

THE POWER OF SOCIAL SIGNALS

How Monitoring Online Conversations is Driving Business Results



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INTRODUCTION

The Value of Social Conversations

Right this minute, in another corner of the Internet, **your customers (and prospective customers)** **are +1ing** the restaurant where they ate lunch, tweeting about their upcoming camping trip, sharing pictures of destination wedding dresses, and “liking” one of your competitors on Facebook.

Why should you care?

Simple Answer:

You can't afford not to care! The future of marketing is now!

Ok, that's a pretty absurd cliché—in another year there will be a new future of marketing, and thus, the future of marketing is always still in the future. But, social signals are a new and powerful trend in marketing that you should be taking advantage of. Even if it's not the future of marketing, **it's the NOW of marketing and who wants to live in the past?**



The good news is social signals are far less confusing than that entire previous paragraph.

Using social media to win customer love makes sense for all small to medium size businesses that are looking to grow in the new social world. Every tweet, pin, like, and YouTube video can be a great way to connect with customers and turn social media activity into measurable business.

How can you make sure your social media efforts are delivering added revenue and creating growth?

You need to look for the signals; then respond to them. Your customers are telling you how they want to be marketed to (frankly, they're screaming it at you) and you can take advantage of it. In the following pages, we will show you exactly how to decipher customer signals on social media and how best to use that information to drive deeper relationships and business results with customers and turn social media activity into measurable business.

**You need to be
PRESENT**

**You need to
LISTEN**

**You need to
REACT**

This is what will show your customers, and prospective customers, **that you value their opinion and understand what matters to them**—and that's a cliché that never gets tired.

One caveat: Don't be the creepy online stalker company.

Anyone who spends any time online knows—and loathes—**“the creepy online stalker company.”** You know the companies we mean. The ones who know you happened to check out a wedding dress last year, and now inundate you with ads, spam and ‘targeted’ messages about how excited you must be to be getting married soon, despite the fact that your relationship status remains firmly in *‘it’s complicated.’*



The fact is that we can now know more than ever about our customers and prospects. It's up to us as marketers to use that information responsibly and considerately. Crossing that line is the online version of checking out someone's medicine cabinet. **No good comes of it!**

Throughout this book, we'll flag a few **“Creep Alerts!”** to help you discern the fine line between insightful offers, and creepy online stalker activities.

What Would BoostCase Do?

Throughout this eBook we will highlight the examples of a company called BoostCase. They sell regular phone cases, but their marquis product is the \$49 BoostCase which protects a smartphone, but also has built-in components that boost cellular signals in weak service areas. **This company is effectively using social media to boost their bottom line and engage their customers in real time.**



Is this an amazing product or company? Faux sure! But don't go searching for the company or the product on-line. Sadly, this particular product and company is simply a vehicle for demonstration that we will repeatedly exploit to help illustrate exactly how a small to mid-sized company can use social monitoring to engage their customers, and grow their business.

Prospective Customer Signals

The vast majority of people on Twitter, Facebook, and Google+ are not your customers.



YET.

CARPE DIEM!

(Do you think the ancient romans groaned at that particular cliché?)

Anticipate Buying Signals

This is when you take a step back from your product and service and say, “Why does somebody use our product? What are all the ways they could use our product? What could happen to necessitate the need for our product?” And then search for conversations mentioning those needs and potential trigger events.

Imagine that you own a painting service company and your social media management software flags the following tweet:

JaneConsumer: Check out the painting “masterpiece” our 3yo just created on my dining room wall. #ugh.

This is all about buying triggers. If a customer is posting about the crayon marks on their wall, you can offer assistance and advice. Now is the time to respond and offer advice and suggestions on how to remove crayon without damaging the paint, and maybe throw in a discount offer on their next paint job. For instance:

@Jane Consumer *A budding Monet! Some WD-40 on a clean rag should take that off. If not, let us know and get 20% off your next 2 room paint job!*

Here are some common terms to consider for monitoring **buying signals**:

Search for combinations that include your product, such as laptop, phone cases or painting.

