



# Social Listening in Practice/ Social Selling



# Foreword

Think 'social selling' is just a buzz phrase?

Direct selling involves discovering opportunities, developing relationships, nurturing, offering advice, and ultimately closing deals. Social selling is exactly that. Just on social.

This paper, one of the Social Listening in Practice use case series, is going to show you how social selling will bring your business into the sights of the 81% of consumers who are undertaking pre-purchase research online right now.

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# Introduction

## Social media has evolved.

From the early days of simple chat rooms on Usenet, to the first Livejournal entries, users then made connections on Friendster and began sharing images on Flickr.

YouTube and Reddit shifted the sands once again in 2005, introducing media entertainment into the social networking experience. But with the advent of Twitter and other question and answer format sites, like Quora, not to mention crowdsourced review sites such as TripAdvisor, users suddenly had a new use-case for their social networking.

## Pre-purchase research.

With the proliferation of smartphones, tablets, smartwatches and other wearable tech offering the ability to be online nearly all the time, there's barely a moment when a potential customer can't do some quick research about a product or service. Whether it be B2B or B2C, reviews are available at the swipe of a screen; a tweet asking for recommendations can be sent out to the masses within seconds.

Today, research shows that a huge **81% of B2C shoppers** will search online before making a purchase.

61% will read reviews online before parting with their hard-earned cash, and on average, will look at three different vendors.

You'd think all businesses would be jumping straight on this opportunity with vigour, right? Wrong.

In 2014, **QuickSprout reported** that only 6% of businesses use social media to generate sales.

Social selling is not a term used only in marketing meetings. It's the very real, very effective process of assisting social buyers in their purchase — gently guiding them through the oceans of information available on the internet — with the ultimate end-goal of them choosing your product or service.

It's reaching prospects and helping them trust you. It's building strong connections. It's creating a fulfilling buying experience. It's proactively seeking leads in an area where 140 characters can make or break a brand.

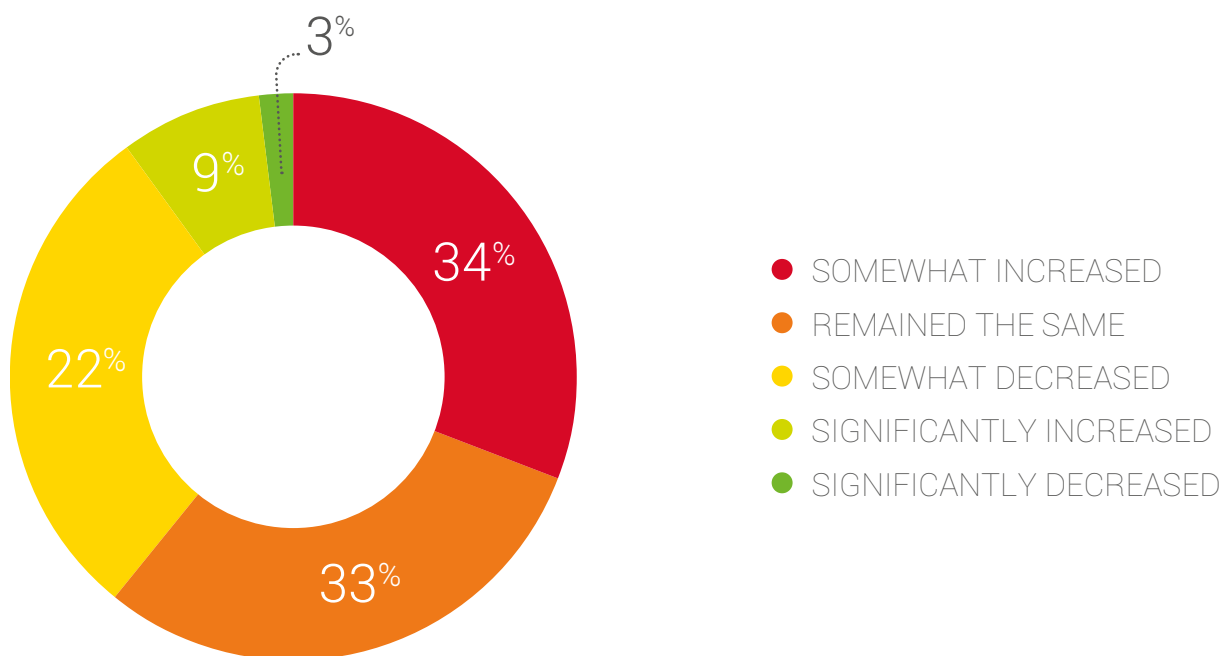
This guide on Social Selling, the latest in the Social Listening in Practice series, will arm you with the information and tools you need in order to nurture relationships into revenue.

# OVERVIEW: Social and marketing: the current landscape

Today, only **40% of marketers** feel their current online marketing mix serves the needs of their customers.

Furthermore, the gap between marketing and the sales pipeline is widening, and the B2B sales cycle ever lengthening as each year goes by.

