

# Web Experience Excellence:

Driving Strategic Online Advantage & Advocacy: Are your customers your evangelists?

A 3-Part Series by Frost & Sullivan, the Growth Partnership Company

## How to Analyze the Reach and Impact of your Web 2.0 Initiatives

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**W**eb 2.0 has transformed the way that organizations deliver messages to target audiences. While this development provides even greater opportunities for organizations to connect and engage with audiences, it also creates new challenges for marketers whose traditional Web metrics may not take into account the new sources of conversations that are happening online.

Social media requires an ever-evolving set of metrics to monitor, analyze and measure the impact of what is being said about an organization, brand, spokesperson or competitor across the entire social media landscape. But don't rush to Web 2.0 metrics so fast that you begin ignoring standard benchmarks like page views, downloads, engagement and time on site — these metrics are in fact enhanced by the next generation of metrics.

### MEASURING SENTIMENT

A fundamental fact about engaging with social media is that once you engage, you'll discover that there are both positive and negative conversations happening, as well as some mentions that have net impact. Comprehensive monitoring and measurement of social media sites is a necessity for any brand in order to determine how your messages are resonating, what people are saying about your organization or brand, and perhaps most importantly, to measure sentiment: whether those comments are positive, neutral or negative.

Since much of what occurs in the

social media realm is opinion-driven, the ability to quickly gauge and manage perception is paramount. The benefit of monitoring sentiment in real-time is the ability to respond in real time, circumventing a potential crisis, as well as the ability to see when your campaign has become a resounding success. In many cases, sentiment can be assessed by reading the various posts and threads. However, for brands with a lot of online exposure, or during a product launch, it may not be feasible to review the myriad of comments.

Professional monitoring services can be a useful tool because they calculate sentiment by leveraging natural language processing and machine learning algorithms. These services allow you to set up proactive monitoring searches to alert you to the specific mentions you need to know about. Results are scored in real time for several important variables, including sentiment, level of authority or online prominence and, when available, the geographic location, gender and age of the individual posting. The data is collected automatically, enabling you to view the authority and demographics of those talking about your brand, as well as track the level of buzz about your brand over time.

As social media proliferates, it is becoming increasingly important for companies to be aware of how their business and industry are portrayed in the social media realm. Bottom line: The more positive the online sentiment about your brand is, the more it drives market share.

### MEASURING IMPACT

Web 2.0 metrics can help a company understand the impact of certain messages, know when to change its messaging mid-program and assess the quality of its coverage versus the competition. The key to remember

when considering which metrics to monitor is that metrics should focus on a company's goals — which, at the end of the day, is sales. The social media metrics that might be right for one company might not be right for another: Make sure you measure against what your company values, and not necessarily what's good for someone else.

Some basic Web 2.0 metrics include the number of inbound links from social media sites — or, in the case of Twitter and Facebook, the number of followers and fans. Equally as important in determining a brand's influence in these new spheres is how many times social media users mention your initiatives or brands specifically, regardless of what their overall prominence may be.

Another way to measure influence is to refer to sites such as Technorati and Alexa, which use a series of criteria to determine the relative strength of a blog or Web site within a specific industry and throughout the entire online space. These ratings are not perfect, but they should point you in the right direction. For Twitter, look at the number of "Retweets" — a redistribution of an individual tweet — to gauge a person's influence and interest in the topic amongst the Twitterverse. Also, check in with tools such as TweetGrade and TwitterScore to get a rough estimate of a Twitterer's influence.

Whatever Web 2.0 metrics you monitor, the thing to show is that the numbers are increasing over time, that your marketing team is truly optimizing its online initiatives and are contributing positively to the organization's or brand's bottom line.