

SOCIAL MEDIA OVERLOAD: HOW TO NAVIGATE THE NOISE AND DETERMINE METRICS TO DRIVE YOUR BUSINESS'S GROWTH

In the world of social media, [Digg](#) isn't shoveling a hole in the ground, and [del.icio.us](#) isn't pleasant to the taste. Nor is [Meerkat](#) an animal or [Vine](#) a climbing plant. Even if you do know those are social media platforms, there are countless acronyms: AMA, CTA, CTR, PPC, NVM, AFAIK, and DFTBA.

While it may not be critical to know that DFTBA stands for Don't Forget to be Awesome, navigating the ever-changing social media environment and identifying the most valuable metrics can improve your social media strategy and stimulate growth for your business.

There are dozens of social media metrics you could analyze, but let's be honest, time is money. This is where selecting the most valuable metrics that can transform your business is essential.

THESE FIVE METRICS CAN BE A PIVOTAL PART OF YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGY:

1. ENGAGEMENT

The interaction between people and brands on social media is engagement. This is one of the most important metrics because it's a measure of relationship. When a customer engages with you on social media, they are showing interest and trust. To increase engagement you have to do just that—engage your customers in conversation on social media, creating content and posts that solve their problems, educate them or inspire them. This approach results in likes, comments, shares, retweets and reposts. When customers interact in meaningful ways with your brand on social media, it has a ripple effect: their friends, fans or followers see that two-way communication (and the obvious “listening” that the brand is investing as part of that process), which spreads brand awareness or even further engagement.

So how is engagement measured? Post engagements are the sum of the interactions for a specific period of time. This metric can be measured daily, weekly or monthly and compared. Looking at the engagement that specific posts receive will enable you to determine which posts perform the best, and then you can tweak your posts. The content of your posts, and the day of the week or time day it's posted, can impact how many people see it and take the time to interact. So when making adjustments, only make one adjustment at a time so that you can identify what is driving the heightened engagement.

2. REACH

The potential audience who can see the post is reach. For example, on [Twitter](#), it's your number of followers. It's important to monitor both engagement and reach and to determine the **engagement rate**. The engagement rate is calculated as the engagement (people who liked, commented, shared or clicked on your post) divided by the reach (your potential audience). This data point is crucial to know since it will help you determine if the content of your post was relevant to your audience, or interesting enough to engage them. While it's great to reach your audience, it's even more important to draw them into a truly two-way loop of dialogue.

3. IMPRESSIONS

Impressions are similar to reach, but instead of the potential audience, it's the number of people who actually saw your post. Tracking impressions is helpful because it enables you to know if your posts are being seen by your audience. If the impressions are down compared to a previous day or week, take a look at the day of the week or time of day you're posting. It's important for your posts to be seen.

4. PAGE LIKES (OR NEW FOLLOWERS)

Tracking the growth in page likes or new followers can also help you determine the success of your posts. You can look at this trending over a period of time and see spikes, or downward movement, and look at that date and see what posts were made. If it's a sharp spike, it could mean your post was popular and received stellar engagement which resulted in more page likes or followers. If you see a downward trend, it could mean you weren't posting enough—or that the post wasn't relevant to your audience.

Page likes or followers are critical because they increase your audience and build brand awareness. If you see that they are stagnant, you may want to reconsider your social media strategy.

5. HASHTAGS

There are a lot of annoying and ineffective hashtags out there. We've all seen #JustSayin, #SorryNotSorry and #MessyHurrDontCurr. But, when used correctly, hashtags can be vital to your social media strategy and a key metric to follow. A hashtag enables you to identify a keyword or topic of interest and to facilitate a search for it and track it to determine performance.

Hashtags can also be an effective way to build brand awareness and stimulate conversation that increases engagement—which in turn can grow your business.

[Charmin](#) is a great example. The toilet paper company has a product that is, well, unappealing. The company wanted to drive brand advocacy and buzz, so it created a hashtag campaign: [#TweetFromTheSeat](#). What ensued was hilarious hashtags that hundreds of thousands of people began to search—and contribute to. It resulted for Charmin what is considered one of the most engaged social media communities on the planet by [Social Media Today](#).

There's no disputing hashtags can play an important role in social media campaigns, but monitoring them and analyzing them is important to success.

HOW DO YOU TRACK AND ANALYZE SOCIAL MEDIA METRICS?

Nearly all social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Instagram have analytics or insights that you can view that allow you to analyze and track the six metrics we described. To really delve in deeper on a social media campaign, and to monitor it, tools like [Hootsuite](#), [Brandwatch](#) or [SproutSocial](#) can be beneficial.

Social media can play a vital role in your business's success and growth. Engagement, reach, page likes or followers and hashtags all play a key role in brand awareness and stimulating the decision process for prospects who can ultimately become customers.

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