



How major brands grow their

SOCIAL MEDIA



audiences

## IT'S ALL ABOUT THE NUMBERS: HOW MAJOR BRANDS GROW THEIR SOCIAL AUDIENCE

When you think about the biggest brands on social networks, which companies do you immediately think of? Who has the most impact in their social media marketing efforts? Who has the largest social audience? Whose audience is the most engaged?

Many of the major brands that come to mind have upwards of two million followers, and a substantial amount of engagement because of it. Coca-Cola, for example, has 2.33 million Twitter followers, and a significant number of those followers choose to engage with the brand's handle on a regular basis.

| COCA-COLA ON SOCIAL MEDIA             |                             |                          |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>4 Connected Channels</b>           | <b>Total Brand Posts</b>    | <b>Total Engagement</b>  |
| <b>TOTAL AUDIENCE</b><br><b>82.6M</b> | <b>379</b>                  | <b>18K</b>               |
| Facebook 80M                          | <b>MOST ACTIVE CHANNEL</b>  | <b>HIGHEST TOTAL</b>     |
| Twitter 2.3M                          | Twitter 339 Tweets          | Twitter 9,312            |
| YouTube 232K                          | <b>LEAST ACTIVE CHANNEL</b> | <b>HIGHEST PER POST</b>  |
| Google+ 5,142                         | Google+ 2 Posts             | Facebook 2,073 Per Posts |

But even Coca-Cola started with no followers, so you might ask yourself, what's their secret? How did they attract such an enormous audience? How do they keep that audience engaged? And how can you leverage their secrets to build your own massive legion of followers and brand advocates across your social networks?

In this guide, we've outlined a few best practices for building a massive audience on any channel. We'll discuss paid options for audience acquisition, and give advice on referrals and other internal forms of audience recruitment.

Social media use as a percentage of the total population



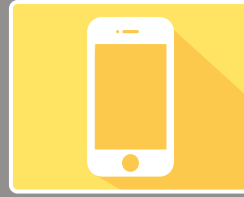
75%

Average time users spend on social media each day



2h 17m

Percentage of mobile users using social media apps



54%

Percentage of mobile users using location-based services

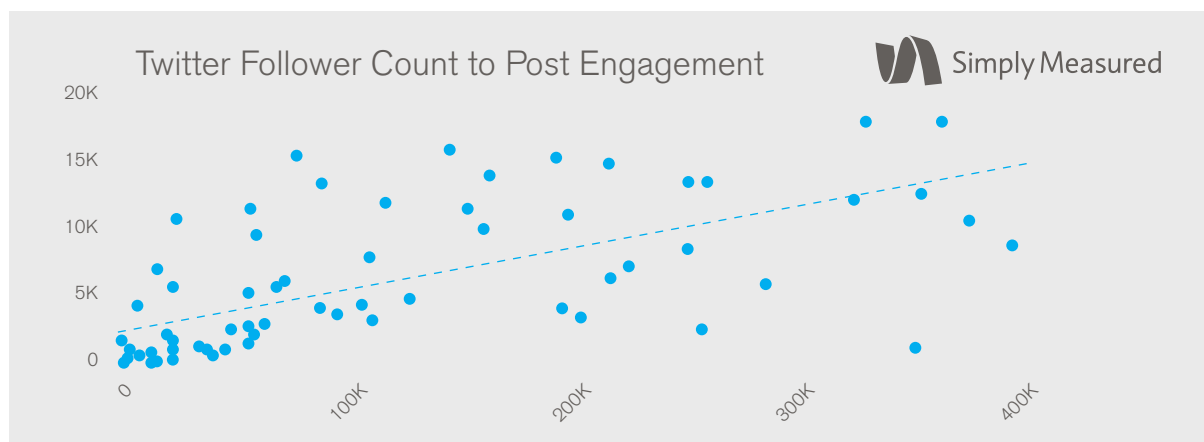


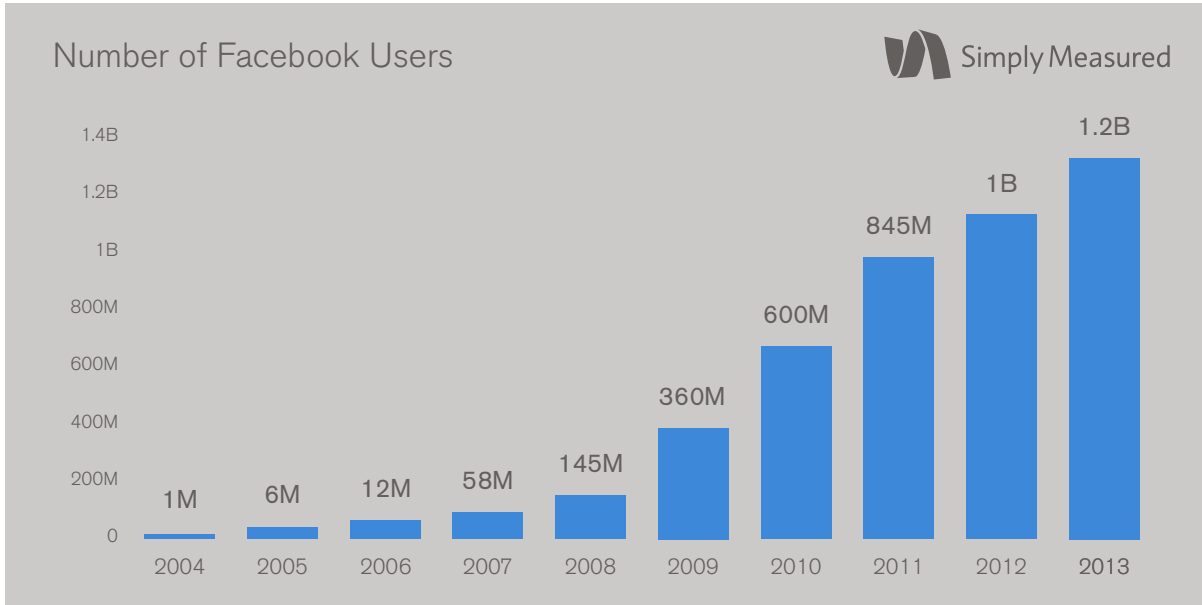
15%

## WHAT DOES A LARGE AUDIENCE MEAN FOR YOUR BRAND?

Social media has made a huge impact on the way users interact with brands. Spending upwards of two hours a day on social networks it's no surprise that these are some of the most targeted sites by adult Internet users. Facebook alone has 1,184 million users and Twitter clocks in at a solid 241 million users.

