FOR B2C MARKETING PROFESSIONALS

The Future Of Social Intelligence Is In The Enterprise, Not Marketing

Social Listening Platforms Flourish When They're No Longer An Island

by Jessica Liu
December 15, 2017

Why Read This Report

Forrester has long argued that companies mustn't silo social listening data within marketing, customer insights, or PR and communications teams. Now, B2C marketers must realize the next stage in social intelligence maturity: merging all types of social data with other data streams and incorporating them into business intelligence models to build more complete customer profiles. Only then will companies be able to paint a comprehensive — and human — picture of their customers.

Key Takeaways

Social Intelligence Puts Humanity Back In Customer Data Crunching
Companies have become robotic in their marketing approaches and overly reliant on automated technologies. Social data reminds brands that customers are human, and companies that leverage social data create stronger customer-brand relationships.

Combine Social Data With Other Streams For A Fuller Customer Picture
Companies building robust business intelligence models must integrate this human social data with other data streams such as customer relationship management databases, customer service data, market research, and omnichannel marketing data.

Learn Three Types Of Social Data Available For Maximum Social Intelligence Impact
Smart companies will widen their view of social data. Understand the three types of social data — user, content, and performance — and how to maximize their use.

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by Jessica Liu
with Melissa Parrish, Brigitte Majewski, Erna Alfred Liousas, Caitlin Wall, David Novitzky, and Christine Turley
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Social Intelligence Puts Humanity Back In Customer Data Crunching

Any good salesperson will tell you that building a strong relationship with your customer requires good conversation: Know her, listen to what she needs, and deliver what she wants. But marketers' growing reliance on technology to identify, target, and cajole customers prioritizes the volume of data over actual customer understanding. Social intelligence rebalances the scale. By collecting and analyzing social data, a social intelligence practice not only gives you a greater understanding of who your customers are, it also reveals what they need, ultimately helping you deliver what they want. In short, social data is the best way to bring humanity back to customer insights — and social intelligence is the practice that will get you there. Forrester defines social intelligence as:

> The management and analysis of customer data from social sources, used to activate, measure, and recalibrate marketing and business programs.[1]

Marketing's ultimate goal is to solve customers' needs through immersive brand experiences.[2] Companies must strive for every brand-consumer touchpoint to be an authentic and welcomed exchange and not a marketing gimmick. To achieve this goal, companies must feed this powerful human social data into robust and enterprisewide business intelligence practices. And so as counterintuitive as it may sound, the long-term future of social intelligence is one in which it becomes so crucial to business operations that, just like social technology in general, it gives up its autonomy and becomes a foundational practice throughout the enterprise.[3] When that happens:

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› **Emotional data becomes the new currency.** Empowered customers will increasingly use social media to drive action and change, solidifying social data as the human gold standard.[4] Change. org members drew 300,000 signatories to successfully petition Dunkin' Donuts to stop using Styrofoam cups and 412,000 signatures to demand that Craigslist change its policies around listing animals for adoption.[5] In the future, as these social signals are captured by an intelligence practice and analysis improves, brands will be able to combine them with other emotional indicators so that they'll know their customers' demographic markers *and* their desires — far more powerful information when viewed together.

› **Companies better serve their customers.** Armed with improved customer understanding, brands deliver relevant, one-to-moment experiences, and their one-sided attempts for attention wane as customer-brand relationships become mutually beneficial instead of parasitic. One international airline is already doing this: A frequent flier discovered his favorite newspaper missing from the business lounge and tweeted at the airline. The company picked up the tweet and pinged a flight attendant who purchased the paper and placed it on the passenger's seat for when he boarded. Marketing? Service? It doesn't matter as along as the customer is having a positive experience.

› **Customers volunteer even more information.** In the US, Progressive Pioneers — those who lead demand for product and experience innovation — comprise 23% of our empowered customer segmentation, and 74% of them are willing to disclose personal information to enable better experiences on their websites or apps.[6] The lesson: Brands that infuse social intelligence throughout the enterprise and use that foundation to treat customers like people and fulfill their needs, will get more valuable customer data and a stronger emotional connection in return. And the virtuous cycle will continue.

Combine Social Data With Other Streams For A Fuller Customer Picture

To embrace this future, companies must move past social data basics today. *Collecting* social data is not a roadblock for most brands; rather, firms falter when they try to analyze social data, glean insights, and make them actionable. That's largely because social data in a silo only shows you a social view of your customer — the magic happens when it's combined with other data streams to augment your complete customer understanding.

