

The importance of play

Kenon Man is looking at how Sherman Cymru are engaging with their audience digitally and like many Digital Officers he has been 'playing' with various digital platforms and using them as marketing tools

As playtime comes to a close, I thought it was time to look beyond the vanity metrics of x number of followers and x number of 'likes' and begin to look at what it all means.

There are a number of monitoring tools across the web but monitoring and the analysis of social media is still in its infancy compared to web and e-marketing. Unfortunately there is no definitive answer on how social media should be measured, but there are effective ways to see the success of our digital output and how audiences are responding to us online.

Initially, I asked myself the questions:

- How engaged is our online audience?
- How effective are our digital activities?

I started to gather various metrics and ended up with a spreadsheet that a statistician would be proud of but was no use to anyone. So I decided to break the questions down into simpler and more manageable ones.

Are audiences talking with us and are they talking about us?

As we all know, online content is created with the purpose for it to be shared and to generate conversation, so the 'I have x number of followers' metric doesn't really tell me anything about our audiences and the relationship they have with us.

So I'm looking at the average engagement rate of our audience by counting the number of replies and comments to a post, also the number of re-Tweets and shares. This gives me a good indication of whether I'm creating boring content or content that our audience can engage with and I can monitor how our tone and brand is being perceived.

SocialBakers.com presents this formula to calculate average engagement rate:

$$\text{AVERAGE ENGAGEMENT RATE} = \frac{\text{No. of engaged activity for a particular month} / \text{No. of posts created on a particular month}}{\text{Total number of fans}} \times 100$$

Another interesting metric that I monitor is *Reach* – how far has my Tweet or post travelled. Facebook provides Reach as part of its inbuilt page insights and TweetReach is good for getting Twitter statistics. Socialmention.com is also good for tracking mentions and reach.

Avinash Kaushik's blog *Occam's Razor* provides another interesting way of reporting engagement rates and he describes them as:

Conversion rate = # audience comments or replies per post

The higher the conversion rate means the posts are more meaningful therefore you are interacting with your audiences in the right way.

Amplification = # of shares or re-Tweets per post

The higher the amplification means the further the reach of your potential audience.

Applause rate = # Likes per post (Facebook) or # +1's (Google +)

This acts like an endorsement to a post, therefore the more people liking a post the more it will show up on people feeds or Google searches, directing more traffic to a webpage or blog.

Are people reading our emails?

Most email service providers deliver metrics to measure the success of email campaigns and I tend to monitor the standard metrics of:

Delivery rate and Hard / Soft Bounce rate: monitoring these two metrics is a good way of ensuring that our E-list is clean and up to date.

Open rates: a good open rate shows that the subject line was interesting.



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Where do they go next? Do they just leave upon arrival? Do they buy tickets? This tells me if the initial content was correct, relevant and met the expectation of the customer

Are people using the website?

Sherman Cymru's digital universe is made up of various digital platforms and they are all connected to the website, as it is the website that converts visits into sales.

So as well as monitoring the basics, I'm currently looking at referral traffic from digital platforms and I'm also looking at traffic from our e-marketing campaigns. Then the next step is to look deeper and monitor their journey through the website – Where do they go next? Do they just leave upon arrival? Do they buy tickets? This tells me if the initial content was correct, relevant and met the expectation of the customer – is it too much of a hard sell if you link directly to the booking page or is it better to link to a page that provides more information?

I'm also monitoring abandonment rate by monitoring how far a customer has gone through the booking process – if an unusually large number of customers leave at a certain stage, does it mean that the page takes too long to load? Are you asking too many questions? Do they trust the process?

My next plan is to calculate an economic value to each of our digital activity ... crazy I know but when I was putting all these metrics together I realised that our ticketing system holds substantial financial data, such as web sales and the number of sales that have been referred by online activity. For me, it makes sense to pull that financial data, combine it with the web data to answer the questions – What is the average value of a visitor to the website? Which can then be translated to what is the value of a Tweet or a post?

The possibilities are endless ... ■



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Subscriber retention rate: the higher the retention rate means that the content was relevant, meaningful and of interest to the subscriber.

Clickthrough rates: the number of times a particular link has been clicked. This is one of the main reasons why emails are sent in the first place – to drive traffic to a particular place, ideally to the website. I have been experimenting with link placement and monitoring whether our audience respond better by clicking images or text and the wording of call to actions within the e-flyer copy.



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