to be tracking, describe how to measure them, and most importantly, explain how you can use them so you never miss out on important insights.

Mentions

A key social metric you need to track is **volume of mentions**, which is the size of a conversation. Depending on your role or function, you'll want to track mentions for several different keywords such as your company, brand name, product or service, industry, the competition or a particular market term. This will give you a complete picture of the social conversations that matter most. Mentions are simply the number of times the term or phrase you're tracking was used across social media, helping you understand just how much (or little) attention the subject is receiving on social.

How to Measure It:
Mention volume is a simple (but tasking) counting metric. You can invest in a social media marketing platform that will automatically track the number of mentions for a specific search term for you. Or, you can count tweets, wall posts, etc.

How to Use It:
Find the right windows to engage. Are there certain days or times when mentions increase?

- Marketing should rearrange its content schedule to capture the attention of an active audience.

- Customer service and sales should be online and ready to engage with clients or prospects.

React to spikes in mentions

- PR should investigate a spike in brand mentions as it could signal a positive brand story they should amplify or a negative one they'll need to get ahead of to prevent a potential crisis.

- A product team needs to understand the cause for a surge in market terms or features and evaluate how or if they need to react.

- Marketing should prepare competitive positioning when top competitors see a surge in volume.

Use mentions to track if campaigns, product launches or other initiatives are gaining traction. Did mentions increase after launch? Are they remaining stagnant? Monitor mentions closely and consider making tweaks if you're not seeing a reaction.

Establish a baseline by tracking mentions daily, weekly and monthly. Benchmark and measure growth over time.

Bar chart showing daily mentions: Day 1: 10k, Day 2: 12k, Day 3: 6k, Day 4: 15k, Day 5: 11k, Day 6: 3k
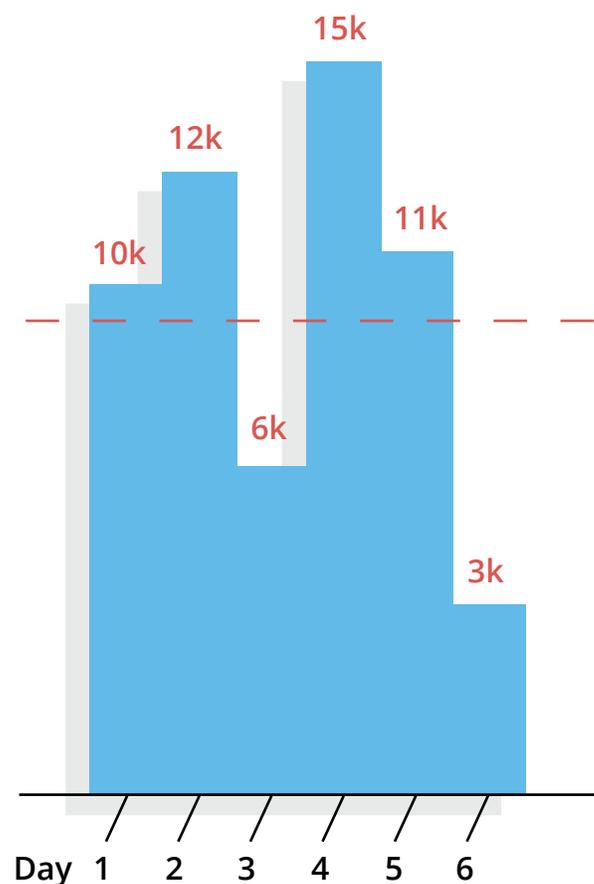
Sentiment

Sentiment refers to the emotion behind a social media mention. It's a way to measure the tone of a conversation—is the person happy, annoyed, angry? Sentiment adds important context to social conversations. Without it, measurement of mentions alone could be misleading.

If you were measuring mentions for your company's new product, you might assume a surge in mentions meant it was being well received. After all, the more mentions—the more people talking about the product. But what if many of those mentions were negative?

Measuring sentiment will help you understand the overall feeling surrounding a particular subject, enabling you to create a broader and more complete picture of the social conversations that matter to you.

How to Measure It:

Measuring sentiment on your own can be quite a time commitment, depending on the size of the conversation. To record the sentiment of mentions, you would read each one, evaluate the tone and assign a positive, negative or neutral score. There are a few free tools available that track and measure sentiment, and many social media marketing platforms will provide automatic sentiment analysis.

The uberVU via Hootuite platform uses a powerful automation tool to determine sentiment, which is based on machine learning technology. If a person was to tweet about their experience shopping at Sears, the sentiment would be determined based on the description words they use. "Such great deals at Sears!" would register as positive whereas "Customer service at Sears is the worst." would register as negative.

Watch your sentiment level for any signals that could indicate a dramatic shift in brand health.

