



# SOCIAL MEDIA MONITORING FOR B2B



**10 Best Practices  
Every Marketer  
Should Know  
and Use**

Today, there are few companies that doubt the importance of maintaining a strong social media presence. But while B2C companies have long since adopted comprehensive social media strategies, some B2B companies are lagging behind. Statistics show that **83% of B2B businesses have active social media channels**, but just around half of all B2B marketers say social media is an important part of their marketing efforts. To add to this, a mere 35% of B2B companies are using social media monitoring tools, which can at least explain in part the lack of a more widespread adoption of social media among them.

For anyone still unfamiliar with the concept, social media monitoring is the process by which companies monitor conversations across social media channels to measure their visibility, brand image, campaign success, as well as to find relevant conversations to join, form new partnerships, and assess the competition.

Whether you are an in-house marketer or you work for an agency that has B2B clients, a solid understanding of social media monitoring is one of the most useful skills you can have in your marketing toolbox.

As more companies realize its importance,

they are also increasingly likely to ask for your help in managing

their presence across social

platforms. If you are new

to social media monitoring

for B2B, the best place

to start learning is by

examining some of the best practices currently in use.

Let's take a closer look

into 10 of them:



# #1 CUSTOMER DISCOVERY

Before we delve into B2B social media monitoring, we need to take a step back and talk about customer discovery. No social media strategy – including social media monitoring – can be successful if you haven't properly defined your buyer personas. When you run an ad, you don't just choose to display it to everyone. Instead, you narrow down your audience based on their demographics.

The same rule applies to your social monitoring efforts. Do you know who your customers are? You may think you do, but companies often report that their products are used by an entirely different demographic than the one they had originally planned for. Either way, you cannot start listening to what people are saying if you don't know whether you're listening to the right people in the first place.

Even if you were wrong about your target audience in your initial research, social media monitoring is a great way to validate who your potential customers are so you can confidently proceed with your marketing strategy.

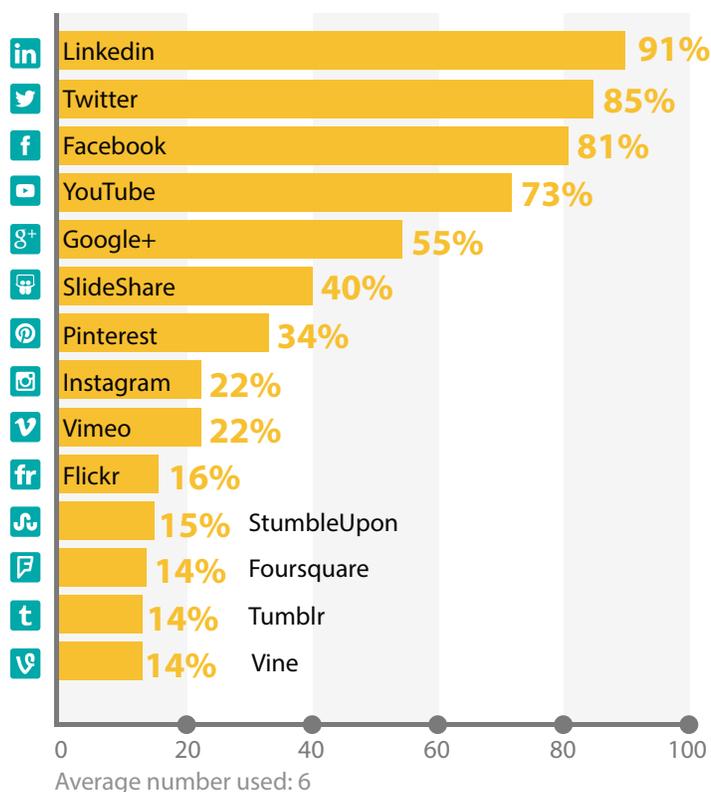
# #2 CHOOSING THE RIGHT CHANNELS

It goes without saying that you should aim to maintain a presence on all major social media channels, but your efforts cannot be (and should not be) equally distributed across each one. After all, why should you invest time and money into two different networks that will provide results that vary greatly?

When it comes to B2B marketing, few people would disagree that LinkedIn is the place to be, so if you are tight on time or budget, this is where you need to invest. As a social platform aimed at professionals and specifically at networking, LinkedIn is where you can most comfortably look for and join conversations relating to your industry. It even hosts groups for the narrowest industry niches, enabling you to find prospects, join the conversation, and establish yourself as a thought leader.

