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# Improving Social Media Writing and Engagement Through Measurement Tactics

By Stephanie Wight

In a crowded online space, social media posts require targeted messaging and visuals to reach and engage the desired audience. In order to gain traction with consumers, brands must understand what motivates and influences them and produce content that is helpful and relatable. By utilizing measurement tools, brands can get a better sense of what drives engagement and action in their community, and this can help them reach organizational goals.

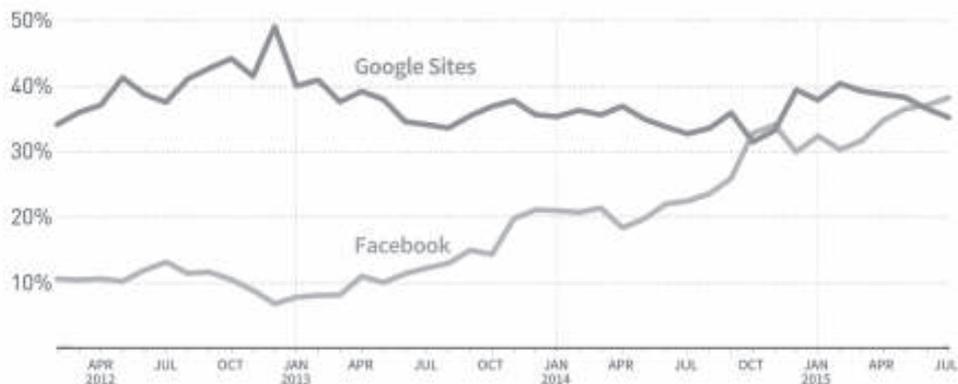
This article will demonstrate how to incorporate social media measurement tactics to test and improve your content, leading to a more successful social media strategy.

**Set your goals:** To be successful on social media, it's important to set specific goals at the outset. First, determine who your target audience is—whether it is women 45+ who experience chronic pain, or adults older than

30 who have a history of Alzheimer's in their family. Next, figure out the social media networks where this audience is active—you want to create a channel of communication where your audience is already engaged.

At the start of 2016, Facebook had 1.59 billion monthly active users. That's more than 20% of the global population. Facebook has become a major content-discovery platform. More traffic to news and media sites is driven by Facebook than Google, (see the chart below), according to **Parse.ly**, a traffic analytics firm. This means that people often are finding content in their Facebook feed and clicking through to articles directly. Americans spend an average of 40 minutes daily on Facebook, 34 minutes on Twitter and 21 minutes on Pinterest and Instagram, according to data from **SproutSocial**.

PARSE.LY NETWORK TRAFFIC FROM GOOGLE VERSUS FACEBOOK



After discovering where your audience spends its time on social, figure out what actions you want your audience to take. Is your ultimate goal to drive people to sign up for research studies? Do you want to drive them to a website to learn more information about your cause? Reversely, what can you provide your audience to better reach its goals? How will following your page benefit audience members? These are questions you should consider when developing content strategy. To reach your goals, you will need to become a resource for your audience that it must trust and can relate to.

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**Implement your content strategy:**

Figuring out the best content to share on social channels starts as an experiment. You won't be able to determine what works best with your audience until you test out different messages and measure results. As you brainstorm content to share, figure out several categories of content that may be relevant.

For example, for a Facebook page that is targeting the Alzheimer's community, the categories may be Alzheimer's news, caregiver advice, personal stories, relatable quotes and information about your organization. Only a small percentage of your content should be promotional—the rest should be aimed at engaging your audience and acting as a resource.

It's also important to determine how you can use paid efforts to boost your activity on social. For example, if you are new to a certain platform, you may want to do a follower

campaign to increase your page followers. Facebook and Twitter ads can also help draw people to your website, reach people near your business or raise attendance at events. Another popular paid effort on Facebook is boosting organic posts with additional targeting. Once an organic post is live, you can boost it to reach more of your followers or more of your target audience that isn't yet following your page.

