



Defend your **marketing budget** (& your team!)

in an economic downturn

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Introduction

The scene: Harvard 2004. An unassuming psychology and computer science student launches a networking website from his dorm room and inadvertently unleashes the most disruptive marketing innovation since the television. No one could have predicted how quickly Facebook and other social media sites would be integrated into our daily lives or how dramatically they would impact how we do business.

No matter what you are selling, very few goods or services change hands without touching some part of social media. From review sites to mobile checkout, social media has empowered a new generation of savvy consumers to make informed buying decisions without leaving the comfort of their homes. And the benefits of social media are not just restricted to consumers.

Love it or loathe it, social media as a primary marketing channel is here to stay

Today's social media marketing campaigns are jam-packed with data that would make any good marketer salivate. Not only can you know how many people **"saw"** the campaign—you can know how they interacted with it (likes and comments), whether the call-to-action (clicks and downloads) resonated, and how, when, and where they shared it with their personal networks.

But what are marketers doing with all that data in 2022?

To find out, Agorapulse and Promethean Research teamed up to conduct extensive market research on how today's marketers are leveraging the avalanche of data available to them around their social media campaigns. The research included a survey of more than 270 social media professionals and 12 one-on-one interviews with marketers directly responsible for social media. Data was also gathered from the Agorapulse social media management platform to benchmark the surveys against qualitative data gathered from the posting behavior of 75K profiles in 2021.

To say the results challenged our assumptions is an understatement. In this paper, we will explore those findings and provide insights into how organic social media data will be used to improve outcomes for social media teams in the future ... but only if we can get the measuring part right first.

More than

270

social media
professionals

12

one-on-one interviews
with marketers directly
responsible for social
media

75K

profiles



Shocker #1:

A Disparate Definition of "Engagement"

A Disparate Definition of "Engagement"

If you were asked to define social media engagement, what would you cite? Likes, shares, and comments? Number of followers? Impressions? Or something else? How about sales? Or leads? Or the journey that buyers go on when they click your call-to-action? Whatever your answer, there was a contingent of our survey respondents that agreed with you.

During our interviews, the answers to **"How do you define engagement?"** received a wide range of responses:

"What she [CEO] really looks into is the number of followers we have achieved ... and secondly, we look into the number of subscriptions we get for [the] newsletters."

*"**Engagement** with followers is very important to us and links clicked ... Commenting, liking our posts, [and] visiting the profile is super-important."*

*"For our organization, **engagement** means how many people are reacting to our posts."*

*"So with **engagement**, I'm looking for the interaction. I'm not looking just for the impressions and the likes. I want to see if there are comments, what kind of comments ... Is there a true conversation that's happening? Or whatever the call to action was of that social post."*

*"Sometimes, you want to have more **engagement**. Sometimes, you want to have more impressions or views, or clicks. We just want to get a lot of awareness. Impressions are important; clicks are not that important because you want to get your product out there."*

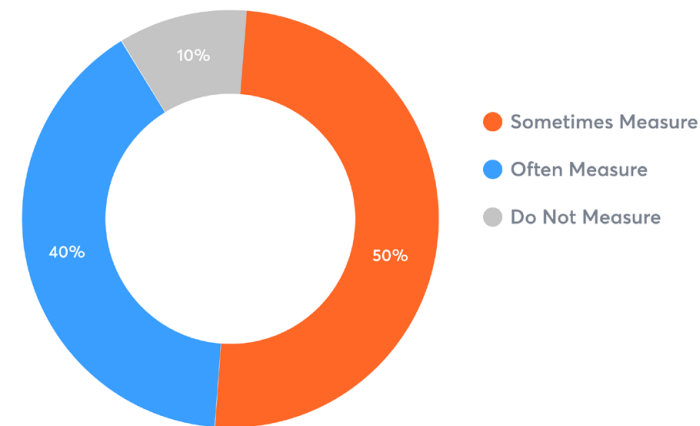
Given this lack of consensus around what engagement means, the survey double-downed and asked respondents to be specific about exactly which data points they are tracking.

When asked about **likes, comments, shares, and followers**, 90% of agencies reported that these are the metrics they sometimes (50%) and often (40%) measure. Conversely, the business impact of social media (sales, leads, and visitor behavior) received far less attention, with a full 24% of agencies reporting they never measure **sales, leads, and visitor behavior**. The answers around tracking leads (16%) and visitor behavior (15%) weren't much better, with a whopping 31% reporting that they never measure these important performance metrics.

Even more surprising was that there was no measurable difference in tracking, measuring, and reporting behaviors when the success of the agency was taken into account. That means that all agencies (regardless of their size or revenue) provided similar answers to the survey questions we presented.