Once you have a target prospect, LinkedIn is also the easiest place to find any missing pieces related to that prospect. Although it's pricey, LinkedIn's advertising tool is also the most sophisticated and well targeted.

## PERCENTAGE OF B2B MARKETERS WHO USE VARIOUS SOCIAL MEDIA SITES TO DISTRIBUTE CONTENT



The runner-ups here would be Twitter (used by 85% of B2B marketers), Facebook (81%), and YouTube (73%). Still, remember that the choice of which social media channels to use will also depend on the type of industry and the buyer personas you are targeting, so take these recommendations only as general guidelines.

*2014 B2B Content Marketing Trends — North America: Content Marketing Institute/MarketingProfs*

# #3 PRIORITIZING OBJECTIVES

If you were networking at a big cocktail party, you wouldn't just go from one group of people to the next in an attempt to listen in and join their conversations. Instead, you would have a list of objectives that you would want to achieve, working to identify the people (and topics) you most want to interact with and the best ways to go about pursuing them.

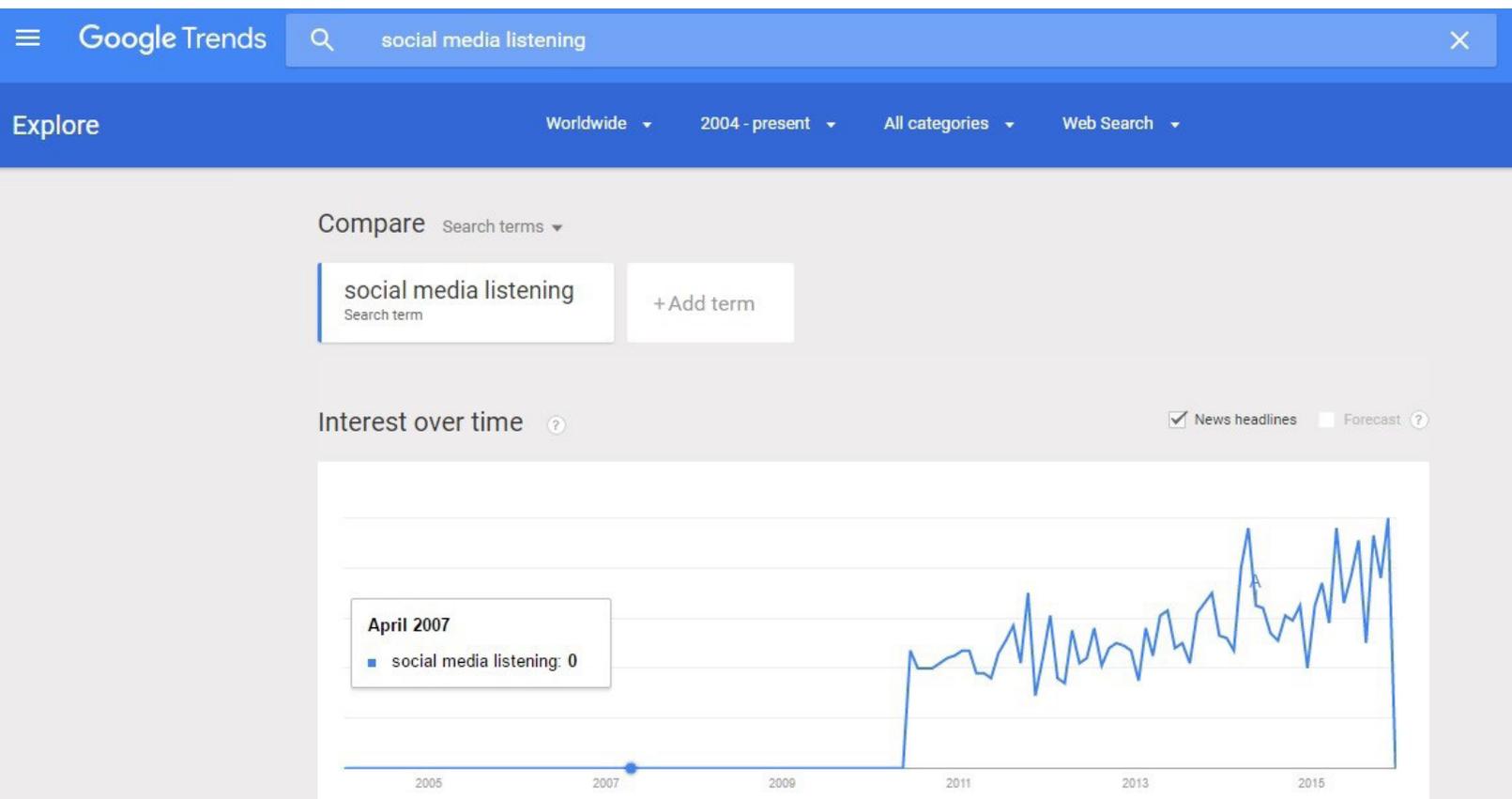
The same goes for social listening. The Internet is huge and you simply cannot monitor every conversation. In order to narrow it down, you need to have clearly defined objectives. What is it that you want to achieve with social media monitoring? Is it to get feedback on your product or service? Lead generation? Analyze how the competition is doing? Of course, you can do all of these, but you need to have a strategy in place

