

When Will Social Media Measurement Mature?

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Marketers have a chance to establish metrics that matter

Marketers know that counting fans, "likes" and followers is not the best way to measure success in social media marketing. Yet these metrics are often the top benchmarks for performance. It's not surprising, then, that marketers consider calculating return on investment to be the biggest challenge of using social media, and that a majority of them believe they cannot measure social media campaigns effectively.

"Marketers often think of social media measurement as listening and monitoring. But that is only one part of a fragmented process, which has contributed to a lack of focus for both marketers and vendors," said Debra Aho Williamson, eMarketer principal analyst and author of the new report, "Social Media Measurement: Getting to the Metrics that Matter." "It has created a culture of data overload, in which metrics that do not have much business value have more importance than those that contribute to the bottom line."

Research from Chief Marketer found that two in five marketers have little confidence in the effectiveness of their ability to measure social media campaigns.

Social media measurement has evolved significantly in its short history, but the need to prove effectiveness is more important than ever. As top marketing executives plan how much to invest in social media and whether to shift funds from other marketing channels, they need metrics that show not only that their brands have a lot of friends but that those friends actually affect the bottom line.

MarketingSherpa found that measurement effectiveness correlated with experience with social media and how strategic marketers were in their social marketing implementations.

"Marketers must apply business-level analysis to social media measurement to determine its true impact," said Williamson. "Going beyond brand metrics to understand social media's effect on a company's bottom line is critical. And it's easier to consider the relative influence of social media on lead generation and sales."

Marketers also need to understand how well social media performs relative to other types of marketing. Integrating social media analytics into other business analytics will help, as will developing ways to show how social media helps make other marketing more efficient.

The full report, "Social Media Measurement: Getting to the Metrics That Matter," also answers these key questions:

- ~ Why is it important for marketers to get social media measurement right?
- ~ Why do marketers believe effective measurement is a challenge?
- ~ What metrics do marketers pay attention to to determine social media marketing success?
- ~ How can marketers focus on the metrics that matter to their business?

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