

# Cutting through the noise

Using corporate social media monitoring and analysis for crisis communications

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July 2018

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Social media adds a layer of complexity and confusion to a crisis. Speed of interactions, sheer volume of information, and noise disguising relevant content can significantly amplify an already high pressure situation. Throw in doubts about the legitimacy of content – is it fake? – and you are left with a scenario that can feel impossible to navigate.

But online analysis offers vital insight into a developing crisis, making it crucial to have an upfront idea of why and how you want to deal with it and how to obtain optimal results from this wealth of information.

Social media is a powerful tool for crisis management, delivering valuable intelligence, as long as you cut through the huge amounts of data generated online.



## Evolving relationship between social and news

The real-time nature of online conversation allows information to circulate before more traditional news sources have the opportunity to publish. This has created an overlap in the way news is reported. Frequently news outlets broadcast on Twitter before reporting a news item more fully. This provides readers with a headline, a taster, and encourages social media users to search platforms to establish what other information is already out there.

Broadcast and print journalists use their social media profiles to promote their own articles, and increasingly to comment on other news items or report on events before writing more substantial coverage.



BBC Breaking News, 22 March 2017  
27.9m followers, 8.4k retweets, 2.4k likes

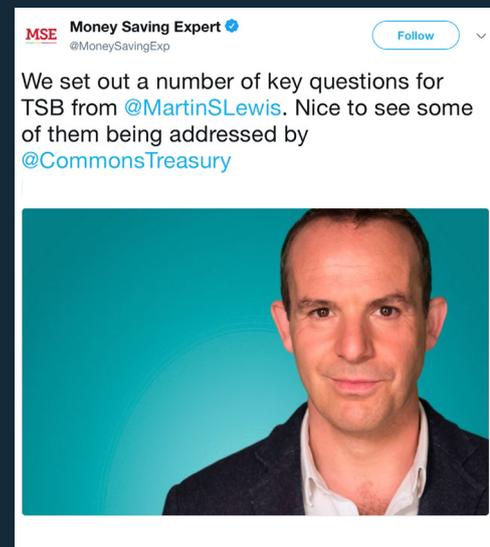
## No longer the voice of the internet

Previously, social media may have been seen as the voice of the internet – platforms and tools used largely by those working in the technology sector or by college students discussing their social lives. The uses of social media have converged in recent years, and it is now as relevant a source of information and intelligence as traditional media sources.

Social media influencers can shape a discussion or outcomes, and in a crisis these discussions can be critical.

Successful social media monitoring in a crisis allows these early influencers to be identified as their voices gain traction and shape the conversation. Communications teams can then keep on top of emerging themes and opinion.

During the recent TSB systems failure, financial consumer champion Martin Lewis and his MoneySavingExpert team continually pressed for answers from the bank, asking customers if they had been affected by the outage. So great is their influence, that the Commons Treasury Committee acted on questions submitted by Lewis.



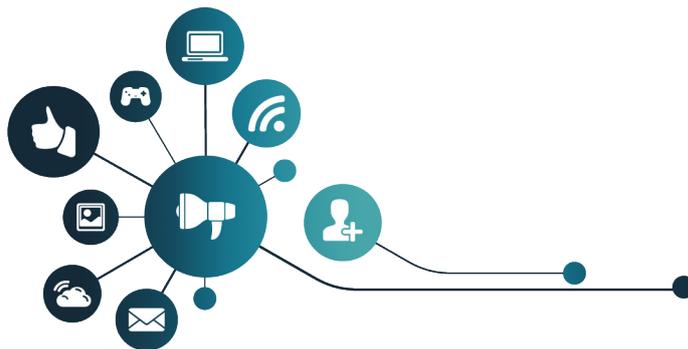
Money Saving Expert, 6 June 2018  
270k followers, 14 retweets, 18 likes

## Monitoring reveals which news items are resonating

As news circulates in mainstream media, immediate online spread and distribution acts as an early indicator of its pickup.

This can reveal what you are likely to be reading about the following day.

Communications and PR professionals no longer need to wait for first editions to roll off the press – the news is immediately out there, being shared and dissected in real time.