# #4 TRACKING KEYWORDS

Going back to the cocktail party metaphor, you would also be likely to listen to conversations revolving around topics that interest you. When it comes to online conversations, the easiest way to find one related to your field is by researching keywords that are most likely to bring it up.

To do this, you first need to know your buyer personas, including the vocabulary they use. Is it longer and formal or more conversational? You can start by analyzing your blog and seeing which keywords brought visitors to your site based on each category of articles so you can gain a better idea of what to look for.

Also, you can use Google Trends and Twitter's Advanced Search feature to look for a particular phrase's popularity over time, as well as what might currently be trending in your area. Don't be afraid to experiment and even frequently change the keywords you look for in order to curate only the ones that offer the highest yield. And don't forget to add your brand name, as well as the names of your competitors and all the products and services you want to see insights about: statistics shows that [a third of a company's mentions on Twitter](#) do not include its handle.



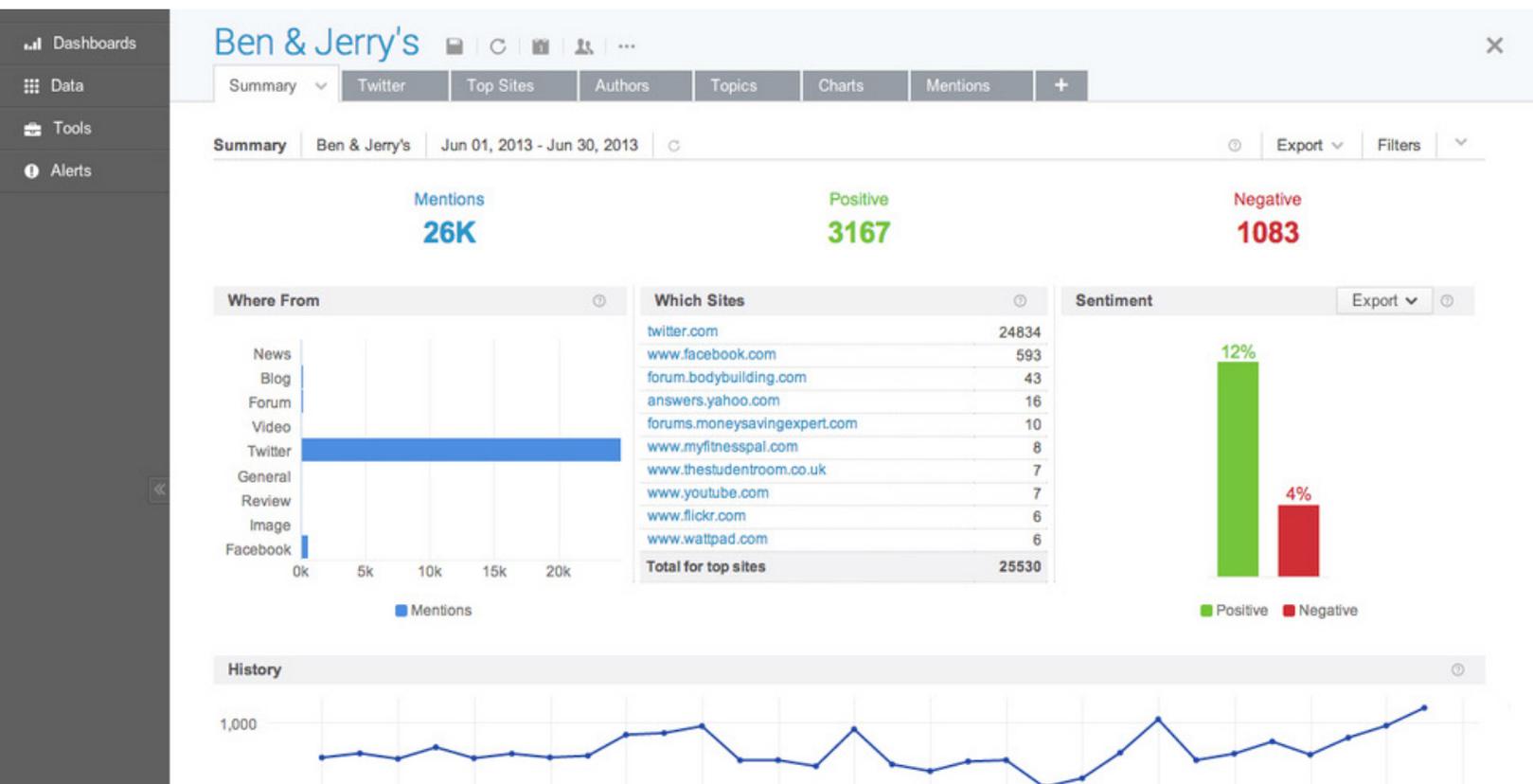
Popularity of the term "social media listening" from 2010 on