Our research here at Simply Measured shows a high correlation between audience size and engagement. It makes sense: the more people viewing your content increases the chance that it will be shared and seen by people outside your audience, which increases the chance they'll share it with their followers, and so on. A large audience allows you to maximize the power of numbers. Even if only two percent of your audience engages with you, it can still represent a significant number of individuals if the pool is big enough.





From 2007 to 2012, the number of Internet users has reached 2.27 billion, almost doubling in size. Social media is not far behind: Facebook currently has more users than the entire Internet had in 2004.

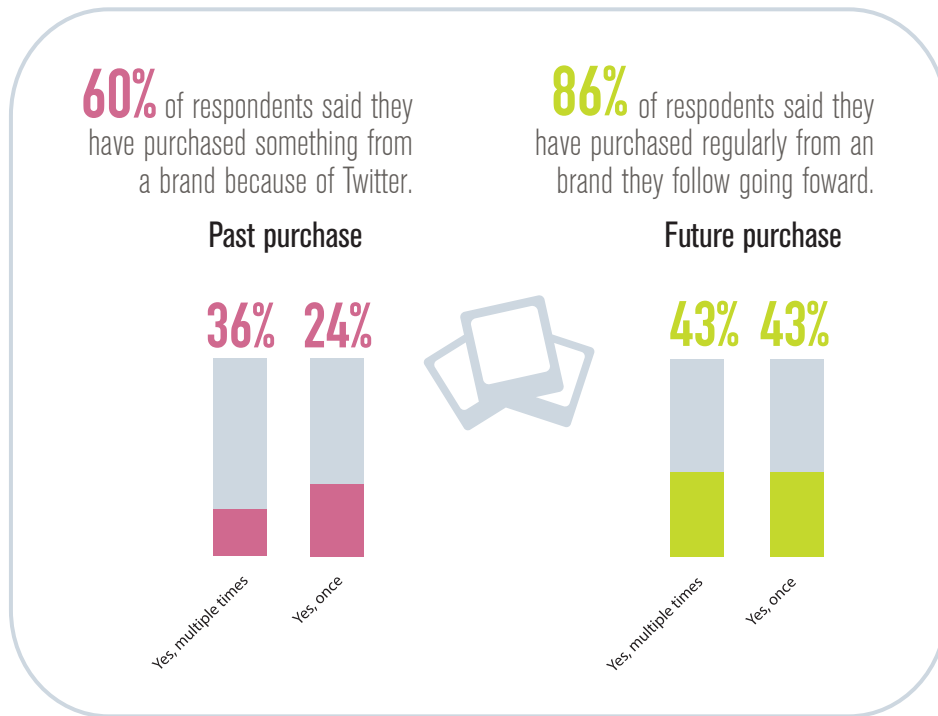
(Source: Internet World Stats)



*“A large audience allows you to maximize the power of numbers.”*



A recent Twitter study showed that followers felt more positive about a brand after following the brand on Twitter and reading the brand's Tweets. As a result, these followers are more likely to become long-term customers as they continue to develop an affinity for your brand.



One can assume that brand sentiment is similar across multiple channels – that people who follow a brand on Facebook also develop the same sort of affinity for that brand. This means that increasing your social audience has very real effects on your business's bottom line.



## WHICH USERS DO YOU WANT TO ATTRACT?

With so many social media users to engage with, you may ultimately find that you don't want to, or need to, attract all of them. You'll discover that the payout is greater if you target your efforts to hit select types of users based on your industry.



Growing your social media audience starts with an analysis of your current audience. Identify the types of followers you currently have and analyze them as fans. Who are they, and why do you target them? What makes them valuable to your brand?

*A “proprietary” audience is one that controls the nature of their relationship with your brand. When they follow you, they are enabling an exclusive relationship that allows you to engage them fully.*

Then consider your target audience. Do you want to attract users similar to those who follow you now, or would you rather expand your reach within new and different circles? Now, look at your competitors, peers, and partners. Is there a particular brand whose audience you admire, or who attracts a high rate of followers and engaged users?

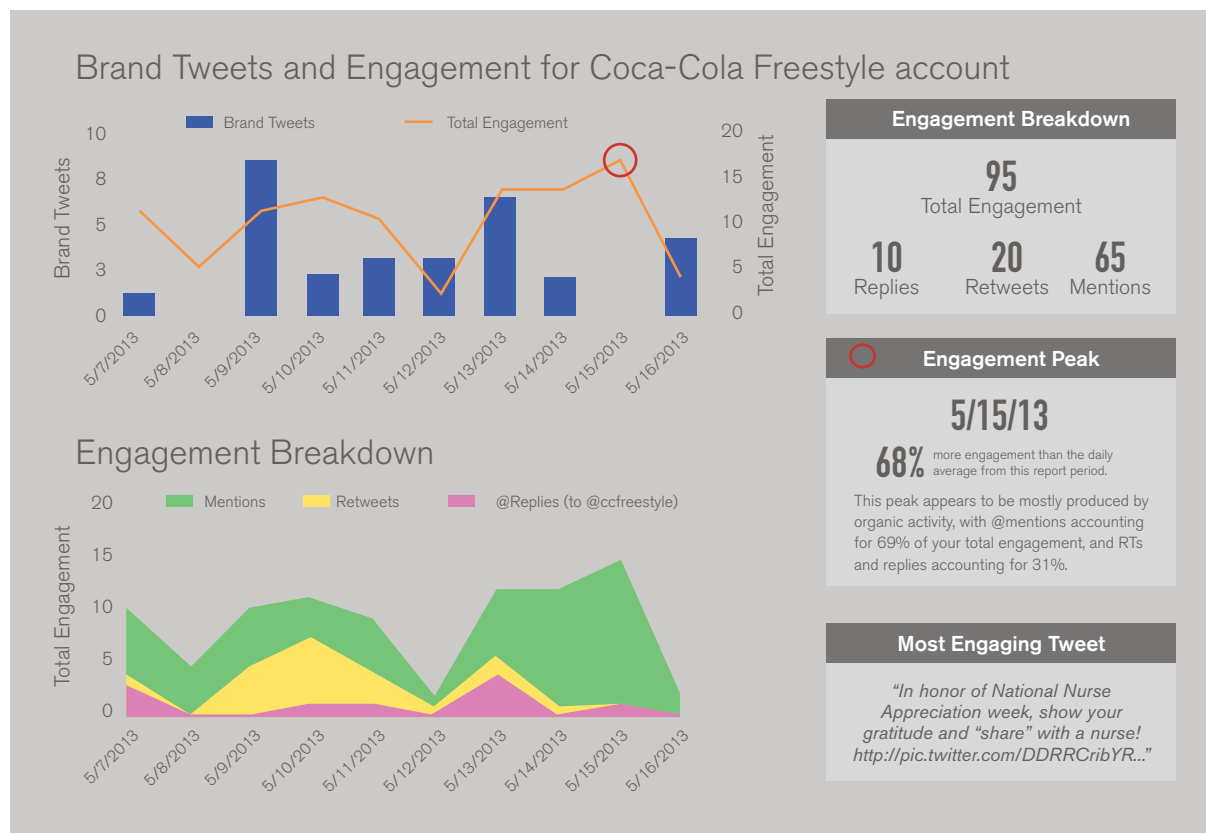
Developing a “proprietary” audience can give you a competitive advantage in your industry. It allows you to easily target audiences, realize their potential value as followers, and adapt your strategy to fit their needs.

