Report/ Financial Services/ 2014

Brandwatch Report

Financial Services/ 2014

Social listening & financial services: An industry snapshot







Brandwatch Report Financial Services/ 2014 Why read this?

The revolution that business is undergoing at the hands of social media continues to dominate discussion in the communications world.

While virtually all organizations are adapting in some manner to the new possibilities and challenges presented by social business, some industries face specific hurdles when looking to do so.

Financial services is a prime example.

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The Dehumanization of Financial Services

Before we consider how social media is impacting financial services and what opportunities it offers, it's useful to first assess the state of the industry as a whole.

Reports abound on the trend of **retail banks closing their physical branches**. Factors including changes in consumer demand meant that 348 branches were closed in 2013 in the UK alone with over 2200 closures in 2012 in the US. Many complexities lie behind banks' reasoning for these actions, but the effect it has on their relationship with the consumer is both simple and profound.

With the **digitalization of end-user services** like banking, convenience endures as a top preference for the consumer - a priority generally at odds with a personalized interaction. Online and mobile banking usage continues to rise, meaning the brand-to-customer experience is automated and comprehensively dehumanized. The age of customers choosing their banks based on the nearest physical branch or the friendliest, most helpful over-the-counter service is over.

With the death of this method of choice comes an increased focus on rates, fees and product benefits.

Recent bank branch closures: USA and UK





The Dehumanization of Financial Services

In the **insurance market**, a different cause is leading to the same outcome. Insurance comparison brands have been rising in status at different rates across the world, but it will likely soon be the case (indeed, it already is in some markets) that insurance providers themselves are only secondary figures, distinguished between almost purely on price and product benefits. The relationship the consumer has with the insurance provider brand has been reduced to one of numbers rather than trust or personal favor.

Competing solely on price and product benefits is undesirable for many brands, banks and insurance companies in particular.

Differentiating your brand in such a climate requires something more powerful and sustainable, so the challenge now facing retail banks and insurance providers is to revive the personal aspect of their customer experience without diminishing the much-demanded convenience. How can we offer both convenience and a personal service to consumers of financial services? Smart use of social appears to offer some assistance to this challenge.

Are financial services companies lagging behind?

There are two key reasons for the swathes of consumer brands taking to social media which are relevant to the aforementioned financial services predicament.

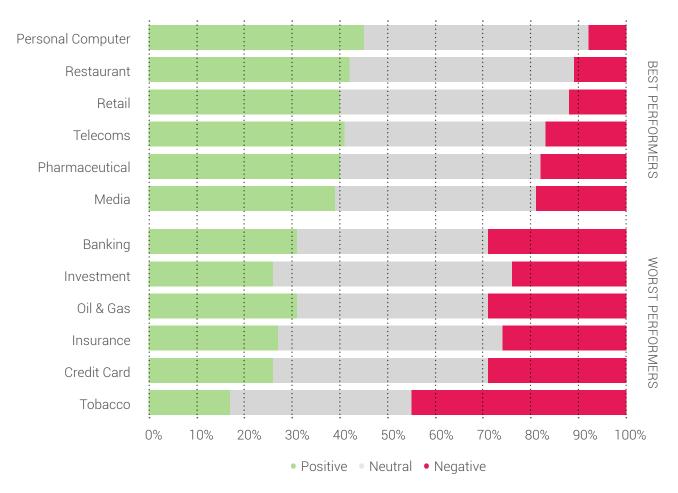
- 1. Social has character and personality
- 2. Consumers are **actively engaging** with brands in social

Firstly, social is a new and a natural place to express more character and personality, which can aid the cultivation of a deeper connection between a brand and its audience. Secondly, being a space in which more and more consumers are active, it offers platforms for more direct and one-to-one customer service, further facilitating a more human experience.

However, are financial services brands employing social media in the same way as those from other industries? Several nuances inherent to the financial services sector make it a more **complex and daunting initiative** than for other types of businesses, and empirical evidence shows that these are taking effect.