LENGTH OF B2B SALE

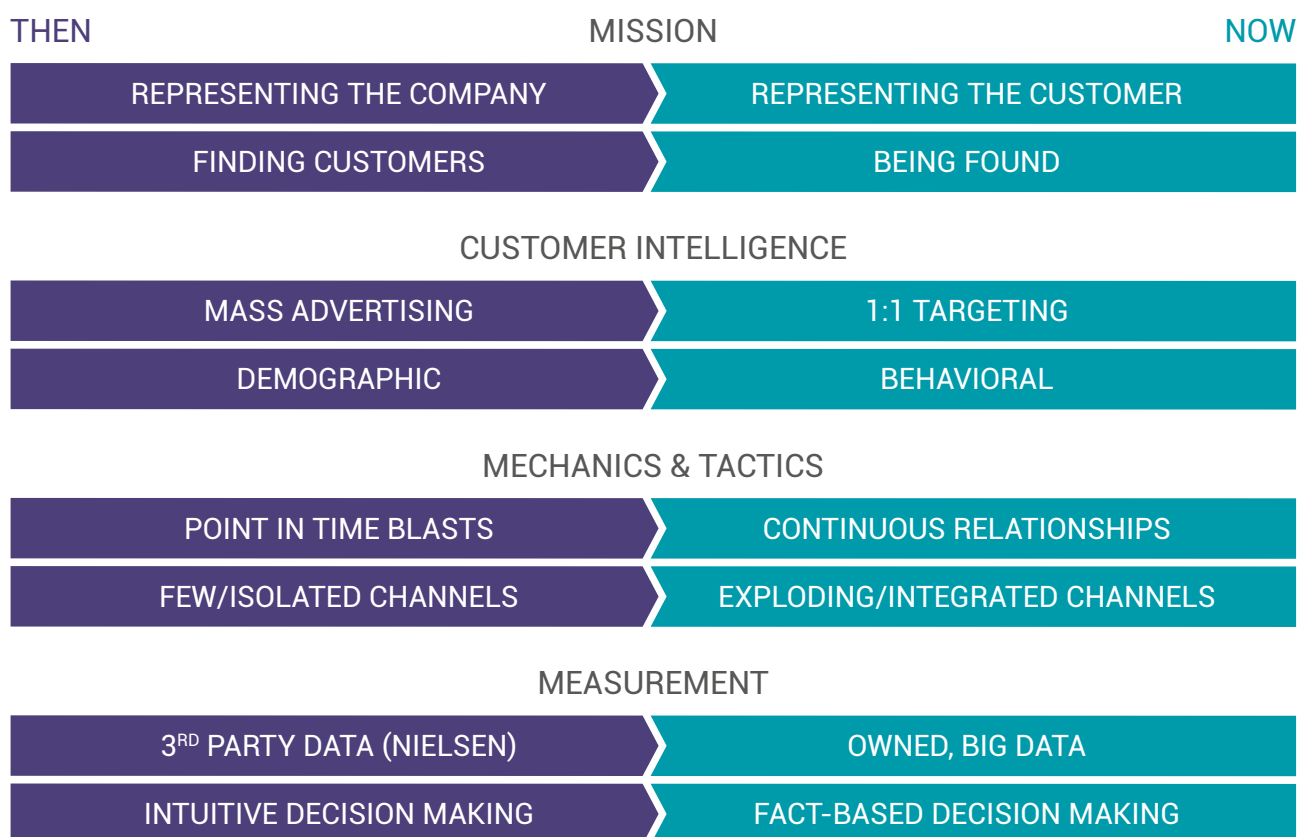


Source: BtoB magazine: The Evolving B2B Purchase Process, April 2013

The pressure is firmly on marketing to ensure that brand awareness is being increased and to help nurture leads through this longer cycle, for both business to business, and business to consumer sales.

A significant shift in the sales process is that cold calling — a seemingly now archaic method of calling customers or businesses from a database list, calling out of the blue — is all but dead. People want to be contacted through their channel of choice — moving away from telemarketing and onto social.

We are now in the age of the customer led approach. The customer is firmly in control.



Marketing's mission, intelligence, tactics, and metrics have drastically changed.

A Marketo study showed that **58% of marketers** who have been using social media for three years or longer state that it has helped plug that gap, and assisted them in lifting sales, spending on average four to six hours on social media per week.

While there is undeniably a struggle with measuring the ROI of generating leads on social, there's absolutely no question that social media is a critical piece of the marketing mix and should be a well-used weapon in the arsenal of every savvy marketing team.

Social allows marketers to create demand and allow marketing messages to be heard across multiple channels. Social selling helps a company increase brand awareness, build demand, nurture relationships, generate qualified leads, and ultimately close deals.

