

# Standing out on social media

A social media analytics guide for digital agencies



**UNION**  
metrics

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Agencies need to deliver killer social campaigns for their clients, which means staying on top of the latest and greatest in social media. You need to provide unique insights to your clients, and figure out how you can stand out in a crowded marketing landscape where everyone thinks they're a social media guru.

How can you bring something different to your clients? Clients have diverse needs, and they're often changing. How can you stay flexible and responsive to a multitude of client needs across social media? You have to continue to win new business. You need research and data to create an impressive pitch that will keep new clients coming in your door.

This guide will discuss how you can use social media analytics to stay on top of social trends, plan and execute powerful campaigns, even craft a better pitch to win that new client. It provides information for agencies of all sizes (and budgets) who work with clients to develop and execute social strategy.

To compete in today's social media environment, agencies need to deliver killer social campaigns for their clients, be up-to-date on the latest trends in social media, and figure out how you can stand out in an increasingly crowded marketing landscape.

So, how can you bring something different to your clients? How can you adapt to constantly changing social media platforms? How can you stay responsive to your clients' diverse needs? How can you win new business? Let's dive in.

## Social media moves quickly

Social media changes quickly - platforms add new features, new platforms spring up and old ones die out, something that was cool last year suddenly isn't any more. A tactic that used to work great now just doesn't. Staying abreast of the latest trends in social media is a full-time job (probably your job if you're reading this).

You have to be constantly working to stay current on the latest changes and trends. That means reading everything you can, as well as using social media to be sure you're in the know. Because if you don't keep up with these changes, it becomes harder to retain your current clients and compete for new business. You need to be able to stay ahead of trends to incorporate them into content strategies for your clients, plan future campaigns, and be the social media expert your clients expect.

## Stay on top of trends

In addition to reading and using social media to stay up-to-date, make sure you have access to comprehensive, ongoing social media measurement. You can use a measurement tool to provide regular reports for your clients, but you can also use it to stay on top of trends.

What's working, what's not working? What caused an abnormal spike or decline in a KPI? How can you tweak current campaigns to increase engagement? If you can demonstrate this kind of expertise, it will help build the kind of trust you need to pitch more creative ideas for your clients in the future.

Checking in on your clients' metrics regularly also allows you to see areas you can improve and address it with your client immediately, rather than finding out only at the end why something didn't perform as you hoped it would. It's incredibly

important to identify issues early. Aside from avoiding minor setbacks that end in disappointing results, you can also avoid a full-scale disaster. We've all seen how small things can quickly spiral out of control on social media, so a team that's actively monitoring these things can head off disaster by dealing with it quickly and using data to inform your decisions.

Monitoring keywords and keeping up with your analytics will help you develop your expertise and ensure you never miss anything. Above all, you want to avoid ever having to tell a client "we've never heard of that" or "we didn't see that coming".

## Experiment to see what works and what doesn't

The right social media analytics give you room to experiment with new ideas. Since social media does change so quickly, to stay up-to-date you need to do more than just read a few blogs; you need to get in there and get your hands dirty with new features and new ideas. You shouldn't be afraid to experiment on social media, but you need to be prepared to carefully evaluate your experiments.

So get out there and try some new things. Try a different post format, posting at a new time, using a new hashtag, reaching out to new people, incorporating different media. But whatever you do, just keep track of it.

With social media analytics, you can see exactly how an experiment performs. You can dig into engagement metrics, identity patterns, and compare your experiment's results with your previous metrics. See what worked better, and what didn't, and then use that data to decide what to do next. The best way to stay on top of social media trends is to be driving them yourself, with new and exciting social campaigns you're monitoring carefully.

## Respond to clients' diverse, changing needs

With so many options for digital communication, your clients likely have diverse needs. Client social media engagements come in all shapes and sizes, and you need to use data to make decisions about what works. The right social media analytics gives you the insights you need to not only meet, but exceed client expectations.

On top of these diverse needs, your clients' needs are probably constantly changing. New campaigns, last-minute requests, sudden crises – you need to

manage them all. You need to be able to change strategy any time and have all your reporting ready to go with it.

As you're thinking about social media, be sure you can quickly adapt your social measurement to new client needs. When you're selecting an analytics vendor, find one that offers flexible plans that allows you to increase or decrease your resources as client needs change. And be sure you can edit your ongoing monitoring at any time so you can always be responsive.

## Be prepared for a crisis

Be sure that you're prepared for whatever comes with a solid social listening program. You don't want to be scrambling when the inevitable crisis unfolds.

First, ensure you're covering the basics for all of your clients. Monitor brand mentions, including all spellings and misspellings of your client's brand and product names, as well as branded hashtags and key client executive or public figures. Set up your monitoring (especially before you begin any campaigns) and keep it running.

Use this listening to keep up with your client's brand reputation on social. Watch their metrics to be sure you don't see any dips in key reputation metrics like sentiment, mention volume or follower growth. Immediately investigate any aberrations. And regularly check into the kinds of mentions your clients receive on social media, as learn how they vary across channels. Watch for negative or out-of-the-ordinary topics.

