2019 HOW STRATEGIC BRANDS PROTECT THEIR REPUTATION
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Today’s always-on, always connected world has connected individuals of like mind and drastically changed the way opinions about brands spread. And given the influence of brand sentiment on customer behavior, you need to know what customers are saying and sharing, so your organization can identify emerging situations before they damage brand health.

An effective social listening program provides insight into what customers love and what they don’t about your brand all in real-time, providing the context necessary to act quickly and appropriately to protect your brand’s reputation.

43% of all complaints lodged by American consumers are done so “on stage” like on social media sites where others can see them. And 82% of consumers say they’ve stopped doing business due to a lack of response about customer service.*

This e-book will discuss important topics and best practices for social listening that monitor and protect your brand reputation:

• Why protecting brand reputation is important
• Customer feedback to learn from is everywhere
• Understand who is driving the conversation
• Where your brand may fall on the customer journey
• Gauge brand health against your competitors
• Insights without actions are useless
• Understanding and reporting in real-time

*Source: Jay Baer, Hug Your Haters
In 2018 alone, companies such as Marriott, British Airways, T-Mobile, Google, Orbitz, Panera and Under Armour suffered data breaches that affected millions of people. While data breaches are becoming commonplace in today’s world, a brand’s response to such an event has lasting implications.

Under Armour was forthcoming and transparent about the implied risk to their users, serving as a best practice on how brands should respond in such a situation. Panera, on the other hand, serves as an example of what not to do. Panera was notified of the security risk seven months prior, yet didn’t make any changes to protect their customers. It wasn’t until the information was posted and went viral on a popular security website that Panera was forced to come to terms with the situation, exposing they had known about the situation for months without doing anything about it. On top of that, as soon as this info became public, Panera reported to news sites that the data breach affected less than 10k users. It came to light shortly thereafter that this number was closer to 37M.

The moral of this story is that all brands experience crisis, it is how they respond to a crisis that presents the opportunity to set them apart. Saying nothing is not an option, but how a brand responds has implications that can last a customer’s lifetime.
THE SOCIAL AMPLIFICATION FACTOR

When the consumer of today has a problem with a company, they don’t just tell 10 friends, as the old sales adage goes. They go online and post complaints to potentially hundreds or thousands of friends. According to research conducted by digital marketing expert Jay Baer for his book *Hug Your Haters*, 43% of all complaints lodged by American consumers are done so “on stage” like on social media sites where others can see them. And 82% of consumers say they’ve stopped doing business due to a lack of response about customer service.

Activating around social media conversations, both to understand the here-and-now of service issues or complaints, but also to find proactive ways to engage consumers to manage and measure brand reputation, is no longer a luxury of the few. It is a requirement of all brands.

CUSTOMER FEEDBACK TO LEARN FROM IS EVERYWHERE

In 2018, global internet users surpassed the 4 billion mark. With a global population of 7.5 billion, this means that over half the global population is now online. Of these 4 billion internet users, 3.1 billion are active social media users.

Social media use continues to rise as well, with almost 1 million new users getting on the top social networks each day, which equates to 11 new users every second!!
Social media is fertile ground for customer feedback because of this modern consumer behavior to turn to public channels when they have good or bad experiences. Why then would we not take advantage of easily accessible feedback to better understand our customer’s perception of our brands and protect our reputation?

*Social Media Usage Demographics in the US and UK 2018

5 WAYS TO CAPTURE CUSTOMER FEEDBACK:
- Survey current customers
- Log customer service inquiries
- Capture feedback on your website
- Record feedback on customer review sites
- Listen for brand mentions on social media sites
Who exactly is driving the conversations about you online? And how do you know?

First, you have to capture the conversations for analysis. Then you have to look at the sources, sites and users to see what the common threads are. Does most of the conversation happen on Twitter? Blogs? Forums and message boards? Are influencers talking about you or is the conversation made up of a lot of micro-influencers (people with 100–1,000 followers)?

You can also look at the topics that emerge in conversations and drill in to find out who is driving the conversation and whether or not you need to react. During a recent foray into understanding online conversations around consumers planning travel in Asia, the Travel Blog Expo (TBEX) discovered a high frequency of the phrase “won’t recommend” in negative conversations about the topic.

It turns out that the phrase “not recommend” had a heavy volume because it was used in a single Tweet by an influencer with over 100,000 followers. The Tweet was re-Tweeted hundreds of times.

While certainly, an influencer sharing that opinion is a concern for those trying to sell vacations to China, one person driving the lion’s share of negative volume is a different concern than if those opinions were coming from hundreds of different people.
WHERE YOUR BRAND MAY FALL ON CUSTOMER JOURNEY

For business-to-business (B2B) and high-priced consumer goods, the path to purchase is often a long one. Customers considering a purchase—perhaps changing telecommunications providers for office telephones, or selecting a long-term care facility for a parent—ask different questions and have different concerns at several steps on their journey.

