



## New Study Reveals Marketers are Measuring Social Media ROI Wrong

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*Sprout Social's 2018 Index report finds marketers' priorities are misaligned with consumers' preferences, making measuring social ROI a continued struggle for more than half of marketers*

Marketers are constantly being measured on the quantitative results of their efforts, and social media is no exception. But the true return on investment (ROI) of social media shouldn't be tied directly to dollar signs, according to [The Sprout Social Index: Realign and Redefine](#), released today. Instead of focusing on direct attribution, the research found social's true impact is in the awareness and consideration stages of the funnel.

[Sprout Social](#), a leading provider of social media analytics, engagement and [advocacy solutions](#) for business, surveyed more than 3,000 marketers and consumers to understand what true success means in the social media industry and how social marketers are aligning with consumer preferences. Not surprisingly, the findings show marketers are still anxious about the ROI they are getting from their social marketing efforts – 55 percent of respondents said measurement is a primary challenge and only 14 percent are able to quantify revenue from social. Clearly, last touch or direct attribution isn't working, and it isn't because of a lack of effort or sophistication of marketers' efforts. Data shows that it is time to get back to basics and think long-term relationships, not quick-fix sales. When asked what they want from brands on social, consumers said they prefer educational content and information on new products and services. Put simply, they want brands, which are guests in their social feeds, to provide value.

"The impact of social marketing permeates every aspect of an organization today, yet the ability to truly capture the return on social efforts remains a challenge for many marketers," said Jamie Gilpin, Chief Marketing Officer at Sprout Social. "By redefining ROI to focus on gains in the top-to-mid funnel and realigning social strategies to reflect consumers' desire for content serving the awareness and consideration-stage, marketers will better connect with their audiences and more clearly see their return on investment."

Conclusions from the study offer a tangible approach to create a more measurable, effective [social marketing strategy](#). Key findings include:

- Educational content is key for brands on social: Marketers' priorities are misaligned with what consumers actually want, except in the area of educational content. Marketers are focused on posts that teach (61 percent), tell a story (58 percent) and inspire (53 percent), while consumers are looking for discounts and sales (73 percent), posts that showcase new products and services (60 percent), and posts that teach them something (59 percent).
- When it comes to video, consumers don't want their time wasted: Nearly three-quarters of consumers share brand video content on social. The top factors that impact whether or not a consumer watches a video on social are length of video (61 percent), caption or description of video (51 percent), and whether the video is an ad or not (40 percent). This shows that consumers won't watch a video that is going to take up too much of their time. They want to know what they are about to watch before pressing play, and they care about the authenticity of the video.
- Employees are the new influencers: Consumers absorb influencer content across the major social networks at a surprisingly low level, between one and 11 percent. They are also most likely to research a product or service recommended on social by a friend (61 percent), compared to 36 percent if a product or service was recommended by an influencer or celebrity. With limited budgets for influencer marketing programs, marketers are turning to employees to deliver the authenticity people are seeking—70 percent use employees as influencers or advocates today, or want to in the future.
- Social is a hub for customer care: Social is one of the first channels consumers head to when they have a question or an issue—nearly half of consumers have reached out to a brand on social. And with nearly 90 percent of marketers noting the importance of customer service on social, it is clear this is one thing that marketers and consumers agree cannot be left out of a successful social strategy.
- Facebook remains a dominant force: Facebook is still the most frequently used channel by consumers (94 percent) and is the top channel for social ad spend. The top reasons people use Facebook are to engage with friends and family, share information with family and friends, and find entertainment. However, 71 percent of consumers like or follow company pages on Facebook, and 39 percent have sent a message to a brand on Facebook, proving brands can still be a part of the conversation.

For more information on the evolution of ROI in social marketing and to download the full data report, click [here](#).

### About Sprout Social

Sprout Social offers social media analytics, engagement and advocacy solutions to more than 24,000 leading brands and agencies, including Evernote, adidas, West Elm and Edelman. Sprout's suite of solutions, including [Simply Measured](#) and [Bambu by Sprout Social](#), support every aspect of a social program and enable businesses to better connect with their audience, extend their reach and amplify their brand. Headquartered in Chicago, Sprout is a Twitter Official Partner, Facebook Marketing Partner, Instagram Partner Program Member, LinkedIn Company Page Partner and Google+ Pages API Partner. Learn more at [sproutsocial.com](#).

### About the Data

The Sprout Social Index is a report compiled and released by Sprout Social. All referenced data is based on 1,253 consumer respondents and 2,060 marketer respondents in the U.S. and Canada. The consumer survey was conducted by Survata, an independent research firm in San Francisco.

Survata interviewed 1,253 online respondents between April 12, 2018, and May 1, 2018. For further information, visit <http://www.survata.com>. The marketer survey was conducted via email, by Google Forms, between April 4, 2018, and May 1, 2018.

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