

How to Set Up Your Social Media Listening Dashboard

The critical first step when developing a social media strategy for your business

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Your customers are getting harder and harder to target. They are bombarded with advertising messages every waking hour and are skeptical of advertising more than ever before. Social media breaks down this barrier and allows you to join in the conversation with your target market. Consumers don't want to "get sold." They want advice, they want recommendations, and they want to be heard. Consumers want their brands to listen to their opinions and respond back to them. They want to know that YOU care about them. So don't be the fly on the wall anymore. Engage, enhance, and involve your audience.

Social media optimization

A hybrid between online media relations, dialogue, and search engine optimization, social media optimization provides an avenue for engaging with your key audiences in an authentic way that creates an experience and connection with your brand. By participating in and encouraging dialogue, your brand visibility and connection with your customers will be heightened and strengthened.

Harnessing the power of social media optimization requires the following five key pillars:

- Listen
- Identify
- Strategize
- Engage
- Measure

It is an ongoing process that needs to be nurtured and cultivated. The most important items for success are consistency and authenticity.

Too many companies fail in social media by jumping into conversations and communities trying to "sell" their products and services instead of creating value in conversation.

This is the quickest way to create negative sentiment toward your brand. The key to successful social media optimization is a clear understanding of your target audience and their social media habits. This can only be achieved through listening first to your audiences.



Listen

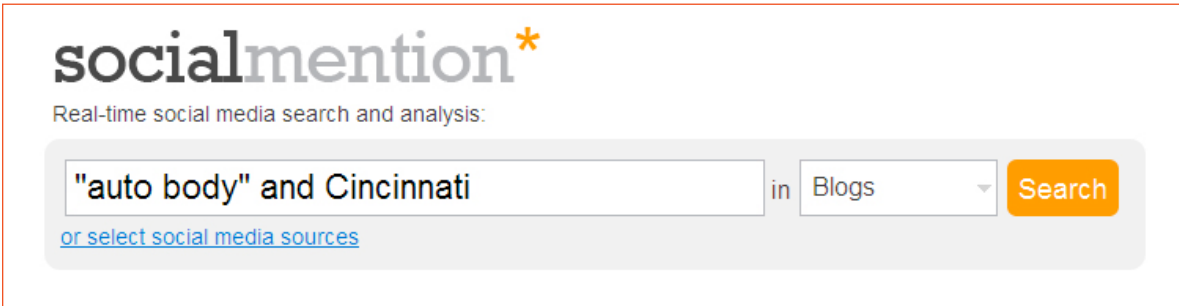
If I told you that you could listen to the online conversations of your customers, prospects, employees, and key stakeholders, would you?

Listening is vital to your online success. In today's online world, you can achieve this through free, powerful online tools that allow you to listen to your audiences' conversations. This paper describes these tools as well as a way to aggregate them all into a listening dashboard.

There are two concepts you will need to understand in order to set up your listening dashboard: Boolean Search and Real Simple Syndication (RSS).

Boolean Search

Boolean Search allows you to broaden and/or narrow your search by adding qualifiers such as OR, AND, NOT, and + or -. Most of the social media platforms allow you to use Boolean Search. The reason this is important to know is it allows you to geo-target your searches. With geo-targeting you can qualify your searches based on locators such as country, state, or city. You shouldn't have to geo-target around your brand name if you are a small business. Geo-targeting comes into play if you are looking for conversations surrounding more generic search terms. For example, if you are an auto body shop in Cincinnati, Ohio, and you would like to find conversations using Social Mention, a social media aggregator, you might use the search phrase "auto body" and Cincinnati. The "" quotes around "auto body" tell Social Mention that you want those words to be together in the post. The and Cincinnati Boolean indicator tells the search engine that you are looking for not only auto body in the post but also that Cincinnati should appear in the post.



socialmention*
Real-time social media search and analysis:

in

[or select social media sources](#)



Real Simple Syndication (RSS)

When creating your listening platform, you need a way to watch and keep track of information coming from multiple sites related to your industry, to your location, etc. Real Simple Syndication (RSS) allows you to track and peruse the new content on these sites in a simple, easy way through subscribing to any website that has syndicated content. This includes full or summarized text plus published date. Most sites that offer RSS show an orange square icon. We recommend using Google Reader (described below) to subscribe to RSS feeds. You can subscribe to the content by entering the RSS feed's URL or simply by clicking an RSS icon, which will initiate the subscription process.

