Making Sense of Social Media Analytics (Podcast)

Mark Thompson: Welcome, everyone. This is Mark Thompson with StayOnSearch.com. I am joined today by Adam Covati, the founder and CTO of Argyle Social. Argyle Social is a company that provides professional social-media marketing software and analytics. Thanks for joining, Adam.

Adam Covati: Thanks for having me, Mark.

Mark: Well, before we get started, I just wanted to get a little bit of background on yourself and how you started Argyle Social.

Adam: Sure. Well, as you said, I've got a background in managing marketing products, specifically digitally marketing products, for about the last five years, with a large focus on email and, more recently, social. After having been in that market for quite a while, I have a very pragmatic, kind of practical approach to helping marketers manage marketing. And it's very important that they be able to work the nuts and bolts of marketing. So, what we set out to do with Argyle Social is provide a solution for managing and measuring your social-media marketing. And we kind of look at that from conversations or conversions, right? So that means that within our tool, we provide the ability for people to post to their social networks, measure the impact of that, and then see, also not only on the social side of it, but also within their website as well.

So that's kind of where you're talking about conversions. There's a lot of topics within that, to how do you measure that and what really means success. So, we aim to please there.

Mark: [laughs] OK, cool. Well, OK. So there's a lot of good questions that I wanted to ask you, all based around social-media analytics. And the first one is, I have a lot of challenges with some of my clients as far as aggregating all of this data. There's data from Facebook and Twitter and from your blog and LinkedIn. How does one even comprehend this data, and then how are we even able to aggregate it all?

Adam: Yeah. That's a great question because, when we first started working on the product, even before we really did anything, we started to talk to marketers, from working with them for a number of years. And we basically said, "OK, what are the problems you're having? What are you doing? How are you managing this today?". And what emerged was kind of a hierarchy of data aggregation. And people span that hierarchy. It doesn't matter whether you're a small business or enterprise; we saw people across the board. Hierarchies tend to start at anecdotal, which means that there are people out there who are using social media, and their only understanding of how it impacts their business is that, "Oh, well, company X that signed with us, they follow us on Twitter, or they heard about us from Twitter, or they were a fan on our Facebook page before they ever gave us a call". Right?

And I still actually hear that quite a bit. But people soon will graduate beyond that to say, "What is this doing? What's going on? Let's get some kind of information". And where people tend to go from there is actually what is just called a basic level. People use bit.ly or some other really

simple kind of measurement tool to look for, "People are clicking on our links." They're at a point where they watch, they keep an eye on, to some degree, how many followers they have. Right?

People who are doing that, and who basically start to see that they want to go a little bit further into it, they start to say, "OK, we're at this kind of semi-structured stage." They start throwing that into Excel. And I would say this is generally where I see most, I want to say good marketers.

Where people who, I think, are understanding the problem and at least trying to attack it, I see them building Excel spreadsheets. And this ranges from daily to weekly to monthly, of logging in to Twitter and checking how many followers they have.

Maybe the more advanced ones are counting replies and things like that, logging in to Facebook, doing the same, looking at their other social properties, like looking at YouTube and looking at subscribers and jotting that down in Excel, building up monthly reports, sending them to their boss or their clients, right? That's extremely common, and that seems to be the MO for a lot of agencies.

Once you get a little bit further beyond that, though, that's where things really start to get interesting. The funny thing about it is, that's where most other channels are. They're beyond the simple Excel spreadsheet, right? It's structured data that's being gathered on a continual basis through automated systems and that's available for reporting. Right?

Mark: Right.

Adam: And there's really not many people who have that level of a solution, because there's not a lot of solutions available freely on the market. When I say freely, I mean not just for free but also something that anybody can actually attain in some way. The last stage, I think, is advanced reporting and advanced analytics, where you say, "We've got a lot of data. We've got business-intelligence tools tied into it. We can do ad hoc reporting. We can slice and dice. We can integrate with other systems". Right?

And so, that's kind of the hierarchy. That's the way that I view the world in terms of where people fit. It's kind of like your standard bell curve, though I would say that it veers quite a bit to the beginner side of things, with a lot of people being closer to that really basic level. But we've seen this before with other channels, like pay-per-click and email. Of course, I lean heavily on the email references, being that I have a strong email background...

