

# Is Your Organization Sitting On a Data Goldmine?

by Ford Kanzler | 10/02/2012



This goes to the heart of tech content development: An organization doesn't have to be SRI International, MIT, Gartner or The New York Times to discover and inform the world about valuable new information. In fact, being informative is at the core of effective content development. Having relevant data on which to base your story leads the way to content success.

As with any customer-focused content, it must connect with and enlighten readers. Integrating data points into content production applies traditional journalism practice to marketing communications and PR. The business benefits accrue from being viewed as a reliable and interesting source by your audience of customers and prospects.

What's exciting is that fresh facts may be buried in the company's stored data. What customer behavioral insights, or what use or investment trends may be unearthed and shared with your market to help demonstrate your brand's business awareness and expertise? Businesses are capturing nearly everything customers do in CRM databases. What revelations of interest to your market could be sifted from all that stuff? What facts are demonstrated that support your marketing objectives? That's where your research starts.

## Media Interest Magnet


From a media relations perspective, having fresh data is a huge, credibility-boosting value. Relevant data on a topic of fairly broad interest to a market segment gives legs to a PR effort. Remember, creating a brand is about nurturing market perceptions, not just about pushing product features. Going beyond product promotion and demonstrating expertise as an industry source, armed with insightful data, is powerful PR. All the traditional and new media relations tactics may be applied when you've got significant data-based findings to share.

That means considering a news announcement, executive speaking opportunities, a report for the sales team to share with customers, posting to your newsroom and applying it to social media as blog content or shared online in forums as well as Twitter and Facebook—all part of integrating your communications.

I had a client whose heuristics-based software could clearly demonstrate when typically linear IT expansion plans (e.g. just adding more servers) would hit a wall and drive costs out of sight. We surveyed several hundred organizations around this topic and published findings demonstrating the need to think differently about IT investments and system growth. We got a ton of media response to the well-publicized report, as well as significant interest in my cli-



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ent's software. We had the numbers to back up our story. Digging up the info cost an hour's worth of searching the company's database. It was powerfully demonstrated PR ROI.

## **No Data? Create It**

Social media platforms, if used effectively, can allow huge insight into market behavior, and not just for consumer brands. There is lots to learn from tapping into social data. A recent Forester Research report, "Uncovering the Value of Social Intelligence for B2B Companies," shows 26% of those surveyed spend less than \$500 each month on listening technologies. Listening is key. Among the greatest challenges, according to Forester, are under-investment in listening (tools and team members), tracking too many topics and lack of focused application of what's learned. I'm advocating focused application here.

Beyond well-established tools like Survey Monkey, mining social media data can help brands understand their customers' beliefs and preferences as well as bolstering its outward-facing voice with data on percentages, growth trends and other factors important to buying decision-makers. Generate data by asking questions and/or listening to your community's discussions.

Investing in listening platforms such as TweetDeck, Buffer, SocialOomph, Outlook on Facebook, Booshaka, Polygraph and HootSuite can help make listening more cost- and time-effective. Sharing paid tool costs with other departments can make sense. The complexity of social media is increasing, so monitoring and listening tools are no longer just nice to have.

Ask the tool vendor how much training is required. Going with free tools is OK. When you get serious make an investment. You can't really benefit from social media data unless you have ways of capturing and analyzing it for further use as mentioned above. Once you're creating intelligence from internal or external data sources, you've got a golden opportunity to enhance and drive content development, with greatly increased informational value and perceived credibility across a range of media.

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