

Workbook

# Social listening step-by-step:

Revolutionize the way you connect,  
converse and convert in 90 minutes



sproutsocial ×  B Squared

## Section 1

# Why social listening?

Your target audience is talking about your brand online right now. Some are applauding you, while others are sharing their pain points (which is completely normal). But their conversations aren't just about your brand. They're also discussing your industry as a whole—what's next, their favorite trends, products they love and so much more.

Keeping track of these many ongoing conversations can seem overwhelming. That's where [social listening](#) comes in.

Social listening refers to monitoring and analyzing conversations happening around your brand and industry, even when you aren't tagged or mentioned.

With social listening, you can learn why people are sharing their opinions and use that data to strengthen your marketing, customer care and product development decisions. For example, social listening can help you improve your content strategy and messaging, iterate on new product designs, outpace your competition and build more impactful future campaigns.

**“Consumers are composing epic ballads for marketers looking to target them—as long as those marketers are listening.”**



**Brooke Sellas**

Founder and CEO, B Squared Media

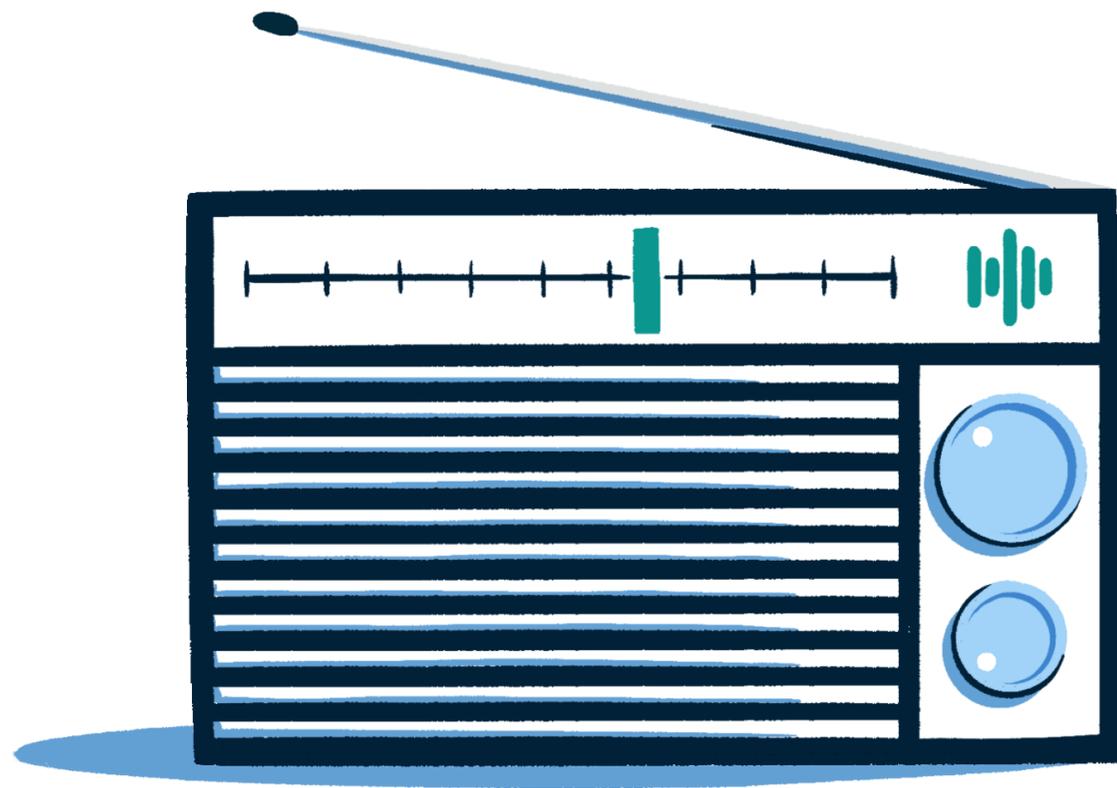
## **What listening says about your customers and target market**

Social media is a trove of consumer insights—from their names and locations to their interests, frustrations and beliefs. Social listening harnesses that information to create a clear picture of your target audience. It also tracks touchpoints on their digital customer journey, so you can better understand how consumers interact with you online.

