

# 50 SOCIAL MEDIA BEST PRACTICES

Learn How to Be There for Your Fans and Followers



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# Introduction

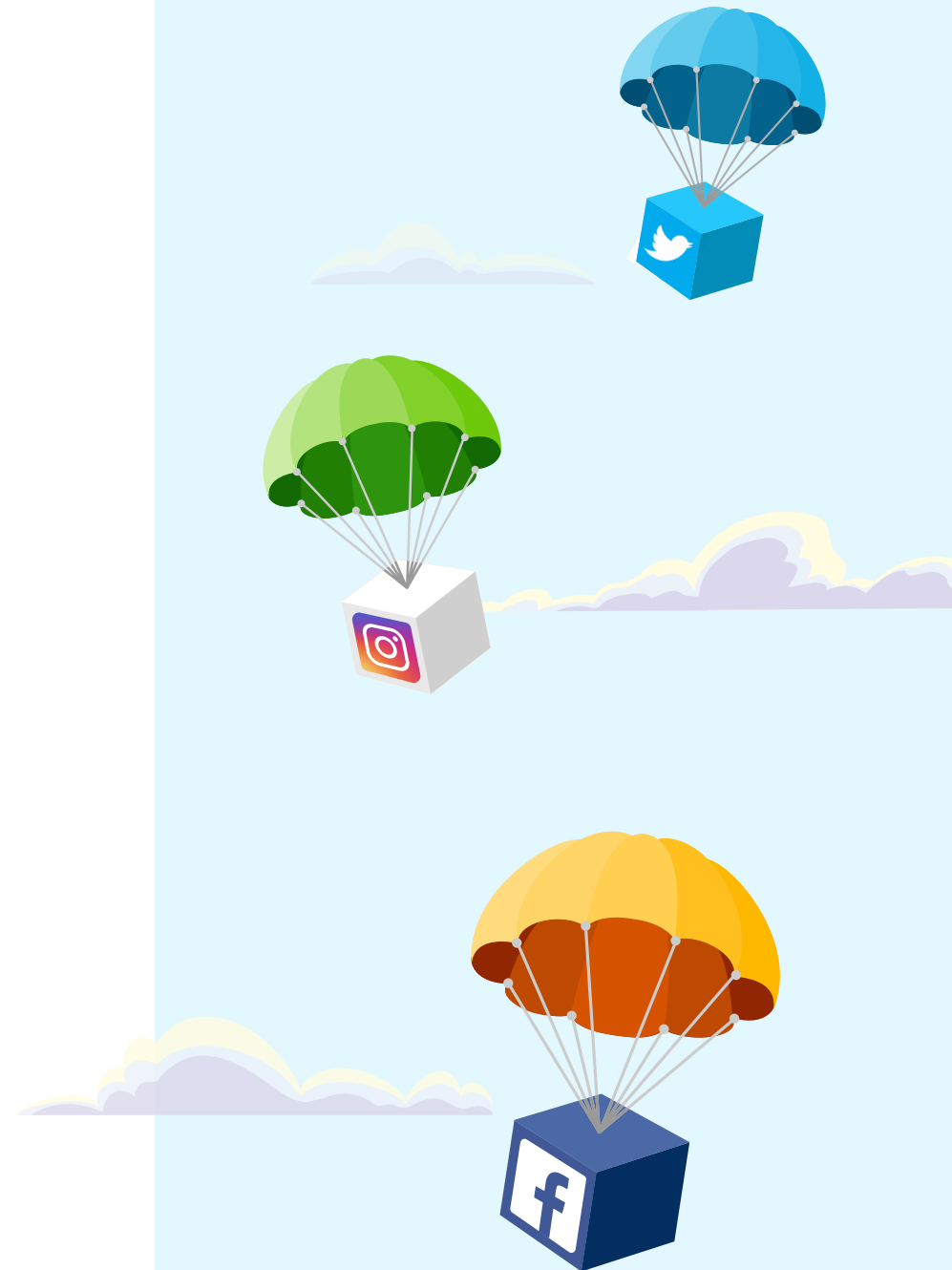
In times of need and uncertainty, people turn to social media. It's where they connect with friends, loved ones, and brands they love and trust. And those brands – and the voices that define that brand – become cultural leaders.

Social media accounts for over 30% of all time spent online.\* Keeping up with the latest social channels and their functionalities can feel like a full-time job. And if you're like most marketers, you're probably juggling other responsibilities, such as reporting on social media metrics, growing your audience, and collaborating with teams like sales and service to make every department more social.