Is Negativity Inevitable?

Financial services, as a sector, is mired in negativity.



Indeed, banking, insurance, credit and investments all rank in the bottom six industries when ordered by trust.

Comparing finance brands' social tone with those from other sectors, the difference in communicative style is significant. For obvious reasons, financial brands are prone to face more friction from disgruntled customers than most others.

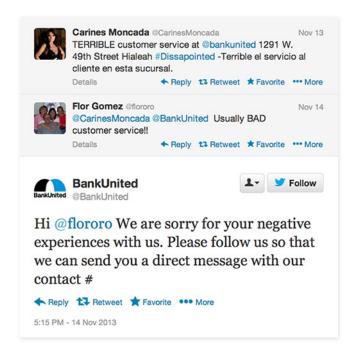
This reality can lead to situations in which – as the examples on the following page demonstrate – social media engagement predominantly amounts to picking up **complaints** and **apologizing**.

This chart uses data available in the IPSOS reputation snapshot report.

Is Negativity Inevitable?

It may be argued that this is an inevitable facet of consumer attitudes to financial services that will not cease purely by giving attention to social media. However, as Andrew Schrage of personal finance forum Money Crashers states, to ignore discontent entirely will be much more detrimental to the brand and its reputation.

More than just mitigating the negatives, we will shortly look at a modern financial services company which is exceeding customer expectation and, as a result, building a remarkably positive reputation through its forward-thinking approach to social media and consumer communications.







Security and Privacy

Fears around security and privacy issues, combined with heavy regulations on the matters, can seem a daunting problem for financial services companies looking at venturing into the very open and public social web.

Financial bodies such as **FINRA**, the **SEC**, **FSA**, **IIROC** and **PCAOB** set out requirements that brands must adhere to. However, with the right technology and internal policies in place, social profiles can be secured and compliant with these regulators' legislation. For example, as HootSuite advises regarding technology:

"Look for a social media management system that offers centralized control of corporate social accounts. These are strategic assets, and should be secured as such. Retain ownership of them at all times, especially during personnel changes. As a basic compliance measure, be sure that your social platform has a multi layered permissions system and supports automatic archiving of both internal and public social messaging."

The bottom line here is that, while security and privacy are very real concerns for financial services companies, they can truly be overcome. They should in no way prevent companies from taking advantage of the **huge benefits** to social media, but simply may require additional accounting for in the policies, strategic planning and tactical deployment of social business.

You can read our more detailed guide for financial firms with regard to the most recent legislation at brandwatch.com/finservregs

What do Consumers Want from Financial Services Brands?

The benefits of expressing brand personality to foster a better relationship with the consumer and a clearer, stronger identity are sought by a vast number of consumer-facing organizations today. Many are taking the opportunity to use **humor, informal language** and a more "human" **originality** than brands have historically been comfortable with.

Finding the right balance between character and responsibility is a major challenge for financial brands.

When it comes to financial services, however, it may be viewed that this kind of approach is at odds with maintaining a trustworthy, cautious, informed and authoritative image - likely very important for a company ultimately in control of people's money.

A closer inspection of a UK-based organization proves insightful, as many financial service companies there also offer non-financial products so can be comfortably compared, as exemplified by Tesco. We can observe the different approach taken in the Twitter accounts of their mobile network brand and their banking brand. Tesco Mobile is operated as an

interactive, humorous and engaging account – so notoriously informal that it generates significant publicity – whereas Tesco Bank remains strictly corporate and broadcast-driven.

Also indicative is that the former also enjoys **over 25 times more followers** than the latter.



Turning Social Media into an Advantage

It's clear that, though there are complexities to the financial services industry which make social business initiatives challenging, **there are significant gains to be exploited** if handled intelligently.