How to Use It:

Head Off a Crisis

- A sudden spike in negative mentions could be an indication of a developing crisis. Loop in your PR department, dive into the mentions to find the cause, and establish a plan for handling the rise in negativity.
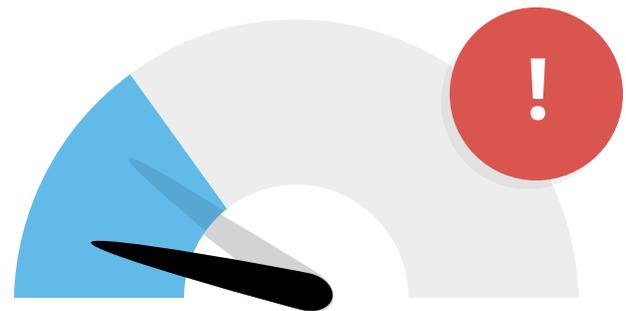
Competitive Research

- Sentiment analysis can also be used to find how your brand or product is being perceived in comparison to your top competitors.

- Keep an eye on the overall sentiment level of competitors and find opportunities (positive and negative) that you can use to shape your positioning against theirs.

Evaluate Campaigns and Other Initiatives

- Use sentiment levels to measure the success of product launches, marketing campaigns or other new initiatives.

- Track how levels change throughout the duration of the initiative to establish if it is being received positively or negatively. Consider adjusting your strategy if negativity rises.

Reach / Exposure

Reach is the potential audience for a message based on total follower count (Twitter, Pinterest and LinkedIn followers, total likes on your Facebook page, etc). If your Pinterest boards have 1,000 followers, then each of your pins could potentially reach 1,000 people.

Exposure further expands on your potential audience by measuring not just the number of your followers, but the number of followers each of your followers have. Each time a person shares something on social, it is delivered to their list of followers—each instance is called an impression. And those impressions are included in a message's exposure. For example, if your company's latest tweet was retweeted by a Twitter user with 10,000 followers, then the exposure for that tweet would include the number of impressions based on your audience plus the 10,000 impressions based on that specific user's audience. Of course, not everyone who receives a post in their social feeds will read it, which is why exposure measures the *potential* audience.

How to Measure It:
To measure your reach, you would tally your following on each social network—number of Twitter followers, Facebook page likes, LinkedIn followers or connections, Pinterest followers, etc. You can keep track of these stats manually, use the analytics reports provided by each social network, or use an analytics tool that can automatically track reach.

Measuring exposure on your own can be a bit tricky, especially if you're looking to track the impressions of a particular campaign or market term. Quality social media management or analytics platforms will automatically track exposure for you. Or if you want to measure your content's exposure manually, you can tally up your total follower count as well as each time your content is shared.

For example, on Pinterest you'd track the number of repins and the number of followers those who repined

your post have, as well as pins from your website or blog. Focus on the sharing stats for each platform—retweets, shares, etc.—as well as links from your website or blog to calculate your average number of impressions.

How to Use It:
Track reach on each social network over time to determine where you're seeing the most growth.

Use exposure to measure the spread of a conversation to evaluate the success.

Inform future initiatives. Determine what's resonating with your audience by finding what types of content or messaging received the highest exposure. Use that research to perfect future campaigns or content creation.

Combine exposure and reach with engagement metrics to form a more complete understanding of impact

Compare exposure to mentions to find potential influencers. If a specific post's exposure was many times higher than its mentions, someone with a large social following is clearly distributing the content. Research the influencer and find ways to work together.

Facebook provides its own reach analytics, which it defines as "the number of people who saw your post". The network considers a post to reach someone when it's displayed in that person's News Feed.

Post Reach: the number of people who saw your post, broken down by paid posts, organic posts or a side-by-side comparison.

Total Reach: the number of people who saw any page activity including posts, posts by others, Page like ads, mentions, and check-ins.

Engagement

Engagement measures how much and how often others interact with you and your content on social media. When someone takes the time to like, favorite or comment on your content, they're actively engaging with your content. Engagement metrics showcase audience action, which is important for social media health and growth.

Sharing metrics, which are a subset of engagement metics, represent when people amplify your content. All of the major social networks allow users to share content whether it's a retweet, share, reblog, repin, etc. Engagement metrics are important in highlighting the success of content, but depending on your goals, sharing metrics could be of higher value because they extend your content beyond your own audience, increasing its exposure.

How to Measure It:
Every social network offers different engagement touch points, so each one will be measured differently. To the right is a breakdown of engagement metrics by platform.

How to Use It:
Guide your content strategy. Use engagement to understand what types of content or posts get attention—and more importantly, what types don't.