That's why we compiled this list of 50 social media best practices. You'll find tips for every aspect of social media in business, from listening and engagement to publishing and advertising.

But the beauty of social is its diversity. Businesses and individuals bring their own voice, tone, and approach to social media. So as you read these 50 tips, think about how you can personalize them for your unique business goals, customers and challenges of today.

\* Lauren Underwood, "Social Media Captures Over 30% of Online Time," We Are Social, [wearesocial.com/uk/blog/2017/09/social-media-captures-30-online-time](http://wearesocial.com/uk/blog/2017/09/social-media-captures-30-online-time).

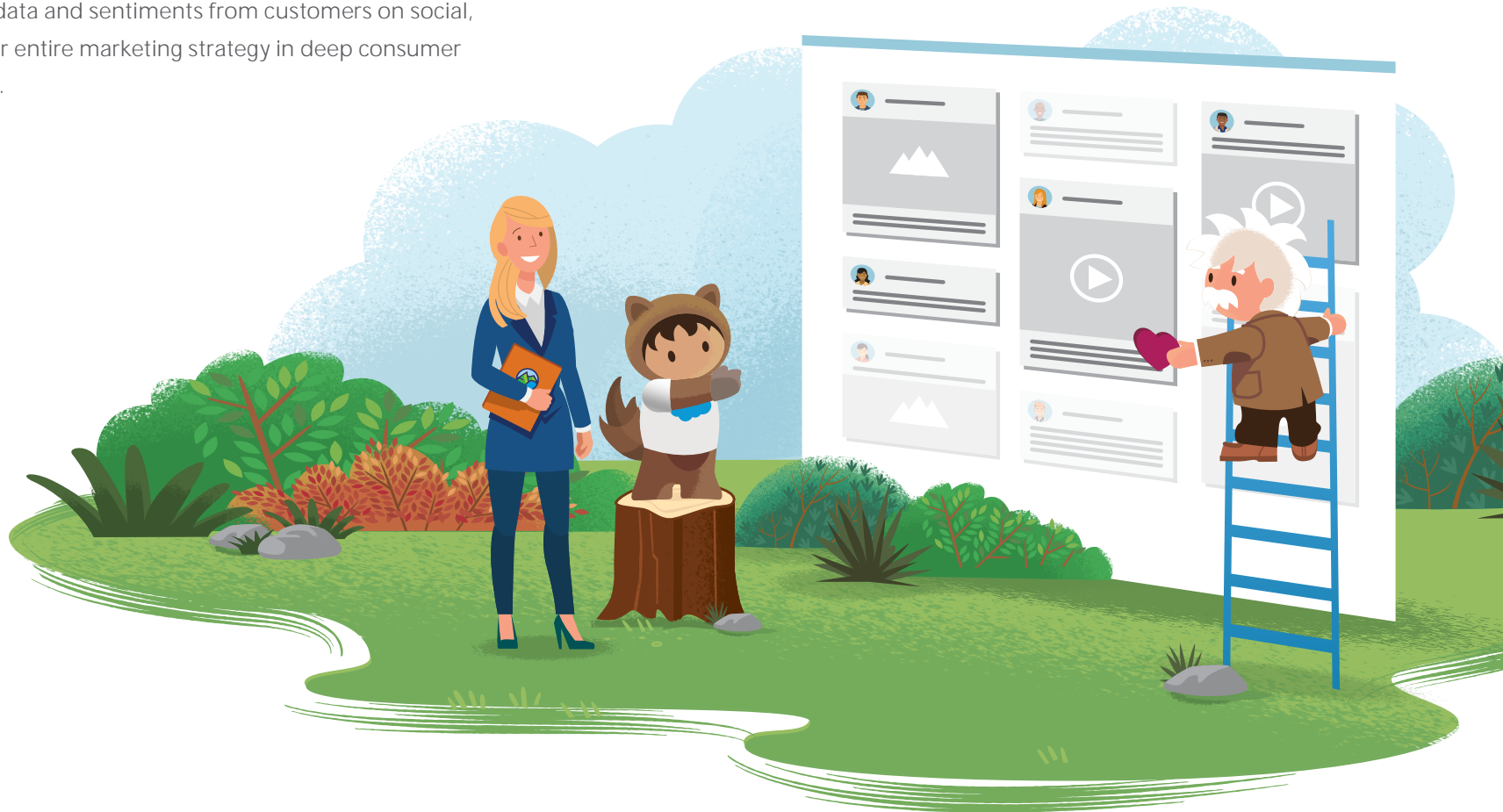


## CHAPTER 1

# Listening and Analytics

A social media listening strategy sounds straightforward enough: Identify and analyze what's being said about you – and topics relevant to your company – on the internet. But what makes social listening so crucial is how it can impact every other part of your marketing plan. When you use real data and sentiments from customers on social, you can ground your entire marketing strategy in deep consumer and market insights.

