2019
HOW TO
MANAGE &
RESPOND TO
CRISIS USING
SOCIAL ANALYTICS
Even the biggest brands in the world aren’t immune to mishaps. The problem for modern brands isn’t issues cropping up—it’s how quickly social media turns small problems into viral catastrophes.

The good news is, social media is also the solution—or more specifically, Social Media Analytics is.

This ebook is part of our Complete How-To Guide: Social Analytics series and explains how using Social Media Analytics helps you weather a crisis, as well as keeps your brand out of the line of fire in the first place.

Let’s dive in!

DEFINING “CRISIS”

Before we go any further, let’s first define what we mean by crisis. Anything that puts your brand negatively in the public eye qualifies. This isn’t limited to scandal or sabotage—i.e., your CEO or a disgruntled employee saying something damaging, or meant to incite outrage.

Something as simple as running out of stock during a big promotion can spark a crisis—especially with social consumers in the mix.

Social users love a bandwagon. So, in such a situation, you aren’t just dealing with the customers directly affected by the stock shortage; you’re dealing with every social user with a complaint of their own, or an opinion about a supposedly superior competitor. They’ll all gladly chime in, keeping your brand in an unwanted spotlight.
One of the most important things for brands to remember is that crises happen—to everyone. The moment you think it can’t happen to you, you’ve left yourself vulnerable to a sudden twist of fate.

Build-a-Bear certainly didn’t predict their recent moment of crisis—during their Pay Your Age promotion. They knew it would be popular, but didn’t expect the overwhelming crowds that turned up in some areas.

As much as they hated to shut down the events in those locations, it became a safety matter, and they had no choice.

How did Build-a-Bear weather the storm with minimal damage to their brand? By following some Crisis Management best practices.

Just as you can’t control the weather, you can’t control what is shared and spread by social consumers. But you can control your awareness of and preparedness for such events.

The worst thing a brand can do is ignore Social Analytics. Whether you’re launching a new product, running an ongoing campaign, or just dealing with business as usual on any given day, you need to know the perception of your brand in the wild. That’s where Social Analytics come in.

Tools like Social Listening, Social Monitoring, Sentiment Analysis, and more allow you to follow social conversations in real-time, so you’re aware the moment a shift in attitude or swell of emotion occurs.

This moment is crucial. It’s when you have the best chance to stop a potential crisis before it gains momentum. Ignore it at your brand’s peril.
ESTABLISH YOUR BASELINE TO MAKE SPOTTING ANOMALIES EASIER

Of course, you can’t recognize a shift in sentiment if you don’t have a sense of how things look on a regular day.

This is why regular Social Listening is so important. This, along with Sentiment Analysis, allows you to understand the emotions driving your target audience. Not only that, this data highlights areas of concern taking priority amongst your customers and prospects in general.

Post Office Ltd uses NetBase in this way to stay on top of consumer issues—and manage them in the moment. This approach has led to reduced wait times for customers, and increase in campaign effectiveness, and an 80% reduction in misinformation shared about the brand online.

The idea is to focus on brand health always—not just when you’re “sick.”

When you have a baseline awareness of your brand’s standing with social audiences, you’ll quickly recognize when uncommon occurrences send sentiment spiking into the red. Without it, you may panic unnecessarily, or—just as bad—not react when you should.
SOCIAL MEDIA TOOLS FOR BRAND HEALTH AND CRISIS SURVIVAL

Once you’ve got the basics in place—acceptance, awareness, and clarity—there are several tools and tactics to make use of as you form your Social Crisis Plan. Here’s how to get the most from them:

1. **Let the past inform the present—and future**
   There are several reasons you want to perform periodic social media audits, and preventing crises certainly tops the list. Looking back at quarterly and seasonal trends, in particular, helps you stay ahead of trouble-spots and keep them from reaching critical mass.

   For instance, James Madison University uses social crisis management tactics to keep abreast of hot-button issues they know they’ll always have to contend with—like affordability and campus safety.

   Assessing social media audit results reveals patterns they can work with—like which audience segment cares most about which issues. They use NetBase to assess levels of concern for current students, alumni, and the public individually by key topics. This allows them to spot reputational threats early, and defuse situations before they reach critical mass.

2. **Set up real-time alerts**
   The worst thing you can be when a crisis strikes is unaware—especially when awareness is so readily available through Social Monitoring Tools. Use real-time alerts to be informed every time your chosen hot button keywords pop up in social posts.

