

Mash-up Wanted: Social Posts Meet Net Promoter Feedback

The Net Promoter System® and social media scraping have advanced along largely separate paths of development. But what would their union produce? We think it could unlock significant growth in customer advocacy and lifetime value.

The rewards reaped by businesses that use the Net Promoter System have been well documented over the past decade. Net Promoter® companies commit to processes that help everyone focus on earning the passionate loyalty of both customers and employees. They regularly get feedback from customers about a recent experience or interaction. Based on a simple question or two—namely, *Would you recommend X company to a friend or family member, and why?*—they classify customers as promoters, passives or detractors. They loop the resulting feedback to employee teams who discover the root causes of customers' feedback and then take action to improve their experience. Because promoters buy more, stay longer, refer others to a company and often cost less to serve, these customers improve the overall economics of the firm.

While Net Promoter is a powerful tool, it's no longer the only way customers share their views. Social media measurement and analytics tap a different stream of information—immediate, unfiltered consumer sentiment about a company's products or services. Most large companies focus on social media either to monitor their share of voice or to watch for eruptions that would trigger customer service reps to intervene. But that's not sufficient. In most cases, businesses are still figuring out how to systematically convert social media information into improvements in customer experience and marketing that will help to earn greater loyalty.

Blending social media analysis with the Net Promoter System offers a practical and effective means of putting the seemingly chaotic chatter on the web to good use because the two channels complement each other. Social media typically provides raw consumer sentiment at a point in time, while the Net Promoter System,

which captures a view of the consumer's complete experience, tends to show broader intent. For instance, a few longtime airline customers might tweet their annoyance about a service slipup on a particular flight yet still give the carrier high marks overall and remain loyal. Combining social chatter with Net Promoter puts sentiment of the moment into the equation of intent.

Unearthing insights at Taco Bell

Restaurant chain Taco Bell works with data platform provider Quantifind to sort through the noise of social chatter to understand better the signals that correlate with sales or profit performance. Taco Bell's social analytics team has unearthed business insights from social media analysis that never showed up in its Net Promoter feedback. For example:

- Restaurants that were first to launch the chain's new breakfast menu showed an overwhelming response on social media. That response allowed Taco Bell to adjust preparations for locations that had not yet offered the new menu so that they could better meet demand. While the positive feedback would have been captured after the fact through Net Promoter, seeing a real-time view allowed Taco Bell to anticipate and prevent service issues that could have negatively affected customers' experiences.
- Social chatter often focuses on particular events or new menu items (such as the free breakfast for Cinco de Mayo) that would not show up in Net Promoter feedback.

Taco Bell's social insights tie to business outcomes, but now imagine how much more powerful this kind of analysis could be if a company knew whether the person posting comments was already a promoter or a detractor. Both the Net Promoter team and social team could pinpoint opportunities to delight their advocates and quickly respond to detractor feedback before it gets amplified.

Social posts could also help to define the questions that Net Promoter surveys ask. For instance, if the desire for meal delivery pops up in social chatter, a restaurant

could test the response to a delivery pilot project through Net Promoter feedback to pick out the valuable signals from the noise. The blend of social data with the Net Promoter System thus presents a huge opportunity for companies to get smarter about their customers' perceptions, respond with communications that will start to mend or strengthen relationships, and adjust their operations to deliver more tailored marketing and a better experience.

Consider a hotel guest who enjoys dinner at a restaurant owned by the hotel. She posts a photo of the meal with a glowing caption on Instagram. Her profile in the Net Promoter System would show that she's an advocate of the hotel but has never eaten at the hotel's other restaurants in the same city. A company with a robust Net Promoter System should know that she is a prime candidate for a time-limited email promotion for dinner at one of its sister restaurants, which would not only spur incremental sales but also strengthen her loyalty.

Three steps to a mash-up

Where to begin? Assuming a company already has a Net Promoter System in place, it can take the following steps to incorporate feedback from social media:

- **Listen and learn.** Get smart about where consumer sentiment is heading by listening to feedback from multiple sources. Investigate technical solutions that help pick out real insights from the background noise.
- **Act.** Move from listening to chatter to incorporating social media into the Net Promoter feed, with the goal of taking action on business decisions more quickly.
- **Activate.** Don't stop at fixing problems identified by detractors. Mine your social data for the biggest promoters, and respond within and outside of social media sites. In many cases, promoters have an even louder voice online, so ensure that your brand is what they talk about.

If your company does not run a Net Promoter System, starting one would accelerate your customer loyalty efforts as well as amplify your social media actions. At many firms, the various voices flowing through social media, Net Promoter surveys and the contact center each become a separate customer story produced by separate teams reporting to different executives. A summary of social media chatter tends to make its way to executives' desks but rarely finds its way to the front lines where people could act on the implications of the chatter. Even at Taco Bell, the social and Net Promoter efforts are separate in the company's organizational structure and its data servers.

For most companies, it makes sense to establish mechanisms for the groups to see and respond to each other's insights so that they can cross-pollinate. That would allow managers to get a comprehensive view of important shifts in customer sentiment and intent. Companies that close the distance between the social and Net Promoter worlds will be able to capitalize more quickly on signals from customers. 

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