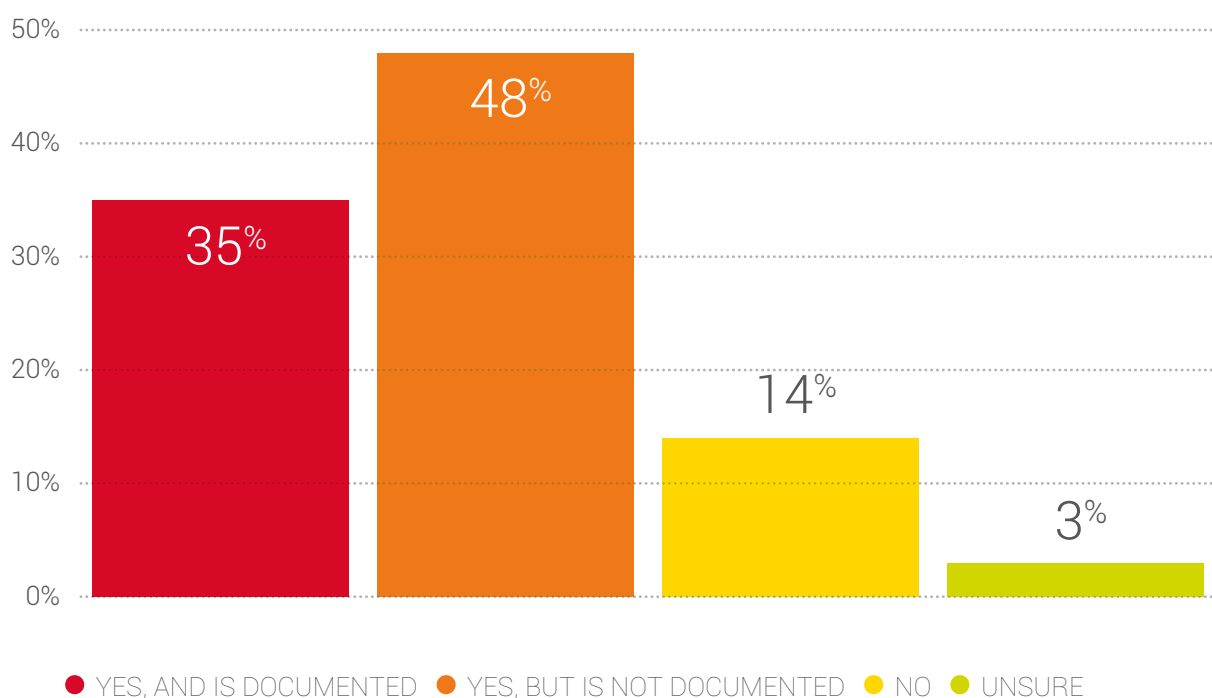
According to Forrester, buyers might be anywhere up to 90% of the way through their buying journey before they contact a vendor, making it difficult for sales to influence the buyers' decisions — these buyers can now delay talking to sales until they are experts themselves.

# OVERVIEW: Harnessing a strong content strategy and the importance of influencers

It's important to remember that content marketing is ultimately the foundation of social selling efforts, and connections the backbone. A strong content strategy, aligned with your sales funnel, enables marketers to address every stage of the sales cycle with carefully curated, tailored content.

Research by the Content Marketing Institute revealed that while 83% of B2B marketers claim to have a content strategy in place, only 35% had actually documented what it actually was, or how they were going to make it happen.

## PERCENT OF B2B MARKETERS WHO HAVE A CONTENT MARKETING STRATEGY



2015 B2B Content Marketing Trends—North America: Content Marketing Institute/MarketingProfs.

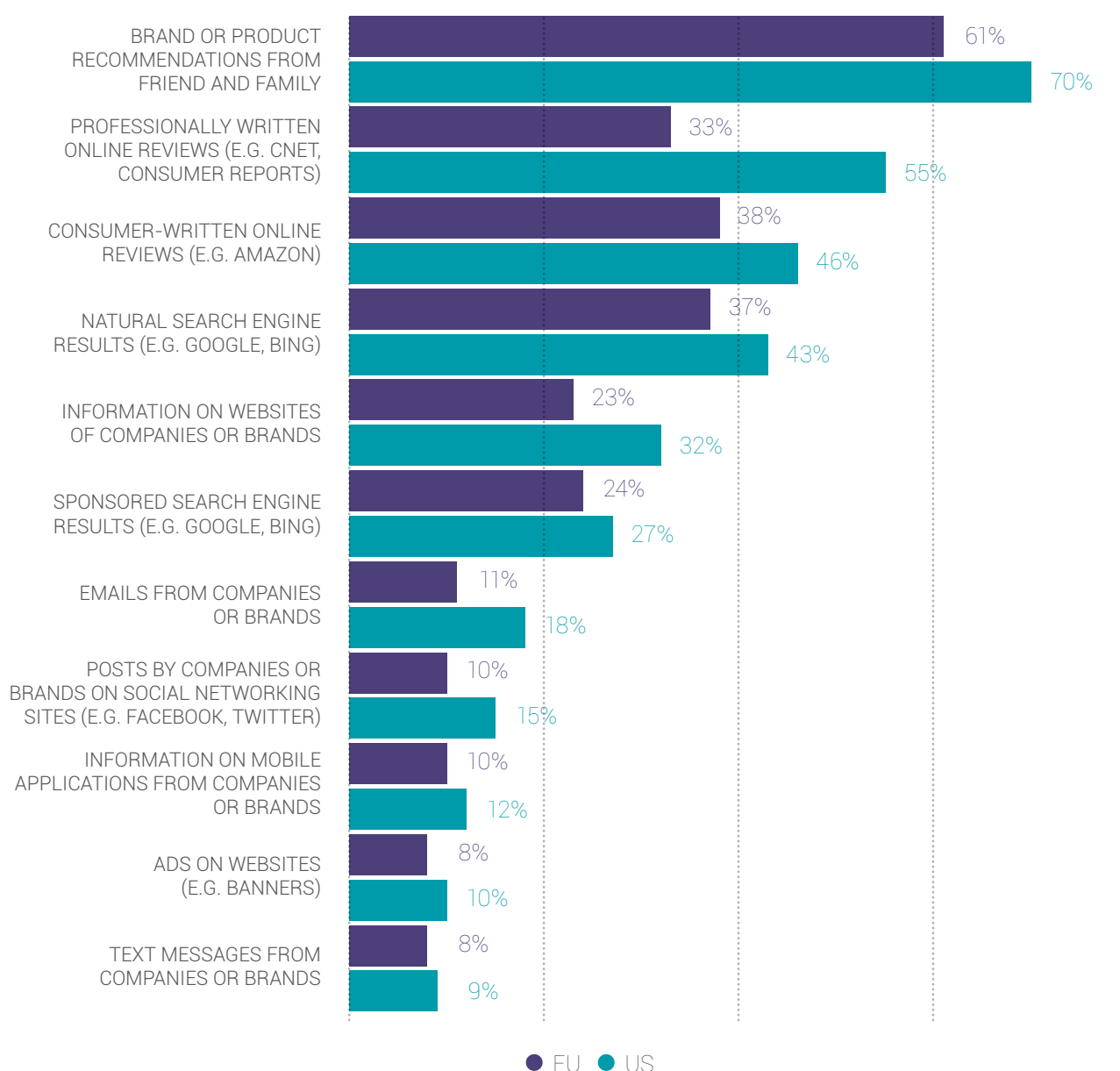
Having content that is crafted strategically in line with sales efforts will amplify lead generation efforts. It underpins your social selling endeavours. We go into more detail in how to craft content optimized for social media in our Social Listening in Practice: SEO and Content Marketing guide.