In a crisis, effective monitoring will pinpoint which articles are gaining the most interest online:

- Who is sharing?
- Are these people of relevance and influence?
- Are they commenting?
- Are their comments sparking any alternative discussion?

As a crisis unfolds, its narrative can change. Social media can not only assist that narrative turn, it can steer the direction and sentiment of conversation.

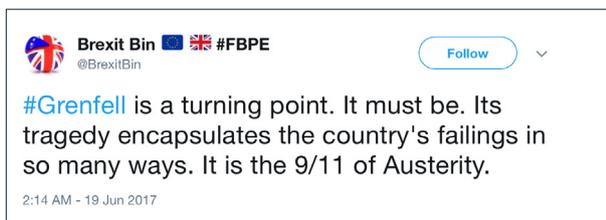
Recently, the Grenfell Tower fire saw this happening to a huge degree.

In the immediate aftermath of the fire, the media was reporting a catastrophic incident of human tragedy. The focus was on the victims of the fire, and the bravery of the fire service.

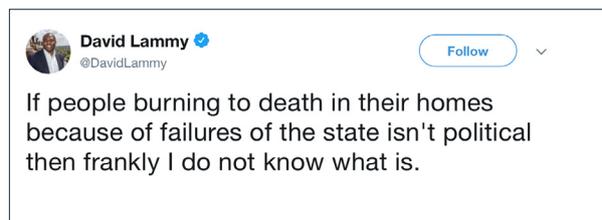
As days passed, attention turned to the cause of the fire – the cladding which was

being reported as not fit for purpose. Social media led the charge in linking the ineffective cladding to austerity measures, which then led to questions of social injustice.

Similarly, during the Tesco horse meat scandal in 2013, the narrative changed from discussion around questions of food authenticity to questions of food safety – the public uncomfortably accepting that they had been eating horsemeat and going on to raise questions of whether or not this was going to be harmful. That transition played out on social media, with consumer groups bringing the conversation to the public eye.



Brexit Information Source, 19 June 2017  
30.9k followers, 29 retweets, 50 likes



David Lammy MP, 27 June 2017  
385k followers, 4.4k retweets, 10k likes



## Monitoring social media and analysing online conversation

While traditional media leads mainstream news reporting, social media leads the conversation. And this conversation is the one that gives true insight to your crisis management plans.

Digging deep into the social landscape uncovers the influencers driving the narrative and adds context to the discussion.

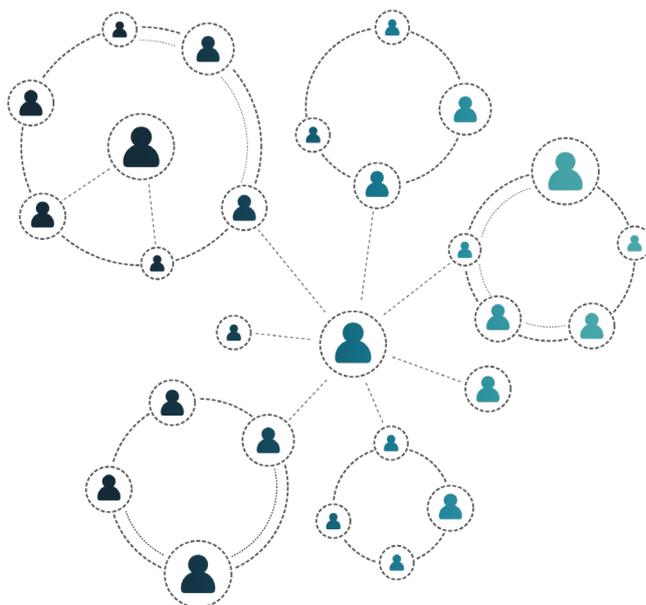
Corporate social media monitoring techniques vary. Management of a crisis brings with it different demands from either brand monitoring, or day-to-day reputation management. Your communications teams need to filter a vast amount of online discussion to find those crucial pieces of intelligence which can make a difference to your crisis management strategy. But they

also need to work efficiently during crisis periods when resources are stretched and exhausted.