# #5 CHOOSING TOOLS

No social media-monitoring program would be complete without a set of tools to help you make sense of the sea of information available on social media channels. While the complete list of tools available is impossible to detail here, we'll look at several of the most reputable ones.

**MENTION:** This is one of the most popular tools for B2B social listening, and unsurprisingly, it boasts clients such as Microsoft and Spotify. Mention analyzes a plethora of online resources in more than 40 languages and notifies you in real time when your brand is being mentioned, so you can jump in the conversation while it's still ongoing. Its user-friendly dashboard lets you connect as many social channels as you want, analyze insights, and share them with your team.

**BRANDWATCH:** Brandwatch is another social media monitoring giant that offers a ton of useful features. 44 languages, 80 million sources, demographic insights, and impeccable customer support are just a few of the reasons why you might want to consider Brandwatch. It also boasts a clean search thanks to an algorithm that detects spam, duplicate, or irrelevant content, so you don't have to waste time browsing through useless mentions. It will even sort out all mentions into sentiment categories based on whether they are neutral, positive, or negative.



BrandWatch's dashboard showing a sentiment analysis of 26K mentions of Ben & Jerry's

**DIGIMIND SOCIAL:** This is another software that is highly ranked in customer satisfaction. In addition to social media insights, it lets you perform a brand image analysis based on Google search results, so you can see what potential clients want to know about you and your products, which can be an invaluable feedback. Digimind also makes it easy to directly put the data you've gathered into practice, since its streams can be integrated with Hootsuite.

This is by no means a comprehensive list of all social media monitoring tools and their features, so if you find that choosing one over another is particularly challenging, make use of [G2 Crowd's comparison tool](#).

# #6 IDENTIFYING INFLUENCERS

Once you start closely monitoring your social media accounts, you will quickly discover that every time someone mentions you, a conversation starts up. Ultimately, it is not always important what people are saying, but rather who is saying it.

This is why in addition to listening, you will also want to catch the attention of influential people in the industry. Just a single retweet from a Twitter influencer in your industry can do wonders for the reach of your campaigns. There are numerous ways to discover influencers and the above-mentioned tools will certainly help. You can also try other tried-and-true tools such as Topsy, Buzzsumo, and Followerwonk, each of which will give you more insights into who the key players are in your field.