Two ways to turn social into an advantage:

- 1. Use social media to enrich and differentiate brand
- 2. Stand out through great customer service

Firstly, there is using social media to enrich, differentiate and improve brand reputation. In an increasingly automated and non-personal brand-consumer ecosystem, social media platforms provide portals for financial services staff to connect with the customer. Furthermore, they support marketing functions with a suitable new means of conveying a more real, likeable and human brand.

Secondly, the downfall of traditional customer experiences in financial services can be reversed and improved by social media, but there ways in which it can improve upon them too. A powerful component of social media customer service is the ability to run many interactions in parallel, making it a more scalable and efficient means of resolving queries.

Research has proven that **customer care interactions over social media** can cost an organization as little as \$1 when the **equivalent phone interaction** will cost \$6.

That financial services is a historically slow-moving industry stifled by legislation is in itself even more incentive to innovate. Huge ground can be made by the companies who are able to negotiate the potential obstacles and develop effective social business processes.

To further illustrate the opportunity for intelligent leverage of social media for financial services, we will look at five examples.

1 Campaign Measurement

Financial services corporations spend billions of dollars on marketing campaigns every year. Some are aimed at improving brand awareness, or perception, others launch new products or look more directly at acquiring new customers.

For every dollar spent, naturally, marketers need to prove the ROI for their initiatives.

An incredibly powerful application of social media is the insight it can provide into the success of all kinds of campaigns. Broad metrics such as reach, sentiment and conversation volume can demonstrate the impact of TV/video ads, email marketing, online advertising as well as, of course, social media and content marketing campaigns.

To illustrate how social media activity can provide tangible evidence of marketing and PR efforts, we're going to look at an example of **sports sponsorship** by a financial services brand. Credit provider Capital One undertakes two large

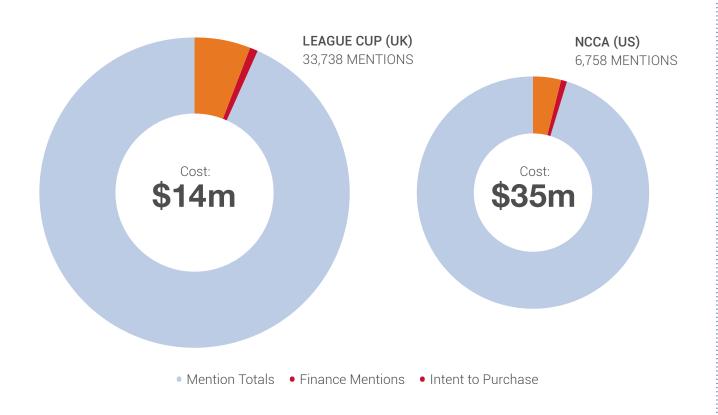
sports sponsorships, the soccer **League Cup** in the UK and the **NCAA** in the US.

Brandwatch data generated from tracking discussions around each campaign provides some insight into their success. In practice, this involves the gathering of mentions of Capital One conversation generated in relation to each sporting event for February and March 2013, the peak of both campaigns.

The chart on the following page illustrates that, despite the UK sponsorship costing just an estimated \$14m compared to the \$35m US counterpart (both annual figures), the soccer campaign generated over five times the quantity of online mentions.

Campaign Measurement

At first glance, this implies a far better ROI in the UK, but we can look in more detail to see if this holds true.



In fact, despite more volume overall, just 4.8% of the League Cup sponsorship conversation concerns financial matters, whereas this figure is 6.8% for the NCAA deal. This may imply that, while conversation about the League Cup delivers superior reach, there is a stronger link to the brand's actual products with the NCAA.

Analyzing the conversation to an even greater degree reveals how much of it directly related to Capital One's bottom line: those comments in which people **declared a statement of purchase** intent. Listening for mentions featuring language around purchase behavior, such as those announcing they were planning on applying for a Capital One credit card, showed that neither campaign managed to generate many of these mentions.