This is significant because it demonstrates that the ability to prove the value of organic social media is a universal challenge faced by agencies of all sizes and types.

When we asked the agencies about how often they measure likes, comments, shares, and followers:



24%

of agencies reporting they never measure sales, leads, and visitor behavior



Shocker #2:

The Difference Between Knowing and Doing

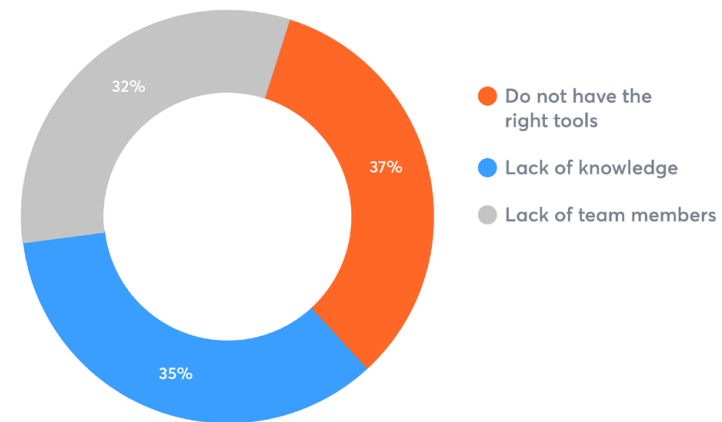
The Difference Between Knowing and Doing

When asked about the importance of measuring the business impact of social media (sales, leads, and visitor behavior, 100% of the agencies surveyed indicated that it is somewhat (32%) or extremely (68%) important. Clearly, we know this needs to be done. But then what explains the gap between knowing and doing?

To get to the bottom of it, we asked participants why they weren't measuring the business-critical metrics around social media and their answers reflected a significant gap in the current framework.

Not having the right tools was reported as the biggest obstacle, with 37% citing it as the reason they didn't measure that data today. That reason was followed closely by a lack of knowledge (35%) or lack of team members (32%) to adequately and effectively gather that kind of data within their organizations.

Why agencies are not currently measuring the business impact of social media:



Not having the right tools was reported as the biggest obstacle to measuring the business impact of social media.

None of these answers were surprising given the messy and time-consuming nature of gathering the data needed to track organic social media performance. Getting it done requires a **working knowledge of UTM** (urchin tracking module) **codes** and **Google Analytics** (GA), both of which are simultaneously loathed and loved for their complexity and robustness.

So, what's a social media team to do? From creating custom UTM codes to ensuring they are used correctly and consistently, the current methodology around measuring social media is cumbersome and labor-intensive. For many agencies, getting a clear picture of their social media outcomes means downloading data from native platforms (54%) and/or third-party tools (29%). Only then can the data be aggregated using multiple spreadsheets (37%) and manual calculations.

But no single data point left more jaws on the floor than this one... When asked why survey respondents didn't measure social media, 25% said it was because company leadership did not require or request it.

1 in 4

marketing leaders
allow social media
campaigns to
go unmeasured,
unbenchmarked,
and unreported.



Shocker #3:

The Sheer **Volume** of **Missed Opportunities**

The Sheer Volume of Missed Opportunities

Here's where our story takes yet another turn that no one expected.

We asked a team of data analysts to take an in-depth look at the posting data for more than 10 million social media posts, excluding Instagram. 3.4 million of those posts contained a link (32%). Of those links, only 64,884 included UTM tracking parameters. That's just 1.8%.

Without a UTM code, you cannot track the performance of a post, no matter how great you are at Google Analytics. That means a whopping 98.2% of these social media posts (ones that could have had a real, direct impact on the company's bottom line through website visits, lead conversions, or revenue) will never be tracked.

All that creative energy, teamwork, expense, and effort... and not a single shred of business value to show for it. And if that's not a shocker, we don't know what is.

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What Is at **Stake?**

What Is at Stake?

For in-house marketing teams, the temptation to leave well enough alone is high. If leadership isn't asking for these numbers, why bother?

The answer is simple.

Without the data to prove the business impact of social media, your team is seen as an expense. A big, money-sucking pile of overhead with nothing to show for it.

And do you know what that means? It means your team won't receive the budget it needs to grow or get the green light to hire the team you need to be successful. Worst of all, if social media isn't seen as driving revenue, your team won't get a seat at the table when strategic decisions are being made. After all, if you're not moving the needle in ways that matter, what could you possibly contribute?



For agencies, the situation is even more dire. Without the ability to prove ROI, agencies run the risk of losing clients to competitors that are able to provide these numbers. Would you choose the vendor that **SAID** they were helping your business or the one that could **PROVE** it with cold, hard facts?

