

## Social Media Listening – Should you be doing it?

Your firm has ventured into the social media space. It's sending Tweets, posting information on Facebook, and engaging on Pinterest. But, are you also listening to the conversations about your brand? How about listening for things going on in your clients' industries?



Posting content without listening is like pinning the tail on the donkey and never taking off the blindfold to see if you've hit your mark.

So why do brands listen to their social channels?

Brands will listen to conversations taking place on social media to look for opportunities, to participate, and engage with customers and prospects.

How do you do it?

That sounds great. But, how do you do it? Does it take a lot of time?

Listening starts with pre-defined words or phrases you want to listen for, such as hashtags, keywords, or brand names. You could also be searching for influencers who might be willing to extend your reach through their own visibility.

### *Example*

Your firm specializes in the dental practice industry. You would want to listen for your client's brand names using tools like Google or [TalkWalker](#) alerts; follow hashtags related to the industry, such as #Dentist, #Dental, #AskTheDentist, #DentalPractice, etc.; identify influencers using tools like PeerIndex, Compete, and Alexa.

Once you locate these items, you want to create content that speaks specifically to them. Driving traffic to your website with questions and engaging posts on social platforms that link back to your content.

Remember this is not a one-way street, but a relationship-building experience. In order to influence an industry, you must engage, share, and be willing to put the time and effort into the relationship to generate leads. Therefore, when done right, it does take considerable time

to do well.

Why is social listening so important?

For many companies, social listening is not on their radar screen. Often leaders feel it's enough just to be posting. However, that's just one small piece of the social media pie. Without listening you may be missing out on opportunities that might be presented as complaints from clients or questions posted in a forum, such as LinkedIn.

Listening also gives you the chance to influence discovery. When new things are happening within an industry, like a change in regulation, be the first to talk about it. Become the go-to firm for answers for the dental practice professionals. You could even be a trend spotter and begin the conversations that spark something within the profession, like billable hours versus flat fee structures. Most of all, listening gives you a chance to prospect. You might find new practices that are looking for a new accounting firm.

What should I monitor?

When it comes to what to monitor, do the same things for your own brand as you would for the competition, such as your firm's name, its products and services, leaders from within your firm, and high-visibility marketing efforts.

*Example*

In 2015, H&R Block launched a new tax campaign with phrases like "Get your billions back, America." In that case, social listeners would be looking for that phrase, the firm's name, hashtags, mentions in posts and tweets, and mentions of products associated with the campaign. To learn more about the success of that campaign, visit [Ad Age](#).

Why should I monitor my company?

Not everyone will use your brand name when talking about you—don't miss out on important feedback and insights into what people think about your products and services. By listening, you get the chance to learn about the effectiveness of your brand, or why people don't associate your product with your brand.

It also allows you to evaluate the effectiveness of marketing and advertising efforts. How is your messaging and positioning being received?

Lastly, is issues management. Your brand isn't the only thing that might elicit attention. Keep tabs on top players to stay ahead of any potential trending story.

### Monitoring Your Industry

By monitoring what's happening in your client's industries, as well as your own, you may be influenced to change strategic direction for a marketing campaign, product or service improvement. Industry listening also helps you to stay on top of industry trends, and to be a thought leader by joining the right conversations.

### What types of tools should I use?

There are many free social listening tools, including online services like [Google Alerts](#), [Hootsuite Search](#), [TweetDeck](#), and [Social Mention](#). There are also dozens of paid services, which I would only recommend if you have a large brand, such as a top 15 firm. Those tools include services like [SocialRest](#), [TweetReach](#), [ViralHeat](#), [Sysomos](#), and [Simply Measured](#).

What it boils down to is, if you plan to leverage social media to increase brand awareness, to generate leads, or to have a conduit to clients, listening should also be part of the plan. Simply pushing content out in to the social sphere is not enough. You may be missing out on huge opportunities if you're not listening to what's happening around you.

So, take the time to build a listening strategy into your overall social plan. You might be surprised what you hear.

### Your Turn

What's your biggest concern about social listening and working it into your overall marketing strategy?

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