   And don’t forget to include image alerts. Whether someone is co-opting your logo for nefarious purposes, or an unsavory influencer is sporting your branded merch (seemingly representing you), you need to know. Especially if such posts are being seen and shared by others.

   Social Monitoring Tools also allow for real-time tracking of changes in social conversation, upticks in negative sentiment, emerging themes with damaging potential, and influencers to engage when a crisis hits.

   The sooner you know what’s happening, the better your chances of controlling the message.

   This is why brands like Lloyd’s Bank use NetBase to assess risks to brand health. Because if you don’t know there’s a problem until it’s out there on social, you’re too late.

3. **Uncover what’s driving consumer sentiment**
   There’s no one way to handle a crisis—which is perhaps why brands often muck things up. Each situation is unique, so your smartest move is to look to Social Sentiment for guidance.

   Do you need to respond? What does your audience most need to hear at various moments as the crisis unfolds? They’ll certainly tell you!

   Are you better off remaining silent and letting things die down on their own? It may sound...
counterintuitive, but sometimes this really is best.

Take the time to assess the emotions driving the conversation and respond—or don’t—accordingly.

This was something the Georgia Aquarium faced after the unexpected passing of a beloved Beluga whale. Because they were immediately alerted to social conversations surrounding the news of the whale’s death, they were able to understand consumer concerns, and recognize the need to address their audience.

By doing so, they turned sentiment around from -50 to +90 (on a scale from -100 to +100).

“USING NETBASE SOCIAL MEDIA ANALYTICS, WE WERE ABLE TO SEE THE PUBLIC’S REACTION AND FEELINGS, WHICH MATTERED GREATLY TO THE AQUARIUM.”

—Director of Marketing Science & Digital Strategy, Ames Scullin O’Haire

4. Assign key roles to key players in advance

When you’re in the thick of a crisis is not the time to train your staff how to handle one. Things happen quickly—especially on social media—so have a plan in place that outlines:

• who is responsible for analyzing incoming data
• who needs access to the data, and how it will be shared
• who decides the actions to pursue based on incoming insights
• who implements these actions

You don’t need a team of hundreds – you just need the team you have to know what their roles are, and to execute them.

Remember social data is bigger than the marketing department. Just as a crisis can
strike any facet of your brand, social data helps every facet of it. Don’t limit yourself or your team.

5. Craft your informed response
As mentioned above, responding may not always be necessary—but when it is, whose job is it? And what will they say?

As you create your Social Crisis Plan, designate members of your team to interface with the public as needed, with the entire customer experience in mind.

Create guidelines for customer-facing team members to follow, and be ready with workflow approvals and access rights for all concerned. Having a way to track communications to examine after the fact is also smart. If this continues—or happens again—you want to know what works and what doesn’t.

Crisis prediction isn’t an exact science, but Competitive Analysis, and a bit of imagination can take you far. Run drills for potential scenarios as you would any other kind of crisis, so it’s easier for everyone to keep their cool even when stress is high.

Additional topics include:
• How to Analyze Social Media Analytics
• How to Use Social Sentiment to Perform a Competitor Analysis
• How to Retain Customers & Manage Community with Social Analytics
• How to Manage & Respond to Crises Using Social Analytics
• How to Use Social Sentiment to Anticipate Trends in Your Vertical
• How to Measure Social Analytics ROI
• How to Train Smart Social Ambassadors for Your Business

Ready to give our Social Monitoring Tools a try? Reach out for a one-on-one demo!

BE PROACTIVE INSTEAD OF REACTIVE

Hands down the best way to manage a crisis is to avoid one in the first place. Social Monitoring is designed for this purpose—and when applied regularly lets you put out fires at the first whiff of smoke.

And even when crises break through your well-placed defenses, you will be armed with the knowledge to fight in real-time, instead of playing catch-up after the fact.

Handle things well and you might even gain a few fans in the most chaotic of circumstances. What could be better than that?

Be sure to check out the rest of The Complete How-To Guide: Social Media Analytics as well as its companion The Complete Guide to Social Media Analytics.

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NetBase is the social analytics platform that global companies use to run brands, build businesses, and connect with consumers every second. Its platform processes millions of social media posts daily for actionable business insights for marketing, research, customer service, sales, PR and product innovation.

NetBase is recognized by analysts and customers as the leader in Social Analytics. NetBase was rated a category leader by Forrester in the “Forrester Wave: Enterprise Social Listening Platforms, Q3 2018” report. NetBase was also named a top rated social media management platform by software users on TrustRadius and a market leader by G2 Crowd.

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