# Get started with social listening

People just starting out with social listening often ask “Where do I start?” This workbook will answer that. Sprout Social partnered with Brooke Sellas, Founder and CEO of [B Squared Media](#) and author of the new book [Conversations that Connect: How to Connect, Converse, and Convert Through Social Media Listening and Social-Led Customer Care](#), to help you at each step.

Give yourself 90 minutes to complete this social listening guide. By the end, you will have created your first listening exercise and be ready to share your insights with stakeholders.



## Section 2

# Social monitoring vs. social listening

What's the difference between social listening and social monitoring? These terms are often used interchangeably, but their distinct use cases result in different outcomes for your business.

## Social monitoring

Social monitoring tells you **what** people are saying. When you provide customer care by tracking and responding to messages sent to or about your brand, you're monitoring your social presence. Monitoring is essential to your brand's communication pipeline, but your social media strategy shouldn't end there.

## Social listening

Social listening tells you **why** people are talking about your brand. It helps you uncover the root cause behind customers' wants, needs, feelings, actions and desires. By listening, you have access to the [unbiased voice of customer data](#) that empowers proactive, social-led customer care.

## Section 3

# Define your listening approach

In this section, you will lay the foundation for your brand's listening strategy. The following questions are designed to identify how you can use listening most effectively and what successful listening looks like for your brand.

What are your goals for using social listening?

What opportunities are you looking to gain from social listening?



# Align your goals with the digital customer journey

In [Conversations that Connect](#), Sellas describes the digital customer journey as every potential interaction a customer could have with your brand online. She points out that today's consumers often take a nonlinear path, bouncing around different channels before moving to the next stage.

Consider how the goals and opportunities you identified in your answers to the questions above correspond to each stage of your customer's digital journey.

# Think critically about your customers' experiences to answer the questions below.

## 1. Awareness

Where do consumers first encounter our brand?

## 2. Consideration & Evaluation

What motivates potential customers to buy from our competitors?

## 3. Purchase

Why do customers buy from us?

## 4. Loyalty

How do our customers feel about us?

## 5. Ownership

What is a product or service we offer that is under or overperforming?

## 6. Evangelism

What makes consumers want to share about our brand?

## Section 4

# Set up your listening framework

# Determine one question you want to answer

The first step in effective social listening is fine-tuning your question. What do you want social listening to help you understand?

Some of the most common questions our customers ask include:

**Brand health:** Why do people like or dislike our brand or products?

**Industry insights:** Why are certain discussions and hashtags trending in our industry?

**Competitive analysis:** Why is our competitor performing well or poorly?

**Campaign analysis:** Why is our campaign resonating?

**Event monitoring:** Why is our audience responding to a conference or event?

Use those examples to inspire your question. Then, brainstorm three question options. Use the first for this listening exercise and save the other two for future listening efforts.

## Question 1

## Question 2

## Question 3

# Manual listening

Now it's time to dig in and start listening. If you're pulling listening data manually, follow these steps. If you're using a tool, skip ahead to the next section.

1. Every social media network has their own native analytics for you to dive into. For Facebook and Instagram, you'll find them in the Meta Business Suite. On Twitter, you navigate to [Twitter Analytics](#). On YouTube, LinkedIn, TikTok and Pinterest, you'll need business or pro accounts before you'll be able to see your data.
2. From the native analytics tab, review the data or export the data to a CSV file.
3. If applicable, manually consolidate the relevant analytics data from different networks into a single spreadsheet.
4. Create tags to categorize inbound and outbound message data. Example tags include audience demographics, sentiment (positive, negative or neutral) and buying stage (acquisition, retention).
5. Count and analyze your data by tag to determine listening trends.

# Read Between the Data Points

## Acquisition & Retention Tagging

Many social teams underestimate how much of the social chatter surrounding their brand is pre-purchase (acquisition) and post-purchase (retention). In [Conversations that Connect](#), Sellas' clients guessed their acquisition and retention conversations made up 0-5% of their social buzz. However, when her agency started using those tags, they found acquisition tags alone made up at least 5%—but sometimes 70% in one month alone.