You must also build a network of strong connections. Social marketing is shifting away from company-to-buyer marketing, and toward peer-to-peer influence marketing. Forrester research shows the difference between digital pull advertising versus digital push — and the results are clear.

Buyers simply do not trust digital push content today.

Brand or product recommendations from friends and family (and Twitter connections, no doubt) and online reviews are the most trusted forms of advertising/promotion.

### TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU TRUST EACH OF THE FOLLOWING TYPES OF ADVERTISING/PROMOTION?



Base: 57,499 US online adults (age 18+). \*Base: 15,654 EU-7 online adults (age 18+). Source: North American Technographics\* Online Benchmark Survey (Part 1), Q2 2012 (US, Canada). \* Source European Technographics\* Online Benchmark Survey Q3 2012



Harnessing influencers is an incredibly important facet in creating a social selling strategy.

By identifying influencers, answering questions and reaching out to prospects when they are engaging, you'll be turning fans and followers into warm leads.

*"Research from Sony has shown that people are more than five times as likely to buy based on a recommendation from a social peer than they are when having simply been exposed to traditional forms of marketing."*

The great news is that brands can leverage this; Sony were able to focus on the 15% of their huge customer base that wielded significant social influence, and increase sales by 300% by honing their marketing to target them.

Locating high quality, relevant targets for outreach is absolutely paramount to success.

Without a well honed set of influencers to go after, you risk wasting valuable time later on as you find your targets are outdated, irrelevant, based in the wrong location, or any other number of complications.

On social media, every platform plays a role in how individuals earn their influence, how their audience engage and how brands can leverage the influence.

Which particular platforms you want to focus on will likely depend both on the industry and nature of your product/service — we delve into this subject in extensive detail in our Social Listening in Practice: Influencer Marketing guide.

## #Brandwatchtips: Locating influencers for social selling

- Use Kred in Brandwatch to identify influencers on Twitter. The more people follow a tweeter, retweet or reply to the mention, the higher their score.
- Set a MozRank filter to chart only mentions of pages with a score of over 5 to keep tabs on influential sites and cut out irrelevant data.
- Keep an eye on the follower to following ratio — the higher the ratio, the more influential the tweeter. 10:1 or above can indicate a major thought leader.
- Set up location and account type filters to your data to find only individuals rather than businesses, and experiment with location operators to get local influencers.

# OVERVIEW: The importance of establishing expertise

When you've crafted your content and isolated key influencers to help amplify your message, you can use social to ensure that your messaging is timely and relevant to the customers looking to make a purchase.

By providing the right information at the right time — ie; giving customers the push they need at the right time, you're going to increase the likelihood of closing a deal further down the line.

*"Share specific information that they may need and make sure that they see it. We do this on occasion when a prospect is trying to decide between X and Y service.*

*Usually it won't be something that we wrote unless we send them information from at least two other sources as well.*

*This practice isn't about showing a potential customer how smart we are, but rather about sharing knowledge that the prospect will use to make a decision."*

**Stoney deGeyter (@StoneyD)**

KnowledgeTree's recent research shows that 95% of prospects will purchase from the salesperson who provides the most useful information.

As we've discussed, prospects are looking to complete their own research, so they are likely to purchase from the company offering them the information when it's needed. We'll show you exactly how you can do this in the 'Monitoring' section.

## #Brandwatchtips: Signals

- Signals are intelligent email alerts that automatically notify you when there are significant or unexpected changes in your data.
- They're simple to set up and then do all the hard work for you, analyzing your data in real time and automatically alerting you. Signals doesn't require you to know what changes you're looking for in advance, so it's great for unearthing stories or issues you might otherwise have missed. Try using them to discover when your competitors are gaining share of voice, so you can stay on top of their movements.

You are also able to boost customer referrals through good social customer service, or 'micro customer service'.