In order to understand where your brand may succeed or fail on that customer journey, you have to look for these touchpoints.

NOW YOU CAN SEE:
- What questions would my prospects ask of their networks when considering my product?
- What phrases would they use if they were searching for those with similar experiences?
- What potential complaints would they voice concern about if we weren’t meeting their needs in these instances?
- Those answers can help you case conversation nets for critical touch points for your prospects in their journey from awareness to discovery to consideration and purchase.

GAUGE BRAND HEALTH AGAINST COMPETITORS

A leading spirits brand leveraged competitive analysis to inform its product team of the public reaction to a competitor’s new, flavored product. Seeing that a fair portion of the consumer feedback was focused on the flavor of the new drink being too sweet and not strong enough from an alcohol perspective, the product team had more to work with than anecdotal evidence in formulating their entry into the category. The intelligence served as research and development for a competitive follow-up that helped the brand claim a stake in the new sub-set of flavored versions of the alcoholic beverage.
Wouldn’t it be nice if you could look at your measures of success and compare them directly to competitors? With social media data, you can. At least in many cases.

Follower counts and engagement metrics may seem trivial by themselves. But trend them over time and compare those trends to data points in market trends, advertising campaigns, public relations events and even pop culture news points and you’ve got a treasure in interesting data. By tracking not only your own vanity metrics, but those of your competitors, you can get a jump on them when they zig and perhaps even beat them to the punch when they zag.

But even more compelling is going beyond the vanity metrics to the consumer conversation. Just as easily as you can monitor conversations about you, you can monitor conversations about them. The public conversation space, thus, gives you an unprecedented perspective on competitive analysis to keep your business ahead of the game.

INSIGHTS WITHOUT ACTION ARE USELESS

Strategic brands focus on measuring brand health in a variety of ways. Analyzing conversation data like that found in social media conversations, customer service transcripts and freeform customer surveys is a very powerful mechanism to surface consumer insights for any brand.

But finding the insights does no brand any good if they aren’t leveraged for success. As informative as the social media conversations can be, information alone will not help you. Moving insights to action—having the confidence and (perhaps) bravery to change from product to messaging and everything in between—based on those insights is what separates strategic brands that drive growth from those that do not.

As you leverage different data sources and channels to uncover insights about your consumers, you must account for the actions that will result from your new understanding. Incorporate conversation analysis in your planning meetings, integrate your entire team—across verticals—with the ideas of mining social and other conversations for action-driving measures to improve the business. Whether you are acting on insights or they lead you to not act, leveraging them to do something other than ignore the issue is imperative for positive brand health.
One Spong client, Thermos, probably would have never known that Blink-182 bassist Mark Hoppus was proactively bragging about his water bottle. Spong identified Hoppus and his 2.6 million Twitter followers as an opportunity for the brand. Weeks later, the musician was re-tweeting the brand and even entered a full partnership, launching a branded line of Thermos bottles he gave away on his social channels.

NOW UNDERSTANDING AND REPORTING IS REAL-TIME

Traditional brand health studies involved focus groups, surveys and lengthy data analysis. In today’s information-driven marketplace and with social technologies churning at warp speed to offer cursory analysis, that information lag disappears.

Understanding and leveraging insights from consumer conversations can, and with strategic brands often does, happen in real-time. Take Spong for instance. The innovative public relations firm’s Social Tracker, powered by NetBase, keeps track of social conversations about its brands, but also integrates other data sets from email, marketing and digital channels. Spong’s analytics team stays on top of crises, informing clients when negativity might break before it does. They also identify opportunities, by finding influencers for outreach or touch points to adjust in campaigns.

Integrating brand health data throughout your team and even broadly across your company means more internal stakeholders have more information to leverage for key business decisions. Being the funnel for that insight puts your department on the receiving end of thank you’s for the company’s success.
SUMMARY

Given the speed and reach of today’s social networks, once your brand is out there it’s no longer in your control. The experiences you provide to your customers are shared via word of mouth, customer reviews, and across social media making their experiences accessible to all. Knowing what consumers are saying and sharing in real-time is critical to ensure your brand health is protected.

A comprehensive social listening strategy enables you to hear everything that your customers are sharing about your brand, alerting you to unexpected changes in conversation volumes, sentiment changes, and negative brand experiences that can influence public opinion and possibly damage your brand health.

Consistent monitoring of your brand through social media analytics gives you the context to understand your exposure to risk and the insights necessary to respond in an appropriate and timely manner to minimize the impact of any potential reputational damage to your brand.

Contact NetBase to get a more complete picture of your brand as seen through the eyes of your consumers.

Blog: How To Measure Social Analytics ROI

How Buffalo Wild Wings Monitors Customer Sentiment and Competitors over Social Media

eBook: 2019 How TO Make Social Media Analysis Work For You
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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