Setting Up Your Listening Dashboard

There are many different RSS readers as well as sites that you could search and subscribe to for user-generated content (UGC). UGC is content created and published by users. This can include blogs, videos, podcasts, images, wikis, discussion groups, and forums. What we have recommended below is a start that will get you up and running. Before you begin setting up your listening platform, put together a list of keywords that you would like to track online conversations. The keywords could include your brand name, products you offer, or services you offer. The goal of the listening platform is to discover opportunities in conversations people are having in user-generated content. If someone mentions your brand in user-generated content that you are monitoring, you now have the opportunity to get feedback on your brand through a listening platform.

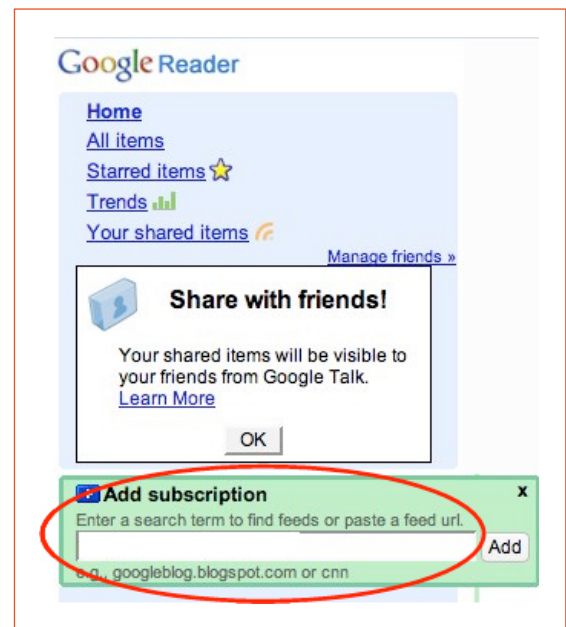
1) The first thing you will need to do to set up your listening dashboard is to set up a Google Account. You can set one up at www.google.com/accounts/NewAccount. Google Accounts allow you to use all of the free tools that Google has to offer. The tools that you will use to create your dashboard are Google Reader, Google Alerts, and Google Blog Search.

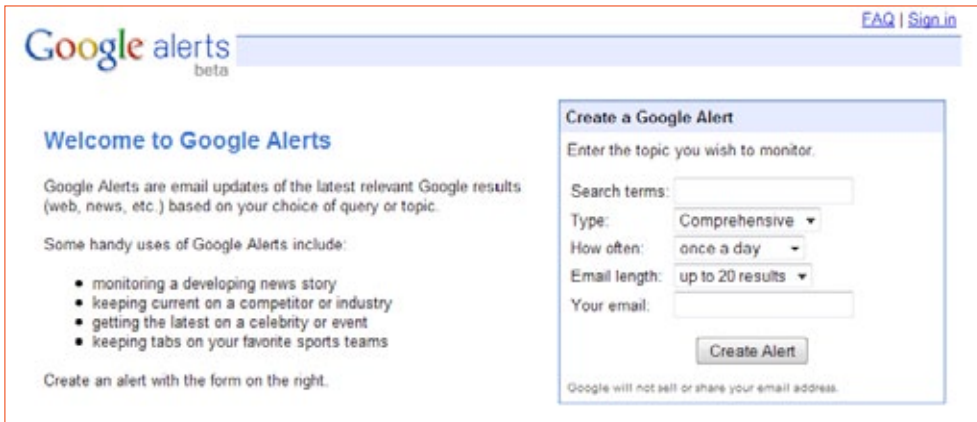
a. Google Reader checks your subscribed feeds regularly for new content and downloads any updates that it finds. This is a key component in your listening dashboard. All of the searches you will be performing below will be fed into your Google Reader account.

b. Google Alerts, <http://www.google.com/alerts>, is a monitoring service that is provided by Google and one of the benefits of creating a Google account. When you are setting up your Google Alerts, you will enter the keywords that you have come up with above into the search term box. You will need to set up each alert individually. These alerts cover news, websites, blogs, videos, and discussion groups. Alerts can be sent via email, as an RSS feed or added to your iGoogle page. There are six types of alerts:

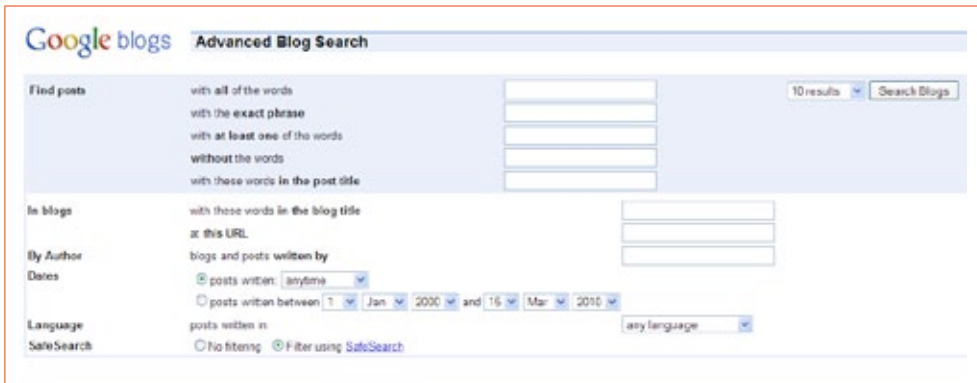
- Comprehensive - news, websites, and blogs
- Web - when new web pages appear in the top 20 results in Google search
- Blogs – when blog content shows up in the top 10 results of a Google blog search
- Video – when new video content appears in the top 10 results of a Google video search
- Groups – when new content shows up in the top 50 results of a Google Groups search

You can determine the frequency of these results from once a day, once a week, or as it happens.

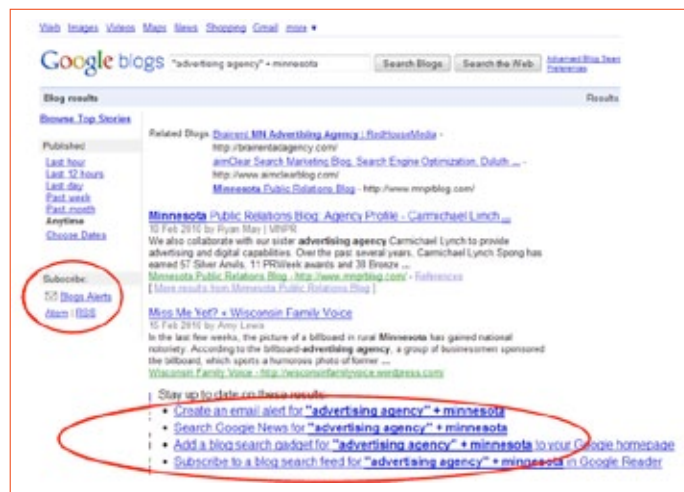




c. Google Blog Search, <http://blogsearch.google.com/> is a search engine for finding blogs related to your keywords and search terms. If you are a local garden supplier, you may want to set up alerts around gardening in your area. If someone in your area is an avid garden blogger, you may want to reach out to them and see if they will write a post reviewing your garden supply store. The advanced search option within Google Blog Search is very powerful and allows for Boolean Search, specific blogs, by author, dates, language, and safe search. It allows you to have these searches added to your RSS reader or have them emailed to you.



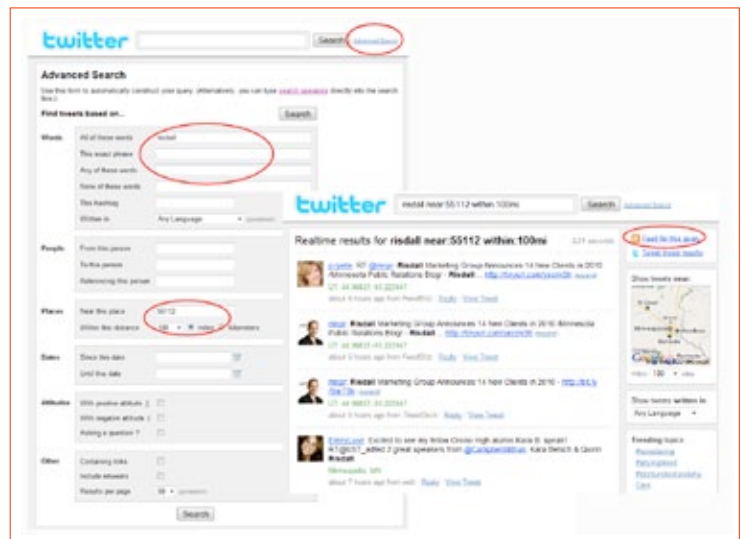
The example below is a search for advertising agency + Minnesota. This search will show all blogs that have written about advertising agency and the qualifier Minnesota. If you are an advertising agency in Minnesota you may want to set up this search to see who is blogging about Minnesota advertising agencies. You will see highlighted in red the RSS link as well as how to have this search emailed to you.