Listening first and engaging second should be key to your social media approach. Here are 10 ideas to start building a better social listening and analytics plan.





**1. Research where people are talking about you.** The first step in the social listening game plan is tuning your antenna to the right channels. You probably already know that Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn are smart places to start listening. But depending on your industry and customers, you may find that forums, Snapchat, Instagram, TripAdvisor, Yelp, or other sites are just as important.



**2. Identify the industry influencers.** When you first start listening, you may feel that no one's talking about your brand and there's not much to listen for. This can ring especially true for B2B brands. That means it's time to identify the primary influencers in your space. You can bet that trusted influencers are out there creating great content for just about every topic under the sun. So find the influencers first and see what they're talking about.



**3. Listen for social selling opportunities.** Social selling doesn't always mean conversion directly as a result of social. Usually, it's about social media managers getting the assist from their sales teams. For example, someone might tweet that she's thinking about buying a new BMW, and the local BMW dealership chimes in with a useful video. Look for these kinds of opportunities – and also times when someone may not be so happy with your #1 competitor. Social selling opportunities are everywhere once you start looking.



**4. Keep an eye out for nondirect brand mentions.** People don't always mention you by your correct brand name when talking about you. They may spell your name wrong, use an abbreviation, or simply talk about your industry without specifically calling you out. Put together a list of words people may use to describe you, your industry, and your competitors, and track conversation around those keywords across the social web.



**5. Connect social to the broader business.** In Salesforce's fourth annual "State of Marketing" research report, we found that the highest-performing marketers integrate social media activity into other business functions. For example, 88% of high-performing marketers collaborate with their service department to respond to social inquiries and concerns – versus just 37% of underperformers. Social also helps your sales teams discover new leads and your community managers identify brand advocates.



**6. Create categories to organize mentions.** Hopefully as your social listening plan matures, you'll start tracking many topics and keywords. You'll likely find this information flows into your stream in one large, unstructured mass. By assigning categories and moving content (either manually or automatically) into categories, you'll have a far easier time understanding and taking action on what people say about you. Keep your categories flexible to account for any changes that arise in your audience's opinions.



**7. Draft analytics reports to help shape future marketing endeavors.**

Social media listening puts you in an enviable position: You'll start sitting on a mountain of data. But more data doesn't always create more action – you have to be intentional. So create consistent reports that cover:

- Sentiment analysis
- Total mentions
- Most active networks
- Pain points

To put it all into context for your fellow marketers, answer questions like "Are mentions going up or down over time?" and "Is positive sentiment increasing?" Doing this on a weekly, biweekly, or monthly basis will help shape current and future campaigns and the way you talk to your customers.



**8. Be customer-focused, not channel-focused.** As all social media marketers know, channels change over time, but the importance of knowing individual customers stays the same. As you listen for questions and comments, focus on individual customers and how you can provide a consistent experience across social, web, email, and more. Instead of filing their thoughts away under keyword lists, get to know people as customers, not handles, connecting the dots on their relationship and history with the company.



**9. Automate what you can, but keep the human element.** The social listening process may be overwhelming, depending on the size of your company. Social listening tools help by automatically tagging keywords and assigning mentions to employees. These automation steps improve efficiency and allow you to spend more time engaging with people. But you can't leave it all to computers. Figure out what automation techniques work for you and allocate human resources where it makes the most sense. You'll be more productive and your employees will be happier doing work that can't be done by a robot.



**10. Draw meaningful conclusions about your customers from sentiment analysis.** Sentiment analysis refers to how you measure consumers' attitudes toward your brand. Sentiment analysis technology today is highly sophisticated, but some posts – which use sarcasm, for example – may occasionally trip up the system. You should always take a sample of your analyzed content and make sure it looks properly tagged. The holy grail of social listening is the ability to draw meaningful conclusions about your customers from listening to what they say, and that's where sentiment analysis plays a big role.