Mark: [laughs]

Adam: We've seen it mirror it very closely in that, with email, things just started out with people just wanting a tool to, as they would say back then, I shudder every time I hear people still say it, "blast out" to their list. They just wanted something that could blast, right? And then it got to the point where they were like, "Well, how many people are looking at this message?" Right? And so they said, "OK, well, let's count opens." And it was like, "All right, opens. Cool." And it was like, "Well, how many people clicked through."

And it's progressed, and now people do very sophisticated analytics for their marketing campaigns, A/B split testing and whatnot. That's all grown out of the fact that people understand now that you can put a dollar into email and, if you do it right, you can get $50 back. And when they see that, they're willing to spend more money and they can start to optimize and do better. And that's really what we're trying to provide for people.

Mark: Yeah. And that seems to be the hardest part. I'm definitely guilty of creating an Excel spreadsheet and tracking how many followers and all that. But when it really comes down to and the client says, "Well, what kind of business does this generate for me?" it's really hard to say. You kind of have some idea, as to say, "OK. Well, we started from here. Here's kind of our baseline. We had zero followers to start off with. But then, in month one, we had 40; in month two, we had 100. And you can see that it increased our traffic." But you can't really tell exactly how many people converted. It's hard to put an actual ROI number on it.

You're right. I think that's kind of where social-media analytics is going towards.

Adam: Yeah. There's a famous Drucker quote of "What gets measured gets managed." And I think that social media, right now, you said you're guilty of the Excel spreadsheets, right?

Mark: [laughs]

Adam: It's better than not doing it, right?

Mark: Right.

Adam: Right now people are measuring leading indicators, because they're not good at measuring the actual outcomes, because it's difficult. It's the same thing with email. We still talk to a lot of people whose big value in email is "How many subscribers do we have? We want more subscribers." That's not valuable. What's valuable is engaged subscribers, or subscribers who convert. And so, really taking the time to look at some advanced ways that you can start to measure conversions through social media, which can be done with web analytics and a little bit more rigor in the marketing side of things, it's attainable, but it is difficult right now.

And I think, for people, it's starting to understand which performance indicators are best to measure, and which ones are better leading indicators, or at least indicators that are closer to the outcome. Right? So it's not necessarily just fans on Facebook, but how many people click through or what people do on your site after they've been a fan.

Mark: Right, exactly. Yeah. I guess the other side of things would be, for especially Fortune 500 companies, who may have 10, 15, 50 people involved in the social-media strategy, it's like how do you aggregate all of that data? Because everyone's out there conversing on Twitter, on Facebook. And how do you take all of that and say, "OK. Sally here, she was able to generate X amount of traffic, and this many people bought our product." It gets even harder when there's multiple people involved in that strategy.

Adam: Definitely. And you have varying levels of expertise there. So Sally may be totally savvy with the technology, understands web analytics and tagging and understanding all that.

And John may not get any of it, and he may just be out there Tweeting with abandonment, [laughs] posting whatever.

Mark: Right. [laughs]

Adam: And he may actually be bringing in more sales than Sally, but he can't prove it. Right? Some of the burden of getting people to better measure things and better account for what they do, again, is to lead to accountability, is to motivate them, but also to provide them with the right tools and the right knowledge, right?

Mark: Yeah.

Adam: And I don't want to make this a walking sales pitch for our product...

Mark: [laughs]

Adam: To some degree, that's what we're striving to do, and then we have built tools to do that. There are many ways to do that, but a large part about is getting that done is ensuring that everybody within your organization has access to the ability to properly push content into social-media networks. So, whether that be a policy, which might just be a simple work flow of always go to this site, plug in your URL, get the tracked version, and then place that into Facebook or Twitter or your blog, YouTube, or whatever it may be, putting that policy in place helps to ensure that people at least have an avenue to account for what they do.

Mark: Right. That's awesome. OK. OK. Well, let's kind of change gears here. In terms of, a company is ready to use social-media analytics, at what stage are they ready for that? There's a lot of free solutions out there. There's a lot of professional analytics solutions out there. At what point are you ready to move forward from a free solution to a professional solution?

