

Tracking SMM performance

Meaning of SMM

SMM stands for "Social Media Marketing." SMM refers to marketing done through social media or social networking websites. While most companies and organizations have their own websites, it can be difficult to reach users who do not already know about the organization. Therefore, many organizations have found it useful to also develop a presence on "Web 2.0" websites, such as Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter as well.

Social media marketing provides a low cost way for businesses to reach large numbers of users and gain brand recognition. Since social networking websites already have large established online communities, businesses and organizations can gain exposure by simply joining these websites. Organizations can create custom social media profiles, then build their own communities within these sites by adding users as friends or followers. Many companies attract users by posting frequent updates and providing special offers through their social media profile pages.

While SMM is a powerful online marketing tool, it is typically used to supplement other online marketing methods rather than replace them. Since just about any company or business can join a social networking website, it can be difficult to stand out from the crowd. Therefore, most companies still rely on Web advertising and search engine optimization SEO to generate traffic to their websites.

Types of Social Media Measurement

The two types of social media measurement are:

1. **Ongoing Analytics** – Ongoing monitoring that tracks activity over time
2. **Campaign-Focused Metrics** – Campaign or event analytics with a clear beginning and end

Ongoing analytics are necessary for keeping up with the overall pulse of general conversation about your brand and company. Once your brand tracking is set up, you can just let it run and check in regularly to see how everything is going.

Campaign-focused metrics, on the other hand, help you understand the impact of targeted marketing initiatives and will vary from campaign to campaign, depending on your goals for each. An effective social media measurement program will likely include both ongoing and campaign-specific measurement.

Step 1: Determine Your Social Goals

Before you jump into measuring every single tweet, photo and Facebook comment posted about your brand, first think about your goals with social media. What are you trying to accomplish or gain through these social channels? And which channels are most relevant to those goals?

The first step in your measurement plan should be to generate a list of what you're trying to achieve from your social media efforts. Social media can serve a variety of purposes, from broadcasting news and information, to answering customer questions and engaging with a community. What is your company trying to accomplish?

You've probably already started interacting on social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, Pinterest, YouTube, and Instagram, depending on the type of information and the format of the content you're sharing. You've probably also considered the audience you want to reach and the tools they're using. So the next step is to think about what you want your audience to do with your content on these channels. Are you trying to get them to read, share, reply, click, purchase, engage? **List out all your business goals for social media.**

For our Twitter chat example, our goals are probably two-fold:

1. First, we want to spread awareness of the new product to potential customers
2. Second, we want to get to know the parenting community on Twitter, particularly the influencers in that community

Step 2: Create Metrics to Measure These Goals

The next step is to match your goals to actual metrics and behaviors you can measure. For example, if you're trying to measure engagement, then what is the practical form of engagement you want to track? Is it retweets or reposts? Replies or comments? Clicks? Here are a few suggestions of behaviors to measure, based on a few common social media goals...

- If you want to measure **awareness**, then use metrics like volume, reach, exposure, and amplification. How far is your message spreading?
- If you want to measure **engagement**, then look for metrics around retweets, comments, replies, and participants. How many people are participating, how often are they participating, and in what forms are they participating?
- If your goal is to **drive traffic** to your website, then track URL shares, clicks and conversions. Are people moving through social media to your external site and what do they do once they're on your site?
- If your goal is to find **advocates and fans**, then track contributors and influence. Who is participating and what kind of impact do they have?
- If your goal is to increase your brand's **share of voice**, then track your volume relative to your closest competitors. How much of the overall conversation around your industry or product category is about your brand?

For our hypothetical Twitter chat, our first goal is awareness, so we want to measure:

1. The tweet volume and reach of our Twitter chat
2. How many unique people tweeted with our hashtag

We're also interesting in getting to know this community, so we want to know more about the participants, including:

3. Any influence metrics we can find (like follower counts and Klout scores)
4. Relevant demographic information about them (gender, location, etc...)