2) There are many powerful tools that will allow you to monitor conversations within user-generated content. There are a lot of opportunities for brands who listen to user-generated content. We will cover Twitter Search, Social Mention, Google Blog Search, Technorati, flickr, and YouTube. All of these tools allow for you to subscribe to the RSS feed for the search. This will allow you to track every site you're subscribed to without having to go to each individual site.

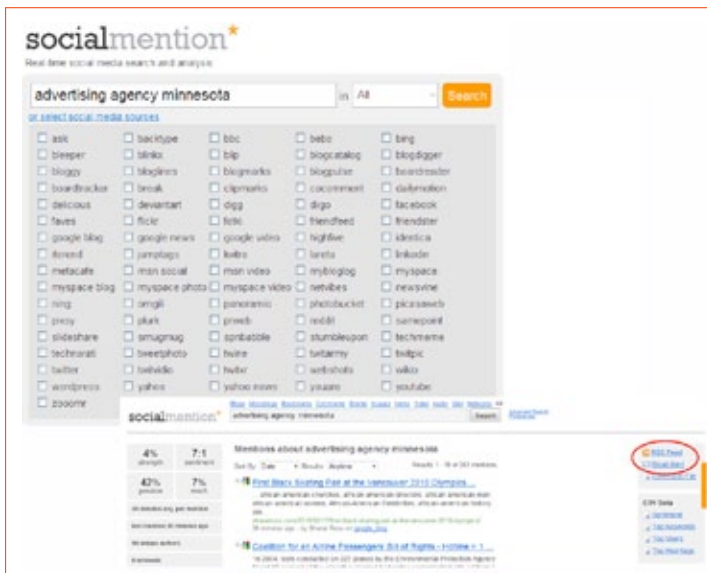
a. Twitter Search, www.search.twitter.com, allows you to search for keywords, phrases, and hashtags on Twitter. You can also search for tweets from and to specific users. The most powerful part of Twitter Search is the geo-targeting capabilities, which allows you to search within parameters based on zip code, city, or state. This is a great resource for brands to search for more generic type keywords. For example if you are an auto body shop, you may want to set up searches around car accident, fender bender, etc. within 20 miles of your location. This will then alert you of anyone who tweets that they were in an accident or fender bender near your location. You could reach out to those people and ask them to come to your auto body shop for a free estimate. Search criteria also include dates and attitudes as well as links and retweets. To utilize all of these search options, you will need to click on the advanced search option in the right-hand corner. Once you get the results from this search, click on the RSS icon and feed this query into your RSS reader.

The sample search shown is a search for Risdall, the name of our advertising agency, along with the geo-targeted criteria of being within 100 miles of our zip code 55112. By doing this search, it allows Risdall to see any mentions of its brand within 100 miles of its location.