## CHAPTER 2

# Engaging Your Community

Now that you've set up your social listening program to hear what's being said about your brand on social media, it's time to join the conversation. Engaging with your prospects, customers, industry, community, and, yes, even your detractors is integral to a successful social strategy. Here are 10 ways to improve your engagement efforts.







**1. Empower employees to be social brand advocates.** Employee engagement is one of the best ways to get your social message spread far and wide. Empower your staff to be social ambassadors by making it simple for them to share company content on their personal channels. Curate a frequently updated list of links and short messages so all employees need to do is copy, paste, and customize.



**2. Put share buttons in strategic places.** A few years ago, social share buttons exploded. Suddenly Facebook and Twitter logos covered every surface of brick-and-mortar stores and websites. We've since learned that share buttons should be used more strategically. Use social media buttons to let people know about a new network you've expanded to (maybe Snapchat or Instagram) or to indicate where they can get quick customer service, and always provide a valuable reason they should connect with you.



**3. Humanize the brand.** Whether you're marketing highly technical B2B software or a hair product, you're still marketing to a person. And people want to talk to other people, not faceless corporations. Here are a few ways to ensure your social presence is staying both professional and human:

- Admit when you're wrong and apologize when needed
- Share a behind-the-scenes look at work and life at your company
- Show the names or faces of those who manage social
- Go on a jargon diet and use real-people language
- Have a sense of humor (while being aware that not all humor translates across geographic locations or from computer to person)



**4. Grow your audience the right way.** Big numbers of fans provide an ego boost and may help your boss see that you're doing a great job. But what you really want is to grow your audience responsibly and sustainably. The old-fashioned formula of sharing consistent and valuable content, sending timely responses, and acting like a human still works for growing your audience on any social platform.



**5. Be mindful of oversharing.** While it's important to stay in the loop and maintain social relationships, posting too often can turn off your audience. Delivering focused, exciting content less often will yield better results and help you grow your following. Create a content calendar with a posting schedule and stick to it. Everyone in your social media audience is busy – and they'll appreciate clear and concise communication.



**6. Don't always feel compelled to jump in.** You've probably seen one of the many articles poking fun at brands that feel compelled to share their opinion on every celebrity faux pas, world event, or holiday. Some things are better left unsaid – and most major news events don't warrant a response from your company. Similarly, you don't always have to respond every time someone mentions your company. Sometimes it's better to let individual employees, influencers, or other members of the community interject before – or instead of – you. If you jump in at the wrong time, you might send the wrong message. So pick your conversations wisely.



**7. Aim for transparency.** Openness goes a long way in social media. A transparent communication model helps your community feel involved in your company and appreciate the trust you show them. You can increase transparency by turning your CEO or other execs loose on Twitter, actively soliciting feedback, and letting your customers meet and chat with your employees online.



**8. Help your customers become experts.** You've accumulated a ton of knowledge about your industry, products, and services. Share what you've learned with your customers and community and help them become experts in their own right. Here are a few approaches:

- Pay attention to the questions your customers ask most and put them on the FAQ section of your website. A robust FAQ library is a great way to assist your service team and show customers that you know their biggest concerns.
- Answer every question and provide resources for further reading.
- Lead by example. Conduct research, post case studies, and share learning moments on your blog.

You don't always have to have all the answers. Just be helpful.



**9. Engage intelligently with positive feedback.** When you get positive feedback on social, tie a bow on that interaction so the customer is likely to say nice things about you again. Humans are highly influenced by others' opinions, so when customers openly express their love of your brand, it's valuable indeed. Always thank them first. Then you can look for ways to integrate them further into your community. You may take note of their latest blog post and share it with your network, add them as a guest contributor, or invite them to a customer forum.



**10. Deal with negative feedback swiftly and skillfully.** When someone has negative things to say about your company, respond quickly and don't delete the post from your page if it's on a network like Instagram or Facebook where comments can be deleted. Your customers may view deletion as a sign your brand is dishonest and trying to hide the truth. And don't feed the trolls – stay focused on constructive criticism. If someone is clearly out to tarnish your name, it's best not to play into their game on social media. Instead, send them your customer service email address or phone number and ask them to contact you directly.

## CHAPTER 3

# Publishing and Creating Content

Every successful social media strategy involves publishing. After all, what makes social media unique is the two-way conversation. But sometimes brands go wild with publishing without much of a strategy at all. On the other hand, some brands are so creative with their social content that their posts spread like wildfire across the web.