Step 3: Measure

After you've listed the metrics you want to focus on, now you need to find tools that actually capture these metrics, and then start measuring. In some cases, social media channels themselves provide some form of analytics, in some cases you will need to use third party tools, and in some cases you can build your own using APIs.

If you're not sure which tools to use for which channels, ask around or do a quick Google search and you'll find tons of options.

Many social analytics tools work in real-time, so if you can plan ahead and set up tracking before your campaign begins (and well before your report is due), it will be much easier to access the data you need later.

On Twitter, for example, accessing tweets that are more than a few days old is very expensive, difficult, and far less reliable than collecting and archiving them in real time. When possible, set up your measurement tools before your campaign begins.

The measurement part of this may take some time, so let the tools do their work. Make sure they're tracking the social posts you're interested in, do what you can to filter out spam, and then come back in a few days for steps 4 and 5.

Step 4: Monitor and Report

The fourth step is to report your results. Use your initial findings to set a baseline or benchmark for future measurement, and share these early figures with your important stakeholders. Two important questions to nail down are:

- How do your numbers compare to what you expected?
- How do they compare to your competitors' or related products and campaigns?

One of the great parts of social media analytics is that you can easily run reports about your competitors to see how they're doing.

This is also a good time to consider your schedule for regular reporting. Depending on your (and your organization's) schedule, monthly or quarterly reporting may work best, but weekly reporting may work well for others. No matter the schedule, make sure you're checking in regularly on your metrics. Don't let your effort up to this point go to waste! And let your metrics accumulate over time; you'll see how valuable this data will become after a few months have passed and you have older data to compare to your new data.

In your reports, be sure you highlight the important numbers:

- Include benchmarks or other contextual information so that your stakeholders can quickly understand what all the figures mean
- Consider including visualizations of your data; graphs can help communicate your results quickly and clearly to your audience
- Keep your graphs simple and clean

Step 5: Adjust and Repeat

The final step is to carefully review your measurement program. How are these metrics doing? Are you missing anything? Was anything superfluous or unnecessary? Figure out what you can improve, make changes, and then measure some more. Check back in with the goals you set initially and make sure your new metrics actually help you address those goals.

In the case of our Twitter chat, we now realize that we also want to measure engagement around our chat hashtag. We've decided it's important to know how many of our host's tweets were retweeted and replied to, so we can understand what participants found most interesting. We can add this in and include it in our reporting next time.

If you're participating in social media, you really need to understand how you're doing. Is your content having the impact you want? Are you meeting your company's goals with social media? This is why monitoring and measuring your social media activities is so crucial – you need reliable and consistent analytics that help you track your success on channels like Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube.

Metrics to Track for Social Media Success

1. Track Follower Growth

Your total count of fans, followers, and page likes represents the number of unique people who have taken an interest in your business. Ideally, you should consistently grow your following. This means the content you're sharing and the ways you're engaging your audience need to be enticing enough to attract new fans.

- **Facebook**

On Facebook, it's easy to get a detailed analysis of your number of page likes. Go to your page and click the Insights tab. Then click Likes in the left navigation.

You'll see your total likes, as well as gains and losses of likes over a designated time period. This lets you monitor your audience's reactions to certain posts or determine which time periods are best for bringing in new fans.

- **Twitter**

On Twitter, you can find your follower count on your Twitter account page.

To view trends and statistics for your followers, visit Twitter Analytics. Click on your profile picture at the top right of any Twitter page and choose Analytics from the drop-down menu.

The data at the top of the page shows a continuous 28-day summary, with information on your followers on the far right. You can see gain/loss trends for recent followers. Scroll down to see a summary for previous months, which includes changes in followers.

2. Identify Optimal Times for Engagement

Knowing when your audience is most likely to engage with your content is important. It helps you tailor your strategy so you post your content at the right time (when your audience is most active) and the best days of the week.

- **Facebook**

On Facebook, you can view your followers' daily activity over the last week. By narrowing it down to individual days, you can see how engagement shifts by the hour.