| Competitive Leaderboard          | All Account Avg.                      | Lowest Account        | Leading Account           | How do they compare?   |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|--|
| ENGAGEMENT                       | <b>107K</b><br>215K total engagement  | <b>63K</b><br>Pepsi   | <b>152K</b><br>Coca-Cola  | Leader posts more often than average. Content is mostly videos and photos.               |
| PAGE FANS                        | <b>55.7M</b><br>111.3M total fans     | <b>31.5M</b><br>Pepsi | <b>79.8M</b><br>Coca-Cola | Leader has 48.3M (153%) more fans than the next best brand Pepsi.                        |
| PEOPLE TALKING ABOUT THIS (PTAT) | <b>350K</b><br>0.6% PTAT as % of fans | <b>185K</b><br>Pepsi  | <b>515K</b><br>Coca-Cola  | Leader has a 74% share of PTAT compared to a 26% share for the second best brand Pepsi.  |
| BRAND POSTS                      | <b>12</b><br>23 total posts           | <b>6</b><br>Coca-Cola | <b>17</b><br>Pepsi        | Leader sends about 1.1 posts per day and gets an average of 3,677 interactions per post. |

To define that proprietary audience, consider creating social “archetypes” that describe your current and target audience. You’ll want to be able to outline who they are, what they like, where they come from, and when they choose to engage. The Simply Measured [Social Media Snapshot](#) has all the data you need to answer these questions.

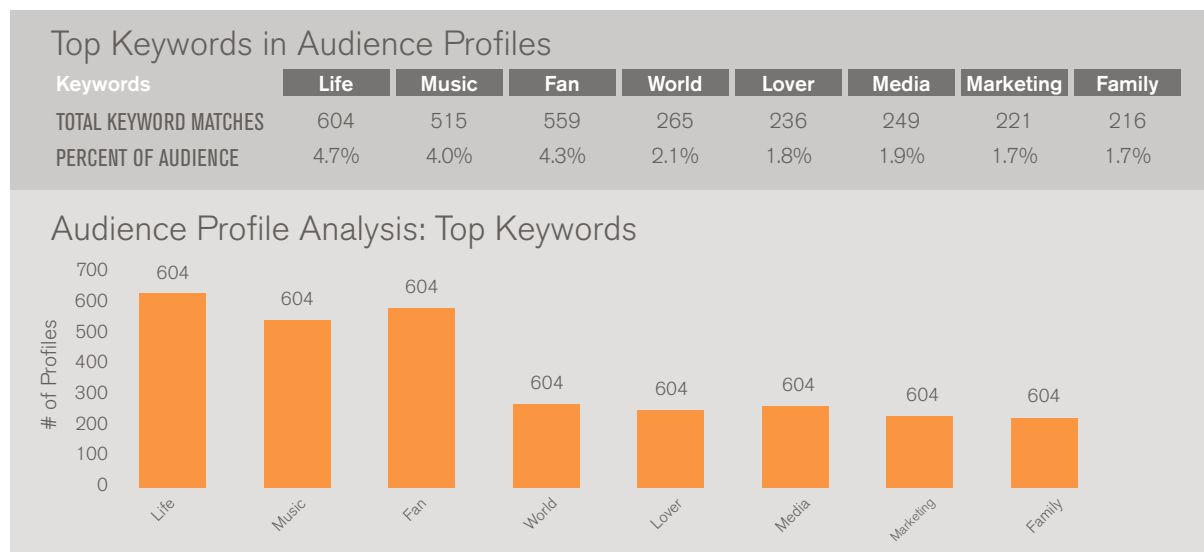
# WHAT

What type of content and activities get your current audience engaged?  
 What activities and content drove spikes in audience growth in the past?

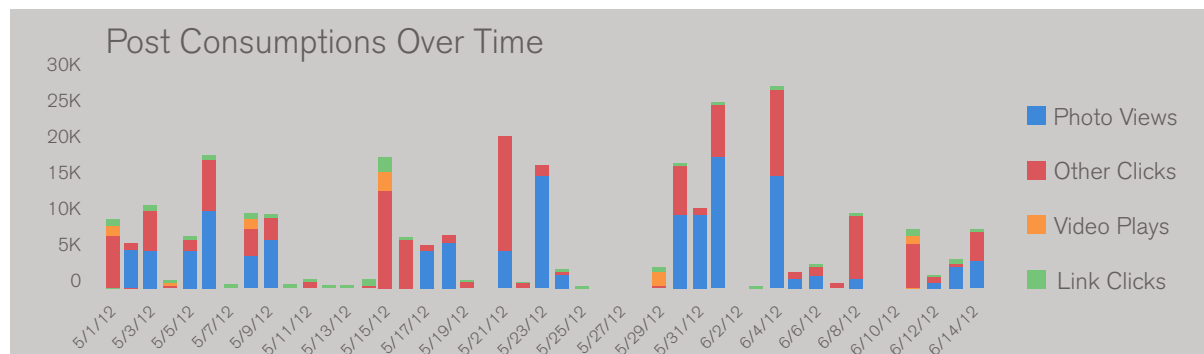


Looking at your Simply Measured Twitter account report, for example, provides an engagement breakdown that shows which tweets performed best during a given period of time. You can then examine time periods where you had spikes in engagement, to the report to find out just how you engaged with your audience to drive higher results. Doing this will help you focus your efforts on the content that generates the most response.