Erin Hildreth, senior manager of marketing and communications at **The Vision Council**, shares how social media plays a role in her organization: "Social media has personified all of our campaigns, and the sheer reach of one interaction has the power to grow your message exponentially. It is something that we think about constantly when preparing campaigns because it is a way to touch people as they go about their days and live their lives."

**Test your content and optimize:** Facebook and Twitter offer in-depth insights for organic and paid posts. It's important to review your page analytics often to note trends and see which categories of content are performing best. Here are a couple things to look for:

1. What day of the week and what time of day is your content getting the most engagement (likes, comments, shares, re-tweets, favorites, replies)?
2. What type of content is eliciting the most comments? Are all these positive comments?
3. When promoting your organization, what messaging works best with your audience?
4. What types of links are receiving the most clicks?
5. What types of images or graphics seem most eye-catching/appealing to your audience (based on engagement)?



## Dissecting an Engaging Post

This post from the **Alzheimer's Prevention Initiative**, a project led by **Banner Alzheimer's Institute**, received 4,082 engagements, including 600+ comments. Here is why:

- 1. Short upfront text:** The best-performing posts use fewer than 50 characters, according to **Buzzsomo's** analysis of more than 1 billion Facebook posts from brand pages.
- 2. Asks a question:** In the Buzzsomo analysis, posts that ask questions performed the best, which shows true in this example, since 600+ people shared their answer in the comments section.
- 3. Was posted on a Sunday:** It seems that publishing when there are fewer posts being published, and vying for attention, boosts posts' engagement.
- 4. Shares a visually appealing graphic/image:** Posts always perform better with an accompanying image.
- 5. Pulls at the heart strings/elicits emotion:** This is something I've found performs well with the audience of Alzheimer's caregivers and family/friends.
- 6. Puts a positive spin on a negative situation:** Another finding from this community, since Alzheimer's is a challenging situation, anything positive that can be taken from it produces a strong response.
- 7. Incorporates the brand:** This doesn't necessarily drive engagement, but it is beneficial for the organization when the post is shared with others who are not familiar with the brand.

Facebook algorithms determine if your posts will be seen by your followers, based on their past engagement with your content and what type of content it is. For example, if a Facebook user engages more with videos, Facebook will be more likely to show that user a video that you post rather than an image. This algorithm makes it very important to measure your engagement and change your content strategy based on performance. If followers aren't interested in your content, your posts will stop showing up in their newsfeeds. When followers engage with your content, their friends may be exposed to your page, increasing your audience and potential new followers.

Facebook and Twitter also provide very detailed analytics for ad performance. Face-

book has integrated with Instagram ads, so your content can be displayed on both platforms. Facebook and Twitter collect a wealth of information within a user's profile, which will enable you to target a very specific type of person.

When developing ads, it is smart to test several different images and text to see what best resonates with your audience. Facebook and Twitter automatically will optimize so that the ads gaining traction will show more often. But once you have seen that an ad is not performing well, you can pause it and refocus your budget.

Another measurement tool that often comes in handy is **Google Analytics**. Aside from seeing how much traffic is coming to your site from social each week, you can set

specific goals on Google Analytics that will allow you to see when consumers from social complete a certain action on your website.

For example, let's say your goal is to get people to sign up for a registry. You can tell Google Analytics that when a user lands on the "Thank you for signing up" page, they have completed the desired action. By pulling weekly analytics reports, you can see what aspects of your content strategy are contributing to your bottom line.

**Measuring success:** In order to show results and improvement on social media to others within your organization, it's important to do monthly or quarterly dashboards that highlight growth. I've found that showing the percent change in followers, engagement and/or impressions is a strong way to show success. For example, "Since January 2016, we've increased engagement on the page by

123 percent." Another important metric to share is goals completed through social media on Google Analytics.

Stacy Mowery, director of brand development at **Banner Health**, shares, "Measuring our social media analytics helps us understand our message reach: Who are we reaching? Who is most interested in our content? The metrics can also help us understand which topics or types of posts are most engaging to our audiences. A few years ago we began studying the differences in engagement between heavy visual posts vs. posts with written content only. The data showed visual posts are clearly more engaging, so we now have shifted to a heavy visual social strategy."

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