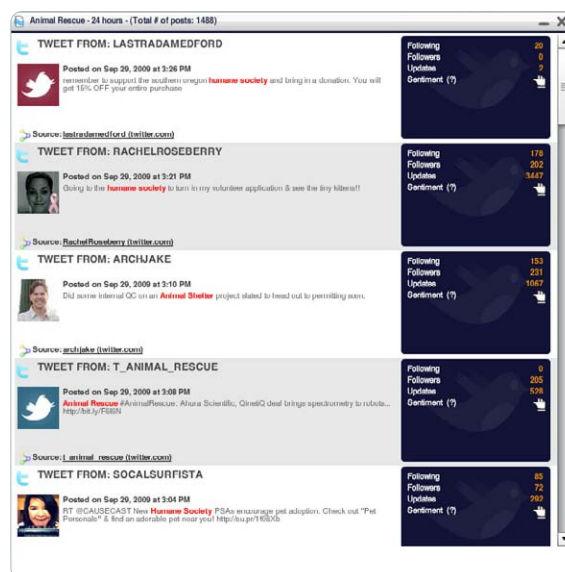




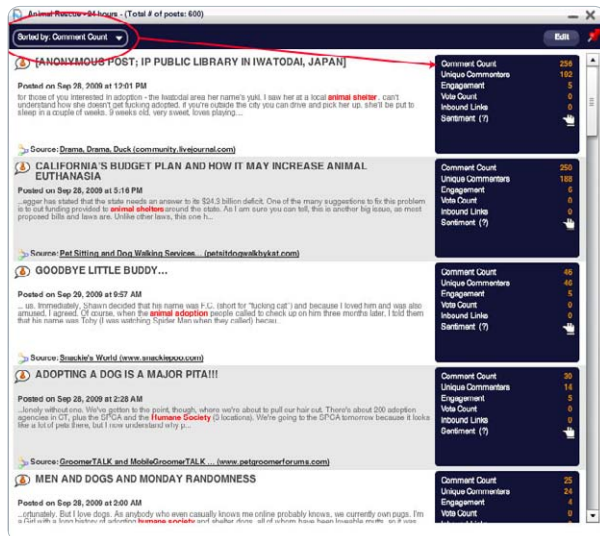
You might think that social media isn't for you because no one's talking about you yet. You're listening, but you're not hearing much, and you're not quite sure what that means. Getting a foothold in social media isn't always because of conversations about you. Sometimes, it's about identifying the conversations you'd like to be part of, becoming a participant, and investing time in those communities.

Let's say you're a smaller non-profit organization focused on animal rescue. No one's talking about your shelter, per se, but you want to raise awareness for your work online and make some friends. It's okay that you're not the topic of conversation yet. There's plenty of places where you can join in and participate.

First, you can set up a topic profile for your cause. Perhaps you'd include terms like "animal rescue", "animal shelter", "dog adoption", or whatever other terms you use to describe your mission, cause, and focus. Then, build a new River of News to show you the results from the last day or so, so you can be as current as possible:



Right out of the gate, can filter out just the blogs in your River of News, and see the recent posts on topics that interest you. Maybe you'll sort them by comment count, to see which ones have the most activity. Then, you'll head out to those blogs, check out what conversations they're having, and leave a comment or two, contributing to the discussion (not pitching your shelter, of course).



Once you're on Twitter, you can start listening for those tweets about your area of interest, and respond. You'll be engaging and helpful and interested in conversing, and you'll make friends fast. Soon, your animal rescue friends on Twitter are telling their other animal lover friends about the new connection they've made, and more people start following you, too. The dialogue builds along with your network, and next thing you know, the topic profile you set up for your brand starts turning in more results.

Now, you can use the workflow to respond directly to those posts about you – even if they're a couple at a time at first – and thank folks for mentioning you, or answer their questions. Before you know it, you'll be an active participant in the social web, and your brand presence online will continue to grow.

Having the conversation around you instead of about you can be a valuable and gradual introduction to social media, and a great way to immerse yourself in the communities that you'd like to someday have supporting and talking about your work.

Then, you'll notice that there are a pile of tweets talking about similar subjects, from people interested in animal rescue causes. So, you'll set up your twitter account, and click through to their profiles to follow them.