There's a lot to consider before tweeting, posting, pinning, or snapping from your brand's voice. Take a look at these best practices for a more thoughtful approach to social publishing.





**1. Respect the rules of each channel.** Smart social media managers understand that each social network is its own entity. Even if you want to share the same thing (like a big product announcement) across mediums, make sure you're using each social network the way it's meant to be used – and to the best of its abilities. For example, a Facebook post doesn't need to be under 280 characters like a tweet and can include larger image sizes than an Instagram post.



**2. Have a publishing strategy, not a channel strategy.** While it's important to respect the differences among channels (see the previous tip), make sure your publishing strategy doesn't become too siloed. Ideally, all channels operate in harmony and complement each other instead of functioning separately. Avoid having separate goals and practices for Facebook, Pinterest, Snapchat, and beyond. Instead, focus on what you're looking to achieve overall with social and how each channel plays a role.



**3. Line up approval processes.** Before you can start publishing, you need to decide who gets to add content to your social channels and when. This helps you avoid situations like having two people posting different things at the same time. For example, your personnel list might include the following people, each with different permissions:

- Administrators
- Publishers
- Editors

Some social networks, like Facebook, natively set up permissions for admins, while others require the use of a third-party tool. Regardless of how you do it, map out your approval hierarchy to ensure your organization has proper auditing and fail-safes. This will ensure the only people who can publish to your networks are those who should have access.



**4. Make every social CTA mobile friendly.** Today, nearly 80% of time spent on social media is spent on mobile devices.\* So when you're sharing content on social and hoping consumers will take action – whether that's by clicking, purchasing, or sharing – every call to action (CTA) must be seamless on mobile. You and your social team should be constantly testing social CTAs yourselves with your mobile devices. Ease of use is key. The less work people need to do on their phones to access your content, the more willing they'll be to stick with you.



**5. Publish during nights and weekends.** You might work Monday through Friday from 9–5, but your community is global, spanning time zones around the world and checking social networks outside of your normal work hours. Think about all of the times throughout the week when you check your Twitter feed or watch a YouTube video on nights and weekends. Posting outside of regular office hours helps your content stand out when many other brands aren't posting.



**6. Test ideas for new marketing campaigns.** One of the biggest benefits of building a large social network is the ability to test new copy and concepts with that audience. Experiment with different headlines and post types to find what might work in an email subject line. Look back on your most retweeted content to get ideas for new content marketing efforts. Your social audience is a great petri dish.



**7. Publish according to your own data.** Everyone will tell you something different when it comes to the best times to publish, the best post types, and the best calls to action. But only you have the data to make the right decision for your brand. Never stop experimenting and develop your own best practices.

\* Greg Sterling, "Nearly 80 percent of social media time now spent on mobile devices," Marketing Land, [marketingland.com/facebook-usage-accounts-1-5-minutes-spent-mobile-171561](https://marketingland.com/facebook-usage-accounts-1-5-minutes-spent-mobile-171561).



### 8. Create a social calendar that syncs with other marketing campaigns.

Your organization may have a few different marketing calendars for overall campaigns, advertising, content, and more. Your social publishing calendar works best when it reflects other marketing objectives. Calendars don't have to match up exactly, but you'll get more buy-in on your social efforts if you boost what other teams are already doing. Plus, customers will see a unified message from your brand no matter where they connect with you.



**9. Use tracking URLs.** Tracking URLs are a great way to prove the return on investment (ROI) of social. We'll talk more about ROI in the measuring section, but every time you publish, post links that have a tracking code built into them. This tracking code will then feed back into an overall database, helping you track which social networks are driving the most traffic and purchases. When it comes to proving the ROI of social, every link counts.



**10. Embrace the power of 1-to-1 interactions.** For some companies, publishing on social media is all about them. You flip through their recent posts and see all broadcasting and very little interaction with individuals. When people review your published content, they should see a mix of content that's both helping others and sharing your own story. You'll reach a broader audience and make a bigger impact if you take time to interact on a personal level.

## CHAPTER 4

# Advertising on Social Platforms

So you're engaging with the social community and growing your audience. With advertising on social platforms, you can connect with your customers in even more personalized ways. Ads on social shouldn't be siloed from the rest of your digital channels. Paid promotions on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and more can be a key component of your entire digital story.

The key to great social ads is the right targeting. With social media, you can align your ads to your customers across multiple channels. In this section, learn 10 best practices for irresistible ads on social networks.