Adam: Yeah. Well, I'm a big believer in, "You get what you pay for". There's some power that you can get out of having as a free solution. But I think, really, what it comes down to is, is this strategic in some way? How important is it to you? You may not want to use that S-word of "strategic." But if you feel like there's real value in social media, if you're at the point where you're seeing that it's driving sales or leads or whatever goal outcome you have, but you want to do better. Just as you're at the point where you want to optimize, you want to improve, you're going to have a hard time doing that with a lot of the free tools that are out there, because they're not focused on providing value that a marketer needs.

A lot of them are focused a little bit more on the vanity side. Which is fun. Hey, I love seeing that I have more followers, and I love seeing that I posted a link and I got 300 clicks. That's fantastic, right? That drives my ego...

Mark: [laughs]

Adam: And hey, we all get motivated by that, whether we're marketers or not.

Mark: Right.

Adam: But at the end of the day, if I'm doing marketing with this, I need to know more information. And I need to know, do the links that I post that go to site X get more clicks than the ones that go to site Y. Or, better yet, do the links I promote in the morning do this, get more clicks? Do the posts I put on Facebook in the afternoon get more replies? Which, by the way, we do tend to see that, in general, posts to Facebook and Twitter get more replies after lunch.

Mark: OK.

Adam: Yeah. It just seems like people, after lunch, are a little less motivated to work and a little more motivated to catch up with friends or get news or whatever distraction they may be able to find.

Mark: [laughs]

Adam: But the thing is that, when you start to say, you're not going to find that out as easily from a lot of the free tools. Now, if you're going to looking to do is to just account for the impact of social media to some degree, like, "Is this doing anything for us?" free might still be the way to go. But when you say to yourself, "What I need to know is how I can squeeze more juice out of social media. How can we get more sales out of this? We've got 10,000 followers on Twitter. They don't seem to be converting. Or I don't know if they are, but it doesn't seem to be having an impact. I need to know how to utilize that channel better."

When someone is saying that, or when you can convince the CMO or whoever it may be that they should be saying that, that's when you need to start looking at paying for tools, because those are the tools that are going to let you prove ROI and improve ROI. And it's just going to be very hard to do otherwise.

It's a difficult kind of a catch-22, because it's hard for the channel to be taken seriously when you're using funny-sounding-name tools that do one thing and don't work together and you're cobbling it all together in random spreadsheets, right? It's all in different time frames and measured in different ways.

Mark: Right.

Adam: It's hard for the channel to be respected, right? And because of that, it can be hard to get money sometimes. But if you're asking the right questions and you can show a little bit of success in doing stuff, in terms of finding better times or showing how you can optimize something and how more data would allow you to optimize more, then you start to see the road and you start to see the path towards really starting to ratchet that up.

Mark: Right. Yeah, I totally agree with what you're saying. There's a lot of small business owners that I've worked with that say, "Hey, I need something better than Google Analytics". It's like, well, why do you need something better than Google Analytics? What type of data do you need to be gathering that Google Analytics doesn't provide? And they'll sit there and they'll be like, "Hmm. You're right." And it's almost like you need to have action items from your findings. If you don't act on the things that you find out, or if you don't have someone that's analyzing the data to say, "Hey, OK. Well, based on our time on site or our bounce rate, we need to improve these pages," and if you don't actually follow through with it, the data means nothing.

So, there needs to be a reason why you need a professional solution, and you need to have the resources to actually follow through with your findings and having an action-item list.

Adam: Yeah, well-stated. Well-stated.

Mark: OK. I kind of want to talk about key performance indicators for each type of social network. They vary, depending on which social network you're engaging in. So, as far as Twitter, what are the main KPIs you look at? Do you just look at Twitter followers and people you're following, or what do you really look at?