Running an Audience Report would enable Coca-Cola’s marketing department to discover what keywords show up in their Twitter followers’ profiles. Knowing this, they can tailor their future marketing efforts to appeal to a wider audience share.



For Facebook, Coca-Cola should also run a Post Insights Report, and discover which types of posts lead to higher engagement. They would see that link posts don’t perform well but photos do. This allows them to provide content better suited to their audience.



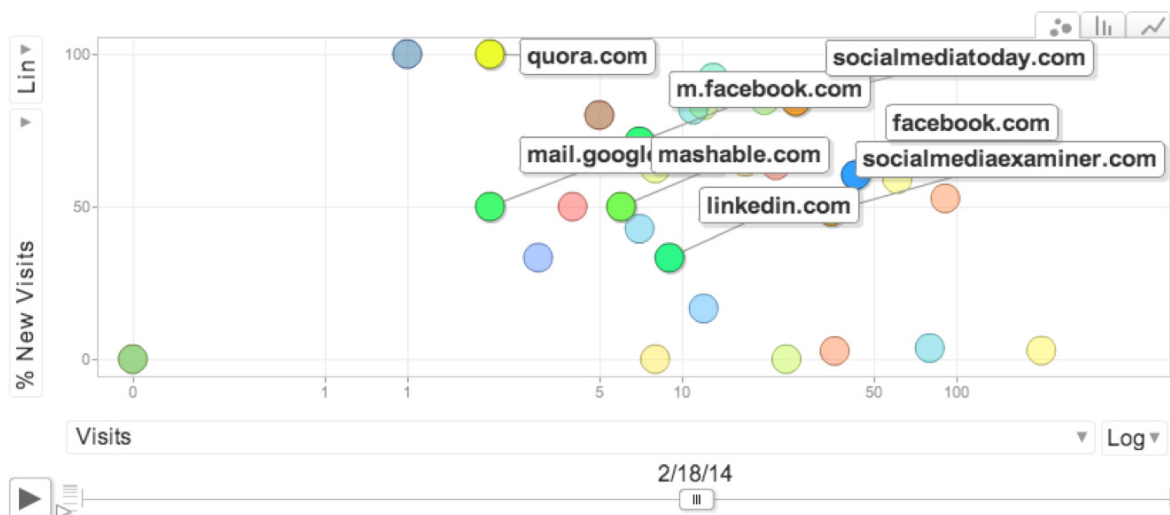


## WHERE

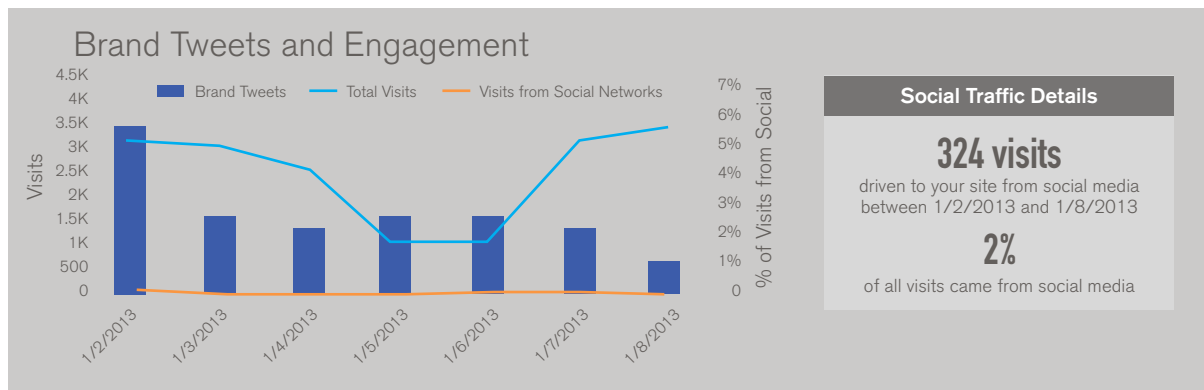
Where is your audience coming from? Where do they spend their time online? And how much time do they spend on certain parts of your website? Who refers them to your site; do they visit your page directly, or do they come from social channels, other websites, and publications?

Our reports calculate the volume of visitors referred to your site by social networks. If you use Google Analytics to look at your website referral sources, be sure to connect your Analytics account with your Simply Measured account to get in-depth detail on which channels drive the most engagement. Analyzing the sources that drive new fans and followers will help you identify the opportunities to increase your audience growth.

Though Analytics shows you a listing of referral sources, it can be difficult to nail down solid numbers.

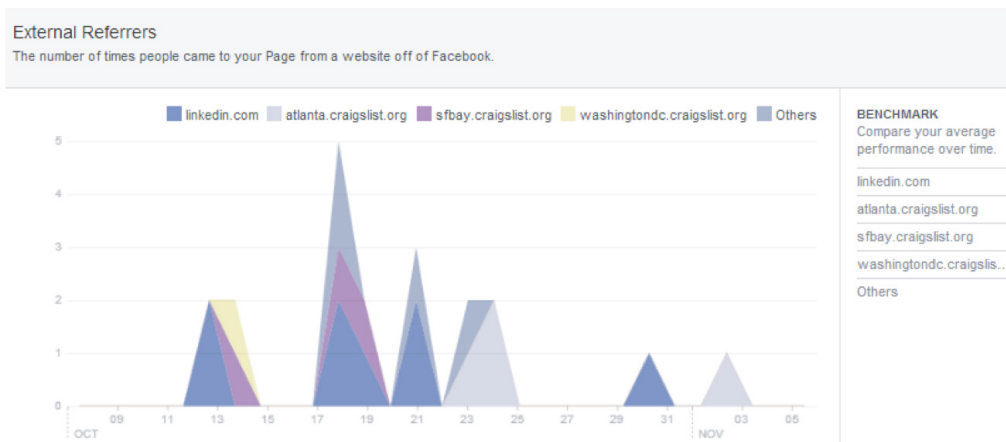


With Simply Measured reports, you can get a more comprehensive idea of how your social channels drive traffic to your website.



