



# WHITE PAPER

## The Hierarchy of Social Media Insight

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# The Hierarchy

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is a well known theory of human motivation that starts with meeting our basic physiological needs for food and water, and builds on those needs to achieve more complex needs of safety, love, self-esteem and self-actualization. The theory behind Maslow's hierarchy can be used to understand other processes as well, including the application of the scientific method to terabytes, petabytes, and yottabytes of social

No matter the size of your business, social media matters to you. You want and need to know what consumers are saying about you. There are many different approaches to this learning, each building on the previous stage.

We have outlined the stages of this learning process in the **Conversion Hierarchy of Social Media Insight**.



1. **Stage 1 Happenstance** reflects the most basic level of social media data understanding wherein social media information is consumed if and when it happens to come your way. Perhaps someone emails YouTube comments to you, or consumers leave postings on your website. What you learn depends upon what you happen to hear.

2. **Stage 2 Searching** reflects active seeking out of information, such as through the use of an internet search engine like Yahoo, Bing, or Google. The search may be a onetime occurrence and certainly isn't exhaustive or representative of all the information that actually exists. It may or may not reflect consumer slang or misspellings. It is painstakingly slow and insufficiently relevant. This is our 'Need to Hear.'

3. **Stage 3 Alerts** is the first attempt to gather information using an unbiased and standardized method. Setting up an alert system through a third party, such as Google Alerts, gives you access to data from a wide range of sources on a regular basis. Though all of the data will not be identified and some of the data won't be relevant, at least the data won't be biased due to the constraints associated with manual searches. The

time it takes a person to read through hundreds of pages of search findings to identify desired terms is given over to automated systems. However, the act of reading all of the findings and then and possibly recording them in a database is still manual. This is our 'Need to Hear Regularly.'



4. **Stage 4 Monitoring** is the first attempt to put some standardized rules around the data collection process. Search terms are now broader, more comprehensive and higher quality. Data is automatically added to databases which allow you to track the volume and source of data over time. Some offerings may even include sentiment analysis such that you can determine overall levels of positive and negative sentiment of the opinions collected. This is our 'Need to Hear the Masses.'

5. **Stage 5 Research** is the stage that finally turns data into knowledge. By applying strict scientific principles to the collection and analysis of the gathered opinions, valid and reliable generalizations can be made from data which may otherwise be biased, skewed, and unrepresentative of any population other than itself. This stage reflects data which has been carefully filtered through standardized and recognized processes of data quality. The contents of the data, the sentiment of the data, and the sources of the data have been carefully considered in order to determine how each piece fits into the overall scheme of the research objective. Regardless of how much data has been collected or where it has been collected from, it has been assembled in ways that allow you to grasp the opinions of the average online consumer, not just the most talkative online consumer. This is our 'Need to Hear Validly.'



6. **Stage 6 Insight** is the last stage, the one that all data fans aspire to. This is where data, which has been properly assembled and analyzed, empowers analysts to create insight, that amazing and powerful idea that comes out of nowhere to guide action plans and strategy.

**About Conversation Strategies:** Conversation Strategies is a social media market research firm based in the US and Canada. Conversation listens to consumers by applying scientific principles to the collection and analysis of social media data. Its strength lies in combining the expertise of respected market researchers with social media mavens.

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