# How You Can Know Your Social Media Is Working: A Basic Guide

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# Table of Contents

## Introduction

If you're using social media such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter as a strategy for your project, you should measure that use to give you insights into your **social media** performance. While some social media metrics are universal, there are also platform-specific metrics that can measure the success of your identified outcome. But, as with all evaluation, don't measure just for the sake of measuring. Instead, **measure your social media activities so that you can learn what's successful, what isn't, and how you can improve**.

The purpose of this guide is to help you understand the metrics collected by various social media platforms and how you can use that data to tell your story. Outcomes such as increased community engagement or increased awareness of a specific issue can be measured by metrics from social media platforms. These metrics can also track specific targets. For example, if your organization is advocating a fully funded pre-K–3 program in your state, you could monitor the effectiveness of your social media campaign during a specific time frame and use that data to set benchmarks for the campaign.

## 1. Facebook Insights

Of all social media platforms, Facebook offers the most comprehensive free metrics for business pages. You can start by going to the Insights page to see a list of all of your Facebook business pages currently tracking metrics. When you click on the page you want to analyze, you will be taken to the Facebook Insights report for that specific page (Exhibit 1). There, you will find an overview of your most important metrics, followed by detailed sections on your likes, reach, visits, posts, and people. Some of the metrics found on this page include:

- **Likes**: Total Page Likes gives the number of unique users (unique users refers to the number of distinct individuals requesting pages from the website during a given period, regardless of how often they visit) who like your page.
  ***Why are Page Likes important?*** New Page Likes shows the number of new likes your page has received during the last seven days, compared with the previous seven-day period. When it comes to establishing a digital strategy, nonprofits know that you must grow your online audiences. Your Likes metric increases your potential reach. One way is through increasing your social visibility on users' News Feeds, which includes status updates, photos, videos, links, app activity and likes from people, People, and groups that you follow on Facebook. If users like your page, it will show in their News Feeds and users' friends will be able to see content from you that may draw additional visits to your page. Furthermore, when users like content on your page, related and new content may be automatically displayed on their News Feed, providing additional opportunities to be noticed and enhance engagement. A larger audience increases your reach which ultimately increases your chance of engagement. The Likes tab on the Insights page gives you trends regarding your Net Likes (see Exhibit 2). Your Net Likes reflects the number of new Likes minus the number of unlikes on your page, and combines the following metrics:
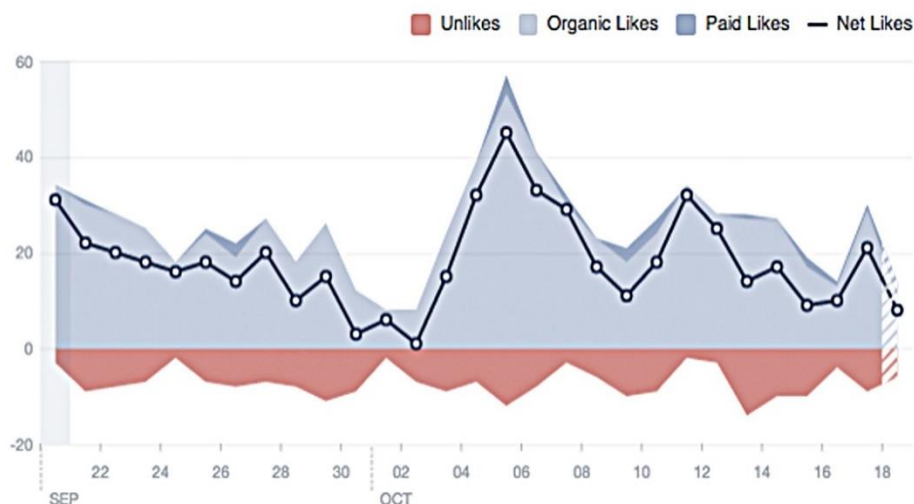
o **Unlikes:** The number of people who have unliked your page.
o **Organic Likes:** The number of people who have liked your page, not as a result of a Facebook Ad campaign.
o **Paid Likes:** The number of people who have liked your page as a result of a Facebook Ad campaign.

