



# Listening When No One's Talking

## Ideas for Listening Around and Above Your Brand

It's a pretty common question: "What, exactly, am I listening to if no one's talking about me or my brand?"

Companies that are small, new, or just not as plugged in to the online environment can sometimes feel as though they've got nothing to gain by monitoring social media because the mentions of their brand are few and far between.

But the "listening" step of social media is important beyond that. In fact, it illustrates a fundamental principle of a successful social media foundation: thinking and participating around and above your brand.

### We've Got Company

Unless you're in a super-niche or groundbreaking industry, you've got competition. You're likely not the only game in town, so if someone isn't talking about you, they may very well be talking about your competitors, and you can learn a lot about what they're saying.

From insights about what customers love or don't love about a competitor's offering to who's engaged in the community on behalf of the competitive brand, conversations can tell you a ton. And understanding your Share of Conversation within the larger industry you represent - especially as compared to those competitors - is an important insight.

One thing to note: trolling for your competitor's customers and fans in social media is a big no-no. It's one thing to connect with them and build a genuine relationship (good). It's another thing entirely to be chasing down your competitor's customers or engaged prospects and using these channels as an opportunity to poorly butt in and pitch your stuff (bad). Tread lightly.

### Finding the Tribes

A key to understanding where to spend your resources in social media is the basic knowledge of where your potential customers are gathering online. Are they bloggers, or do they favor Twitter to have their conversations? Are they using forums to hold discussions? Or maybe they're not using these sites much at all?

You can monitor for discussions that swirl around your industry at large instead of about specific brands to understand how those audiences are using (or not using) social sites. For example, if I'm a lawn care company, I'm going to be searching for discussions on lawn maintenance, landscaping, and the weekend warriors out cutting the lawn or sharing lawn care tips among their friends. Where they're talking is where I want to be participating. Instead of a shotgun plan, I've now got a focused idea about where my social media outreach should be aimed.





## Problem, Meet Solution

Problems, needs, and wish lists from your potential customers or your competitor's customers are being tossed out to the social web all the time. From product reviews to casual statements about what's not working right, customers are giving you loads of intelligence about what problems they need you to solve.

Think bigger than your brand, and tune in to conversations that are about the kinds of issues and challenges that your product or service is aimed at solving. If you're a virtual assistant, maybe you're listening to people who are drowning in email and learning how to help them to refine your service offerings. If you're an accountant, you might be putting together a list of the most commonly asked questions from people setting up a small business and doing a podcast about it.

We call this "listening at the point of need" and it's about understanding how your business solves problems for people, and then connecting with them in a meaningful, helpful way when they need you most. It's not about a sales pitch. It's about creating a solution for someone that they're asking for. And by listening to the feedback from people who aren't yet familiar with your brand but know your industry, you can learn how to create better and more relevant offerings that address the pain points these folks have and talk about most.

## It's Bigger Than Your Brand Name

Simply put, conversations in social media aren't just about finding mentions of your brand. It's about finding relevant conversations from within the communities you serve and understanding how those impact your business and its growth potential. Listening is a holistic activity with great potential to bring you intelligence, insight, and focus for your social media efforts.

For more information about how Radian6 can help you listen around, above, alongside and within your brand, visit us on the web at <http://www.radian6.com> and request a demo.