- I'm researching
- I'm looking
- Need recommendation
- I want to buy
- I'm going to buy
- I'm considering
- Which (product type) is best

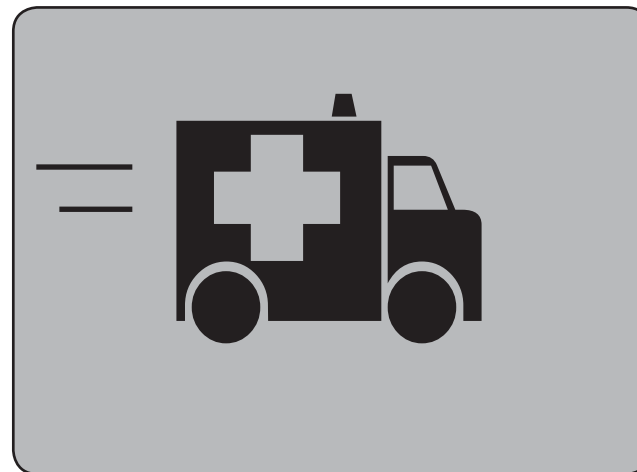


Once you start watching these types of conversations you'll start to understand the language your audience is using to indicate buying signals. It's important to refine and optimize your search terms over time to **find high value signals**.

Creep Alert! Creep Alert! Creep Alert! Creep Alert! Creep Alert!

If the same consumer tweets that her husband just lost his job and she's afraid they'll have to move again, do not offer a painting discount to get their house "ready to show." **Not the right time! SO not the right time! Not every insight is an actionable buying signal and you don't want to be perceived as an ambulance chaser.**

End Creep Alert!



Market Research Signals

This is what gets social media managers all kinds of excited. **Social media is one big (FREE!) focus group.** Pay attention to what people are posting about your industry: new trends, new products, new needs, everything. You can glean some really insightful ideas from these market signals, and share them with your product development team.

For instance, a small credit union could see from their stream that their customers are getting turned onto Mint.com—an online program that organizes expenses across all accounts. This is obviously a move toward technology as a solution and the credit union needs to keep that in mind when coming up with new product enhancements.



For example, they could build their online banking site in a way that members can access it through their Mint.com login. Sometimes it's not about beating new technology. Joining them is okay too!

What Would BoostCase Do?



Based on market research signals found on social media sites, it's obvious that smartphone users like to personalize their phone cases with colors, patterns, and their personal interests. While the simple matte-black BoostCase has been popular for a while now, they project that there is a need for more customization.

So BoostCase will now offer their products in dozens of other colors besides black -- including Fuchsia, Cornflower Blue, and something called 'Summer Wheat'.

Underwhelmed Customer Signals

We've all heard and seen Twitter Tales where someone complains about something and a competitor swoops in and gives them an uh-MAY-zing deal.

There is a fine line between being helpful and being a predator when someone complains about a product or service.

Dave Kerpin tells a great story about a personal experience he had in Las Vegas. He had just landed from a 6 hour flight and was waiting to check into his hotel. Only thing is, the wait was incredibly long. After a good bit of time waiting, David pulled out his blackberry (Hey it was 2010, give him a break!) and fired off a frustrated tweet. While the hotel he was staying at didn't respond to the message, a hotel across the street tweeted back immediately:

"Sorry about the bad experience Dave. Hope the rest of your stay in Vegas goes well."

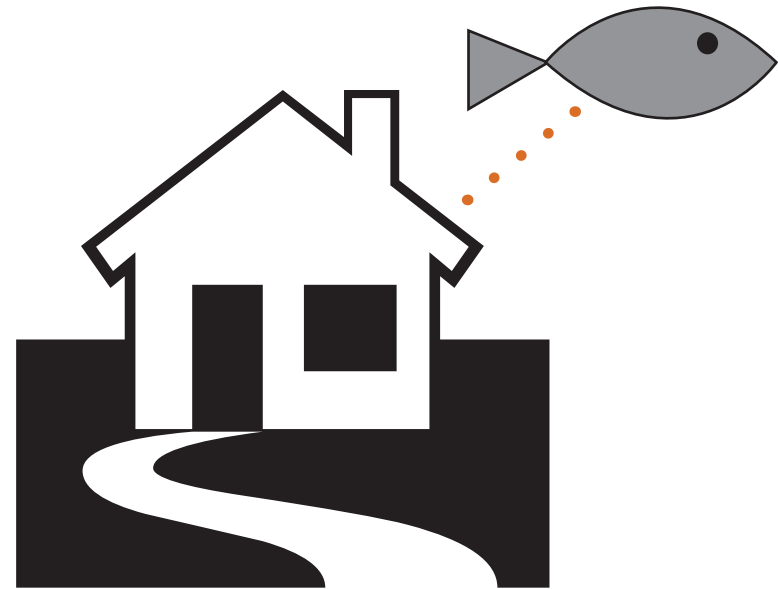
Not predatory, just a super-fast, super-cool, no-pressure response. And you know what? It worked. Guess where Dave stayed the next time he went to Vegas.