In order to do this effectively, you'll need to find out exactly where your customers are talking about you.

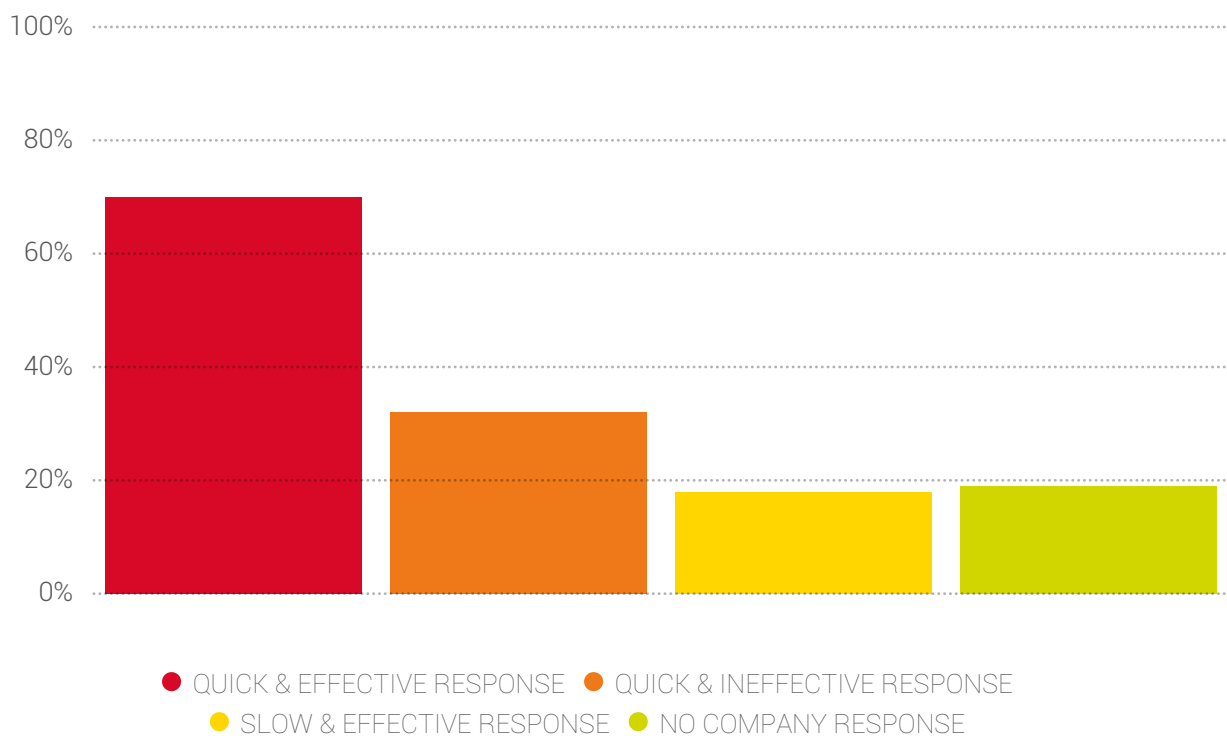
They're already on social media, so it's easy for them to ask questions, make requests or issue complaints in that environment. Why look for an address to which you have to draft an email or locate a telephone number and wait on the phone when you can put it out there in the public eye and pressurize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

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.

The likelihood of whether a customer will recommend a product or service to friends (and we know that's the most trusted form of advertising) is almost entirely based on the response time.

More interestingly, perhaps, is that it appears that it's most important for the brand to respond at all, even more so than the response being seen as helpful or not.

#### % LIKELY TO RECOMMEND BRAND/COMPANY BASED ON SOCIAL CARE EXPERIENCE



# SOCIAL LISTENING IN PRACTICE:

## Monitoring social to proactively seek leads

Now we've arrived at the practical part of this guide.

Using an enterprise social intelligence platform in order to monitor social enables you to do the following, therefore actively discovering leads, opportunities and sales:

- Find discussions of your product category.
- Find buying indication terms within your product category.
- Look for recommendation requests within your product category.
- Uncover questions and conversations about your product category.
- Monitor target prospect personas to confirm accuracy.
- Discover topics for content.
- Discover competitive insights.
- Monitor for key phrases customers are using when seeking help.
- Spot and answer direct questions from prospects.
- Monitor industry trends.

Let's go through each way of seeking leads in more detail.

## Monitoring prospect personas

As part of a solid marketing strategy, buyer personas help businesses understand target audiences more deeply to identify what makes them tick: what they want, what they need, and how they behave and interact with others — including brands — on a day-to-day basis.

Segmenting contacts into prospect personas using a tool like HubSpot's Personas tool helps you make informed decisions about how you market to them, and ultimately go on to create meaningful connections with them.

Using a social intelligence platform like Brandwatch, you are able to locate these personas and monitor them, via keyword searches (the Queries we keep going back to), to confirm whether your segmentation work has been accurate.

By doing this, you can then adjust your personas, and ultimately, your strategy, as needed — creating a more solid basis for nurturing opportunities. By now we know what nurturing leads to — sales.

## #Brandwatchtips: The NEAR/n Operator

The average number of words in a sentence is 15, so NEAR/15 often works well, but try changing the number and see how it affects your results. You might find that a larger number gives you more results, but they may be less accurate — continue testing and refining until you get to a level of accuracy you're happy with.