**Exhibit 1. Facebook Post Metrics**



**Exhibit 2. Facebook Net Likes Metrics**

- **Impressions**: Impressions is the number of times a post from your page is displayed, whether the post is clicked or not. People may see multiple Impressions of the same post. For example, someone might see a page update in the News Feed once, and then a second time if a friend shares it. If the same person sees the same content two different times, that would equal two impressions.

  *What can Impressions tell you?* They give you a clear understanding of how many times your content has been exposed in the News Feeds of people on Facebook. Measuring your impressions will help you understand the extent to which your content is being distributed through social media.

- **Reach**: Total Reach is the number of *unique* users (i.e., each user is only counted one time unlike impressions) who have seen any content associated with your page, including ads, during the last seven days. Post Reach shows the number of unique users who have seen your posts. Your post counts as reaching someone when it's shown on their Facebook News Feed. Figures under Post Reach (Exhibit 1) reflect the first 28 days after a post was created and include the number of people viewing your posts on desktop computers and mobile phones.

  *What do you learn from Total Reach?* Though Reach is a common metric on social media, it is not as important to track and could be almost considered a vanity metric. Can you trust that 800 individuals (Exhibit 3) saw your post? Did each of those users view your content, or were they concentrating on something else, perhaps using Facebook Messenger or scrolling down their newsfeed without digesting half of the posts they passed? Reach simply tells you how many people had the opportunity to interact with your post. Reach is important because it gives you the exact number of people that viewed your content and unique users are only counted once unlike the impressions metric.

**Exhibit 3. Facebook Reach Metrics**



Reactions, Comments, and Shares
These actions will help you reach more people.

- **Engagement**: If increasing awareness in a given area is your outcome of interest, Engagement is the metric you want to pay attention to. Unlike Reach, the Engagement metric tells you that the user clicked on the content and read it and possibly commented, shared, or liked your post. People engaged include the number of unique users who have clicked, liked, commented on, or shared your posts during the last seven days.

  *What does Engagement tell you?* You can use metrics to determine which social media strategies are more or less working for accomplishing your specific objectives (e.g., increasing awareness of an issue or marketing service to members of the community) which can then inform your approaches to meeting that objective. There is something to gain from vanity metrics such as Impressions and Likes. If you have an audience of 12,000 people, as measured by the metric, it does not mean that you are increasing awareness of your cause. The Engagement metric is a better proxy for awareness because it accounts for followers who actively made use of your post by having read, shared, commented, or downloaded information from your post. The Engagement metric is the golden metric when measuring impact. Using Insights, you can also review past posts to see what wording or images your audience related or responded to more. Your Insights tab also shows all of your charts from the data that Facebook collects (Exhibit 4).

**Exhibit 4. Facebook Post Metrics**



By examining changes in Engagement indicators (likes/reactions, shares, and comment volume) over time or post-by-post, the organization can get a sense of how compelling or resonant their messaging is with those on their platform. Using Insights post alongside the Engagement metrics would allow the organization to draw out the verbiage, imagery, or communication approaches that elicit the most attention or responsiveness from its audience. Examples of ways that the organization can increase engagement include:

- o Using Insight data to inform language, methods or approaches, create brief, simple, eye-catching posts (e.g., statistics on alcohol-related teen fatalities) that are quick and easy to read and comprehend, making it easier for viewers to take it and react to (with like or another reaction click).
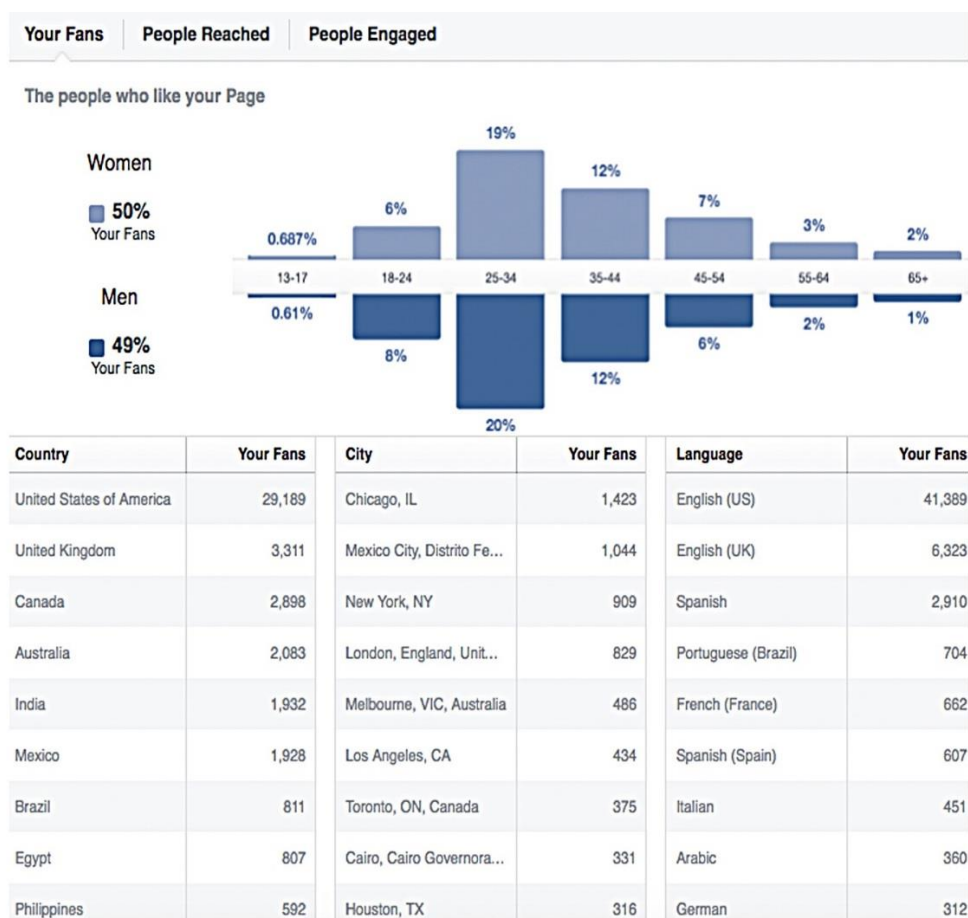- o Welcome or ask for visitor commentary on posts to get them talking about the issues, creating dialogues that are potentially drawing more active participants into the conversation.
- o Respond to commenters as much as possible to encourage further participation on their page and also distinguish them as an organization worthy of being liked or followed.

In addition to the metrics, Facebook also gives you pertinent demographic information about your audience (Exhibit 5).

**Exhibit 5. Facebook Demographic Metrics**



| Country | Your Fans | City | Your Fans | Language | Your Fans |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| United States of America | 29,189 | Chicago, IL | 1,423 | English (US) | 41,389 |
| United Kingdom | 3,311 | Mexico City, Distrito Fe... | 1,044 | English (UK) | 6,323 |
| Canada | 2,898 | New York, NY | 909 | Spanish | 2,910 |
| Australia | 2,083 | London, England, Unit... | 829 | Portuguese (Brazil) | 704 |
| India | 1,932 | Melbourne, VIC, Australia | 486 | French (France) | 662 |
| Mexico | 1,928 | Los Angeles, CA | 434 | Spanish (Spain) | 607 |
| Brazil | 811 | Toronto, ON, Canada | 375 | Italian | 451 |
| Egypt | 807 | Cairo, Cairo Governora... | 331 | Arabic | 360 |
| Philippines | 592 | Houston, TX | 316 | German | 312 |

Facebook also lets you export data about your page and posts. This gives you raw data about your page's activity, with each metric defined within the spreadsheet. If you publish videos to Facebook, you'll have access to video metrics—such as how often a video was viewed for three seconds, 30 seconds, or 95 percent of the total video length—and the ability to export them.

## 2. Instagram Insights

If you understand Facebook Insights, you will understand Instagram Insights because they are owned by the same company. Instagram Insights provides information on who your followers are when they're online, and how they engage with your content. You can also view insights to check the performance and engagement (hashtags) of specific posts and Instagram stories you've created.