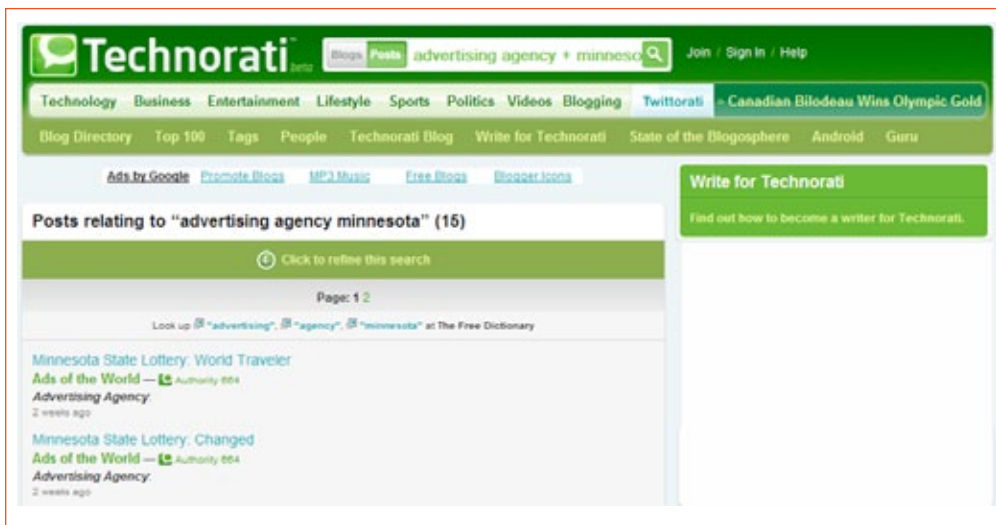


b. Social Mention, www.socialmention.com, is one of the most powerful user-generated content search engines available. It searches blogs, microblogs, bookmarks, comments, events, images, news, video, audio, Q&A, and networks. You can choose to search all of these content areas, or pick and choose specific ones. Once you get the results from this search, click on the RSS icon and feed this query into your RSS reader.

The example below is setting up a search for advertising agency Minnesota. This search will tell us anytime there is a mention within any of these sources for people writing or mentioning advertising agency in Minnesota. This allows us to see the conversations around the industry that we are in and decide if we want to engage in these conversations or see an opportunity for us to gain a client. The red circle shows that this search can be added to our RSS reader or emailed directly to us.

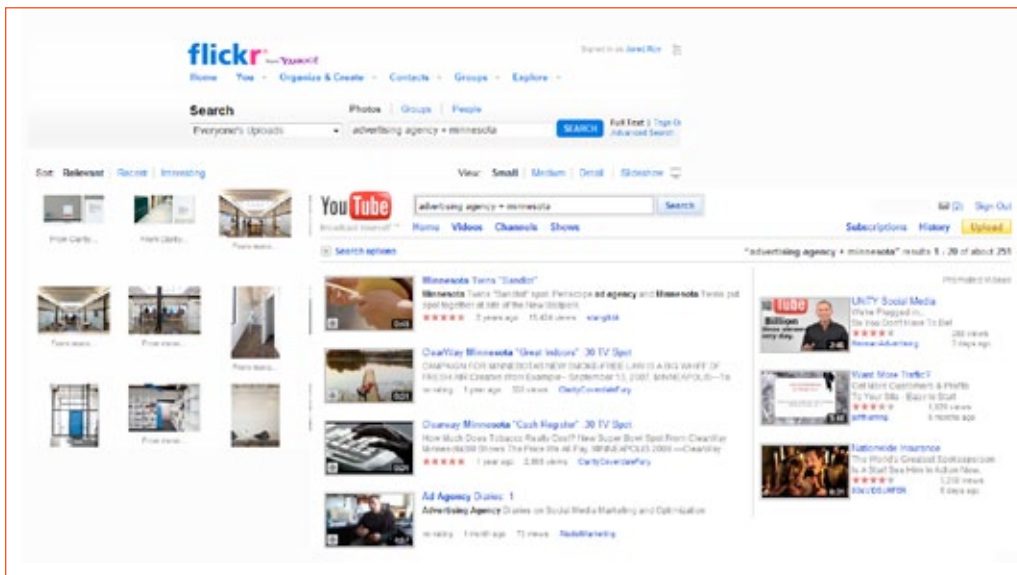


c. Technorati, www.technorati.com, is an internet search engine for searching blogs. You can search for blogs that write about your company, brands, or any keyword you would like to monitor. Technorati also allows you to search for posts. It does not offer an RSS link, but if you copy the URL after you have performed your search and add it to your RSS reader in the Add Subscription link in Google Reader, it will automatically update anytime new content is posted. Technorati is similar to Google Blog Search, but offers a few more features which include the option of searching for blogs specifically related to your keywords or posts that have been written about your keywords. The search below shows a couple posts related to advertising agency + Minnesota. This is a good way for an advertising agency in Minnesota to keep up with blogs and posts related to its industry.