Brands know this is an area that needs improvement: 63% of business and tech decision makers say they are focused on improving their complete view of the customer across channels. In fact, it's the second most important initiative after establishing new data privacy and security processes and tools (see Figure 1). To ensure that this initiative includes social data and to prepare for the future of social intelligence, start by integrating social data with:

› **Customer relationship management (CRM) data.** Customer records are a common first data set that brands merge with social data.[7] Social networks and third-party vendors can match users' mobile device ID with other markers like phone number or email address to identify social users.

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Kunal Merchant, Audience Insights Partnerships at Facebook, explains, "CRM data can be highly detailed or very basic, like just an email address, but now we can combine email address with social data to get a richer understanding of who that customer is."[8]
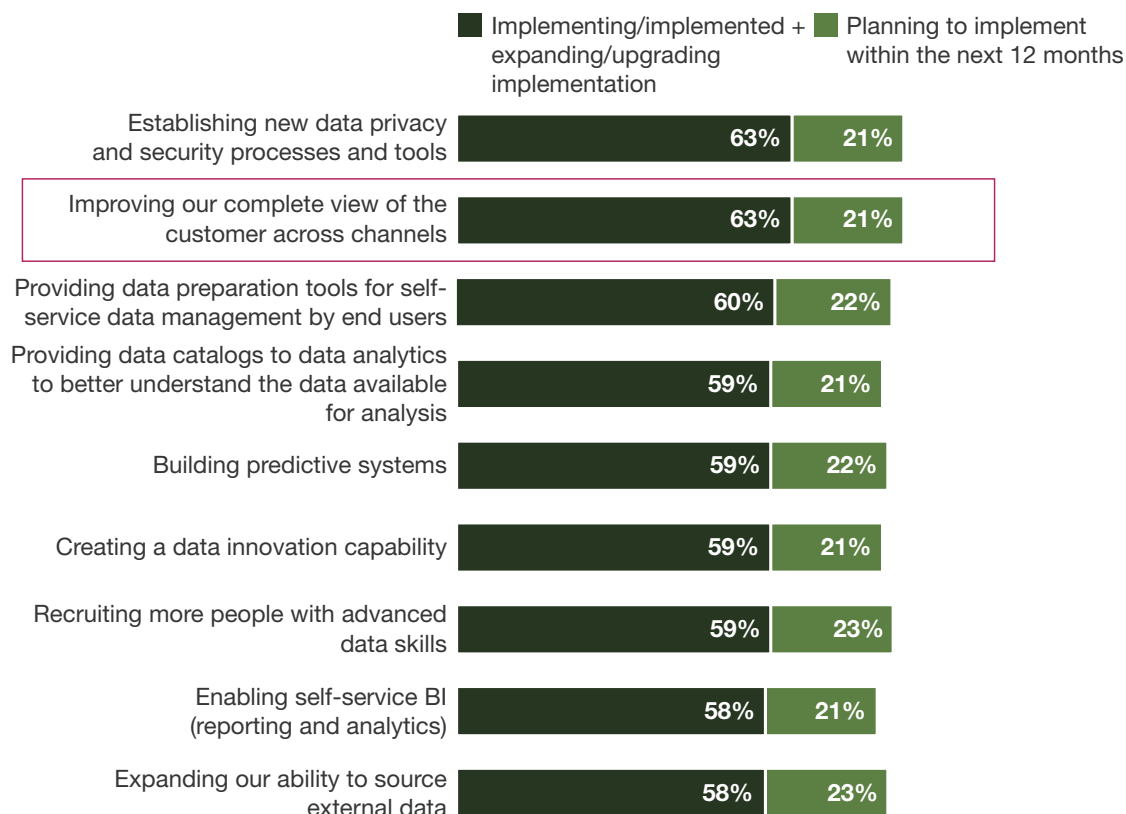
›   **Customer service data.** Call-center transcripts, email customer service records, and social customer service interactions should be closely linked to CRM data, but for immature brands, CRM data and customer service data remain siloed. Sophisticated brands know that to serve customers across the customer life cycle, they must link these data sets — and may even expand their customer service data to include their customers' ratings and reviews or social community commentary on their branded websites. Across its 20+ product divisions, a giant global beauty brand is unifying customer data sets by combining social user data, customer service data, and website visitor data.

›   **Market research data.** Social data is disruptive to old school market research methodologies, but focus groups and surveys still have a place in marketers' repertoires. While social data is vast (and unruly) in comparison to traditional market research's more focused data collection, both strive to understand the customer and complement each other. To develop a launch strategy for a new show, the USA Network analyzes past related TV programming, those shows' social audiences, and their relevant social content. Historically, the network only conducted focus groups to uncover this information, but the addition of this social data rounds out their research intelligence.