Adam: Yeah. Just before we can even dive in there, I do want to say, this is probably one of the more confusing and difficult areas of social media, in general, because it's hard to compare apples to oranges in terms of looking at even Twitter to Facebook, which is to that compare relatively closely. So, understanding what things to measure for each network is pretty important, and then being able to understand which ones actually compare to each other in some way. So on Twitter, obviously, there is the followers. That's important because it's one of the top-level numbers. But what, really, I try to focus on, on Twitter is your replies and your re-tweets, because I'm going to go and throw the E-word out there on the engagement, right? It's a number, it is rather a word that a lot of people will talk about: "You need to increase engagement. You need to be engaging".

Re-tweets and mentions alone do not measure engagement, right? There are, again, a leading indicator of it. So if you have a lot of re-tweets and a lot of mentions, that's good.

But what you really need to be asking yourself is, how many re-tweets do I have, say, per 1,000 followers, or per 100 followers, depending on how many followers you have. And also, how does that relate to the number of posts that I have, right? Because what we want to find is the right balance between posts I put out there that people respond to or share with their network. Right?

Because those impact and drive further conversations. And they also drive brand loyalty and a lot of these other soft and squishy things that are all valuable. But at the end of the day, re-tweets are extremely valuable because they drive viral traffic into your network.

I'll jump into Facebook here because it is very similar to Twitter. You are tracking things like comments and likes. Those are extremely valuable. And because they also get your posts into their time line, which is important because that helps to drive more viral spread of things. Also, shares, if they share your content with their network.

The upside of Facebook is that because Facebook provides their Insights tool, which you can utilize...if you have a fan page, you have access to that; that does give you aggregate information about impressions, so you can start to understand a little bit more about how many people are actually viewing each of your posts as well.

Facebook does have a lot of other data as well that's kind of given at the higher aggregate level, like demographics and whatnot. Those are useful to pay attention to and help you to understand and tailor your marketing message that you use on Facebook. But they're not always as powerful

in terms of understanding if it's successful because it's more just kind of general data about who you're talking to.

Mark: Right, right.

Adam: I do think looking at things like your impressions and your clicks for impressions and the number of shares you get, again, kind of looking at things in terms of ratios, right? Not just raw numbers, but out of how many people looked at this or at least were exposed to it, how many did something? And that's always important. I'll go back to email here, because when you send something out, you don't say, "We got 1,000 opened". You say what was your open rate. Because if you sent it to 1,000 people and you got 1,000 opens, that's fantastic. But if you sent it to 100, 000 people and you got 1, 000 opens, it's not very valuable, right? So always keep in mind that you want to be looking at things in terms of ratios.

Mark: OK.

Adam: Now, to jump into a little bit of a different space, I'll talk about YouTube briefly. YouTube is interesting because in YouTube the comments are a little bit less valuable. It does depend on your vertical. Comments may be a worth a lot if you're in a little bit more serious space. But in the straight B2C area, comments oftentimes have very little value. It's good to see a lot of them because it means that people are engaging to some degree. But it's very hit-or-miss with YouTube, with a lot of miss. So there I tend to focus a bit more on subscribers, views, and ratings. Right? You really want to take a look and say, how many people here, really, actively want to follow me, right? Actually want to pay attention to what I'm saying. And then do watch that. So you kind of have that insight to see that, and you can kind of watch things take off that way. That's good to watch.

For all of these things, I'd also say that it's very valuable to watch them over time, right? To know what they are before you start a campaign so you have a baseline, and to watch them during the campaign and after. You want to know if this campaign had lasting impact and immediate impact. Right? So it's not a point-in-time thing. You need to have a baseline.

Now, one of the last areas that's kind of a totally different genre is the blog. This is one area that there's a lot of value in the fact that, through your blog, you can tie it into web analytics. And I would definitely recommend that if you have a blog, you need to have your web-analytics solution on there as well.

But there you can track visitors, and you can track subscribers to your RSS feed, using something like FeedBurner. And that's definitely valuable. But it comes back to, similar to re-tweets and mentions, I would definitely be paying attention to how many comments you get on your posts. That's huge.

You can use some tools out there, like Google Alerts and things like that, to watch for links. So your posts, try to understand how many people are out to look to track out of the common blogging tools. You can start to see how many people are sharing your content externally.

You can also to some degree look for references to your blogs on social networks, the more open ones like Twitter. That's a little bit hit or miss because of all the length short engine stuff like that.