With new data and content appearing on social media channels at such a rapid rate and with huge volumes during a crisis, you need to be able to take the pulse of the narrative regularly. This allows you to act and respond and take the pulse again. This could be twice a day or every two hours.

Your communications functions will not be able to spend hours sifting data, nor should they need to at times when it's fair to say if your company is in the throes of a major crisis then sentiment is unlikely to be anything but negative. During a crisis, the narrative matters more than the numbers.

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## Look at everything that's out there

Universal corporate social media monitoring is the most effective way of understanding the online reaction to your crisis. But the sheer volume of data that is available will make this a solution out of reach of most companies – especially during crisis times when resources are even more stretched.

There are pitfalls – in crisis times – of focusing only on discrete stakeholder groups. Influencer monitoring is critical for day-to-day tracking of conversation and sentiment.

Sector influencers can amass huge numbers of followers. Their views carry weight and reach a broad audience.

In a crisis, particularly one affecting social or consumer issues, influencer analysis will miss identification of new and emerging voices. Social media brings a voice to everyone. If a tweet resonates with a prevailing viewpoint, it does not matter if the user has 50 or 50,000 followers, as the message can be picked up and shared across entire social platforms.



Communications teams need to be able to take the broadest view possible, to find the online content that will influence the outcome of their strategy and response, while using minimal resource.



## Preparedness is essential

Previously, a company could face a major reputational crisis once in its lifetime. In the technologically advanced world where we now operate, with increased volatility and pace, a crisis is not as rare. Businesses need to be prepared and resilient against threats, with crisis management and readiness high on the corporate agenda.

When companies do face crisis, the more high profile they are, the louder the noise can be. Where crisis goes hand in hand with injustice and consumer wrongdoing, social media activity goes through the roof.

Corporate social media monitoring plays a vital role as a be a key component in the horizon planning of any communications team. Being prepared will allow you to manage any surge in online activity from the outset, putting out comment that can prevent the issue turning into a crisis.

Triggers can alert you to increases in activity – triggers that are meaningful and relevant, and not simply picking up content from bots and fake sources.



Where a physical crisis occurs, such as a fire or an accident, the first people hear of it is likely to be on social media. Smart phones have made everyone a journalist, as video content and photos are shared instantly. If a company is prepared with the right monitoring place, it can act as an early warning system which helps you to differentiate between an issue and a crisis.