## Finding discussions of your product category

We use Brandwatch to uncover discussions about our market everyday.

We set up Queries (searches) to find mentions online from people who might be looking to subscribe to a platform like Brandwatch, and then — where appropriate — we engage with those people and offer them a demo of the platform.

It all starts with a Query.

Start your search in your social intelligence platform off with some broad terms. As an example, hotel accommodation booking website, LateRooms, might search for 'hotel booking sites' and start to read through a few of the results.

### Create a New Query

Language: **English** [Examples](#) [Operators](#) [Locations](#)

1	"hotel booking site*"


**Test Query** **Need help?** **4075**


Cmd+Enter


**Next >**

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1-20 of 57 unprocessed Mentions for the last 8 days ☺

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"...the latest reviews at: Bitcoin Magazine: 13 Nov 2015  
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"...the latest reviews at: Bitcoin Magazine: 13 Nov 2015  
<https://bitcoinmagazine.com/21151/hotelgo24-com-pays-users-5-cashback-bitcoin/> NewsBTC:  
<http://www.newsbtc.com/2015/07/03/online-hotel-booking-site-offers-free-bitcoins-for-customers/>

Doing this will allow you to get a feel for the type of language and phrasing people use when discussing your product or service. Expand your terms by adding in variations, other industry/product terms, misspellings, different phrasings and so on as you read through the results.

## Intent to purchase

### Monitoring for buying indication terms and recommendation requests within your product category:

Large numbers of people talking about your brand is certainly a good indicator that your social media strategy might be working, but high volumes of conversation do not always equal boosted profits.

There might be an infinite number of reasons why people are discussing your product, service or brand. By diving deeper into the conversation, richer insights can be uncovered.

In the same way complaints can be identified, so can buying indication terms, or 'intent to purchase'. This is the conversation that happens online that indicates exactly that — the intent to buy or invest in a brand's offerings. It might include a tweet from a person expressing their desire to buy a product, a post about wanting to pre-order something before its release, asking for something for Christmas, or any other statement of interest.

When building your Query, think about how you would phrase a question when asking for a recommendation from your Twitter followers.



**Samara Smith/** @Samara2k

Hi Twitter Does anyone have a social media 'listening' tool that they can recommend that include looking at brand sentiment analysis?

RETWEETS 0 | FAVORITES 0

((("I OR "I am" OR "I'm" OR Im OR really) NEAR/0f (((want OR wanna OR need OR looking OR "interested in" OR tempt\* OR "Thinking about" OR "thinking of" OR ((cannot OR "can't" OR cant) NEAR/0f wait) OR considering OR "feel like" OR "feeling like") NEAR/2f (buy\* OR purchas\* OR get\* OR order\*)) NEAR/7f [BRAND]))

OR (((("I will" OR "I'll" OR Ill OR "I'm" OR Im OR ((I OR "I am" OR "I'm" OR Im) NEAR/1f ("going to" OR gona OR gonna))) NEAR/0f (buy\* OR purchas\* OR get\* OR order\*)) NEAR/7f [BRAND]) )

Use the proximity (~n) operator in Brandwatch to allow for variations in the way people speak. This specifies that the words in a phrase must only be a certain number of words away from each other. For example, "looking new"~3 would match mentions where those words are within three words of each other, for example "looking for a new" or "looking at a new".

Also use the wildcard operator to save writing every variation of a word — this finds words with the same stem, for example recommend\* would find recommend, recommends, recommendation, recommending.

You might also want to search on other sites to find more variations in phrasing. Do a broad search on sites such as Twitter, Yahoo! Answers and Quora — places where people tend to ask questions — and see how the questions are being phrased.

Add those into your Query. Also consider misspellings and contractions when adding in your phrases.