Mark: Yep. And I think something that's extremely important is relevancy. You know one thing I noticed when I looked at my Google analytics I'll see that I get a lot of traffic from StumbleUpon, but those people are only staying on for maybe 30 seconds. And then but if you look at take like Spin.com which is a social bookmarking site for Internet marketers, those people are staying on for three and a half, four minutes. So I know that if I can get a post on the front page of spin.com that that's going to drive much more targeted traffic to my site.

Adam: Yeah. Exactly. And I think that's the difference and that's why web analytics are so important in blogs. You can get detailed data but that's the big difference between Twitter followers and Twitters followers who re-tweet you or mention you. All followers are not of the same ilk. They're not all worth the same amount and you need to understand how you can isolate those who are more valuable and understand how you can reach out to them and target your content to them because those are people who are going to provide value to you.

Mark: Yeah, that's for sure. I wake up every morning and there's 20 new Twitter followers but I'd say 80% of them are all spam. They have 10,000 followers but only 20 tweets in total. You're right though, I mean relevancy is huge.

Adam: Yeah. Yeah. And you really start to get into things. Once you're following these basic things I've mentioned. That's a great point. When you start looking at Twitter you can start to say all right well of the people who re-tweet me, what's their follower count. Because it's someone who has 50 friends on Twitter re-tweets me it really doesn't have any impact. But if someone with 23,000 friends who are engaging in and if they follow 500 people and they have 23,000 people following them, a re-tweet from that person is like gold. So at least the followers are somewhat related to your vertical in somewhat right?

Mark: Right.

Adam: But you have to imagine someone with that many followers, unless they are a random celebrity, they have that many followers because people see value with what they do. Everything they can do for you is of a lot more value. So understanding who those people are. You're not going to spot those people and you're not going to know when those events happen unless you start to get this basic data and then you start to grow on top of that.

Mark: Yeah, I think that's why social media monitoring is so big. Understanding who the key influencers are in your industry. You know, if you can get 10 key influencers to follow you and they're re-tweeting your content, that just builds just massive amounts of credibility to your blog and to your personal brand.

Adam: Definitely.

Mark: OK, well, that's all good stuff. One question I had is where do you see the future of social media and how social media analytics is going to play a role in making business decisions?

Adam: Yeah, I'll kind of fall back a little bit here on what I was saying about email. But also about pay-per-click. If you look at pay-per-click it's a very similar story to email, if anything, more compelling. People see that with pay-per-click, Google AdWords, whatever option you may be using, you can put in a certain dollar amount. I can invest $1,000 there and I can get a certain amount out. You're not going to know that right off the bat but with a little bit of work you can get there. So people are going to be finely tune a pay-per-click campaign and you can get a lot of value out of that.

Email is a very similar story. You can put in a certain amount. You can get a certain amount out and you can optimize that and you can improve it. They're going to be taken very seriously and looked at as serious marketing channels.

Right now social, depending on who you talk to, sometimes is taken seriously, oftentimes isn't. I do see that social media is going to trend towards that same path that ppc and email have taken. Slowly people are starting to see, some very quickly but many not so quickly.

I've seen this value is there. And they are starting to see that if we put a little bit of money and some time and effort into social media we can get value straight out of it. And we really can see some impact there. As that ramps up we're going to start to see that it does play a big decision into where we allocate money and resources.

I don't know if it's going to change marketing strategies in a large way, but it definitely will open up some doors. There are definitely some circles and some areas where there are really hot social networks and you may find that people will divest a lot of current marketing plans and invest in social media.

When I was in email I saw people ditching print ads. They had been advertising in newspaper and magazines for 10 years and they totally stopped doing it because they just couldn't justify the cost. But they were such fantastic returns on email that it just made so much more sense to stop doing it and to start picking email even more.

I saw someone actually stop making their own catalogs and switch completely over to the email market. And one thing, a huge transition for them.

I think we're going to see that for social media in some cases but I don't want to ring the social media bell too loudly because for a lot of people that doesn't make sense. Their target is not entirely there. But for some verticals and for some specific niches, it's going to make a ton of sense to put a lot of money into there because you just get a totally connection.