Again, 2% may seem small but with an audience size of roughly 82.6 followers across the social networks we reported in the beginning of this whitepaper, 2% is roughly 1.6 million people who have visited the site coming from social channels.

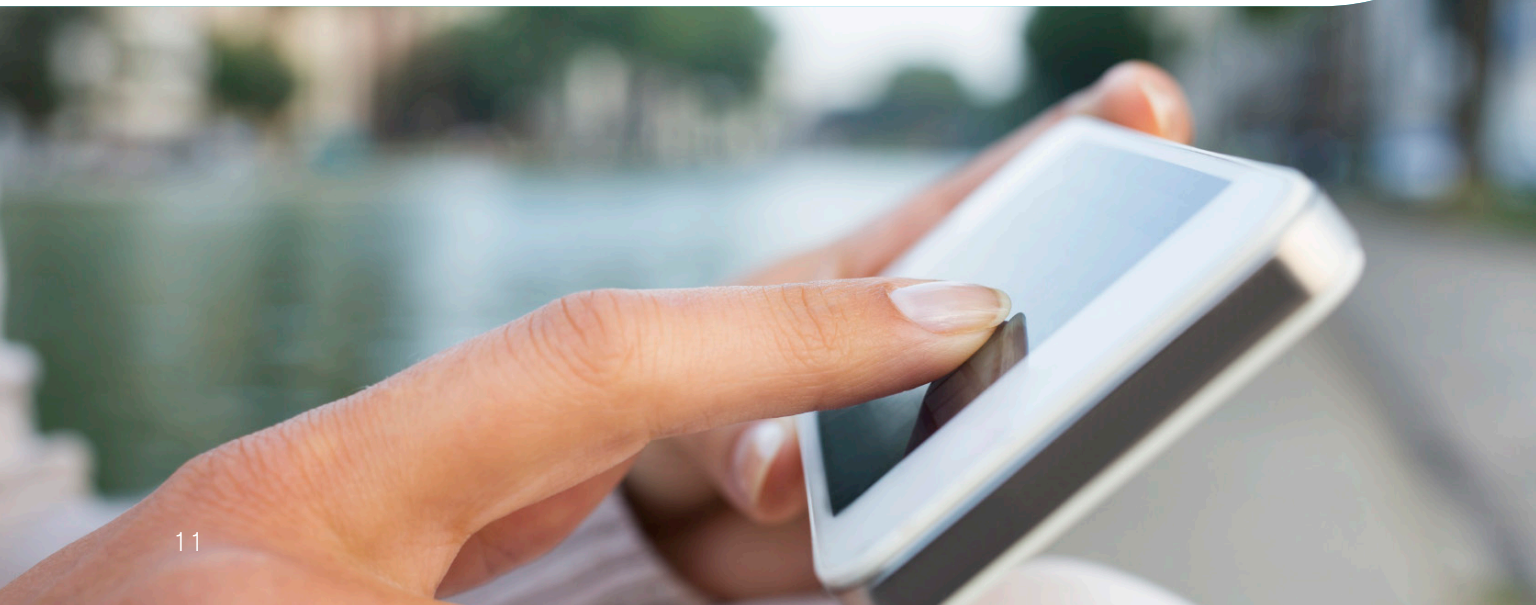
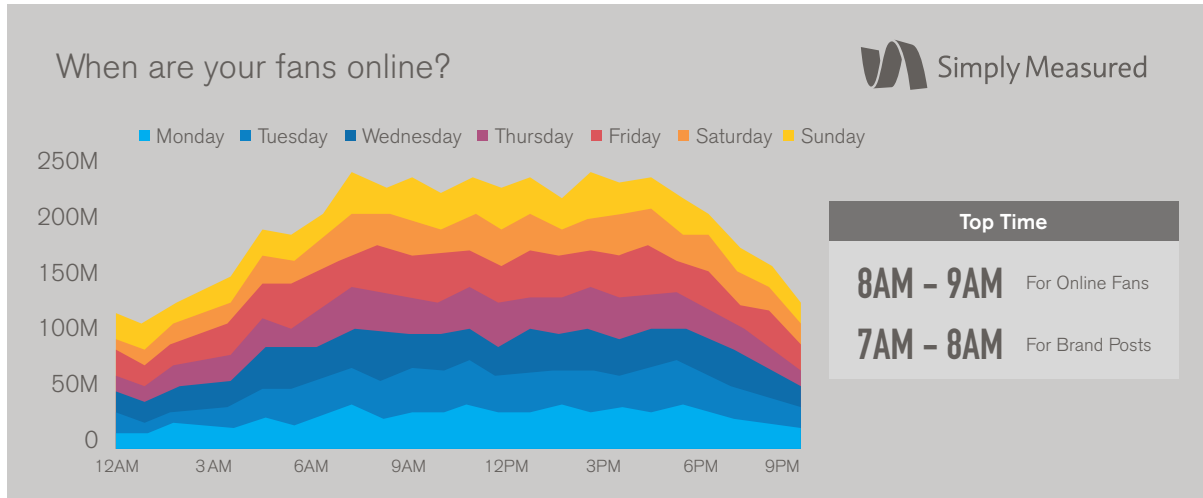
Another question you might want to ask yourself is where your social network fans are coming from. Facebook Insights, for example, provides a nice breakdown of referral sources to your fan pages. It also helps to know where your audience is coming from geographically. By doing this, you can geo-target your content in both earned and paid social media posts.



Finally, using solutions like CrazyEgg (heatmap tracking) or Google Analytics (analyzing clicks on your webpage), you can analyze how well the “follow us” buttons on your owned assets are doing (your website, blog, emails, etc.). Are they driving good click through rates? Which buttons and locations work better than others? What calls to action work better to drive follows? Answers to these questions will help you identify opportunities to increase your audience.