**1. Set your advertising goals first.** When social media first hit the scene, growth was all organic – but now you can put some money behind your best-performing messages and most-targeted offers through ads. This means there's more at stake if you aren't getting results: namely, your advertising budget. So before you get started, think about the reasons you want to advertise on social media and what you want to get out of it. With clear goals, you can make better adjustments if things aren't working and better understand success or failure.



**2. Create daily and lifetime budgets for your campaigns.** Depending upon the social network you're advertising on, payment works differently – and you can usually bid directly on the objectives you want, such as website conversions, reach (impressions), clicks, or mobile app installs. Setting your budget for both the entire length of a campaign, as well as on a daily basis, will help you decide which ads to run when. It will also allow you to look at your day-to-day requirements, while simultaneously matching them up with your overall spending capabilities.



**3. Fit your social campaigns in the context of other advertising initiatives.** There may be times when you want to run social media ads separately from other marketing initiatives, and that's fine. But most likely, your social media ads will coincide with other paid media initiatives. To create cohesion, make sure your creative, messaging, and targeting coincides with the rest of your traditional advertising. This may seem obvious, but different departments or media-buying agencies may oversee different advertising responsibilities, so it's important to get everyone in the same room to share plans and assets.



**4. Know your options.** Each social network has different advertising capabilities based on the unique features available to users. For instance, a video campaign makes sense on Facebook or YouTube, whereas a link to a new white paper may be best as a link within a promoted tweet or LinkedIn update. And a gift guide is probably best suited for Pinterest. Regardless of the best platform for your campaign, familiarize yourself with your options so that you can make the best decision on where to spend your dollars.



**5. Get smarter about targeting, whether you're B2B or B2C.** Today, ads can go far beyond traditional demographic targeting, like all 18–25-year-old women in Chicago. For example, with Facebook behavioral targeting, a B2B marketer could start by targeting people with specific seniority levels and job titles, segmented by company size. A B2C company might be more interested in targeting email subscribers who haven't purchased in three months. The sky's truly the limit with digital ads and hyper-specific targeting. Your ads can reach real people, not anonymous groups. And with Facebook Custom Audiences, Google Customer Match, or Twitter Tailored Audiences, you can directly target people in your CRM system based on their email addresses or phone numbers.



**6. Test to improve targeting and performance.** Companies that focus on advanced targeting of their ads also use A/B testing to improve their results. The best way to determine the success of something is to have two small test groups and show them different versions of the same promoted content. The content that performs better is then used on the balance of the list. Make sure the variable is limited to one element, like the headline, image, or call to action, but not all three at once.



**7. Cast a sufficiently wide net when targeting.** You can create your ad groups by targeting, but you need to make sure you have a big enough audience to spend your budget and reach a sufficiently large group of people. Avoid getting way too granular with your targeting, which will undercut your ad's effectiveness by limiting the number of people who see it. You can even target people who look like your own customers with lookalike targeting.



**8. Don't forget about time of day and scheduling.** Just as it's important not to forget about nights and weekends when publishing, timing can be everything for your social ad effectiveness. Some testing is required to figure out when your ads are most effective, though there may be some more obvious publishing times. For instance, if your brand is a fast-food chain or a sandwich shop, you may want to run ads for an hour before lunch and dinner, when people are thinking of what to eat. Look at the times and days when people are most engaged with your ad, and devote more of your budget to those times once you feel your sample size is large enough.



**9. Agree on the right KPIs and metrics.** Digital ads give you a wealth of data. But data doesn't mean much if you don't do anything with it. Because social networks can track so many different actions taken by users, they create robust analytics reports that can help you determine the effectiveness of your advertising campaign. Create a list of metrics and key performance indicators (KPIs) that are most important to you before you get started so you can monitor these closely. As your campaign progresses, either make changes to optimize the results of these metrics or determine whether these metrics are actually the best indicators of your success.



**10. Don't just set it and forget it.** Advertising campaigns are living, breathing processes that require monitoring and adjustment. Fine-tune your analytics rhythm. Look at your results regularly. Schedule periodic meetings with stakeholders to go over campaign performance. Even if things are going according to plan, it's good to have everyone on the same page. Getting in a rhythm will also make internal sharing a lot easier, as those involved will already know what's going on with your ads.



#### CUSTOMER SPOTLIGHT:

## Bombardier

Bombardier, the world's leading manufacturer of planes and trains, strives to transform how millions of people travel across the globe. The company, with a presence in more than 60 countries, has set its mission "to continuously find ways to bridge distances and bring people together." To achieve this, Bombardier uses social media and Salesforce.