Another way to look at it is this . . . if you have a product that can solve the problem or a great add-on product, then you can jump in. Say someone is complaining about a new shampoo that makes their hair frizzy. A company that sells anti-frizz serum can reach out with an offer. **That's not predatory, that's problem-solving.**

Prospect Personality Signals

Monitoring the interests of your prospective customer lists can be a great way to personalize outreach for a more effective starting point for a relationship.

You, the kitchen cabinet manufacturer, see that a big local housing contractor is very interested in bass fishing. If you're looking to earn his business, you could send him a special lure as a gift or ask how opening day went. Picking up on the social cues in your data stream can go a long way toward making a prospective customer feel special—and may turn them into a long-term customer.



Prospective Customer Segmentation Signals

Getting insight into the common interests of a large segment of your prospect list is powerful information to drive new marketing campaigns that will resonate with them. When you see large areas of interest among a target market, you can tailor campaigns accordingly.



For instance, a local furniture store could take advantage of the buzz surrounding the upcoming release of Nintendo Wii's Just Dance: Polka Edition video game and create an entire campaign around the release, perhaps even offering a Wii system and entertainment center as a prize for the best video of wild, high-impact Polka.

The combined interest in entertainment centers and bad dancing is well-documented (just go with it) and capitalizing on those interests is sure to be a hit.

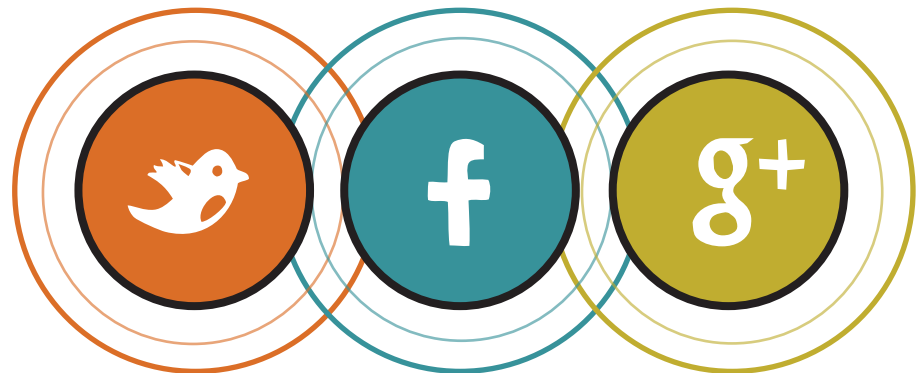
PART II

Current Customer Signals

Monitoring the conversations your current customers are having on social media can be a great way to:

- generate repeat business
- gain excellent insight into your customer demographic, including common interests
- turn them into evangelists for your company

It all starts with what to look for and how to act on what you find. **Following the conversations your customers are broadcasting on Twitter, Facebook, and Google+ will help you really connect with customers and jump on opportunities in real-time to generate real results.**



Anticipate Repeat Buying Signals

Monitoring your current customer list with your social media listening tool can help you generate repeat business just when the time is ripe. They might mention a need for your type of product or service. For example, they might post an update that starts with “I want to buy a new...” or “I’m looking for...” Don’t let them forget you’ve got what they need.

Before you file this under **“O” for “obvious”** and move on, hear us out. You cannot assume that just because a customer bought from you before, that they will automatically do it again. Despite your best budget-busting online and print marketing efforts, they may not know the full breadth of your product line. Or, maybe they do and they just need some convincing.

Use this opportunity to reach out with a special VIP offer or messaging providing them with exactly what they are looking for. ►►

What Would BoostCase Do?



A customer who bought a regular smartphone case from BoostCase two years ago Tweets about needing a new case for his iPhone13 (the one with an entire digitized family for you to hang out with).


BoostCase would Tweet back this short-n-sweet offer:

@iPhone56dude Looking for new phone case? We hope you'll check out BoostCase. *Here's a 25% off & free shipping deal. Use code TWEETDEAL.*

Creep Alert! Creep Alert! Creep Alert! Creep Alert! Creep Alert!

If this same customer Tweets about his upcoming 10th wedding anniversary, it would be creepy to Tweet them: “Boost her gift expectations with a new BoostCase -- get 25% off!” Not only is a phone case a questionable anniversary gift, there’s a place for marketers to step in—this is not one of them.

End Creep Alert!



25%?

It’s also important to note that people may post about a need they have instead of a specific product. Keep an eye out for these opportunities. Best Buy recently had success boosting their laptop sales by responding to searches for “I’m looking for a new laptop”. If the big boys are doing it, you should too. It isn’t a money or a manpower issue—even a sole-proprietor can monitor social channels effectively with the right [social media management software](#).