Target the right demographic. Pay attention to the gender, age or location of the people engaged (Facebook Insights provides this breakdown or you could manually investigate). If the majority of your engagement comes from people outside your target location or demographic, you'll need to tweak your strategy.

Measure the success of product launches, marketing campaigns or other new initiatives. Listen to feedback to inform future projects.

Add context to exposure or reach. Tally sharing metrics like retweets or replies and divide them by exposure or reach to calculate an engagement percentage. This will tell you what percentage of your potential audience actively participated in a contest, read a blog post, etc.

Measure growth and performance on specific social networks. Track your engagement rate over time to see how you're improving.

Find influencers or brand advocates. If there are people who consistently engage with you on social, consider utilizing them to help gain more exposure for future initiatives.

Engagement Metrics by Platform

Twitter
- Replies
- Retweets
- Modified Tweets
- Favorites

Facebook
- Page Likes
- People Engaged
- Engagement Rate
- Likes
- Shares
- Comments

Pinterest
- Repins
- Likes
- Comments

LinkedIn
- Interactions
- Engagement Rate
- Likes
- Comments

Google+
- +1s
- Shares
- Comments
- Total Engagement

Instagram
- Likes
- Comments

Tumblr
- Reblogs
- Likes

Vine
- Revines
- Likes
- Comments

Hootsuite™ UBERVU via Hootsuite

Share of Voice + Audience Growth Rate

Share of Voice helps you understand how your brand or company is performing in comparison to the competition. The metric details what percentage of mentions within your industry or space are about your brand and what percentage is about your competitors.

How to Measure It:
To measure your Share of Voice, you first need to tally all of the mentions for your brand for a specific time table. Then, compile the mentions of each competitor in your industry for that same time period. To calculate Share of Voice, divide your mentions by the total number for the competition.

How to Use It:
Calculate Share of Voice for more than just brand mentions—compare metrics around specific products, services or brand attributes.

Competitive research. Calculate Share of Voice for a top competitor to evaluate its market share.

Measure effectiveness of campaigns and other efforts. Benchmark your Share of Voice before beginning a campaign so you can measure any increase. Continue to measure to see if the campaign had any long-term effect on brand awareness.
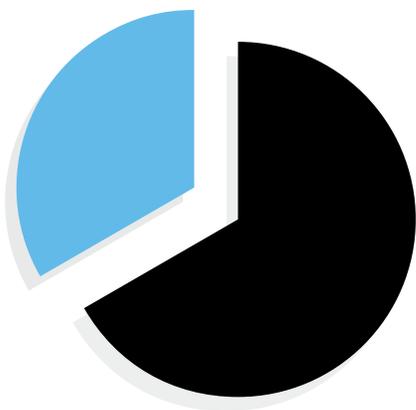
Audience Growth Rate measures the change in a brand or company's following on social media networks. Tracking your Audience Growth Rate on each individual network will determine the average rate of increase or decrease in your fans or followers over time.

How to Measure It:
Benchmark your audience on each social network and measure the increase in those numbers every day, week, month or for another specific time table to determine the speed at which you're attaining new fans.

How to Use It:
Identify which networks are generating the greatest growth and investigate how you can apply your success on those networks to others.

Track your growth rate during the course of a campaign to evaluate its success.

Pay attention to the gender, age or location of new followers (some networks will provide this breakdown) to measure if your strategy is helping you reach your target audience.

Measuring the Audience Growth Rate for top competitors will help determine if you're effectively growing your audience.
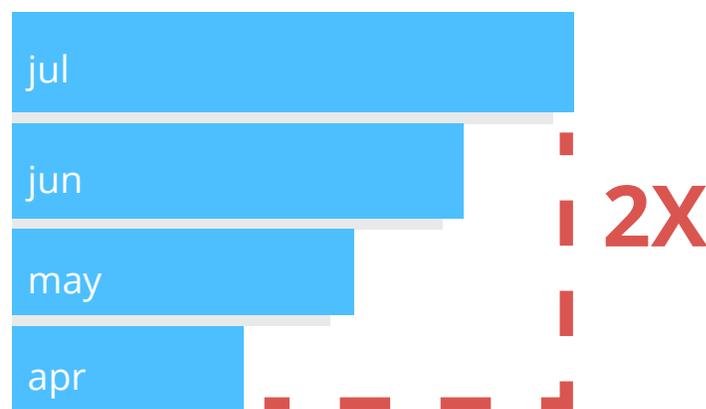
Influence

Tools like Klout, PeerIndex and Kred measure **influence** by assigning a score to one's social media activity and interactions. Each company uses its own methodology for determining influence by giving different weight to metrics like reach, comments, likes etc. to formulate a number that represents one's overall social influence.