# WHEN

Examine your engagement by time. For example, if you're analyzing Facebook, using the Facebook Page Insights report can give you great data on when to post for maximum visibility. Knowing when your potential audience is the most active on social networks will allow you to schedule your content to take advantage of the situation.



## WHO

What kind of people make up your current audience? Who are the most engaged users, the influencers, and the people who drive the most visits? What is their gender breakdown? Age distribution? What industry do they work in, and whom do they work for?

This is where it helps to create social archetypes that represent the type of audience you are looking to attract. For example, is your audience motivated by discovery? Are they the cool hipsters of Twitter, posting what they see, experience and enjoy? Do they constantly monitor and retweet others who share information relevant to their passion? Do they have well-connected networks that can amplify stories and influence mainstream media?

To do this, look at your current audience. Analyze what they post – whether it's sharing news stories, evangelizing brands, engaging with other users, or just sharing photos of breakfast. Look for common characteristics in their profiles and their Tweets. When you know who they are, target users like them who would also benefit from your business.

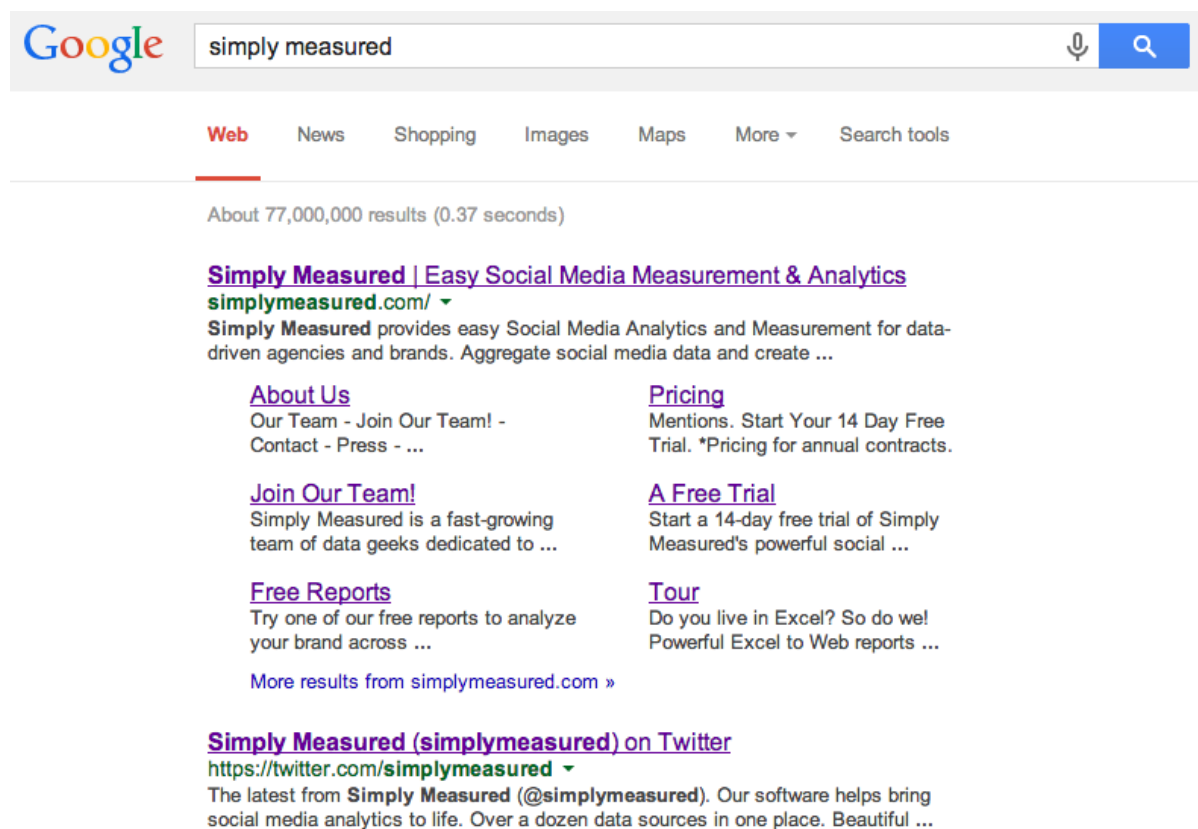
Then, look at your competitors' audiences. If you envy Company X's social audience, spend some time and effort analyzing their content, behavior, and metrics. In addition to number of fans or followers, you might also want to note their performance as it relates to engagement, responsiveness, frequency of posting, type of content and what percentage of feedback is positive, negative or neutral. ([You can read more about analyzing other channels in our guide, "How to Analyze Your Social Media Competitive Landscape."](#)) Also, consider any markets that they may not be targeting that you might benefit from.

Finally, consider your product – what are you selling, and who should buy it? Who benefits from the product? Where do these users live? Where do they work? What does their day-to-day lifestyle look like? What is their purchasing behavior? Where do they get their information, and how can you leverage your posts to engage with this audience?

# HOW TO ATTRACT USERS ON ANY CHANNEL

We've outlined a few tips that will help you gain the attention of new users, engage and retain that audience to get the most out of your social marketing strategy.

## 1. Use search optimization strategies in your social profiles



The screenshot shows a Google search for "simply measured". The search bar contains the text "simply measured" and a search icon. Below the search bar, there are navigation tabs for "Web", "News", "Shopping", "Images", "Maps", "More", and "Search tools". The search results show "About 77,000,000 results (0.37 seconds)". The first result is for "Simply Measured | Easy Social Media Measurement & Analytics" with the URL "simplymeasured.com/". The description states: "Simply Measured provides easy Social Media Analytics and Measurement for data-driven agencies and brands. Aggregate social media data and create ...". There are several sub-links: "About Us" (Our Team - Join Our Team! - Contact - Press - ...), "Pricing" (Mentions. Start Your 14 Day Free Trial. \*Pricing for annual contracts.), "Join Our Team!" (Simply Measured is a fast-growing team of data geeks dedicated to ...), "A Free Trial" (Start a 14-day free trial of Simply Measured's powerful social ...), "Free Reports" (Try one of our free reports to analyze your brand across ...), and "Tour" (Do you live in Excel? So do we! Powerful Excel to Web reports ...). A link for "More results from simplymeasured.com »" is also present. The second result is for "Simply Measured (simplymeasured) on Twitter" with the URL "https://twitter.com/simplymeasured". The description states: "The latest from Simply Measured (@simplymeasured). Our software helps bring social media analytics to life. Over a dozen data sources in one place. Beautiful ...".

