

## Assessing the Success of Social Media Efforts

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The purpose of this article is to show how a marketing model can expedite the evaluation of social media efforts. This article speaks to two problematic approaches in the assessment of such efforts. A first approach consists of looking at a few basic metrics (e.g. # of followers). Such metrics, commonly available, offer a quick and simple approach. However, it provides few clues on how to improve or optimize social media efforts. In addition, it gives little or no context for determining the success of such efforts. A second approach consists of looking at a confusing morass of metrics which end up giving very few insights, if any. Even worse, each one of these metrics can be the starting point of a particular analysis, thereby leaving marketers with many paths to explore. In such cases, it is easy to get lost, or be inefficient about assessing the success of social media efforts.

In my experience, two strategies are critical to overcome these issues.

1. **Set clear goals.** The goals of a website and of each social media property (e.g. Facebook, Twitter) need to be S.M.A.R.T. (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time scaled). Goals need to be clear and specific. For example, is the main purpose of using Facebook for building awareness or developing of following of loyal users? It is important to be clear on goals for each property as each one has unique attributes. Are these goals attainable given the marketer's experience with digital properties? Are they realistic given their time frame, for example, it takes time to build up a core of loyal followers, not to mention the disciplined effort required to achieve this.
2. **Use a marketing model.** Web metrics are best used as part of a marketing model that has proven to be both valid and reliable. The marketing profession has generated many models which not only help marketers understand consumer reality but also guide them in their

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marketing efforts. A marketing model allows marketers to efficiently drill down into the data to track causes of events and to know which levers to push to optimize one or several aspects of the sales process. This article focuses on the use of one particular marketing model (AIDA) to assess social media efforts.

Phase	Success Event	Metrics
<b>Attention (Awareness)</b>	Breadth of traffic (size of our social media "communities")	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ # of followers (e.g. Facebook, Twitter)</li> <li>▪ # of friends (e.g. Facebook)</li> <li>▪ # of fans (e.g. Facebook)</li> <li>▪ # of subscribers (e.g. Tumblr, YouTube)</li> <li>▪ Growth rate of followers (e.g. month to month)</li> <li>▪ Churn rate (# of followers lost / total # of followers)</li> </ul>
<b>Interest</b>	Depth of visits (degree of consumption of our content)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ # of unique pageviews (e.g. Facebook)</li> <li>▪ Click through rate (e.g. Facebook)</li> <li>▪ # of impressions (e.g. Twitter)</li> <li>▪ # of "detail expands" (e.g. Twitter)</li> <li>▪ # of views (e.g. YouTube)</li> <li>▪ Average view duration (e.g. YouTube)</li> </ul>
	Engagement of visitors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Conversation rate (average # of comments/replies per social contribution)</li> <li>▪ # of engagements (e.g. YouTube)</li> <li>▪ # of notes (e.g. Tumblr)</li> <li>▪ # of user profile clicks (e.g. Twitter)</li> <li>▪ # of link clicks (e.g. Twitter)</li> <li>▪ Average # of replies sent and received per day (e.g. Twitter)</li> <li>▪ # of post feedback (e.g. Facebook)</li> <li>▪ # of stealth clicks (post clicks - (likes + comments + shares))</li> <li>▪ # of posts with no engagement (e.g. Facebook)</li> </ul>
<b>Desire</b>	Support for our content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Applause rate (# of visitors who approve of a given post)</li> <li>▪ # of likes for each post (e.g. Facebook)</li> <li>▪ # of new likes per period (e.g. Facebook)</li> <li>▪ # of dislikes per period (e.g. Facebook)</li> <li>▪ # of likes and dislikes per video (e.g. YouTube)</li> <li>▪ # of favorites and follows (e.g. Twitter)</li> <li>▪ Sentiment analysis</li> </ul>
<b>Action</b>	Conversion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Single visit conversion rate</li> <li>▪ Latent conversion rate (e.g. returning visitors)</li> <li>▪ Goal completion rate (e.g. micro-conversions)</li> <li>▪ Page abandonment rate (e.g. cart process)</li> <li>▪ Revenue (or ROI) per period</li> <li>▪ Cost per click (CPC) and Revenue per click (RPC)</li> </ul>
<b>Loyalty</b>	Extent of social reach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ # of friends of fans (e.g. Facebook)</li> <li>▪ # of external referrers (e.g. Facebook)</li> <li>▪ # of retweets per thousand followers (e.g. Twitter)</li> <li>▪ # of shares (e.g. YouTube)</li> </ul>

The AIDA model has been used for many decades to highlight the key stages in the sales process. The original model has 4 phases: Attention, Interest, Desire, and Action. I have added a 5th phase to reflect one of the key attributes of social media, i.e. building loyalty.



**Attention** refers to making our brand aware to consumers. The success event is the size of each social media community: the larger it is, the more people are aware of our brand. **Interest** refers to visitors liking and preferring our brand. They like it and may eventually grow to prefer it to other brands. **Desire** refers to support for our content. Desire has an emotional component that leads visitors to express their likes (or dislikes) for a given piece of content or our brand itself. **Action** refers to an actual conversion; it is a purchase of some kind (e.g. a visitor to our Facebook page clicks a link to our website where they can buy a product, register for an event, or sign up to download a pdf). **Loyalty** refers to customers/followers becoming salespeople for our brand, i.e. word of mouth flourishes. It is "the ultimate customer-marketer relationship".

Each phase is associated with a "Success event" and "Metrics". Success events are key indicators of success for each particular phase. They answer the question: "How do we know that we have been successful?" For example, in the Interest phase, there are two success events; we know that we are successful in this phase when visitors to our social media property consume our content and are engaged. Metrics help us gauge the degree of our success. They are quantifiable indicators that allow us to track our progress and measure our success in relation to benchmarks and trends. Metrics on their own mean little, e.g. # of link clicks. They need to be put in context, for example, they can be measured per time period, per visit, per post, per video, per tweet, per visitor segment, etc. The metrics presented in this article for each phase of the AIDA model are not meant to be exhaustive. They are key metrics to consider for each phase.

Regarding the Interest phase, a high engagement rate is not necessarily good news as it could consist of a lot of negative feedback. As such, it needs to be interpreted in the context of sentiment analysis (done in the next phase). In the Desire phase, it is important to do sentiment analysis to examine the content and tone of user comments. One possible scenario is that a percentage of users may have become aware of our brand and become interested in it but, for some reason, have grown to dislike it (i.e. not desire it). Thus, the Desire phase allows us to assess to what degree users support our brand.

#### References:

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