You can also determine influence on your own, without using a scoring system. When doing so, it's important to keep in mind that audience size does not necessarily translate to influence. Just because a person has a large social following doesn't mean they're *influencing* their followers. Influence is all about encouraging or inspiring people to take action. That's why the metrics that are most telling of influence are engagement and amplification.

Key Indicators:
- Twitter replies, retweets and list memberships (these are especially helpful in finding influential people in very specific topic areas).

- Google+ comments, shares and +1s.

- Facebook likes, shares and comments.

- LinkedIn recommendations, interactions, likes and comments.

- Pinterest repins, likes and comments.

How to Use It:
Understand who is talking about your brand or company and what kind of impact they have. Reach out and engage with influencers who are portraying you in both a positive and negative light.

Find the right influencers to help promote your content, campaign or company.

- Make sure you're researching those who are influential in the space or industry you operate in.

- A recommendation or endorsement from a trusted social influencer with expertise in your industry can be extremely valuable.

- Evaluate the effectiveness of influencer partnerships by measuring if your reach, exposure and engagement levels increase.

Are You Influential? Research the extent to which your messages and content are being shared and use the intel to inform your ongoing strategy.

2K
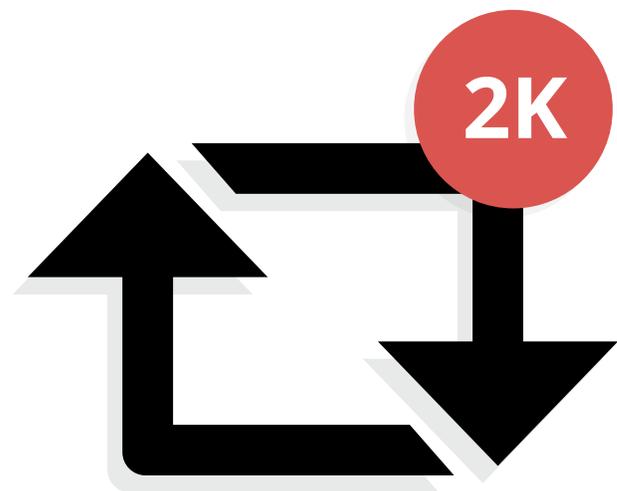
Take Action

Now that you have an overview of social media measurement, you're ready to start tracking the right metrics to put social data to work for your business goals. Remember that consistency is key when measuring social media so make sure to use the same formulas or tools when tracking and measuring your data so you can accurately find and report on changes.

Social media metrics are more than just numbers. They're a key component for informing your overall business strategy. Use the insights you uncover to set strategic goals, steer future initiatives and guide important business decisions. By analyzing the social metrics detailed in this guide, you're on your way to gaining a deep understanding of—and proving—social media's value.
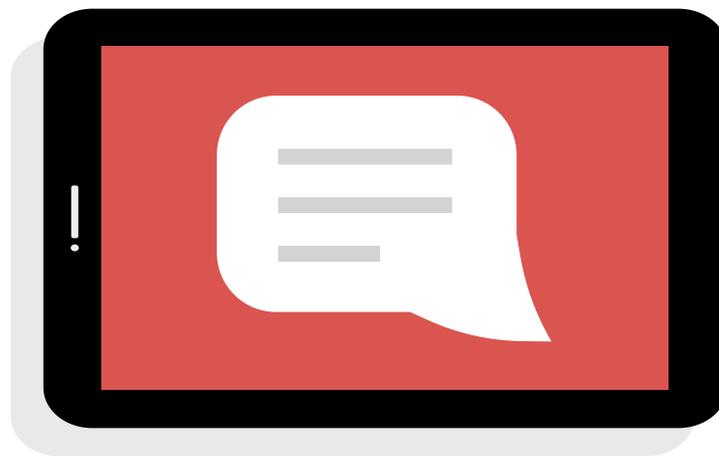
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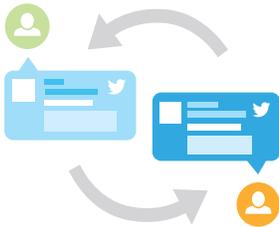
Better Business Decisions Through Social Data

Experience Deep Social Listening

Perform Market Benchmarking

Discover Real-Time Marketing Opportunities

Monitor Important Discussions

Social data can empower everyone. With our intuitive, easy-to-use social analytics platform, you don't have to be a data scientist to see the value of social media analytics. uberVU via Hootsuite's exclusive technology synthesizes results from across the social web (not just your owned channels!) into a user-friendly dashboard offering the broadest possible overview of the social conversations that matter most, in real time.

Hootsuite and uberVU via Hootsuite were built for business. Featuring the most advanced tools and services available for security, collaboration, engagement, and social media analytics, we're the trusted solution for 744 of the Fortune 1000, and for more than 1300 enterprise clients worldwide.

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