Campaign Measurement

The data from Brandwatch shows that as a lead generation initiative, both campaigns performed poorly in generating immediately visible social media conversations that included an 'intent to purchase'.

Ultimately, these results need to be linked back to the original objectives. It's possible that these campaigns were focused more directly on brand awareness, so that sheer **brand amplification was the goal**, and were backed by direct campaigns targeted more heavily at acquisition. Whatever the aims, analyzing the outcome with social media data provides invaluable insight as to how comparative campaigns can be improved, revealing specific areas for optimization in future endeavors.

Current challenges:

- Proving the overall ROI of integrated marketing campaigns (on- and offline)
- Differentiating between engagement and profitable business impact
- Creating informed, data-driven marketing initiatives

Recommendations for Social Listening

- 1. Establish the objectives of your campaigns and use social metrics to monitor the success in meeting them
- 2. Categorize your social data to gain deeper understanding of the performance of each marketing initiative
- 3. Use advanced Boolean operators to intricately dissect the meaning behind the response to your campaigns, such as 'intent to purchase'

2 Customer Service

It's unsurprising that social media has become such a common channel for customer service. When customers want help, they seek it on their terms.

They're already on social media, so it's easy for them to ask questions, make requests or issue complaints in that environment. Why bother to find an address to which you have to draft an email or dig out a number and wait on the phone when you can put it out there in the public eye and pressurize the brand to respond immediately? The "alwayson" world of today nurtures a shorter attention span and thus a very demanding consumer attitude toward brands.

Indeed, **at least 80%** of customers that submit a query to a brand via social media expect a response on the same day. Around half expect a brand response within **two hours**, with 30% of Twitter users and 25% of Facebook users expecting one in **under 30 minutes**.

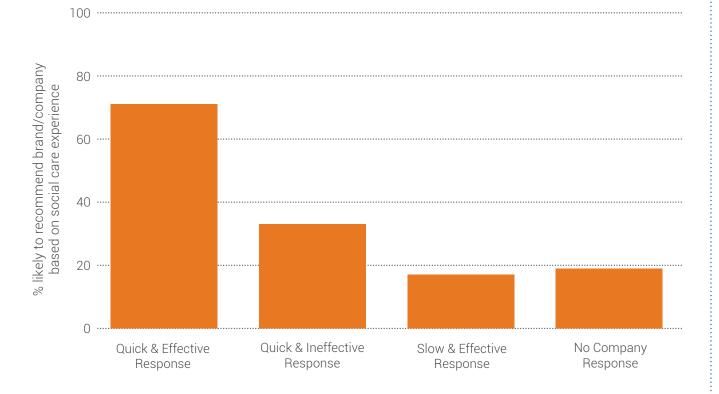
While some people may harbor concerns about online privacy and security regarding financial services, the reality is that platforms such as Facebook and Twitter are becoming the first port of call for customers seeking assistance or looking to raise an issue. Many banks, credit card providers and other financial services companies are **taking steps to adapt** to this, but it's proving a challenge to maintain a satisfactory level of service.

Troubleshooting customer problems and minimizing complaints needn't be the only benefit of effective customer support. The added impact is that effectively communicated-with and cared-for customers are then far more likely to **recommend that brand**, even if the brand simply responds and remains unable to solve the issue.

Furthermore, the benefits to customer satisfaction from being prompt can outweigh the benefits of being slowly effective, underlining the importance of rapid brand response.

2 Customer Service

One of the biggest challenges that financial services institutions have been both constrained by and may still be hiding behind is that of regulation.



Regulators have been typically cautious and slow to provide clear guidance to their wary financial services community members. To highlight how financial services businesses can succeed at delivering exceptional customer service on social media and not contravene legislation, we need look no further than **Simple**, the Portland-based banking company.

In less than eighteen months, the business has built up huge demand - there is now a two-year waiting list of new customers for its invite-only service. Its informal customer service style matches a company-wide approach to communication, stripping jargon and legalese from written and spoken content whenever possible.