Without the ability to provide relevant, business critical data (such as sales, leads, and visitor behavior), your agency will be left to compete on price. And we all know how that story ends. Lower contracts, tanking revenue, and watching good clients (and good staff) choose other agencies.

From tracking revenue to benchmarking employee performance, the survey also revealed a wealth of important findings around how agencies track their end-to-end operations, including:

- 📉 50% track early-funnel metrics (engagement rates, organic site visits, outbound activity)
- 📉 Less than 50% monitor mid-late-funnel metrics (number of referrals, marketing qualified leads (MQLs), closing ratios)
- 📉 Two-thirds monitor completed milestones (onboarding, content plan, campaign completion)
- 📉 Less than 20% track utilization rates
- 📉 Less than half track revenue by service
- 📉 Less than a third of agencies track cash flow
- 📉 52% charge under \$100/hour

Want to know more? Promethean Research recently launched a [core benchmarking service](#) to help digital agencies improve margins, break through growth plateaus, and identify the most impactful opportunities.



Now What?

How to **Avoid the Coming Data-Apocalypse**

Now What? How to Avoid the Coming Data-Apocalypse

The first step in getting ahead of the seismic shift in how social media will be benchmarked in the future is to accept this new reality as a good thing. Accountability is good. It is good for the industry, good for your organization, good for your team, and good for you professionally.

As a marketing channel, social media has matured, and it is time for the data around social media to grow up as well. Once we get comfortable with the idea of incorporating this data into our work, the rest is just a matter of putting the pieces in place to get it done.

After that, you will want to put the right tools in place to make the process as painless as possible.



Getting your team up to speed about what, why, and how to measure social media is the first step. Assign a team leader to head up the effort and make sure that person has a budget to get everyone trained and motivated to participate. Good education will be the backbone of this effort. If you are looking for an introduction to measuring social media, this course featuring Christopher Penn will give every member of your team the knowledge they need to get started (use the code **"socialmediaROI"** to get the course for free).

If you are already using a social media management platform, check to see whether it offers UTM management and business impact data (sales, leads, and visitor behavior) as part of the tool. Agorapulse, for example, has a built-in analytics feature that streamlines the management of UTM codes and automatically pulls data into easy-to-read reports.

If your current tool does not offer these features, other third-party tools are available at a wide range of costs and features. And of course, there is always Google Analytics.

Once you have the data, you will wonder how you ever lived without it. For the first time, you will be able to see exactly how your campaigns are performing and be able to adjust them in real-time. You can then take those numbers to leadership (or to your clients) and make the case for why social media deserves a bigger piece of the pie.

Does your social media management tool provide:

- ✓ ***Analytics***
- ✓ ***UTM management***
- ✓ ***Reporting built-in***

Good news: You're not too late.

There is still time to get ahead of the curve. The shift from how things have always been done to how they will be done is happening right now.

This is your chance to lead your organization out of the social media dark ages and into the bright, data-driven future ahead.



Meet the Authors



Theresa Anderson,

Head of Marketing, United States, Canada,
and Australia

Theresa supports Agorapulse's growing base of clients in the United States, Canada, and Australia. Prior to Agorapulse, Theresa held leadership roles with several in-house corporate marketing teams and independent marketing agencies. She also served as Program Director for the Center for Entrepreneurship at Rollins College.



Nicholas Petroski,

Managing Partner, Promethean Research

As Managing Partner at Promethean Research, Nick helps digital firm owners better understand their industry and chart more effective paths to success. Prior to co-founding Promethean, Nicholas worked as an equity analyst at a Wall St. firm, where he covered the enterprise software and semiconductor industries.

If you are interested in joining Nick and Theresa for a roundtable discussion to further discuss this topic:

[Register Here](#)

About Agorapulse

Connections are at the center of the human experience. In ancient Greece, those connections took place in public spaces—or **agora**, and our name celebrates the importance these gathering places play in our lives. Today, social media platforms serve as a modern-day village square, where people from all over the world go to shop, find love, create art and meet others that share their passions. Those millions of interactions each day form the beating heart of our modern lives, the **pulse** that binds us all together. To make the most of these moments, social media professionals rely on Agorapulse to stay organized, save time, and manage the everyday interactions that make up our most meaningful connections. See for yourself why **Agorapulse** is #1 with social media professionals, just like you.



About Promethean Research

Promethean Research provides data-backed strategies for digital shops around the world. Their core strategy work covers vision setting, positioning, and implementation guidance with the goal of delivering sustainable growth and profitability. Since 2015 their research has covered over 30,000 digital shops across 24 countries.