Mark: Yeah. I think small business owners are really starting to catch on. It's more because they obviously don't have these huge budgets to pay-per-click advertising. So setting up a Facebook account or setting up a Twitter account is free. The only... [overlapping talks]

Adam: It levels the playing field in some ways. Because if I'm competing against a $100 million corporation they can have a great email marketing campaign. They can do all sorts of direct marketing. They can do a huge pay-per-click campaign. But it doesn't mean they can connect with their customers better on social media. It doesn't mean that they understand social media or will have as good of a campaign there. You don't need to invest... a $100 million

company might be able to do some crazy social geared sharing things with all sorts of generated content and what not. But at the same time they may not be able to build and maintain that quality engaging Facebook page.

A small business owner if you set up right in time, you can do that and you can have just as powerful a presence as a very large company. If not more powerful because oftentimes people don't want to engage with a Facebook organization but as a small business you can actually be much more personal.

Mark: Yep. That's very true and I think you know what else plays into that is localized marketing, kind of like Group On and Living Social. Those are huge for local business owners and if you can tie those specials into your Facebook and Twitter account and you've built a localized presence with that, it can really be powerful.

Adam: Yeah, and you can really leverage brand loyalty there, especially if you're not like a chain. Chains can, too, but a lot of these mom and pop shops or similar type if it's an agency of whatever it may be, you can get people who want to be a fan of their local coffee shop, because they like the fact that it's quirky and it is what it is, right?

Mark: Yeah.

Adam: If you gain a lot more update than that with perhaps being a fan of Starbucks.

Mark: Right. Right. Let's change gears and talk about tools. I know you're a little biased on Argyle Social obviously, but what type of free tools are out there that people can use just to play with and test the waters?

Adam: Yeah, I would not recommend everybody just go out and use Argyle. I think it's... obviously I love it. I think it's a great tool, but not everybody is at that stage. Not everybody should pay for their social media tool yet. If you're just getting started or you just want to understand if there's any impact, I definitely recommend using a URL tracking all the links that you put out there. Leads is a good start for that. It's free. It's available. It could use some basic metrics. It doesn't do as good of a job on trending things but it's going to give you some information to see if things are working, if you're seeing any uptake. And you need that basic information.

If you're using Facebook you definitely need to be logging in or looking at the Insights tool. It's a little hard to find sometimes to track down stuff in Facebook, like ...well you can find almost anything on Facebook.

But the tool is pretty good. They've done a decent of exposing information about what people are doing and if people are interacting. Then pay attention to those emails they send out about your fan page about how many people, how many fans you got and things like that.

We've mentioned a number of times, Google Analytics you need to have something installed, Google is the number one free platform out there for web analytics. I know of massive corporations using Google Analytics and getting a lot of value.

Most agencies I talk with say: "Oh, yeah, the client is using Omniture and we have Google installed on there because it's just the easiest for us to get some data and it's powerful. It is not the easiest solution to use at times.

So sometimes I see people asking for something else, but spend a little bit of time digging around, maybe attend some of the free webinars or some of the tutorials out there. You can get a lot of value out of Google and you can use the Google link builder.

So make sure that you're putting parameters on the end of your Google Analytics. The end of your links or you shorten them so you get a little bit more context. This is something that Argyle does with every link that we post. Every time I post a link to... if I send a link out, the same thing to Facebook and Twitter, each one gets an individual link. So I know exactly what, they have all got individual paths.

Now, you might not be able to do that every time but if you want to run a task or a campaign or something take the time ahead of time to build out a couple links. Send them to your team.

Say: "Look, these are all tracked accordingly. When we use these links we'll know that it was part of this campaign and we can look in Google later or Omniture if you have it or whatever it may be. We can actually see that, "Oh, this is driven from our social media campaign".

Those are the types of things that are going to help you understand if you're having impact, right? I would definitely recommend that you set up Google alerts for your brand name, or your product names. It's a great way to do some really simple monitoring.

It's does pick up if you've got a name that's really common like Argyle, we're Argyle Social, but we do look for some references. You get some funny things, but some people have a little bit more of a unique name or you do have a specific space, you can search for something that's a little bit more closely matched to what you do.

