



So you have measurements, now what?

The social media analytics you choose to track can be used to guide future efforts not only within social media, but throughout agency communications, outreach initiatives, and overall operations. These metrics are also useful when discussing operations with supervisors.

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SOCIAL MEDIA ANALYTICS

Can you measure social media effectiveness?

There are two views on whether you can measure the effectiveness of a social media presence.

No—Many believe social media has reached a point where it is a mainstream mode of communication, just like the telephone or e-mail, and therefore there is no need to measure it. Some also make the argument that since law enforcement agencies do not sell their products or services, assessing what is known as ROI (return on investment) is not only pointless but also impossible. And finally, there is the thought that social media platforms and technologies are so new and ever changing, that suitable metrics have yet to be established.

Yes—Others believe that social media efforts can and should be measured. As with any new initiative, it is important to gauge effectiveness to ensure proper resource allocation and to guide future efforts. While many social media tools are free of charge, there are other costs such as time spent creating, monitoring, and responding to content. Because valuable resources are used to maintain a social media presence, it is necessary to assess the effectiveness of these operations. Many applications can help users gather and analyze various social media data points. Some aspects of social media cannot be measured, such as relationships and causation, but some argue that this is not a reason to dismiss the assessment of the aspects that can be measured. Therefore, measuring the effectiveness of a social media strategy is completely possible and necessary.

How can agencies measure success?

While measuring the success of your social media presence may seem like a function that you would perform only after you are several weeks or months into your new initiative, it is actually something you should be thinking about from the very beginning. Below are suggested steps to help you measure the success of your social media strategy.

1. Set goals. Your goals should be clear and concise and on the surface may appear to have nothing to do with social media. You may want to increase online crime reporting or improve relationships with your

community members. Remember that social media is a component of your overall communication and outreach strategy. Therefore, your goals may touch on many different aspects of agency operations and should reflect your agency's mission and values.

2. Determine your metrics. What exactly will you measure? This is not necessarily the same as your goals. It may be difficult to measure certain things like relationships, but you can measure numbers associated with relationship building, such as comments.

3. Choose your tools. Once you know what you want to measure, you can choose the tools best suited to your needs. There are many Web-based tools available—some at no cost—that will allow you to measure various aspects of your social media sites. See below for examples of social media analytic tools.

4. Establish a baseline. Your baseline is where you are right now. If you are just getting started, that may mean you have no followers, fans, or mentions.

5. Assess. Determine how often you are going to measure. Use your measurements to determine what, if any, changes should be made to your strategy.

Social Media Analysis Tools

Facebook Insights—Facebook has a feature called Insights that allows users to understand and analyze trends related to users' demographics as well as monitor the creation and consumption of content.

YouTube Insight—YouTube Insight is an analytics and reporting tool that provides detailed statistics enabling users to better understand the makeup of their audience and audience behaviors.

Blog Statistics—Many blogging platforms have a statistics function built in to the main dashboard that allows users to view trends through charts and graphs.

Google Analytics—Google Analytics lets you choose what data you want the system to capture for your Web site, such as page views, traffic sources, time spent on the site, and bounce rates.

Twitter Analytics—Twitter is in the process of launching an analytics tool that would allow users to view information including mentions, follower statistics, and tweet effects.