The chart shown uses data available in the NM Incite social care survey.

2 Customer Service

Without physical branches or traditional economies of scale, Simple is using its customer service and digital-first communication style to differentiate.



The company's documentation and FAQs are **written in plain English**, and this approach extends to customer service. Support teams are not given scripts, and after suitable training, are encouraged to be themselves in order to serve customers in the most human, natural way possible.

This technique is helping it achieve something most financial brands can only dream of – **fanatical advocates**.

The rapid rate of growth and success the company is enjoying is testament to the strategy. Even without this focus on personal, character-driven customer care, the perks of having a robust, prompt **social support system** in place are plentiful.

2 Customer Service

In other sectors, brands are demonstrating that customer service in social isn't just a 'must do' in response to customer demands.

Indeed, it can in fact offer lower cost-per-interaction and higher customer satisfaction than traditional telephone-based call centers.

Some businesses outside of the financial sector, such as global music streaming provider Spotify and UK phone network GiffGaff, are even building hubs for peer-to-peer customer support, utilizing their most loyal advocates to assist other customers in need of assistance. These schemes not only reduce costs of support even more, but also help foster an active and engaged community, when administered effectively.

Current challenges:

- Providing helpful services while complying with vague regulatory guidelines
- Balancing speed of response with effectiveness of resolution
- Managing customer queries at scale while still providing personalized care

Recommendations for Social Listening

- 1. Create flexible but compliant protocols for customer support representatives to adhere to when handling queries and use social metrics to monitor the success in meeting them
- 2. Monitor for customer comments beyond your owned social profiles and empower your team to assign and respond to each accordingly, in real-time
- 3. Implement enterprise-grade social media monitoring and engagement technologies that offer workflow functions, allowing multiple teams and functions to respond

3 Reputation Management

Maintaining an overwhelmingly positive image has always been a tall order for financial brands.

They hold a lot of responsibility and power over consumers who are often unsympathetic toward them and easily riled when it comes to matters of their own personal finance.

Beyond the realm of mainstream social networks, there are dozens of extremely influential consumer rights and advice forums that disgruntled customers flock to in order to seek peer opinion on matters of complaint. In no area is this more true than personal finance - millions of users visit forums like FatWallet, MoneySavingExpert, Pinching Your Pennies and Legal Beagles to share information on their experiences. Unsurprisingly, these forums are candid environments where members pull no punches and happily disparage brands they're not happy with.

The importance of monitoring these forums needs little further emphasis, but brands should also not overlook the opportunity they have to go further than being reactive.

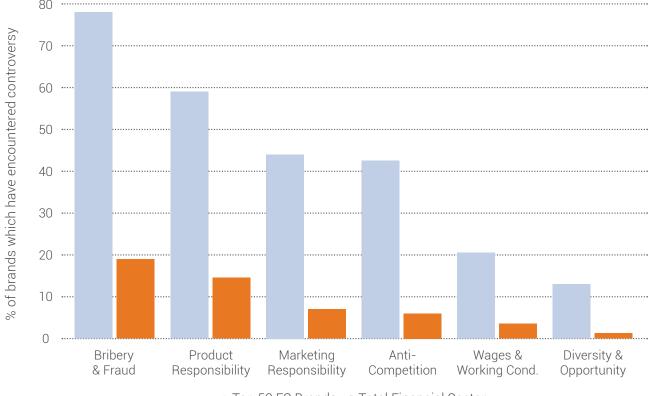
Targeting highly relevant spaces with considered engagement strategies, while remaining compliant with legislation, could return hugely positive benefits for a brand and position them as a standout example of a financial services business that cares and understands their consumer.

That said, preventing crises is of course of paramount importance too, with frequent examples still hitting the social web and **wreaking havoc** with brands' reputations.

Reputation Management

Examples of controversial stories about financial brands circulating online are not difficult to find.