On your Insights page, click Posts in the left navigation and make sure When Your Fans Are Online is selected at the top. Then hover over the different days of the week (Sunday through Saturday) at the top of the Posts tab.

- **Twitter**

Twitter data is a little less comprehensive, as it doesn't provide engagement statistics for specific times throughout the day. However, you can still see how engagement rises and falls by day over the last 28 days (default) or another designated time period.

To find this information in your analytics, click the Tweets tab at the top of the page.

3. Track Likes and Reactions for Your Posts

Gauging how your audience reacts to the content you post and share is crucial for any marketing strategy. This direct response metric helps you determine whether your audience is interested in what you're currently publishing, and should inform the type of content you share in the future.

If your only engagement is chirping crickets on certain topics, cut that content from your editorial calendar or send those articles through another channel to a different audience segment that might be more receptive.

- **Facebook**

Facebook provides more in-depth measurements with its updated reaction system, which lets you know whether your fans like, love, dislike, or are upset by something you shared.

To find this information, go to your Insights page and click the Posts option in the left navigation. Then scroll down to All Posts Published and click on the right drop-down arrow to view Reactions, Comments, and Shares.

The data in the Engagement column measures the total reactions for a post. If you want to see a more detailed look at a post's performance, click on the post link to view the breakdown of reactions from your audience.

- **Twitter**

Twitter has a similar approach and displays all of your tweets for a selected timeframe. To find this data in your analytics, click the Tweets tab at the top and scroll down to view your tweets. You can also click Top Tweets to view only your most popular tweets.

4. Monitor Mentions

Your fans and prospects are out there talking about you and you want to be a part of that conversation. For this reason, it's important to track your mentions. On Facebook, you'll get notifications whenever someone tags your business/username in their post.

If people are not directly tagging you, you'll need to use a third-party tool to keep track of mentions on Twitter.

5. Determine Reach

The Reach metric combines the number of people you've reached both within and outside of your audience. When people engage with your content, their activity is usually shared with their connections, which increases your page's reach.

Mixing more engaging content into your social strategy can significantly improve the reach of both your posts and your business.

- **Facebook**

On Facebook, go to your Insights tab and click the Reach option in the navigation panel on the left. The top graph you see displays your post reach, which is basically the number of people who saw your post.

Scroll to the bottom of the page to find your total reach. This is the number of people who saw any activity from your page as a result of follower interactions, ads, mentions, check-ins, and so on.

In the top Post Reach graphic, you can click on any given day to view posts that contributed to that day's post reach count.

- **Twitter**

On Twitter, click the Tweets tab in your analytics to display an Impressions column. This is the number of impressions for each tweet. As people interact with your tweets, the number of impressions will rise as a result of expanded reach.

6. Review Replies and Comments for Your Posts

Replies and comments on your posts can help you gauge how interesting or engaging your topics are. As with reactions, they're direct response metrics that help you weed out uninteresting content from your publishing schedule.

Because replies are typed out, you can also view individual posts that performed well to measure follower/fan sentiment.

- **Facebook**

To find this information on Facebook, go to your Insights and click the Posts option in the left navigation. Scroll down to All Posts Published and click the right drop-down arrow to view Reactions, Comments, and Shares.

From here, you can view comment counts. If you want more details on the comments and audience sentiment, click on the post link to open the post's details and read through your followers' comments.

- **Twitter**

On Twitter, you can easily measure the number of replies for each post, but bringing up replies to your tweets is a little more complicated.

You can view post reply counts in your Twitter analytics. Click the Tweets tab at the top of the page and choose either Tweets or Top Tweets below the graph.

Click on individual tweets to view engagement levels, which include the number of replies you received.

7. Find out What Content Is Being Shared

Content shares are important because they reflect how your audience perceives the value of your content. Highly shared posts indicate that your audience found the topic or type of content particularly helpful, or had a strong emotional or psychological connection to it. The more often content is shared, the greater the reach.

To measure shares on both Facebook and Twitter, follow the above steps for measuring replies and comments. For Facebook, find your shares, and for Twitter focus on retweets.