›   **Omnichannel marketing data.** Merging social, display, search, email, and digital broadcast performance data may seem like an impossible feat, but it's slowly becoming a reality. Citrix analyzes social network sharing, website activity, and search queries and performs machine learning topic modeling on its blog posts versus competitors' blogs to reveal what topics users are most interested in, thereby informing editorial planning. Further, customer data onboarding — the process of making offline, known customer data available as online, anonymous audience segments for marketing engagement — serves as the connection between offline and online marketing.[9] Companies today can apply onboarding to ad targeting, measurement, and personalization.

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FIGURE 1 Improving The Complete View Of The Customer Across Channels Is A Leading Data-Driven Initiative

"What are your firm's plans for the following data-driven initiatives?"

Legend:
- Implementing/implemented + expanding/upgrading implementation
- Planning to implement within the next 12 months

Initiative	Implementing/implemented + expanding/upgrading implementation	Planning to implement within the next 12 months
Establishing new data privacy and security processes and tools	63%	21%
Improving our complete view of the customer across channels	63%	21%
Providing data preparation tools for self-service data management by end users	60%	22%
Providing data catalogs to data analytics to better understand the data available for analysis	59%	21%
Building predictive systems	59%	22%
Creating a data innovation capability	59%	21%
Recruiting more people with advanced data skills	59%	23%
Enabling self-service BI (reporting and analytics)	58%	21%
Expanding our ability to source external data	58%	23%

Base: 3,378 global data and analytics decision makers
Source: Forrester Data Global Business Technographics® Data And Analytics Survey, 2017

Learn Three Types Of Social Data Available For Maximum Social Intelligence Impact

As you prepare to integrate social data into your enterprisewide systems, you'll need to widen your view of social data and learn the precise nature of the data available. "Traditional social listening has left a legacy that has limited brands' perception of what they can do with social data. They are still asking the wrong question, 'What are people saying?' But, so much is being said with no words, and brands need to look at all social signals," states Jason Klein, co-CEO at ListenFirst. To make sure you're taking full advantage of today's social data, focus on three types (see Figure 2):

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› **Social user data.** Structured user data includes specific variables such as demographic markers (e.g., name, location, age, or gender). Unstructured user data is behavioral (e.g., likes, click-throughs, time spent on posts, or video views) and reveals psychographic interests, preferences, affinities, feelings, and intent. For social users who aren't actively contributing content on social networks, psychographic data is telling. Vendors like NetBase are analyzing users who aren't active content contributors on social networks but like or retweet others' content — actions that provide nuanced hints about those users.

› **Social content data.** Text analysis of keywords, hashtags, mentions, and sentiment across user comments, inquiries, and complaints fall into this category. But content data also entails image analysis and being able to detect logos, people, their emotions, scenery, objects, and movements or motions within an image. Content data does much more than reveal brand or competitor conversations; marketers also use it to surface trending topics, pinpoint product or service issues, identify disgruntled customers, or reveal prospective recruits' preferences for employer benefits. When a mystery jogger repeatedly relieved herself in a suburban neighborhood, Charmin capitalized on the national news by encouraging the #MadPooper to turn herself in for a year of free toilet paper.[10]

› **Social performance data.** Performance data should encompass all branded content no matter the channel, budget, or execution. Paid ads, organic posts, user-generated content, ratings and reviews, and influencer content can and should all provide performance metrics. All-encompassing performance data lets marketers understand reach, engagement, and ROAS across a brand's social activity — and marketers are starting to pick up on this. In "The Forrester Wave™: Data Management Platforms, Q4 2015," 21% of customer references indicated that they collected paid/owned/earned social data in their data management platforms (DMPs); in 2017 this increased to 30%.

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FIGURE 2 Three Types Of Social Data Available

	Social user data	Social content data	Social performance data
Structured	**Demographics** • Name • Geography/location • Age • Gender • Education • Career		**Reach** • Impressions • Followers/fans **Engagement** • Likes • Shares • Comments (# of) • Replies (# of) • Click-throughs • Views • Time spent on content **Return on ad spend (ROAS)** • Downloads • Sales

Unstructured	**Psychographics**
	• Behaviors
	• Interests
	• Affinities
	• Preferences
	• Feelings/emotions
	• Intent
		Text
		• Keywords
		• Hashtags
		• Mentions
		• Sentiment
		• Inquiries
		• Complaints
		
		Image
		• Logos
		• Scenes
		• People
		• Emotions
		• Objects
		• Motions
			Engagement
			• Comments
			• Replies
			
			   ROAS
			   • Lead generation

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Move From Social Listening To Social Intelligence Now

Social data is not a magic bullet that will cure marketers' woes, but if you haven't yet moved past social listening to embrace the more robust practice of social intelligence, you're behind the curve. Before you can integrate social data with non-marketing data streams, you must incorporate it into your broader contextual marketing engine. Start by:

› **Shifting from passive social listening to active research and planning.** When implementing a social intelligence practice, companies move through four stages of maturity: from monitoring to listening to intelligence to, ultimately, enterprisewide listening.[11] This path allows companies to start at baseline crisis management and eventually use social data to support marketing and business strategies. "Historically, social data was used by brands for more surface-level metrics tied to reporting and real-time listening. Now we're seeing brands use data for research or planning in a way that is much more actionable and indicative that you can gain valuable consumer insights from this data," explains Merchant from Facebook.