Add acquisition and retention tags to your social listening data so you can analyze the impact social has on your customers' buying journey. Share your insights with your team to develop creative ways to remove roadblocks and incentivize purchases.

## The Value of Sentiment

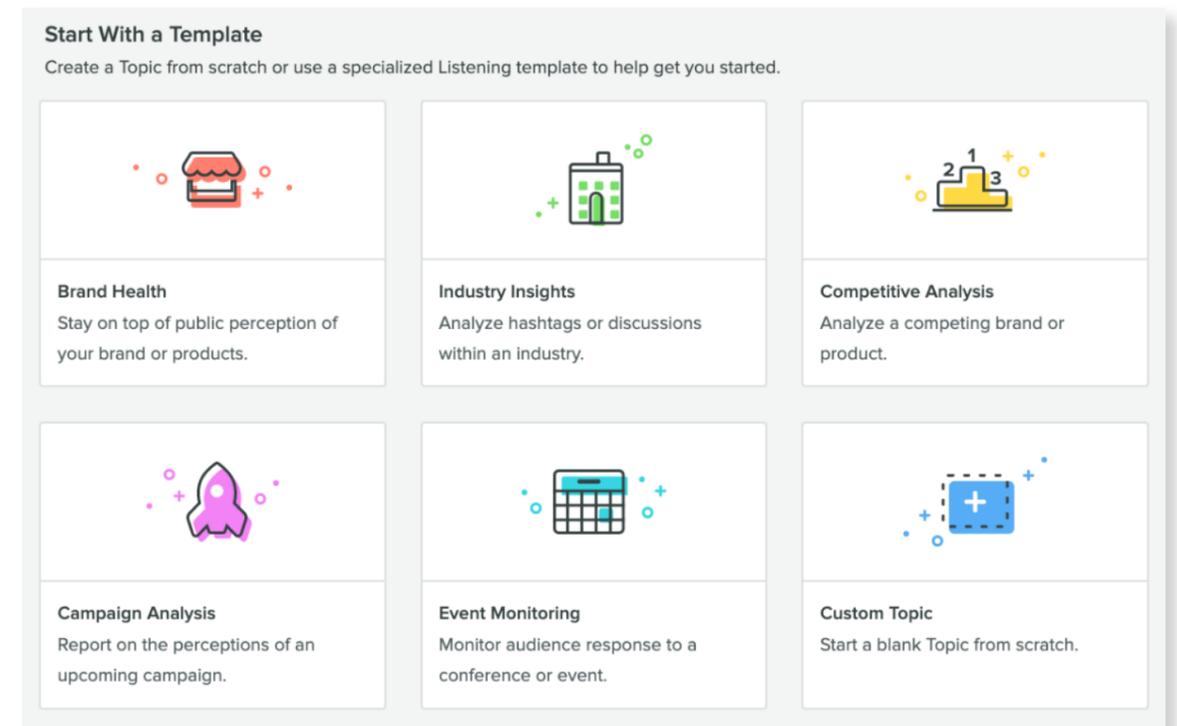
All feedback is a gift—and your customers' opinions are priceless. Add sentiment tags to all incoming messages to and about your brand, whether they're positive, negative or neutral. In fact, negative feedback can provide the greatest opportunity for positive change. According to Sellas, “The negative feedback is where, if you truly want to become a better brand, you go to make the changes your customers want to see. In some cases, these are the changes they have been begging for.”

Lean in to all the feedback you receive on social and share the results with stakeholders. Tracking sentiment can help you transform the way people see your brand.

# Using a listening tool

Let's dive into how you can set up social listening in a tool like Sprout Social.

1. If you're new to listening, we recommend starting with a template like Brand Health, Industry Insights, Competitive Analysis, Campaign Analysis or Event Monitoring, but you can also create a Custom Topic.