Your profile is your calling card and often the first point of contact for a potential audience, so make sure it's just as complete and as branded as your corporate website. This means you need ensure your social profiles are optimized for search and use a good linking strategy. Consider optimizing your Facebook or Twitter profile information with relevant industry keywords that earn you visibility in search results. Because accounts like Twitter are viewable in Google search, if your profile links back to your website, you'll also earn extra traction in your SEO efforts.

## 2. Think in terms of cross channel community building

Though different social channels generally have very different user mixes; specific breakdowns are often very fluid, especially among younger audiences and the B2B market. The most successful social media managers leverage this knowledge when working on an audience building campaign, regardless of where they're looking to expand their audience. When you're looking to build this type of enormous audience, you're going to want to strive for total social media domination and make sure to integrate all the social tools you have available, making it easier for users to follow. That way, if someone follows your brand on Twitter, you can run campaigns that will inspire that user to interact on Facebook too, increasing your overall visibility.

## 3. Create exclusive content around the channel you want to promote

Along the same vein of cross-channel promotion, use certain channels to push out exclusive content that demonstrates your prowess as an industry thought leader. Then make your target audience follow you on that channel to see more. This works especially well for images and infographics – tease users with one compelling photo on Twitter, but make them follow your Pinterest page to see the full gallery. If you have meatier content to offer – a SlideShare presentation, or a guide like this one – offer a free download in exchange for a follow. If you look and sound like an industry leader, more users will look to your social profiles for leadership. This strategy encourages users to keep coming back to gain insight into your industry.



#### 4. Leverage social sign-in on your website

What's the goal of driving social traffic to your website? For many businesses, the call-to-action on a website is user registration that drives sales or helps populate data about your customers. However, many users get to a registration page and immediately balk at having to go through an overly complicated registration process. Using a sign-in widget that allows users to register with one of a few social profiles simplifies that process. In addition, because you're making it easier for users to engage, you'll likely see that more users share your content, that you have more engaged users on your website, and that users spend more time on your site. Capturing opt-in information while you're at it can help eliminate doubling up on profiles and will also help beef up your marketing lists at the same time.



#### 5. Engagement Equals Evangelism

Regularly and generously engage with your followers. Share, repost, retweet your followers' content, especially if they mention you in their posts. Ask their opinion and keep your conversations open-ended. Our studies show that when you boost your rate of response to your followers posts, and reduce the time it takes to respond to them, you encourage interaction with your brand's handle which has the potential to positively affect how your brand is viewed in social channels. Show your followers that you care about them as engaged consumers who have the power to shape their experiences with your brand.

## 6. Engage other brands

Whether they're brands that are smaller or larger than yours, engaging other brands can help you capture their followers. How does this happen? Think of the Twitter timeline – when you Tweet something to a brand's Twitter handle, often that brand favorites, replies to, or retweets your Tweet. Through retweets, your brand gains visibility as the retweet author shows their support for you to their own audience. And when an author replies to your Tweet, any user can expand that Tweet in the web version of timeline to see who replied.

## 7. Leverage your online and in-person connections

As a mover and shaker in your industry, it's likely that you have a network of not only employees, customers, vendors, partners, and prospects, but professional connections as well. Think outside the box in how to expand your audience base – whether it's through alumni groups, industry networks, or other business organizations that you have regular contact with. Building your following includes accessing these potential audiences. Remember: asking never hurts, and it's often what's needed to get the follow.

## 8. Promote your social channels EVERYWHERE

Make sure you include your social profiles in TV ads, on your website, on business cards, presentations, and any other content you share on the internet.

## 9. Leverage your brand name

Make sure your profile is aligned with your brand, that you own all the social profile pages or handles that represent your brand, and that your profile links back to your website.



## 10. Leverage influencers, celebrities and pop culture events to draw attention to your social networks

Consider Coca-Cola's "Big Game" commercial. The commercial generated a lot of talk on social channels when it aired during the Super Bowl. To ensure the conversation kept going past the campaign's original air date, Coca-Cola shared the video on their YouTube channel. Since it was posted on YouTube, the video has earned over 11,000,000 views, increased the channel's subscribers by 1,767, and has been shared over 11,000 times!

## 11. Make social media engagement a company-wide initiative

Make sure that your employees have company information – including your social profiles - in signature blocks, business cards, logos, presentations, etc. In addition, many businesses are using team or professional social accounts to connect with past and potential customers. Just be sure that if your team uses professional accounts they do so in a manner consistent with your business.

## 12. Reward your highly engaged users

If you've noticed a particular user evangelizing your brand, don't hesitate to drop them a note of thanks via a direct message or public post. If you can swing it, consider offering them a gift of value (such as a promo code, t-shirt, or some other branded gift) to thank them for their time and effort. Done right, this can inspire a flurry of repeat behavior as well as a feeling of goodwill toward your company. Make your engagement personal and personalized.



### 13. Put your money where your audience is.

All the major social sites are ramping up their paid options, and with good reason. With the proliferation of social media users comes a lot more content and social networks are trying to determine how to streamline those feeds to provide the best content, with the least amount of “noise”. Monetized campaigns can go a long way in helping you get noticed above all the social chatter, and grab a user’s attention so they’re interested in following you.



This site continues to offer a plethora of paid content including ads, promoted posts, page promotion, offers, apps, poll questions, check-ins, and even personal messages. The benefit of paid ads on Facebook is in the fact that Facebook is continually changing the algorithm for what should appear in the newsfeed, based on the sheer volume of content posted. [Facebook For Business](#) gives detailed information about choosing the right options to meet your goals, and tools to set budgets or even create ads and posts.

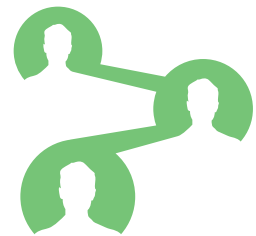
Because Facebook has collected so much data on its users, you can choose to filter your paid content by email address, age, gender, location and interests, creating different campaigns based on each of your target personas or target locations. Facebook also allows you to choose placement of your ads or promotions on desktop or mobile – for example, you can choose to advertise on the logout page. On Facebook advertisers are competing against other advertisers as they bid for placements against demographic data, but you can change ads in real-time to adapt to user behavior or to run A/B testing.