Chart data from Thomson-Reuters Trust Index



Top 50 FS Brands
 Total Financial Sector

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In **Europe**, The Royal Bank of Scotland found itself at the brunt of several PR bashes in 2013 – and the holiday season delivered a final festive treat. An IT failure meant that many **RBS** and **NatWest** customers' buving endeavors couldn't be completed on the "biggest online shopping day of the year". As news spread, sensational examples appeared alongside comments declaring the bank had "ruined Christmas".

How exactly do these stories spread? Well, while there are the additions of blogs and news outlets that further compound the damage, Twitter alone obviously wields awesome power in this arena. A Populus/Open Road report showed that 55% of "opinion formers" referenced Twitter as a key source for all their news, almost double the percentage of two years prior.

3 Reputation Management

If these incidents can't be eliminated entirely, can they at least be quickly tamed?

The Populus/Open Road report highlights one brand that reacted remarkably well in dealing with a crisis they also faced in 2013. How? Rather than shy away, the brand launched a new website, supported by email notifications to millions of customers and a **comprehensive organic and paid search strategy**. The site was dedicated to tackling the matters of the problem by providing as much clarification and transparency as possible.

Being able to react this swiftly requires a fluid internal infrastructure which is prepared for this kind of incident. The more fundamentally plugged into social media a business is throughout, the more this fluidity will be allowed to flourish.

Current challenges:

- Knowing who is talking about your brand and what they are saying
- Reacting to crises in an agile, prompt manner
- Getting early warning as crises emerge

Recommendations for Social Listening

- 1. Monitor for specific conversation about your brand and associated services across the web
- 2. Set up alerts in social media monitoring platforms to trigger when mentions spike
- 3. Create a robust process that allows for instant reaction to any potential crises, with automatic elevation and delegation to relevant teams

4 Research

The common negativity financial services brands face online when it comes to consumer comment can be turned around into something of huge value, both for the brand in question and its competitors too.



Brands can use social data to tap into attitudes towards new products, pitfalls in services, regional or temporal variation in customer service perceptions. **MasterCard did exactly this**, putting what may seem like abstract theory into real practice.

In early 2013, the leading global credit card company released results from its first ever worldwide study of the mobile payments space, commissioned to try to better understand the state of the market and advise on their future involvement within it.

Collating the data from a six-month period, the research project used **85,000 mentions** from across different social

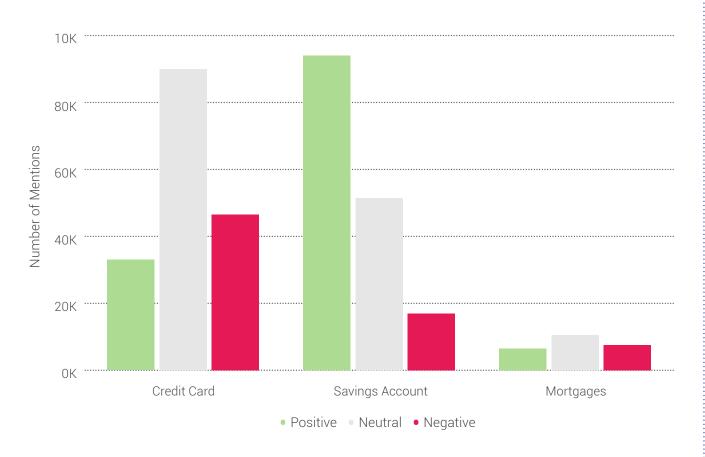
channels including Twitter, Facebook, and different blogs and forums to assess how open people seemed to the concept of mobile payment services.

Perhaps as expected, the study indicated a high volume of conversation and consumer interest in adopting mobile payments while citing security, customer support and confusion over the **array of options** available today as barriers to entry. Crucially, though, the study uncovered one big surprise: those who had already used a mobile money service were less positive and enthusiastic about the idea than consumers who hadn't tried one vet.