Bombardier relies on Social Studio to listen, analyze, engage, and publish. The platform allows the social media team to collaborate, and it also offers executives the ability to monitor all channels from a high level.

[READ THE STORY](#)



I love having full visibility of any team member who's working within Social Studio. I'm able to gain quick, high-level insights and even view more granular data to keep all of my teams in sync.

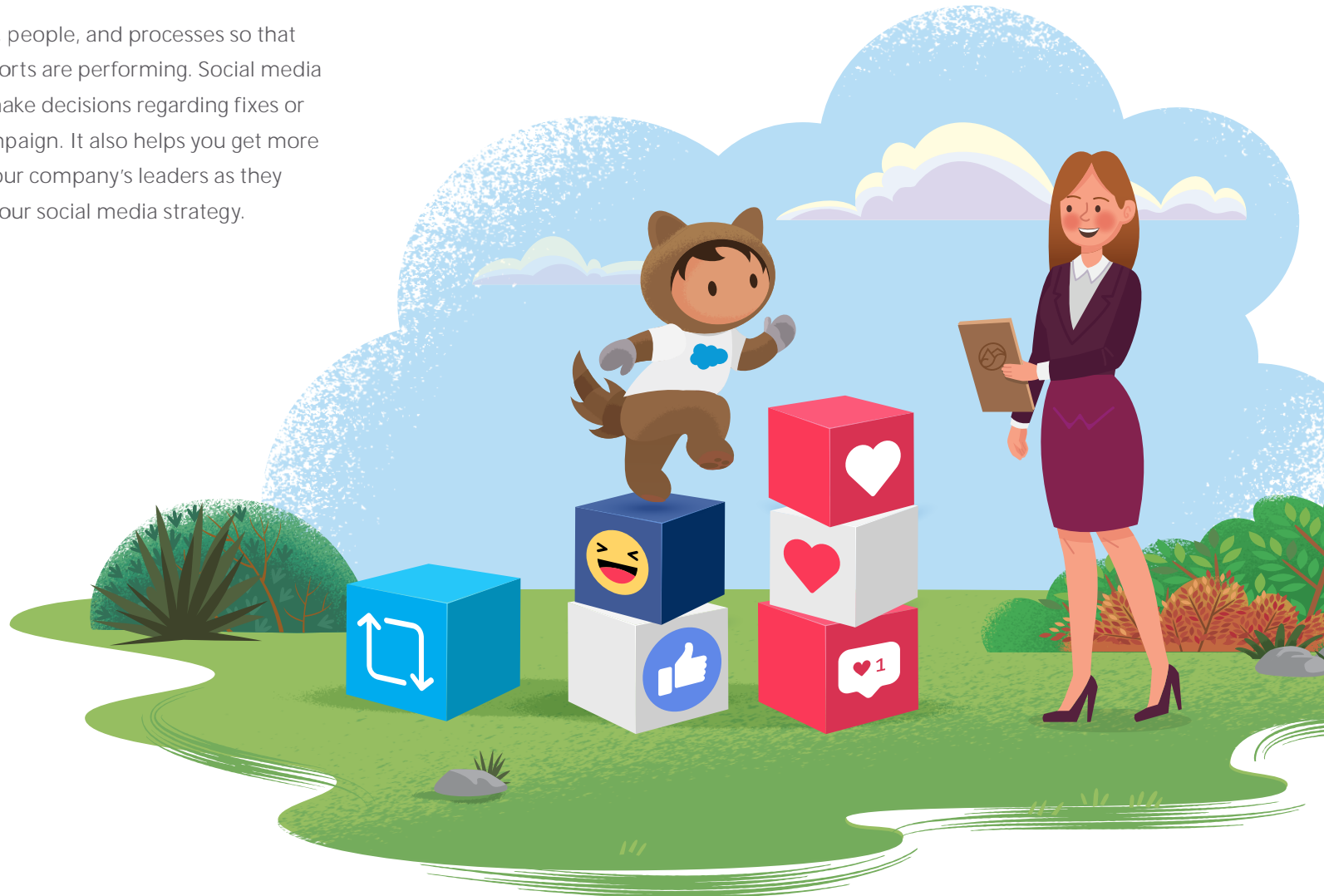
**KEN KNITTER**  
MANAGER, DIGITAL STRATEGY  
Bombardier



## CHAPTER 5

# Measuring Social Success

Establish the right technology, people, and processes so that you always know how your efforts are performing. Social media measurement allows you to make decisions regarding fixes or tweaks midway through a campaign. It also helps you get more buy-in – and budget – from your company's leaders as they see the impressive results of your social media strategy.