In additional to Likes, Reach, Impressions, and Engagement Instagram Insights include the following metrics:

- **Website Clicks:** This metric tells you the number of accounts that have tapped the website link on your Business Profile.
  ***What do Website Clicks tell you?*** This will tell your organization whether or not your content is driving your audience to your organization's website.
- **Follower Activity:** This metric informs you of the average times of the day your followers are on Instagram on a typical day.
  ***What will you learn from Follower Activity?*** This information will inform when it is best to post or engage in social media town halls and this will ultimately inform your Instagram strategy.
- **Video Views:** Number of times your video was viewed for three or more seconds.
- **Saves:** The number of unique accounts that saved your post.
  ***What does the number of Saves tell you?*** This can be interpreted as the number of unique accounts that found your content interesting enough to save it for further viewing or reposting.

## 3. Twitter Analytics

While its metrics are not as detailed as Facebook's, Twitter offers its own analytics for all account users. When you arrive at your analytics dashboard, you will see a 28-day summary of metrics and highlights of your activity (Exhibit 6). Included in the dashboard are the following metrics:

- **Tweet Impressions**: Twitter Analytics shows you the number of times your tweet appeared on people's feeds. This is called Impressions, and the more frequently you tweet, the higher your Impressions will be.
  ***What can Tweet Impressions tell you?*** You can go deeper into this data and see when and where exactly people saw your tweet.
- **Tweet Engagement**: On the Twitter platform likes, retweets, clicks, and replies are all signs of Engagement, but they differ in value.
  ***What does Tweet Engagement tell you?*** A like can mean that someone appreciated your post while a retweet means someone saw value in your tweet and thought they could share it with their followers. A click or reply means that your tweet was interesting enough to convince the user to take action. Identify the types of engagement you are getting and interpret your Engagement accordingly (Exhibit 7).

**Exhibit 6. Twitter Analytics Dashboard**



**Exhibit 7. Individual Tweet Metric**

**Mentions**: The number of times others have mentioned your username. This is inclusive of mentions that were triggered by a conversation that your organization is facilitating and the mention from your audience without any engagement effort from you.

*What can you learn from Mentions?* Your organization can use the Mentions from your audience to engage them on relevant topics to your organization. You can also use the Mentions metric to inform your content by using the qualitative data collected from the Mention tweet. For example, John Smith sends a tweet mentioning your organization that reads "@Love_for_Sobriety I know so many of my friends in high school that would have a beer before school." Your organization may notice a trend in these tweets and create dialogue surrounding this issue because it is related to your organization's mission and it is a great opportunity to engagement with your audience.

In addition to the metrics mentioned above, Twitter provides information on your Audience. Under the Audience tab (shown in Exhibit 8), you will see a breakdown of demographics organized by:

- **Lifestyle:** Identifies the occupation, TV viewing preferences, and political affiliation of your audience.
- **Demographics**: Such as gender, income, marital status, education and more.
- **Mobile Footprint**: Informs you about which wireless carrier and device your audience is using.

Use the data found here to help tailor your targeting and content to your audience.