Early adopter sentiment was **58% positive**, while those yet to adopt were **76% positive**. MasterCard then used these insights to refine its MasterPass e-payments service.

4 Research

The MasterCard example is just one way social media research can guide product development and messaging.



If a blue chip financial services brand like MasterCard was able to use such agility, it's feasible to suggest that, given the right approach, **any brand can**.

Consider also how this type of research can offer organizations rich insights around customer perception of their own brands. **This chart uses social conversation data** to illustrate how a banking brand's different financial products are perceived by customers, and also indicates how much awareness exists around each offering.

This helps the brand tweak parts of the products it offers to ensure that they match the **expectations and tastes** of its customers. This kind of data can also assist in shaping the approach to messaging that the brand undertakes when communicating through marketing channels.

4 Research

The data on the previous page suggests the brand might reconsider how competitive its credit card product offering is or how it markets its mortgage services.

Further research into the demography of the market, differences across platforms, topic analysis, comparisons to competitors and regional variances - among countless other possible avenues of investigation - can reveal a rich cache of insights for a financial brand to optimize the ways it creates, and markets, its services.

Current challenges:

- Understanding what the marketplace truly thinks of the products available
- Compare nuances in the perception of different products across segments
- Measuring the effectiveness of communicating the benefits of your products, and implementing the changes required

Recommendations for Social Listening

- Create targeted queries to accurately comprehend what is being said about specific product offerings
- 2. Use metadata, operators and filters to isolate conversation by location, platform, demography and other criteria
- 3. Share insights with product development teams before, during and after product launches to refine the quality of services provided



5 Command Centers

The concept of a social media "command center" originated with brands like Dell and Gatorade as far back as 2009. However, a lot has changed since those early models.

Businesses are now far more socially mature than they were then, meaning that the functions command centers perform have much more impact across an organization and that they can no longer be accused of being a vanity asset as they once may have been.

Additionally, the social media monitoring and analysis technology powering the centers is **much smarter and more sophisticated** than before. The result is that the information gathered is more relevant, more powerful and of higher impact.

On top of both these factors is of course the ever-increasing adoption of social media by the public, meaning the volume of data continues to mount and brands are under heightened pressure to deal with it. This has certainly been recognized in the financial services sector over the past couple of years with more and more large companies setting up their own interpretations of command centers.

2014's leading command centers are commonly multi-screen display systems that tell the story of social data in an engaging way.

A vertical such as the financial sector is no stranger to using visualizations of data to function as the pulse of a company, with **stock prices and other fiscal data** often proudly displayed in the lobbies of institutions across the globe to indicate the health of each organization, in real-time.

5 Command Centers

Social media command centers can be deployed in finance brands, showcasing social media results across the company, not just marketing and customer service teams.



They also serve to internally broadcast the **success of campaigns** or events in real-time and can help ensure more agile security and crisis management.

They can even be used to publicly keep track of a brand's online presence against that of its competitors, for senior executives and junior staff alike to better understand the company's standing in the digital realm. Establishing a central '**social hub**' to manage social activities also frequently manifests as a major appeal of such systems.

MasterCard's "conversation suite" was the tool behind the research project detailed earlier in this report, and Chase, among other US banks, has invested heavily and committed substantial resources to dedicated social media facilities.

5 Command Centers

Chase's social media department, including the 12-person Twitter team, has been moved into the glass-housed center of a campus of 10,000 employees.

If ever a move symbolized just how strong the social business push is at the US bank, surely this is it. Though these initiatives are characterized by slightly **different tactics and focus**, they are ultimately geared toward the same principle of more comprehensively socializing the business. Command centers are taking on the responsibility of elevating brands from purely superficial, reactionary social media processes to a culture where social data flows in and out of all departments in synergy.