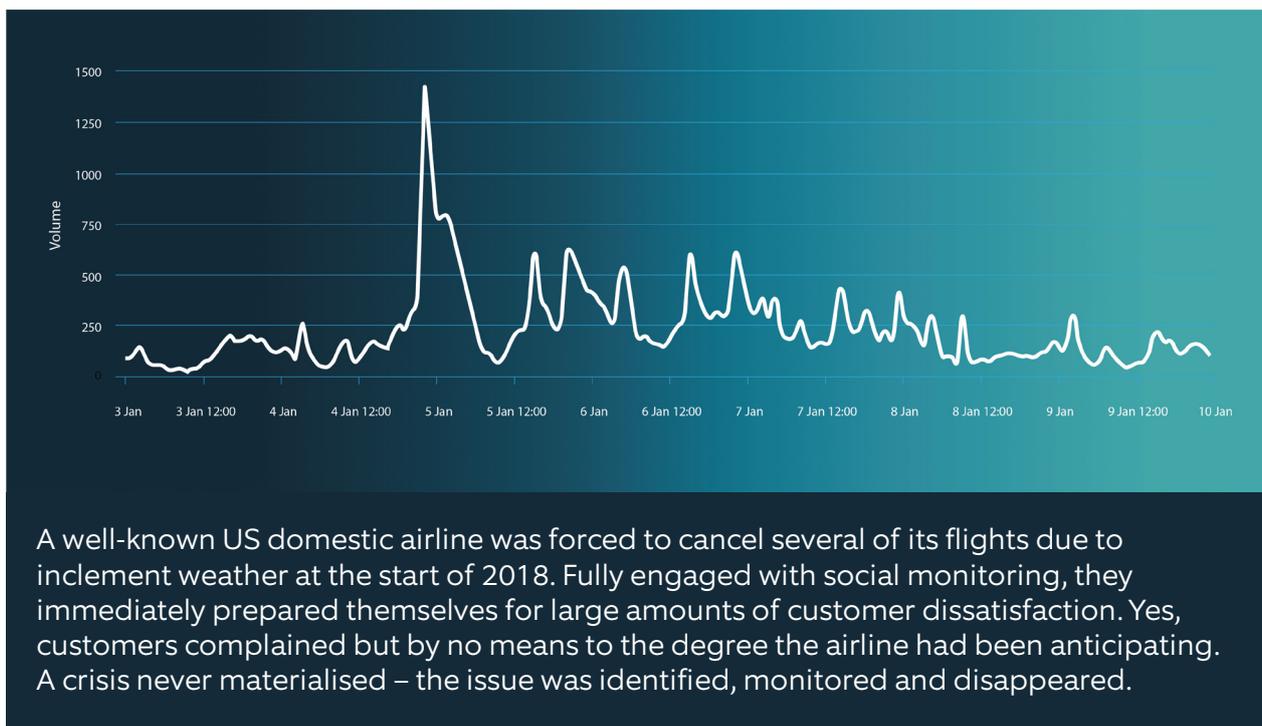


## Don't confuse an issue with a crisis

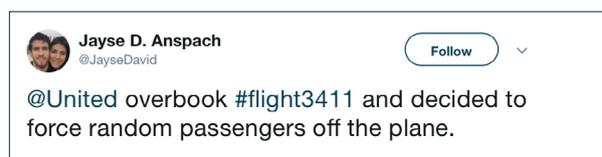
Being prepared for a crisis and embracing monitoring as part of an overall communications strategy means any surge in threshold activity will be flagged. It is important to act with a degree of caution, and re-examine the narrative around this activity to separate issues and emergencies

from potential reputational crises.

Understanding this intersection between issue and crisis is critical for response and planning, but only preparedness will allow this measured reaction.



Contrast this with United Airlines. PRWeek described the 2017 footage of a passenger being forcibly removed from an overbooked plane as the “mother of all social media crises”. An inadequate response by United’s CEO led to a \$1 billion drop in market value, forcing the company and its CEO to make repeated further apologies. The long-term effects of the incident were not as significant, with United recovering well. But it remains a stark lesson in the power of social sharing and the damage that can arise.



Airline passenger  
1.7k followers, 158k retweets, 144k likes



## Human insight and curated content

Crisis communications demand the ability to cut through the volume of online activity and identify the insight that really contributes to management strategy. Technology offers algorithms that uncover relevant content, but alone it is insufficient to manage the swathes of social data in a crisis.

You need a combination of comprehensive coverage and a focus on the content that really matters. Human insight delivers this focus, with the ability to look at the information and deliver curated content. This provides actionable intelligence, staying ahead of the social conversation.



As providers of curated corporate social media monitoring reports, we are frequently asked how we cut through the noise of social data. Our answer lies in human insight alongside sophisticated technology.

This is the combination that is going to find the activist who may be gathering a group of shareholders to protest outside your office tomorrow. It is this approach that will let you tell your CEO that large amounts of consumers are more concerned about certain business practices than about cheaper prices. And it is this approach that is going to identify the technology specialist who has just acquired leaked data and could damage your company's reputation in the immediate future.

During a crisis, your company has everything to lose. Your reputation can be left in tatters, shareholder value lost, investor confidence negligible. Consumers can turn against you, pressure groups can cause more damage.

Planning and forward thinking will help you take control from the outset – in some circumstances, before a crisis takes place. Preparedness reduces the fear that a crisis can hit.

Scan your business and ask questions – where are the weaknesses, where are the threats? Put monitoring strategies into place as you will not have time when the crisis emerges. By doing this, you will make sure that your communications strategy is equipped with accurate and actionable information.

When you scan this horizon, focus on the narrative and take action to harness the conversation and turn it into something that will work to your advantage.

To find out more about our corporate social media monitoring services, drop us a line on [info@s360group.com](mailto:info@s360group.com) or visit our website: [www.s360group.com](http://www.s360group.com)