

MARKETING & SOCIAL MEDIA

Understanding Social Listening: Skills That Can "Work" For You

Daniel Ruscigno

If you use Facebook or Twitter or participate in an online forum, then you know that people have a lot to say. Often, individuals share opinions online that they might never express in a face-to-face conversation.

While the growth in social sharing sometimes leads to a case of "too much information," it also presents a great opportunity to gather useful information about your business.

Social media channels, discussion forums, and review sites have opened up many new ways for businesses to research their consumers. Today's access to consumer research is like nothing we've seen before.

In the past, a business had to rely on customer comments, surveys, or focus groups to gain insights into consumers' wants and needs. If you wanted to know what consumers thought about the latest trends, you'd have to subscribe to an industry research service or conduct the research yourself. Now much of that information is just a few keystrokes away.

What is social listening?

Social listening is a method of reviewing the latest buzz about a particular set of topics by "listening in" to the conversations taking place about that topic online. Social listening is an active pursuit of information, pulling data from several sources to help you better understand your industry or customer.

When you read customer reviews on a site such as Yelp, you are engaging in social listening. By

looking at reviews for several different massage businesses in your area, you can gain valuable insights into what your potential clients value.



Do visitors to a nearby competitor rave about the decor or complain that a desired service isn't available? Do customer reviews of your acupuncture business reveal a pattern of positive or negative comments?

But social listening involves more than just reading customer reviews. You can also discover what topics are trending in your industry and identify unmet consumer needs. Following the acupuncture topic on a forum such as Quora can reveal questions that clients may be afraid to ask you in person.

You can use the knowledge you gain to anticipate your customers' needs. You can also create content designed to answer common questions that you discover through your social listening efforts.

If you are looking for fresh ways to serve your client base, social listening can be a roadmap to success.

Social Listening Tools

Interested in finding out what your prospective clients are saying online? Here is a list of tools to help you start listening.

Five-Star Business

To find out how a business rates, check out the reviews on their Facebook or Google business page.

You can also search for acupuncturists in your area using Yelp. Additionally, TripAdvisor.com has an entire review section dedicated to spa vacations.

The Latest Buzz

Google Alerts is a free and fast way to find out the latest acupuncture industry news. Just set up an alert using the keywords of your choice and receive an update in your inbox. You can also collect intel on the hottest topics by subscribing to services such as BuzzSumo or Buzzlogix.

Feedspot.com will allow you to sign up free for one topic of interest such as massage therapy. Or, for less than \$30 a year, you can select more than one topic to follow. Feedspot's searches include more than just news or social media channels. You'll see blog posts and other sources pop up in your feed as well.

If you'd like to find out which topics related to acupuncture are trending on Twitter, then Hashtagify has you covered. Enter your keyword and you'll see a list of related words and topics that you can "hashtag" and follow such as #acupuncture.

Become a Mind-Reader

Sites such as Reddit and Quora are crowdsourced information sites. On Reddit, individuals post opinions, news, and questions on a huge variety of topics. Conversations are divided into subreddits based on subject matter or interests.

Quora, on the other hand, is designed to answer questions. Individuals can post their query and anyone with an interest or knowledge on the topic can answer.

Reading some of the posted questions, you may notice that there is still a need to educate some consumers about what acupuncture is and is not. So be prepared to see the occasional NSFW (not suitable for work) post if you visit these sites.

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