## 1. Choose your own goal. As the saying goes, “If you aim at nothing, you’ll hit it every time.”

Good social media goals are usually in line with the greater goals of your organization. Here are some solid social media goals to measure:

- Increase awareness
- Generate leads
- Increase service speeds
- Convert more leads to sales
- Surprise and delight existing customers
- Create upsell opportunities

It’s better to execute well on one or two goals than to dilute your efforts by trying to do too much.



**2. Only measure what adds value.** Philadelphia retailer John Wanamaker famously remarked, “Half the money I spend on advertising is wasted; the trouble is, I don’t know which half.” Unfortunately, some CMOs and marketing professionals still feel that way, even though so much of digital is measurable. Remember what your parents taught you: Just because you can do something doesn’t mean you should. For social media marketing, just because you can measure something doesn’t mean it has value, so only track what truly adds value to your business.



**3. Go beyond vanity metrics.** It feels great to measure your growing number of fans, followers, and subscribers. Views, likes, shares, and tweets are clear indications that your audience appreciates you. But marketers are under increased pressure to demonstrate ROI from social media. Are Facebook likes translating into web form completes? Are Twitter campaigns reducing acquisition costs of search-engine marketing? Have reporting tools closely monitor content performance and engagement. Not only does this provide insights, it enables you to target your most responsive audiences across social networks and geographies.



**4. Measure social's impact on email subscriber growth.** For most companies, email ROI remains strong. One excellent way to track social media success is to measure its impact on your email list. For example, you could use a simple email sign-up form on your Facebook page or promote email address–required white papers, online courses, or e-books on social. No matter what you test, social media is a great – and measurable – tool to grow your email list. Email is a great opportunity to help bring social followers through the sales funnel.



**5. Track service improvements from social.** In the chapters on engagement and publishing, we talked about the importance of responding to feedback and service issues in a timely fashion on social. This is one area where you have lots to measure that's highly worthwhile. For most companies, resolving customer issues via social media is much cheaper than phone or email. Studies also show that customer retention increases when customers receive quick replies on social.



**6. Gain insights about favorite products and services.** As you listen to the chatter on social media, you may discover certain features or products that customers can't stop talking about, for better or for worse. Take it a step farther. Don't just listen; track and measure these conversations over time. This ability to run R&D studies in real time should change the way you market.



**7. Create a central dashboard.** One of the problems with measuring social is that data comes from everywhere. You may have some data directly from social networks, some from third-party tools, and some from internal analytics teams. This can slow down your analysis. Try compiling all data into one central dashboard for easy viewing. You can use numbers, charts, graphs, and so on, but putting everything in one place ensures you aren't missing anything while removing redundancies and superfluous information. Bonus: This makes presenting data at a meeting a whole lot easier.



**8. Define your ROI.** ROI will always be marketing's three magic letters. Everyone wants an answer to the question, "How do I track ROI on this campaign or platform?" By this point, you know there's no one answer to this question. Social media gives you tons of data, but you have to decide what user actions are most important to you. Then you can figure out how to track them before you start your next campaign.



**9. Stay flexible and social.** Flexibility is a unique advantage of social media; if you suddenly want to change the direction of a campaign, it requires very little time and effort. That's why regularly conversing with those who have a hand in your social campaigns is critical for your success. These meetings may lead to a change in direction, tone, or even the data you're using to measure. Constantly reviewing the right data is just as important to your success as publishing the right content.



**10. Consider every available measurement tool.** Use all your available resources to calculate data. Whether that means using prepopulated spreadsheets from third-party tools, looking at social network analytics sections, or even whipping out a calculator and crunching numbers the old-fashioned way, never skimp on measuring your data. It's the only way to know whether you're on the right path with your social media efforts – and it can greatly impact the way you operate moving forward.



# Conclusion

We hope this list of 50 social media best practices helps inspire your social media creativity and enhances your existing strategy. With so many social channels to explore and messages to read, it can be overwhelming – so don't try to overhaul your whole social marketing plan at once. Test one or two new ideas each week or month, all while maintaining your existing cadence of publishing and engaging with customers.

To make your marketing feel more like matchmaking – pairing consumers with your products through social media – discover Social Studio at [salesforce.com/marketing](https://salesforce.com/marketing).





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