While Facebook leads the pack in terms of paid options, Twitter is not far behind. On Twitter, you can pay for promoted accounts, promoted tweets, promoted trends and more. [In a recent webinar, we outlined many of the benefits of paid advertising on Twitter](#), including the ability to target audiences and show up in user Twitter timelines, even if they aren't following you. In December, 2013, Twitter acquired MoPub, which allows native ads on mobile apps. This is good news for marketers as mobile has become the number one way for users to engage in social media.

### **Should You Buy Twitter Followers?**

*Despite the benefits of expanding your audience very quickly, buying Twitter followers does not guarantee success. Many of these purchased followers will not deliver in terms of engagement. And there's no assurance that they won't disappear as quickly as they were added.*



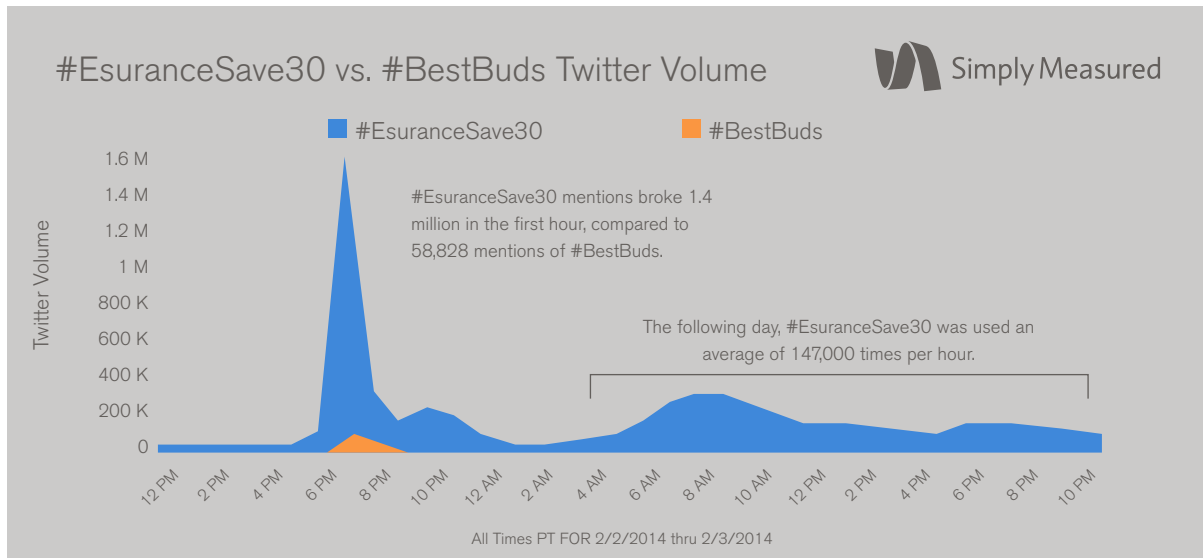
A new player to the paid promotion game (as of Fall 2013), Pinterest now offers several options, including personalized pin recommendations, promoted pins and rich pins (containing more information and details than in a regular pinned image; users do have the choice to opt-out of them if they choose). Pinterest also offers help for paid promotion creators, including SDKs for iOS and Android developers.



If you're looking to grow a B2B audience, LinkedIn offers many great paid options. This includes display ads, targeted InMail and polls. The audience targeting is sophisticated, allowing you filter your target audience by job title and function, seniority (e.g. "Vice President" or "Owners"), industry, geography, company size and membership in LinkedIn groups. You can also publish white papers and other content on LinkedIn, and use paid options to promote it.

## 14. Run dedicated campaigns to grow your audience

A great example of this was Esurance's post-Super Bowl ad. Following the Super Bowl, Esurance ran an ad asking viewers to Tweet the hashtag #esurancesave30 in order to enter to win \$1.5 million. The results on Twitter were phenomenal. Within less than an hour, the Esurance hashtag received over 1.4 million mentions and over the next 24 hours it accumulated over 3 million tweets.



The tactic helped Esurance grow their audience more than any other tactic they previously tried. Esurance gained over 143,000 Twitter followers the day after the Super Bowl. While this growth slowed significantly after the first 24 hours, and the brand saw a decrease in followers the following day, the overall impact was strong growing the brands audience by nearly 25 times.

@Esurance Total Account Followers



## 15. Analyze your efforts

Do you know your “sweet spot” for your social media posts? By this, we mean the number of daily Tweets that will keep your audience engaged without seeming like spam. Do you know which types of Facebook posts your audience engages most with? Do you know how your promoted content trends in relation to your organic content? Do you analyze your user acquisition and retention rates? Testing what works for your audience and analyzing the results can give you accurate insight into what you need to do and when. If you’re not analyzing these metrics and more, you’re not getting a complete picture of where you need to excel to build a colossal social media following. [Simply Measured’s full set of social media reports](#) offer an in-depth look into what’s working and using that knowledge, you can tailor your efforts to ensure you’re making the most of your social networks.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the best practices for maximizing your social network are based on smart search tactics, thinking outside your regular network, and accessing monetized options that make sense for your brand’s target audience. As you make plans to expand your audience, be sure you have your social channels polished and ready. But remember: people can unfollow just as easily as they followed. Once you get your followers, make sure you have the resources to keep them around with compelling content and regular engagement. The more proactive you are in engaging users, the more likely you are to earn the massive following you’re looking for.



## ABOUT SIMPLY MEASURED

Simply Measured is a fast-growing team of data geeks dedicated to making the world of analytics and reporting a better, more beautiful place.

Our goal is to put the tools to understand business data in the hands of business users. We think reporting should be simple, beautiful, and accessible for everyone – not just data scientists. Our software streamlines the process from data to deliverables and eliminates the countless hours spent on everyday reporting tasks. We do this by putting cloud data sources at your fingertips, providing a marketplace of best practice reports, and generating beautiful deliverables on the web, in Excel, and in PowerPoint with a couple of clicks.

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