Current challenges:

- Getting social data out of PDFs and inboxes, and into the hands of staff that are empowered to act upon it
- Compare nuances in the perception of different products across segments
- Driving cultural change in large organizations to 'take social seriously' as part of a digital transformation agenda

Recommendations for Social Listening

- 1. Installing highly visible monitors displaying useful social data across physical departments of your enterprise
- 2. Customize and automate the data displayed for each team to streamline the extraction of relevant insights
- 3. Use agile notification and administration features to present the story of your data to executives when it's most valuable

Key Takeaways

The financial services sector has been slow to adapt to the changes social and digital media are bringing to large organizations, amid restrictions regarding legislation and other sector-specific challenges.

Despite these hurdles, the opportunity for the businesses to capitalize upon these advantages is significant, and provides a **new avenue for financial brands** to connect with customers in a meaningful way.

Significant investment in marketing campaigns is often undertaken by financial organizations, and social data provides a **solid resource** for measuring the impact each campaign has, granting brands extremely granular insights into the ROI of each marketing dollar spent.

Customer expectations for brands' social support have grown more demanding, but implementing a cohesive system in which service reps are empowered to communicate directly with customers can drive brand loyalty, customer satisfaction and referrals. In a sector plagued by regular controversy and public distrust, keeping a handle on brands' reputation is integral. Establishing a robust strategy, process and listening program will ensure any potential crisis is mitigated before it escalates.

Researching a brand's customers, its market and its competitors grants it the power to **better optimize product offerings** and understand the **genuine perception of its services and communications**, to an unprecedented level of granularity.

A number of pioneering financial organizations are employing the use of command centers to catalyze the process of becoming a social enterprise, and to streamline the distribution of information throughout the company.

NB You can read our quick guide to the latest guidance at brandwatch.com/finservregs

Implementing the Right Technology

Most financial services organizations now acknowledge that the opportunities available to them significantly outweigh the threats.

Building your approach plan to social media in a strategic manner is vital, but the success of its implementation will depend upon the quality of the technology behind it.

It is clear then that selecting a suitable listening platform to power your program is integral to making the most of social.

Brandwatch is engineered to be the robust, flexible platform that cutting-edge enterprises need to achieve this and has been selected by some of the biggest and best known financial services organizations in the world.

Financial Services/ Implementing the Right Technology

As a financial services brand, you can take advantage of the opportunities outlined in this report by using Brandwatch to power your listening program.

- Obtain the cleanest, most accurate data from conversations happening across the web, instantly and with reams of additional, valuable information about the authors, websites and networks behind them.
- Ensure adherence to policies and distribute data seamlessly throughout your organization by using Brandwatch's workflow and priority features, enhanced with clever implementation of the various user permissions and sharing functionality available.
- Use Brandwatch's social data in more places, for more purposes, by taking advantage of our partnerships and integrations with leading technologies like HootSuite, Spredfast and Clarabridge.

- Monitor your brand's reputation and remain alert to crises with rich, real-time data, automatic sentiment analysis and a potent suite of email alerting tools.
- Understand your market in unprecedented depth, uncovering not only exactly what is being said about your brand or field, but by whom, where and why.
- Slice and dice your data automatically or manually, in bulk or individually, taking advantage of the most sophisticated data manipulation features available in any listening software.
- Visualize your data using Brandwatch Vizia, reaping the rewards of installing a **best-in-class** command center unlike any other on the market.

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Thank you

We'd love to talk more specifically about the ways Brandwatch can help your business. Please do get in touch or request a demo for more detailed, custom advice on advancing your listening program.

Jump directly to our demo page

www.brandwatch.com/demo

About Brandwatch

Brandwatch is one of the world's leading social media monitoring and analytics platforms. Its technology gathers **millions of online conversations** every day and provides clients with the tools to analyze them, enabling brands and agencies to make smarter, data-driven business decisions.

The company has won awards for its technology and renowned corporate culture, and regularly wins accolades for its impressive growth. The Brandwatch platform is used by **over 900 brands and agencies**, including organizations such as Dell, PepsiCo, Whirlpool, Kellogg's and British Airways.

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