› **Getting comfortable with both deterministic and probabilistic social data.** For companies that crave absolutes, deterministic data satisfies that urge. But probabilistic data is increasingly the norm with social networks as they expand their audience offerings and make assumptions based on users' interests, behaviors, and comments rather than structured demographic data. Facebook's Lookalike Audiences product lets brands find more people who look like their current customers, website visitors, or Facebook page fans.[12] Further, Facebook has been piloting an extension of its Audience Insights API that allows companies to study anonymized users' posts and comments and better analyze its customers.[13]

› **Planning for the GDPR showdown and shoring up first-party social data.** Companies are ill equipped for the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) that will hit in May 2018. Christopher Penn, vice president marketing technology at SHIFT Communications, advises, "Collect your audience's data now and make your first-party audience data robust because third-party data is an endangered species with GDPR." But beware: GDPR requires clear customer consent for all non-anonymized customer data you use for marketing purposes, even if you collected it before GDPR goes into effect. Partner with internal teams and the social networks you work with now to ensure you are compliant — or the data you collect will be unusable next year.

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Supplemental Material

Survey Methodology

The Forrester Data Global Business Technographics® Data And Analytics Survey, 2017, was fielded between February and April 2017. This online survey included 3,378 respondents in Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, New Zealand, the UK, and the US from companies with 100 or more employees.

Forrester Data Business Technographics ensures that the final survey population contains only those with significant involvement in the planning, funding, and purchasing of business and technology products and services. Research Now fielded this survey on behalf of Forrester. Survey respondent incentives include points redeemable for gift certificates.

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Please note that the brand questions included in this survey should not be used to measure market share. The purpose of Forrester Data Business Technographics brand questions is to show usage of a brand by a specific target audience at one point in time.

Companies Interviewed For This Report

We would like to thank the individuals from the following companies who generously gave their time during the research for this report.

Edelman	Salesforce
Facebook	SHIFT Communications
ListenFirst	Sprinklr
NetBase	Synthesio

Endnotes

[1] See the Forrester report "Defining Social Intelligence."

[2] See the Forrester report "The Model For Modern Marketing."

[3] See the Forrester report "You Don't Need A 'Social Marketing' Strategy."

[4] See the Forrester report "Align With Consumers' Values To Win Their Hearts And Wallets."

[5] Source: Paul Kalinka, "Dunkin Donuts: Stop using styrofoam cups and switch to a more eco-friendly solution." Change.org (https://www.change.org/p/dunkin-donuts-stop-using-styrofoam-cups-and-switch-to-a-more-eco-friendly-solution) and "Justice for Puppy Doe: Tell Craigslist to Help Stop Violence Against Pets," Change.org (https://www.change.org/p/justice-for-puppy-doe-tell-craigslist-to-help-stop-violence-against-pets).

[6] Source: Forrester Data Consumer Technographics North American Online Benchmark Survey (Part 1), 2017. See the Forrester report "Empowered Customers Demand Contextual Privacy" and see the Forrester report "The State Of Empowered Customers And Technology: Benchmark 2017, US."

[7] CRM data includes customer records with personally identifiable information (PII) such as name, email address, phone number, birthday, as well as more detailed data like shopper history.

[8] Audience Insights from Custom Audience lists built from CRM data assist in better understanding the customer. Source: Interview with Facebook's Kunal Merchant.

[9] See the Forrester report "Making The Most Of Customer Data Onboarding."

[10] Source: "If the #MadPooper turns herself in, we'll give her a year's supply of TP to help with her 'runs' #EnjoyTheGo," @Charmin Twitter account (https://twitter.com/Charmin/status/910616027721076736).

[11] See the Forrester report "Drive Toward Social Intelligence Maturity."

[12] Source: "Lookalike Audiences," Facebook Business (https://www.facebook.com/business/a/lookalike-audiences).

[13] Source: Garett Sloane, "Facebook Lets Brands Dive Into People's Posts," AdAge, October 16, 2017 (http://adage.com/article/digital/facebook/310888/).

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