# CASE STUDY:

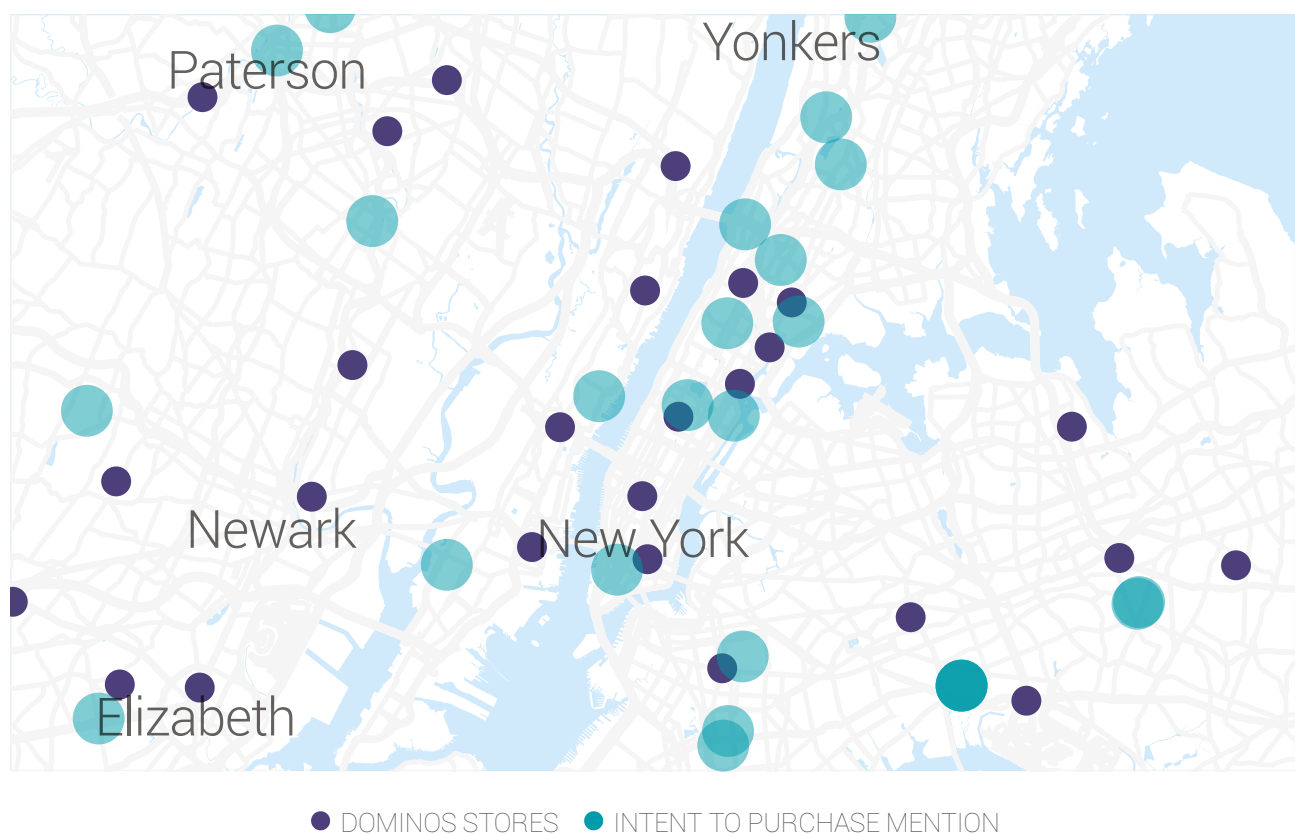
## Domino's: How close could you get to the conversation? Very.

**Geotagged Tweets** allow marketers to accurately locate an author's location. But What can be done with such information, and how can it benefit a social selling strategy?

Let's look at what happens when we take an intent-to-purchase Query, specifically one where people are saying that they want a pizza on a Friday afternoon.

By cleverly crafting the Query to bring back mentions showing people who are on the very cusp of spending their dollars, we can identify sales opportunities.

For this case study, we've then zoomed in to the New York city region within the Brandwatch Analytics platform, and overlaid these mentions with the locations of physical Domino's stores.



A smart Domino's marketer could spend an evening responding to these **geotagged Tweets** with promotional details to those who seem unsure whether or not they'll purchase, or with website details to those showing intent.



But crucially, these responses can be tailored to the location.

Information about local promotions, delivery speed to the pizza-lover's location and local store contact details can all be shared to help entice and push them closer to purchase.

## Uncovering questions about your product category

When searching through your Query results, you're likely to discover people asking questions about your product or service.

These are huge opportunities for your teams to enter the conversation — at an appropriate juncture — and begin nurturing the lead before passing to a sales team to push further down the funnel.



**Joel Windels/** @LinkYeah

Doing a keynote talk in November for @SCIP. Never been to Madrid before — any tips? #scip <http://www.scip2015gamechangers.com/#!/speakers/cfvg>

RETWEETS 0 | FAVORITES 2



**Tales & Tours Tips /** @TalesToursTips

@LinkYeah @SCIP Madrid is simply adorable, currently clear. This are some guides to check out: <http://talesandtours.com/travel-audio-guides-in/madrid.html> ...

RETWEETS 0 | FAVORITES 0

## The importance of listening to build relationships

Of course, all of this effort goes to waste if your teams aren't using social skillfully to build relationships with their prospects.

The quality of the relationships you build with potential customers will play a large part in your social selling results.

*"If social media is about building relationships, then it's the authenticity of those relationships that will truly determine their ROI."*

**Jane Francis,** Founder, Steals.com

Building relationships on social media is about truly listening — about being an active part in conversations. Continuous dialogue. By asking questions, reaching out when there's an opportune moment, offering meaningful and helpful content. By using an enterprise social intelligence tool, your teams will find the right moments to build these affiliations.

## Monitoring your competitors for insights

Monitoring social also allows you to discover competitive insights — ultimately allowing you to create more sales opportunities. Closely monitoring your competitors opens up a space to learn from their mistakes, emulate successes and potentially poach customers.

Simply setting up a Query to track all the social mentions of your competitors, you'll be able to discover how you can leverage your social media to outpace even the most social-savvy competitors. Discovering how your potential customers are being interacted with can allow your sales and marketing teams to make strategic decisions on how to engage and enter the conversation.

Monitoring competitors also offers a simple way to more deeply understand the market your business is operating in.

When building your Query, when adding all of your brand and product names, add those of your competitors' brand and product names; chances are, if someone is discussing buying a competitor product, they might also be interested in your product.

## Monitor for key phrases customers (and your competitors) are using when seeking help.

As mentioned earlier in this guide, social customer service is an incredibly important part of a strong social selling strategy. When it comes to differentiation of brands and products, perception of whether an organization provides a good customer experience can be a deciding factor for many.