You also need to formulate a plan for a crisis. When something happens, you might not always need to get involved. Your response should depend on the tenor and velocity of the conversation, as well as your client's social media guidelines. If there are negative, false or large numbers of posts, it's best to react quickly. If the posts are positive, then you should chime in to express your appreciation as soon as possible. If it's neutral or small, you may not need to act at all beyond keeping track of the conversation. Whatever you decide, put your crisis plan in writing and have it ready for when something happens.

## Set up social listening to stay ahead of trends

In addition to general brand monitoring, consider monitoring a set of industry keywords to identify trends. Look for hashtags and topics you've never seen before, to stay ahead of conversations and issues relevant to your client. These hashtags essentially act as canaries in your social listening coal mine.

Watch to see how large a conversation is, how fast it grows, and who participates in it. Go even further by understanding the conversation about this new hashtag or topic. Read the posts, review the media (photos, videos, GIFs), read external articles, etc... Check the sentiment for the conversation. Learn all you can about the hashtag and what it represents. Then make a plan for how you can incorporate this new trend into your clients' campaigns, present or future. Or, if there's nothing you can do with this trend now, just make note of it so you could potentially apply it later.

## Use competitive intelligence to improve your strategy

Internal benchmarks are great, but industry benchmarks are even better. Find out how your client measures up relative to their competitors on social. Be sure you're monitoring all your client's main competitors on the social media channels that are most relevant to them. Use this data to benchmark your client's progress and give their metrics more context.

In addition, keep track of what the competition shares to social media. Identify key pieces of content that perform well, since your client's competitors are likely focused on the kind of audience your client wants to reach. Use this intel to craft content strategy going forward, plan future campaigns and improve your overall social impact.

With competitive intelligence, it's important to concentrate on trends over time in engagement and growth rates. Don't worry too much about raw numbers like fans or followers to start. For example, if your client has fewer followers than their competitors, focus on growing their audience at a faster rate, rather than just meeting an overall follower goal.

It's also important to check in with your target audience's knowledge of your client's values, since consumers increasingly want to align themselves with brands that have values similar to their own. For example, if your client is a family-friendly

company, make sure that's reflected in the content you share on their social accounts. Use social to reinforce other marketing and branding efforts.

Most importantly, you need a measurement system that will scale with your agency as it grows and you take on more clients, or as your clients grow and want to undertake new projects with you. The last thing you want to worry about is losing data or having to update your client-facing reports if you move to a new provider.

## Win more new business with a better pitch

Good data enables you to craft a better pitch and win more new business to keep growing your agency. With analytics, you can provide more relevant ideas, contextualize your recommendations, learn from your mistakes, and conduct purposeful research with clear reporting.

Why is your idea the right one for your potential client right now? What's happening in the industry or the world that makes it the perfect time for this idea? Set this up by spending some time analyzing industry and other related keywords to be sure you fully understand your client's needs. Research your client's competitors to paint a clear picture of their share of voice. Come prepared with specific ideas about how you could help grow that share of voice, based on opportunities you see in the current state of the industry on social media.

And if you include numbers in your pitch, it'll be even more convincing. Use social media analytics to help prepare data you can share with a potential client. The best pitch will have qualitative and quantitative components.

Many clients will appreciate a data-driven experimental approach to their social media strategy, especially if you stress how this is the best way to keep a strategy fresh and relevant as things change. When you're pitching a new idea, emphasize how this could positively influence your client's social brand, no matter what happens. Even if your campaign doesn't hit the numbers you've aimed for, you'll have new data around your client's target audience, customers and fans, which you can use to inform your next campaign. Finding out why something didn't work can be just as valuable as finding out why something did.

## Don't neglect your own content

At an agency, it's easy to overlook your own social profiles and campaigns. All your time and energy goes into making your clients look good, and there are only so many billable hours in a day. But, your own social profiles are the perfect place to test new ideas, highlight your social expertise, and even give your clients a boost.

In fact, if your agency's social accounts don't reflect the expertise and attitude you're pitching to clients, then why would a potential client trust you to handle their social media? Your Twitter, Facebook and Instagram accounts should be active with frequent updates, and showcase best-in-class social acumen.

You can also use your own profiles to experiment with new ideas and test out new platform features. Many potential clients will be excited to see how cutting edge your social presence is, and it could help grow your business. And even if something doesn't work very well - maybe you don't get much engagement on a new style of content, for example - it's lower risk trying new ideas on your own accounts instead of your clients'. Figure out exactly what works and what doesn't, then apply those lessons to your clients.

## Social media is a moving target, but you can hit it

No matter the size of your agency, you need to deliver impressive social campaigns and stay on top of the latest social trends to keep your clients happy - and to bring in new ones. Using these tips alongside social media analytics to create the very best social media strategy for you and your clients.

Start by testing new ideas out on your own social accounts, making you stand out against your own competition. Back up your pitches with in-depth data so you stand out even more, because your promises are supported by solid evidence.

You've got the great ideas. With the right social media analytics, you can build on them and watch them grow alongside your clients.