



**BALANCE**  
I N T E R A C T I V E

## Measuring Social Media

*How to Determine the Combined Impact of Social Media Engagement*



White Paper Series: Social Media

## Online Goals

As with any and all digital media, social media is an ever-evolving medium. It was not too long ago that Twitter was the newest, shiniest thing in the social media world and since

then we have seen the rise of a number of social media outlets, including the newest and very promising Google +.

Because social media is rapidly changing and evolving, practitioners in the field are struggling to find the answers for when, why, and how to best engage in social media and measure it. It is one thing to track all the variations of mentions, fans, followers, likes, shares, etc. across social media sources and quite another to attempt to measure the combined impact of all of this activity on an organization's goals.

From developing a website to running a marketing campaign, it is essential that the value of that effort be quantified and measured. Otherwise, time and money are spent with no idea whether it was spent wisely. This applies to social media as well.

Efforts made in the social media sphere will have an impact (positive or negative) on an organization's communication strategy, and thus will ultimately affect its bottom line. Is there an organization out there who does not want to be able to quantify these effects? The answer is absolutely not (unless this organization does not care about understanding whether time and money is well spent). Yet, measuring the total impact of social media is still an inexact science at best – many platforms offer so many metrics it is impossible to sift through them all. Worse, most of these metrics are downright lousy, e.g. "followers." It does not make a difference if followers keep increasing if they do not engage with an organization.

With some ingenuity and time, and using a **FREE** analytics program like Google Analytics, anyone can learn to:

- Measure the impacts of social media efforts in a quantifiable way
- Identify which social media sources are having the greatest and least impact on an organization's goals
- Identify which types of visitors are most likely to engage in the social media sphere

## What Should Be Measured

What matters most in social media is not what happens on social media outlets, but rather what happens as a result of what happens on those outlets. Organizations want to increase influence on social media channels to **do something above and beyond a tweet or post**. For

### Social Media Engagement

To quantify social media success – which is entirely possible – it should be noted that engaging in social media is not just about driving immediate outcomes. The true value of social media engagement is not often reaped until months later. It is this "second wave" or "next generation" of results that makes capturing the full effect of social media efforts so difficult. When done right, social media is all about building a community, which takes time and effort. This gives organizations a "community" of very loyal, connected followers.

Evidence suggests that after repeated and long-time marketing exposure to the brand of an organization, people become comfortable and learn to trust the organization. Even if they do not interact with the organization right away (because they do not require services at the time, for instance), they are more likely to make a purchase or refer a friend because they feel "connected."

This type of outcome assumes that social media engagement is done right and successful. Social media can also be done "wrong." Sales pitches, poorly written posts or tweets can damage a business. A [Wall Street Journal article](#) examined evidence from small business owners about whether social media helped them or failed. It concluded that for social media efforts to be successful, businesses need to "regularly interact with consumers... and be patient." Good social media engagement starts simple, seeks to engage, listens to and learns from community and grows.

example, this something could be leading targeted traffic back to a website where the organization has something to offer that this audience also wants to consume. It could also be raising awareness about an issue that is key to the organization or initiating discussion or causing people to take action.

Notice how all of these are action-oriented? It is this action that is so crucial to understanding the success of social media campaigns. Thus, it is this action that needs to get measured.

There are four actions that, when measured, can give true insight into the value of an organization's social media efforts:

1. Website goals
2. Conversation
3. Sharing
4. Liking

### Website Goals

Although many different organizations engage in social media for very different reasons, social media efforts should align with website and business goals. Want to get the word out about an event? Tweet about it with a link to the event registration. And then get into measurement heaven, because this is where Google Analytics can really help out.

The first thing to know is how many visitors this tweet sent to the website's event registration page. The second thing is to know how many of those visitors registered for the event. This will give the registration conversion rate, which gives some indication of how well the

two forms of marketing meshed (social media and website) and how popular the event was among the target audience. You will also get another piece of valuable information – your Twitter reach among target audiences. Because social media has that amplification effect, what you send to followers gets sent (hopefully) to their followers and their followers and so on, potentially amplifying the reach exponentially.

When Google Analytics is set up optimally, this type of information is available in a custom report on the dashboard. If Google Analytics is not yet customized to fit the organization's specific needs, this information is just a few clicks away.



Source: Avinash Kausik

The image above shows how all social media visits contributed to goal completions for a website. It assumes that goals are already defined in the system (e.g. event registration) and that advanced segments are set up to filter for only visits from social media sources. While this is easy to set up, it does require some specific instruction.

## Filtering Social Media Visits

The first step in this process is to find out how many visitors came from Twitter. Go to:

### Traffic Sources > Sources > All Traffic > Search for Twitter

A screen will display how many visitors came from Twitter and when facilitating the process of tying a specific tweet with visits to the website and then registration.



To find out how many of these visitors from Twitter went to the event registration page, go to:

### Content > Overview > View full Report

Find the event registration page (either by looking in the list or searching for the name) and filter by source. Look for Twitter (it will show up either as Twitter or t.co). This will show how many visitors came from Twitter and when.

Without the goal specified, it is difficult to know if these visitors actually registered for the event, but this gives some idea of how interested these visitors were in the event if they came to the website and went to the event details page.