**Exhibit 8. Twitter Audience Insights Metrics**
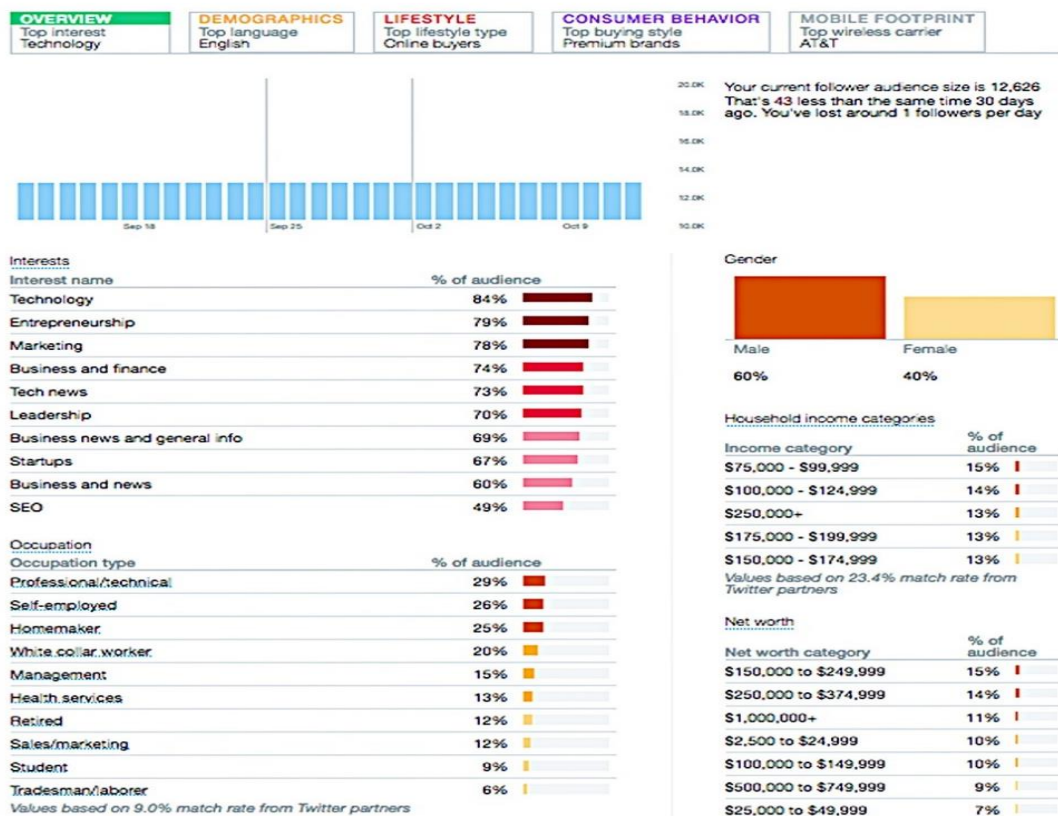
## 4. Google Plus Insights

Google Plus does not offer many metrics for its pages. On your central dashboard (shown in Exhibit 9), you'll find an overview of your most important metrics. Google Plus metrics will inform you on whether your content is performing well. You will be able to interpret this through the Views, Actions on Posts, and Followers.

**Exhibit 9. Google Plus Metrics Overview**



If you click "View insights," you will find three sections of data. The first is the Visibility section (shown in Exhibit 10).

**Exhibit 10. Google Plus Visibility Metrics**



Here, you'll see your total views, broken down by:

- **Page views:** A view of a page on your site. If a user clicks reload after reaching the page, this is counted as an additional page view. If a user navigates to a different page and then returns to the original page, a second-page view is recorded as well.
  ***Why are Page Views important?*** This important because this information will tell you which page your audience is most interested in by numbers of view to a specific page.
- **Post views:** Views of an individual post. This is if you are blogging as a part of your site.

*What will Post Views tell you?* This data will give you an idea of which posts your users are most interested.

In the Engagement section (in Exhibit 11), you will see metrics about your individual posts. These include total actions, comments, and shares. Beneath the detailed metrics for your posts, you will see average actions by post type.