Satisfied customers are an incredible asset — and on such a visible platform as social media, some swift assistance when it's needed will amplify the message that your organization is a great one to do business with.

There are a great number of ways to leverage social intelligence for this use case. We go into more detail in the Social Listening in Practice: Customer Service guide, but the key initiatives you are able to undertake to provide micro-customer service are:

Locating and helping customers wherever they are across the web by setting up a Query that will search for key terms.

```
((I OR Im OR Iam OR I am OR I m) NEAR/0f (((looking OR searching OR seeking))) NEAR/5f (help OR assistance OR advice OR support OR guidance)) NEAR/10 [BRANDNAME]))
```

Listening for problems and helping customers before they've even asked.

Informing relevant team members when they need to take action, and ensure everyone knows the issue by using a workflow management tool within the platform.

## #Brandwatchtips: Workflow management features

<b>Assignment</b>	The assignment functionality allows you to assign a specific mention to another user. They'll be able to see these mentions within their dashboard, and can also receive an email letting them know it has been assigned to them.
<b>Status</b>	Assign a mention as open, pending or closed, making sure that everyone in your team knows whether a mention has been dealt with.
<b>Priority</b>	Some mentions are likely to be more important than others. Priority allows you to mark your mention as high, medium or low priority.
<b>Stars</b>	Stars are used to quickly mark a mention as interesting, or to mark it for any other purpose you choose.
<b>Checked</b>	<p>The 'checked' status of a mention is a simple checkbox, used to indicate that the mention has been reviewed; particularly useful for those in customer service dealing with mentions as they come in.</p> <p>This is also useful if you are doing manual markup — say for <b>categorization</b> or <b>checking sentiment</b>.</p>
<b>Notes</b>	You can write notes that might be useful for others on any mention. Our system also makes entries into the notes section when particular actions are performed (e.g. assigning a mention).
<b>Rules</b>	A lot of these workflow functions can be automated using Rules. So rather than manually assigning mentions to a department, you can automatically delegate incoming mentions if they meet your set criteria. For example, instantly pass mentions with negative sentiment over to your customer service team.
<b>Charting</b>	You can also chart all of these options, so that you can analyze workflow performance and status. For example, you could analyze who has the most assigned mentions, who has closed the most mentions, what percentage of mentions are still open and so on.

You can also dissect the data to understand how to improve customer experience, and inform larger business strategies, and use sentiment analysis to detect unhappy customers quickly.

# CASE STUDY:

## LateRooms — turning social into sales

Forums are of particular interest to LateRooms.com as a key decision-making resource for buyers in the travel and holiday markets.

Social intelligence enable LateRooms.com to focus on forums when it needs to, by offering intuitive and powerful indicators as to how high value the conversation is.

Likewise, members of the Twitter team are able to set up a component in their dashboard that displays tweets only and updates in real-time, providing up-to-the-second coverage of people mentioning LateRooms.com on Twitter.

This service was created to help anyone looking for advice or inspiration about their trips and hotel bookings. Customer questions are tweeted to @LateRooms or posted on the company's Facebook or Google+ page and the LateRooms.com Concierge responds with tips on the best spots and the hottest deals.

As well as this inbound-oriented service, LateRooms.com uses Brandwatch to monitor and spot opportunities to join in the conversation, and where appropriate, steps in to offer its expertise on the topic at hand.

"Of all enquiries the concierge service deals with, a stunning 30% go on to become sales — with that statistic, it's not hard for the team to prove solid ROI on social media."

**Richard Kemp**, Social Media Manager, LateRooms.com

## Monitor industry trends

By monitoring your industry on an ongoing basis using social intelligence, you'll be continually running market research, without the time and costs usually associated with the traditional method.

The rapidly growing amount of public online conversations means that researchers are equipped with vast amounts of data to draw insights from, and social data is comprised of the naturally occurring public opinions online. The conversations collected are not confounded by their own research methods.

By tapping into this data you'll be able to discover which features attract buyers the most, enabling you to craft your marketing and sales messages to influence their purchasing decisions.

# CASE STUDY:

## Understanding regional quirks in emerging markets to create sales opportunities

A major oral care brand based out of the US was finding it incredibly difficult to understand one of their new target BRIC markets, Russia, based on buying trends.

They found that through sales data alone they weren't able to deliver what customers actually wanted, and were struggling to differentiate themselves in a saturated market. By cleverly utilizing social listening, they searched forums on dental hygiene and discovered something insightful. In Russia, most households use two different toothpastes; one for the morning and one for the nighttime.

By being able to identify and understand this regional quirk, the brand was able to adapt the messaging for this market and create sales opportunities abound.

For a step-by-step guide on how to use social intelligence for social media research, download the **Social Listening in Practice: Market Research** guide.

Every business is different. But one thing usually pertains: measurement. If you don't measure your efforts, you can't see the full picture.

Using social intelligence, you can gather a deeper understanding of the impact of your marketing as it spreads across the web, and track the path to purchase of your leads and customers.

# Listen, analyze and act with confidence.

Find more value in the social data that's important to your business with an advanced social media monitoring and analytics platform.

We hope that you've found this guide useful. For this guide, and the others in the Social Listening in Practice series, we used Brandwatch Analytics for the examples we gave you.

You can find out more and request a demo by visiting [brandwatch.com/demo](https://brandwatch.com/demo)

Brandwatch. Now You Know

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