Customer Service Signals



Social media provides an opportunity that you don't often get: the chance to provide excellent customer service in a very public venue. Shrewd companies know that offering real-time customer service is the key to building lasting relationships with always-on and empowered customers.

If a customer tweets you directly with a customer service issue, **ALWAYS** respond in a prompt, friendly, and helpful manner. This is no different than calling your 800 customer service number except you have 140 characters. Go back and forth, ideally in the Direct Message(DM) format, until there is a satisfactory resolution. You get 75 imaginary-but-awesome bonus points if you follow up in a week or so to make sure they're still satisfied.

If they Tweet **ABOUT** you or your product, respond promptly and accordingly. If they are complaining, Tweet back: **"Sorry to hear you're not happy. What can we do to make this right?"** This is a no-brainer with existing customers: make sure they are happy. If they are not happy, make them happy.

And, oh yeah, do it all in real-time. Social media savvy customers expect real-time customer service and they regularly broadcast their opinions and complaints for the world to see. **This is another place where you need to lean heavily on your social media management software**—it's too much data for any person (or team of people) to aggregate alone.

Customer Satisfaction Signals

Once they buy from you, customers do not enter a vast, black hole.

They take to Twitter, find friends on Facebook, post photos of their mushroom risotto on Google+ and **generally broadcast themselves to the world**. If they bought your product, it's now a part of their world and you need to be aware if they broadcast about it. If a customer gives a **"shout out"** to your product, thank them for it. They just referred you to all of their friends, which is very cool for you. Now make it cool to them with a real-time **"shout back"** from you.

You could even include an offer for their friends in your **"shout back."** If your customer is as cool as he thinks he is his friends will all want what he has. And, if not, maybe they'll want it for 25% off.

What Would BoostCase Do?



SusieCustomer has just posted to the BoostCase Facebook timeline about her new BoostCase:

SusieCustomer: OMG, I just ordered my new BoostCase 2 days ago and it's already here! Goodbye deadzones!

BoostCase comments back saying:

@SusieCustomer - Glad you got it! FYI – just because it isn't a deadzone for you now doesn't mean there aren't zombies. Stay alert and go for the eyes!

Not only has BoostCase touched Susie (virtually – anything else would be creepy), but they've encouraged a future post that should further promote their product.

Customer Personality Signals

This is where the fun comes in and where your social media management system *really* works for you.

The key to social media marketing is personalizing your marketing. In order to do that, you need to know what your customer is interested in. Get to know your customer. By understanding their personal interests (running, sailing, watching Cross-Stitching with the Stars), you can spur new discussion and tailor offers and gifts that **speak directly to their wants, needs, and interests.**



Creep Alert! Creep Alert! Creep Alert!

If a customer Instagrams a shot of her view from a recent run in the Hollywood Hills it would be creepy to tweet her: “So you like to go running in the Hollywood Hills area, huh?”

You must engage with your customers about a topic before using that information! Otherwise you risk a visit from the Hollywood Police Department. (Not really but you get the point, right? This is in bold italic so you know it's important.)

A good rule of thumb is that you should discuss (and feel comfortable discussing) the topic with your customers before offering the incentive or gift that relates to it.

End Creep Alert!

What Would BoostCase Do?



Based on their data stream, BoostCase knows that a customer is an avid runner, often running nature trails.

BoostCase engages them in a conversation about running, maybe a simple and silly tweet:

You ran 5 miles today? I walked to the water cooler 5 times so good day for us both!”

At some later point—after establishing that they “follow” this customer online and not in real life—they could target an offer to them:

@TrailRunnerGuy You love running trails, if you have trouble with reception out there, try BoostCases. **Slim enough for an armband case!**

Customer Segmentation Signals

Individual Personality Signals are beneficial, to be sure, but you also need to pay attention to customer segmentations signals. These are themes and interests that a significant percentage of your customers are interested in. Now you're looking for volume trends so you can create broader campaigns that will interest most of your potential/existing customers.

What Would BoostCase Do?



Again relying on their social media management system, BoostCase knows that their products are very popular among hunters.

BoostCase recognizes that hunters tend to work in teams and tend to be in remote, weak-signal areas. As such, they run a buy one-get one promotion in the month before hunting season opens. But, it doesn't stop there. Social media marketing isn't always about selling your products. To enforce their connection with their customers, this tweet was sent on opening day:

It's Opening Day of Bear Season. Good luck and be safe to all our hunting friends! Let them hear you roar!

The upshot is that you no longer have to guess what specific features of your product people will like—you know what they like, now just explain to them how your product matches those desires.

PART III

Competitor Signals

Competitor Market Signals

One thing doesn't change, no matter what era you're marketing in. It's critical to keep up with the Joneses or, in this case, **your competition**. As much as you wish they didn't have a viable online presence, they do. And it's a good thing—it's easier to spy on them!