**Exhibit 11. Google Post Recent Post Metrics**
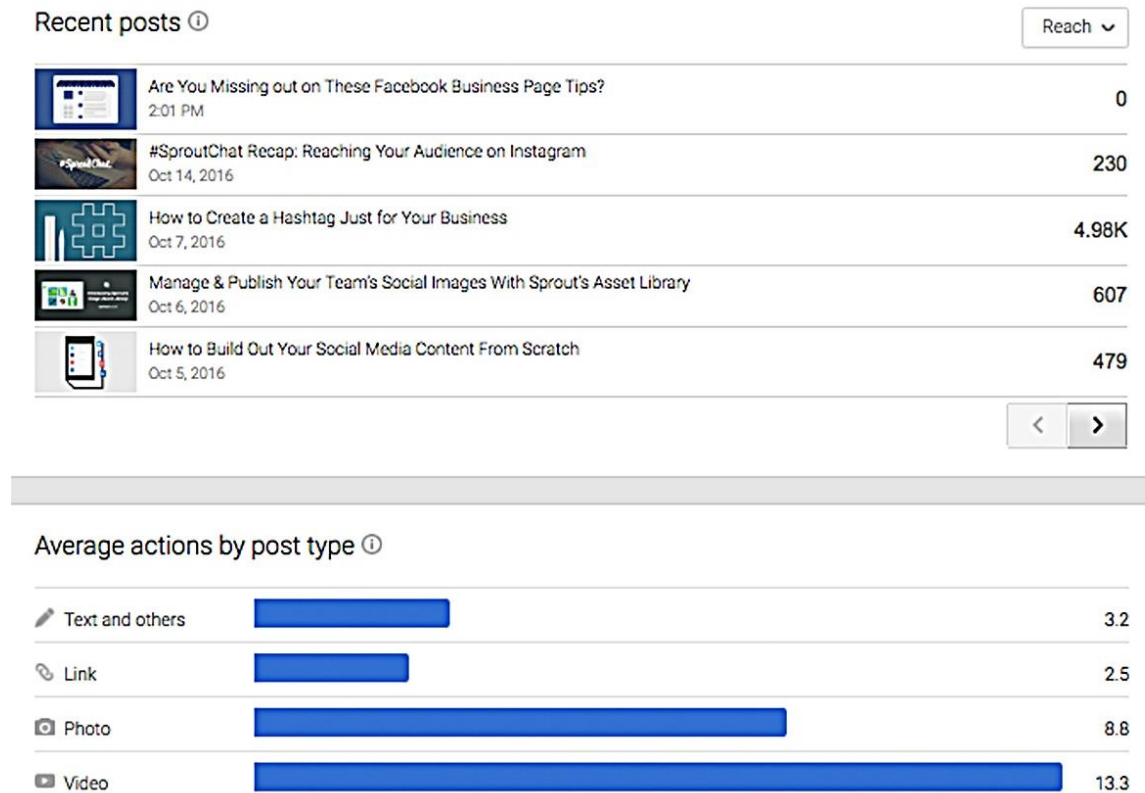


The Audience section offers a demographics overview of your followers (see Exhibit 12).

For example, Love for Sobriety may use Google Plus Insights in the following ways:

- Use the demographic data to tailor messages to group, or inform strategies for drawing in more engagement from less participatory subsets.
- By reviewing the most popular posts, refine messaging strategies to utilize better what works and fix what doesn't work.
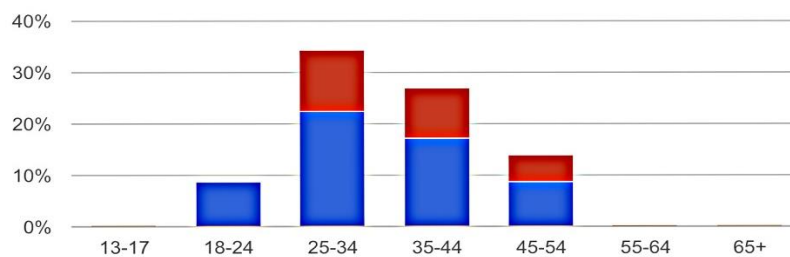- Use peak viewing time to post during page's high-traffic periods.

**Exhibit 12. Google Plus Audience Demographic Metrics**

Followers by country ⓘ

| | Total | ♀ | ♂ |
|---|---|---|---|
| 🇺🇸 United States | 122 | 49% | 51% |
| 🇮🇳 India | 41 | - | - |
| 🇬🇧 United Kingdom | 31 | 39% | 61% |
| 🇨🇦 Canada | 17 | - | - |
| 🇦🇺 Australia | 10 | - | - |
| All others | 160 | - | - |

Gender & age ⓘ

☑ 239 (65.12%) male    ☑ 123 (33.51%) female    ☑ 5 (1.36%) other



The information you see here may only be accessed for use by this organization. You agree to not attempt to use Insights to track or collect personally identifiable information of any users. Values are approximate and only significant values may be shown. Learn more

# 5. Resources for Social Media Data Management

The resources below can assist you in managing multiple social media platforms from one place. These services also provide more analysis to your social media insights. From the resources listed, you can post to multiple social media sites from one place, get additional analytics from all your social media platforms combined, and pull personalized reports from across your social media platforms. Ultimately, these tools will help you to know what's working and what isn't. Get to-the-minute metrics on your social media efforts so you can make smarter, data-informed decisions about your content.

- **Brandwatch:** www.brandwatch.com
- **HootSuite**: https://hootsuite.com
- **Infegy**: https://infegy.com
- **Sprout Social**: https://sproutsocial.com/