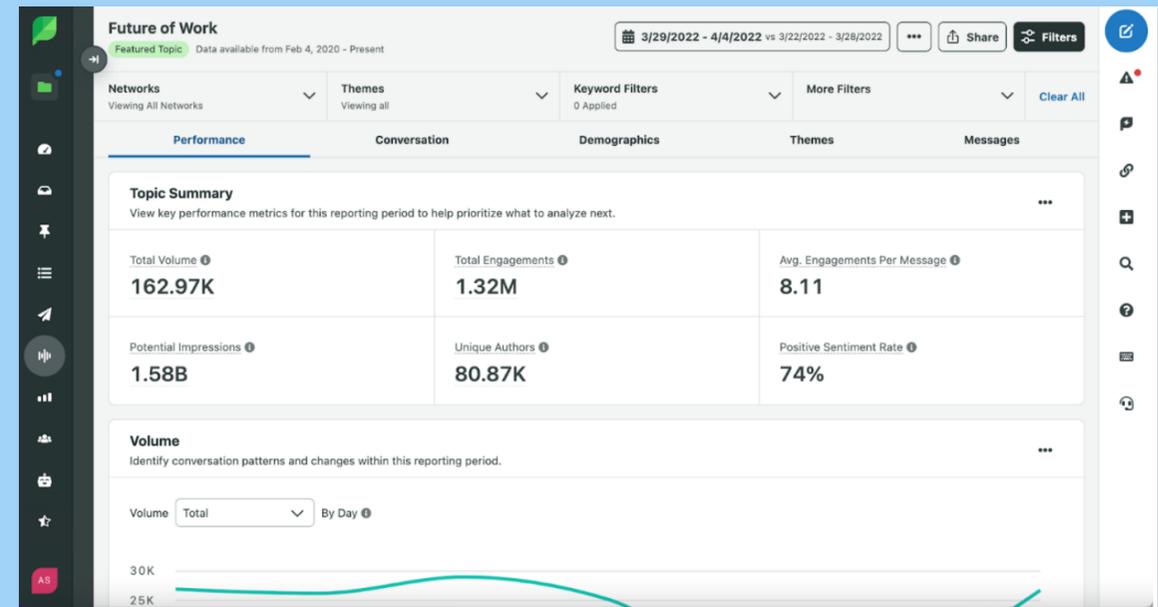
2. Enter a Topic Title, Topic Description and Topic Type. Pick which Sources you'd like to listen to (networks include Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Reddit, Tumblr and the web).

3. Add keywords. Start with brand, industry and competitor keywords for a basic listening topic. Use Boolean operators to effectively search for relevant keywords. Keep your question in mind when selecting keywords.

- Brand keywords include popular hashtags, taglines, branded events or common misspellings of your name.
- Industry keywords include the name of your industry, newsworthy topics and common search queries.
- Competitor keywords include the names and products of your competitors.

4. Tap the Start Listening button and begin diving into the data. Within the tool, you'll be able to access metrics including:

- Demographics (location, age, gender, etc.)
- Sentiment trends (positive, negative, neutral)
- Competitive research and industry leaders
- Engagement metrics (views, likes, comments, impressions, etc.)



5. Once you determine which data answers your question most effectively, click on the share button in the upper right corner to download a CSV or PDF file. You can also send a PDF file.

# Next steps: Distill and share your insights

Now that you've completed your first listening topic, it's time to share your findings. Use the below template to identify and share key learnings with other team members, leaders and brand partners.

Describe your goal of analyzing your listening data:

Brand names used for listening:

Date range for listening data:

 - 

Social networks:

Key findings:

Keywords:

Topic volume over time:

## Demographics overview

Age

Gender

Device

Location

## Ways to maximize listening data:

- Refine your [buyer personas](#)
- Harness negative feedback to [recalibrate your customer experience](#)
- [Share listening insights](#) with your product or user research teams

# You're one step closer to meaningful connections

Want to learn more about the power of social listening? Order your copy of [Conversations that Connect](#) today.

If you're ready to start implementing your social listening strategy and looking for a solution that can help, request a demo of Sprout Social.

[Request a Demo](#)