You're welcome to wear a fake moustache while you do it, but it's not absolutely required.



What Would BoostCase Do?



BoostCase uses their social media management system to pay attention to what their competitors (JonesCase) are talking about—are they engaging their customers in a new topic? What are their customers asking them for? Not only do they learn about their competitor, it's entirely possible that they'll find a new product idea or innovation from what their competition is doing.

This is not about slamming your competition or stealing their customers—in fact this particular signal is far more about listening and learning than any sort of broadcasting. BoostCase now knows the market environment they operate in much better than they could by just reading brochures and buying the JonesCase to reverse engineer.

You can also use competitor market signals to refine your own marketing by following the campaigns that your competitors run. You may be about to run a campaign lauding yourself as the **ONLY** brand of fingernail polish to have gold flakes embedded in it, but if your competitor has just run a campaign that talks about how their polish doesn't use gold because of the long-term health risks, you may want to **reconsider your message**.

Competitor Service Signals

They say you should keep your friends close but keep your enemies closer (which makes for some very awkward elevator rides, incidentally).

Similarly, it's smart to keep an eye on how your competitors handle customer service.

What are their customers saying? Are they happy? How is their customer service? These are areas where you can outperform your competition, even if your product itself isn't much different.



@mint
Mint.com

@KeyserDM- Hey Chris, have you filled out our Contact Mint form mint.com/help/#contact...? If so, what is your incident # so I can take a look?

May 6, 2013 - 02:04 pM



KeyserDM

Another week goes by without a @mint solution to the retireonline.com issue. 150 weeks to solve a problem? The @mint way. #notminty

May 2, 2013 - 11:27 AM

What Would BoostCase Do?



In their daily monitoring reports, BoostCase notices a rise in messages to their competitors that their case has *STILL* not arrived, and shouldn't 3-day shipping mean it arrives in 3 days?

BoostCase knows that consumers want their products fast and have made a point of having good shipping, but they've never used it as part of a marketing campaign. Now they realize that this is a sore spot among their competitors' clients and, specifically targeting those individuals, they release the following promotion.

When we say "Get it now" we mean now! All orders from BoostCase come with 3-day shipping, but if your order doesn't actually arrive within 3 days, we'll refund 20% of your purchase price. Come see the new colors and experience the un-tethered freedom of BoostCase almost as quickly as you can order it!

Competitor Research Signals

These signals are the same as competitor customer service signals, but focus on their products instead of their service. You're looking in the same places, but now you're looking for commentary on their products instead of their service.

Creep Alert! Creep Alert! Creep Alert! Creep Alert! Creep Alert!

We've discussed that this information could easily lead you down the path of trying to steal or influence customers, and you must avoid it. When a competitor's customer tweets:

DisgruntledSam: I can't believe this widget broke AGAIN – can't you guys make a widget that will handle what I put it through?

You shouldn't tweet back that your widget is superior and can handle the abuse—you don't know the situation and don't want to be that company. **Instead, flag that customer in your [social media management software](#)** and then consider a campaign that talks about the durability of your widgets as a selling point. You're using your competitor service signals, but in a broader way that doesn't insult the customer or instigate any flame-wars with your competitors.

End Creep Alert!

This sword does cut both ways, though. By participating in social media, you're opening yourself up to the same kind of monitoring by your competitors. Since participating in social media is a must-do (right?), it's even more important than ever that you monitor your competitors. After all, they're most likely watching you too.

CONCLUSION

There you have it. Tons of cool ways use to use all the data your social media management software gathers for you. Be sure to watch for:

**PROSPECTIVE
CUSTOMER SIGNALS**

**CURRENT
CUSTOMER SIGNALS**

**COMPETITOR
SIGNALS**

Use the data carefully—you really don't want to become the creepy online stalker company. With the right combination of data and action, you can turn these signals into precisely targeted marketing that generates sales and referrals. Now we just need to figure out a way to make BoostCases real.



Turn social activity into real, measurable business with one integrated solution like [Rignite](#) that gives you all the data you need to engage—and market to—your customers and communities across multiple social networks.



WITH RIGNITE YOU CAN

- Easily monitor social signals and jump on social media opportunities in real-time
- Share insightful social signals and trends with the entire team
- Easily identify influencers and VIP customers for special-treatment programs
- Reward loyalty and motivate repeat visits with insights into your customer's preferences
- Turn negative customer support issues into outstanding experiences that customers will rave about
- Segment lists and send targeted offers to customers and prospects based on their interests

**Sign up for a
free trial!**