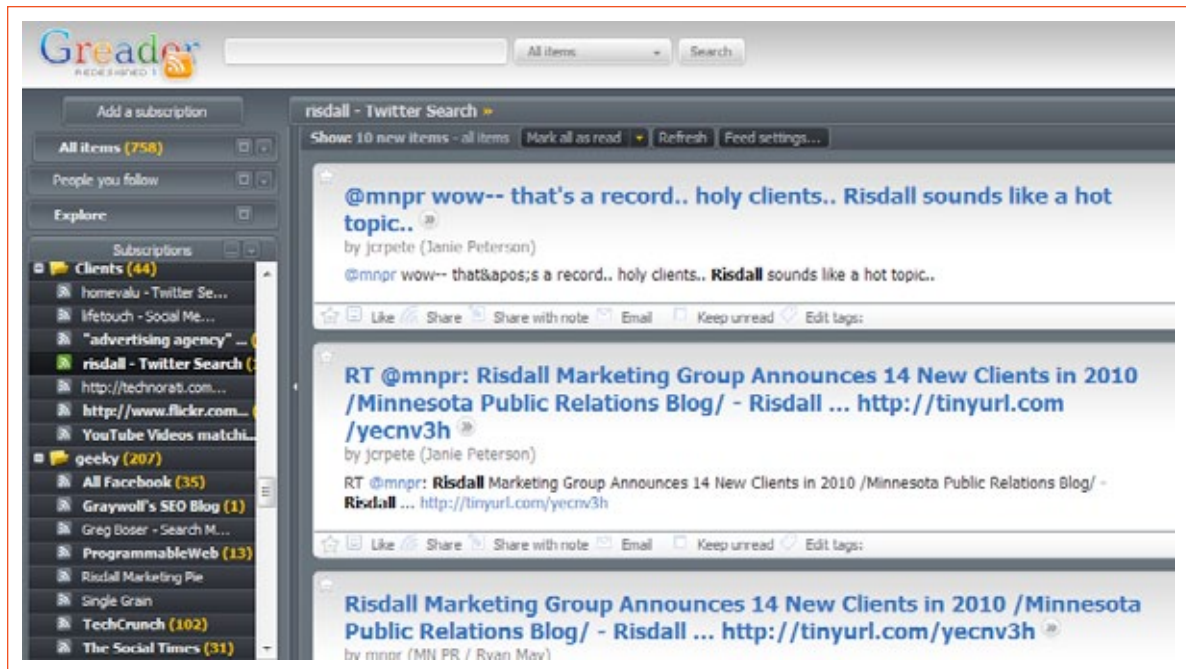
d. Flickr, www.flickr.com, and YouTube, www.youtube.com, are image and video curation sites which allow users to upload images and videos and tag them with title, keywords, and descriptions. When you do a search on flickr or YouTube for your company, brand, or products, all images and videos that have been titled, tagged, or described will come up in the search results. Similar to Technorati, you will have to manually copy the URL after you have performed your search and add it to your RSS reader in the Add Subscription link in Google Reader. It then will automatically update anytime new content is posted. When setting up your searches in flickr and YouTube it is a good idea to search for your specific brands and products. This will then alert you every time someone posts an image or a video that features your product or service.

The example below shows a search on flickr and YouTube for advertising agency + Minnesota. This allows an advertising agency in Minnesota to see all of the images and videos posted surrounding those keywords. It is a good way to see what competitive agencies are posting.



The Listening Dashboard

When you have performed all of your searches within the engines above, the end result is a listening dashboard that will aggregate all of your searches into one dashboard, your Google Reader. You will no longer need to do these individual searches. When you visit your Google Reader account you will notice headings and numbers in bold on the left. These are searches and sites that have new content that needs to be read. If the heading is not bold then there is no new content to read.



Building a listening platform is an ongoing process. The more you put into it, the more you will get out of it. Whenever you identify a new keyword, it should be entered into the above searches and added to your RSS reader, Google Alerts, etc.

Be sure to give yourself at least 3-4 weeks of listening time to better understand the conversation, information-sharing and ground rules in your particular market. In the end, you will be better positioned to identify your social media objectives, build your strategy, engage in the online conversation and finally, measure your results.