The screenshot shows the Buzzsumo website interface. At the top, there are navigation tabs for 'Content Research', 'Influencers', 'Monitoring', and 'Try BuzzSumo Pro'. The search bar contains 'content marketing' and has a 'Search!' button and an 'Export' button. Below the search bar, there are filters for 'Filter by Type' (Bloggers, Influencers, Companies, Journalists, Regular People) and 'Location' (E.g city or country). The search results are displayed in a table with columns: PAGE AUTHORITY, DOMAIN AUTHORITY, FOLLOWERS, RETWEET RATIO, REPLY RATIO, and AVERAGE RETWEETS. Two influencers are listed:

Name	Page Authority	Domain Authority	Followers	Retweet Ratio	Reply Ratio	Average Retweets
Joe Pulizzi (@joepulizzi)	83	81	86,017	5%	58%	4.5
Stephanie Tilton (@stephanietilton)	40	28	8,004	1%	5%	0.7

Popularity of the term "social media listening" from 2010 on \_\_\_\_\_

That being said, how do you go about interacting with influencers? A good rule of thumb is to start slowly and only interact with them when you have a genuine interest in what they're saying and not just with the intent of capturing their attention. Create a separate stream for influencers in your monitoring tool and start by studying the types of topics they tweet or post about, which can help you gain valuable insights about your industry, product, or service.

Start by sharing information you find relevant to your own company and participating in their conversations, but only when you have something valuable to say. It's likely there are other people who are working to capture their attention at the same time, so they will only pay attention to those who are bringing value to the conversation. Only approach them directly (via Direct Message, for example) if you feel that your relationship has progressed and you have something to offer to them in return that they would be interested in.

If your strategy is successful, you will see the results, but don't get discouraged too easily – building relationships takes time. To make sure you are not wasting time on the same influencers without seeing any results, it's useful to create a spreadsheet where you document the steps you've taken to interact with each of them.

## #7 LOOKING FOR PRODUCT FEEDBACK

Another useful element of social media monitoring is that it enables you to find product feedback in its most natural form. Unlike focus groups or other types of research, people use social media to talk about your product and share their thoughts on it. Since no one is paying them or specifically asking them to do it, this is the most “natural” scenario for receiving feedback. Plus, it's also the most budget-efficient way to approach customer feedback.

So how do you lend a listening ear? Similarly to influencer research, you can create a real-time feed for keywords that features all the products and services you want feedback on. If your company is new, however, don't expect a wave of branded conversation initially. As you gain traction you will inevitably receive comments and complaints, but not all of them will necessarily be useful.

Sometimes people like to complain about things that are out of your control or completely unrelated to your company. We've all seen an Amazon review for a product that says nothing about the product itself, but rather about how Amazon handled shipments or refunds. This kind of review would be more useful to Amazon itself than to the company that owns the product.

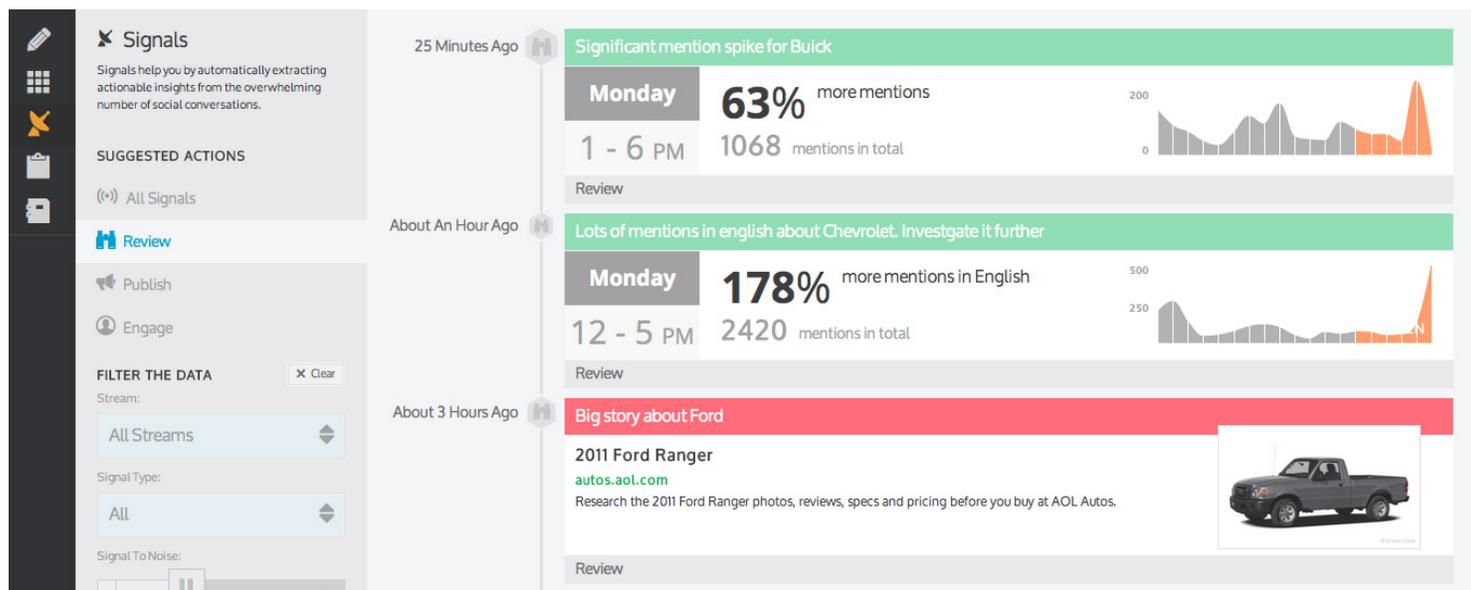
Here, too, it would be useful to have a way to sort complaints into different categories. Slowly, you will see which comments are irrelevant and which seem to be centering on the same issue or feature; this is your cue to respond to these complaints or make changes based on the feedback. Still, another group of people might be using your product or service in a way you hadn't initially considered, so you can use that newfound idea to further develop your product or even use it as part of your marketing. The opportunities are endless.