Regardless of the site goal, measuring the specific impact across all social media channels is relatively easy in Google Analytics – even

without custom reports, advanced segments, and goal set ups.

## Creating Advanced Segments

Setting up an advanced segment for all social media sources is easy. Once set up, filtering any data in Google Analytics by all social media sources is as easy as selecting Advanced Segments and checking All social media sources box. For example, to find out specifically what content visitors from certain social media channels were viewing, navigate to the Top Content report and select the **All social media sources** advanced segment at the top of the page. This filters the data to include only social media sources.

### To create this Advanced Segment:

1. Click on **Advanced segments**
2. Select **+New custom segment**
3. Name it "All social media sources"
4. Include Source containing...enter name of social media source (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc.)
5. **Add "Or" statement to add another social media source**
6. Continue until all relevant social media sources are added
7. **Save segment**

### Conversation

This refers to how much conversation any given social media action caused among followers. How often did they comment on a Facebook or blog post or reply to a question?

This is not yet measurable in Google Analytics, but is easy to track in each social media source. Simply

reviewing blog and Facebook posts for comments is an easy way to measure this. Starting an Excel worksheet to keep track of how many posts per source per week and how many comments received in the same week will provide an idea of how much conversation the social media activity is generating. If 20 posts a week on Facebook are getting 2 comments during this same time period, the conversation rate is 10%.

### Case Study: Why Measurement Matters

A client was marginally active in social media, but with the launch of a new website, wanted to become more active and more successful in social media efforts. The goals for social media engagement were to build community around the organization and drive people to the website to convert them to clients or donors.

A social media plan was created and adopted. Goals were set up in Google Analytics to track progress. After nine months, Facebook became the top referral traffic source for the client and fifth traffic source overall. In one month alone, new "Likes" on Facebook increased by 447%, which was a good indicator of achieving their goal of building community around their brand. Also, traffic from Facebook to the website increased by more than 120%. Perhaps more important, during this same month, traffic from Facebook resulted in 10% of new client conversions, resulting in a gross profit to the client of \$14,325.

Not only did engaging in social media pay off for this client, but because results were tracked and analyzed (using the FREE platform Google Analytics), proper credit was given to the source of the income. The client can now compare results to effort and make informed decisions about how they spend their time and money based on real data and not just guesswork.

### Sharing & Liking

This refers to how often someone shares or likes social media content. This is measurable individually in each social media source (via Facebook Insights for example) or across sources in Google Analytics. The Social section of Google Analytics attempts to measure social actions, such as sharing and liking, as well as engagement.

This is limited to those who interact on Facebook profiles, re-tweet tweets, and utilize the Google +1 share button and must be installed on the website for it to work.

The social plug-in function in Google Analytics also offers some idea of how often visitors of a website are interacting with the social media buttons offered. This tells how "socially engaged" visitors are and whether visitors who click on social media icons on a site vary from those who do not interact with social media on the site.

This information is also available in the event-tracking section of Google Analytics. To access that:

1. Navigate to **Content > Events > Overview**
2. Click on Outgoing links
3. Select the social media source
4. Filter by secondary dimension (location, language, technology, etc.) for the characteristics of visitors who access any social media source from the website

### Keeping It Going

On-going analytics analysis and social media tracking will provide a wealth of information that can drive future marketing campaigns, programs, or website content. Do more of what works, and stop doing what does not work. When actions are tied to outcomes, everyone wins. Money can be spent more wisely, and success can be more easily achieved.

## About Balance Interactive

Balance Interactive is a web development and design company. Our team of seasoned professionals excels at helping organizations:

- Strategically use online tools (mobile, web, email) to connect with customers through websites or secure portals.
- Connect underlying operating and technology systems directly to their website so that visitors get the most value from online interactions.
- Optimize the usability of complex online applications.
- Navigate the interactions of stakeholders to gather input and build consensus.

**Services.** Our strengths include strategy, design, content migration, and governance and technology implementation for projects. Our best-practice methodology for content strategy and management is what sets us apart from traditional web development firms.

**Web Strategy.** Aligning the user experience with your mission and objectives is a core focus at Balance Interactive. Your online presence must leverage your mission and strategic initiatives at every turn.

**User Experience.** A broad range of disciplines are applied: user research in the form of focus groups, surveys, and usability testing; information architecture that results in effective navigational systems and taxonomies; a user-centered design methodology focused on user goals throughout the process.

**Technology.** We specialize in implementing enterprise-level content management solutions, including Drupal. Our client-side coding for XHTML and CSS layout with a focus on compliance and accessibility is core strength. Our wide knowledge of technologies – PHP, .NET, ASP – means we can work with your platform, collaborating with your IT department or integration partners.

**Content.** Content is the most valuable part of your website. Without it you have a pretty, blank frame. We take developing content seriously. Our content team works closely with the development and design teams throughout every project to ensure your website, email, and mobile campaigns are providing information that draws your audience in through compelling calls to action and a wealth of information.

**Online Marketing.** Search engine optimization (SEO), email, and mobile. We marry these traditional outreach mechanisms with new social media tools to create the most targeted and effective online communications campaigns.

**Project Management.** Managing a large-scale website redesign commands an excellent academic and professional background, strong interpersonal and presentation skills, and extensive experience working on engagements involving complex and mission-critical online systems.