# #8 STAYING AHEAD OF THE COMPETITION

While getting feedback about your products and managing your brand image is great, you should never forget to track your competition's progress. Social media monitoring can be equally adept for that purpose as well.

Even if there is no sufficient feedback on your company from users on social media, tracking your competition can serve as feedback in itself. Are people talking about them but not about you? Is there something about their product that users rave about? You can use this information to improve on what you offer.

Hootsuite's **uberVU** can take you several steps further, as it gives you the tools to make a chart of your competitors' mentions over time, allowing you to track how successful each of their new campaigns is. It also assigns a sentiment score to these mentions and sorts out those that come directly from industry influencers.



A screenshot of UberVu showing mentions of different carmakers

# #9 LEAD GENERATION

The same feeds you use for keeping a tap on your competition and looking for product feedback can also be used for leveraging lead generation.

A successful lead generation strategy looks a lot like building relationships with influencers. Your goal shouldn't be to push a product once someone mentions a competitor or talks about something your product can solve. Instead, you and your sales team should browse through your monitoring feeds to find people expressing pain points. Once you know that a person is already looking for a solution, it is much easier to get them on board by offering a free trial, for example.

The usual rules apply here – add value by providing both external and internal resources, and be patient. It helps if you try and forget about the product itself and instead focus on the person and their needs.



# #10 OTHER OPPORTUNITIES FOR CONVERSATION

Being on the lookout for specific keywords is an absolute necessity, but you shouldn't be so overwhelmed by this that you miss more traditional ways of participating in online conversations.

Keep an eye out for Twitter chats that you can take part in, even if they're not directly linked to your industry. It's a great way to gain some additional exposure, as Twitter chats attract diverse crowds. To find a chat opportunity, you can use Twitter's Advanced Search feature or even ask your followers if they have a particular weekly chat they like to participate in. First-time participation in Twitter chats can be intimidating, so initially you can resort to watching others take part. Before you join, make sure you understand the rules of the chat – often they will be listed ahead of time.

A Google+ Webinar is another great opportunity to join an online conversation and “meet” new people. After you feel more confident, you can host Twitter chats and other online events yourself. This is the perfect way to not only listen, but also be heard.

These 10 best practices for social media listening for B2B companies give you the basis from which to start. Once you start adopting them and seeing the value they provide, they will become an inseparable part of your marketing efforts. Remember to give the process time and constantly be tweaking until you get the results you need. Good luck!



## Alexander Kesler Bio:

Alexander Kesler is a visionary B2B digital marketer and has been practicing in the fields of technology, software, education and digital security, among others, for over 15 years. As the Founder and President of inSegment, Alexander leads a team of digital marketing experts and specializes in the areas of B2B Lead Generation, Content Marketing & Syndication, SEO & Paid Search, Conversion Oriented Web Development, Programmatic Media Buying and Direct Response Marketing.

### Let's get in touch!

**Office:** +1 (617) 965-0800x800

**Email:** [kesler@insegment.com](mailto:kesler@insegment.com)