It's very helpful and it can pick up a lot of references, and it can pick up complaints and stories and stuff like that. So, that needs to be in your arsenal as well. You can set that up to do it in real time or to do a daily digest, so that's useful.

Mark: I use tracker.com, which does a really good job. It's very basic, it does exactly what I need and now it's free which is nice.

Adam: Yeah, that is nice. That's a good solution. The other thing I would suggest as well, or at least I want to make people aware of, is things like Twitterfeed. That's useful for getting you're blog posted automatically to Twitter. I just want people to pay attention to how many things they automate.

So, things like automating posts from Twitter to Facebook, and Facebook to Twitter, and automating blog to Twitter, and blog to Facebook and stuff like that. Be aware that those things can be very valuable and very time saving, but are not good at tailoring content.

Your audience on Twitter may be very different from your audience on Facebook , and if you're not aware of that, and you're not targeting on how you speak to each one, then you may find

yourself being unfriended or unfollowed, or remove from the Facebook stream, it's just a flood of information that's not relevant, right?

Keep that in mind. It's a really good idea to try to use whatever tools you can to leverage content across multiple networks. Just remember that you may need to take a little bit of time to personalize it to each network to make sure that everybody's getting what they should be getting.

Mark: Yes. I think that's a very good point because I use HootSuite to manage all of my Twitter following and messages, but one thing you can do is, you automate it. It'll automatically post to your Twitter and Facebook account. I still let it post to my Twitter account but I don't let it go to my Facebook account because your not able to personalize it as much. When you actually, manually go in and insert a link within your Facebook fan page, you have a lot more options. Whereas with HootSuite, it just pushes it out and you can't really tailor the message. So I think that's a good point.

Adam: Yes, definitely. For us in Argyle that was a huge thing. We started with a very similar tool just to start things up, but we actually made sure that one of the things we did, was give people the ability to post to Facebook and to pick the thumbnail that's going to show up, edit the text that shows up, schedule those posts, and to do them independent of each other. So, I don't post to Facebook and Twitter at exactly the same time, I can stagger things. So people who may be getting both of my feeds because they're a fan of me in both places, don't always get exactly the same content at exactly the same time.

Mark: OK. Those are some really good tools. I use probably half of them, but I'll definitely check out all of those. So, let's talk about Argyle Social a little bit. What differentiates you from Radian6, or some of the other solutions out there?

Adam: Yes, well one of the big differences is that we take a very, as I said, a practical approach to what marketers need. Right off the bat I will say though, that there's a lot of solutions out there right now that focus very strongly on monitoring. So the focus is to help you spot conversations, or things that are happening on the Internet, whether that be through Twitter or Facebook, or message boards, or any areas like that, based off of a product name, keywords, things like that. We don't do that, that's not the focus of our solution.

The focus of our solution is to help you to manage and measure what you do, right? So it's not what someone else is saying, though that does play into it. What it is, is we start off with a content management system from the point of view that you use our tools to pot to Twitter and Facebook. Those posts, when they have a link, we encode those links with structured data, so that we can easily get a lot of information out of it. Then it also helps to push good information into your web analytic solution.

So, that's the first part of it, is that we help you to manage your networks, we help you to post it on and get your good quality content out to them. You can schedule things, set up campaigns where people are scheduling stuff more than a month out. They really set up a plan of posting scheduled content and then they, yeah, it's impressive what people are doing.

It's a tool that a lot of people have been looking for, in terms of saying, "This is my calendar, I'm going to go ahead and make sure I have something on these specific days that co-ordinate with

what we are doing, and then I'm going to go in and manage it from a day-to-day perspective as well", right? Some additional tweets that are friendly and relevant to things that are happening right now.

Mark: Right.

Adam: Now, the second part of that is, once you've gone and posted things out, you want to understand the performance. So what that means, is that we help you to see for every link that you post to your social network and for some [inaudible 34:40] customers, they're very link heavy. They're always posting to products, to blog posts they make, or their big curate content, so they'll post to other people's blogs. For those people that definitely want to see how those links perform, it's a question of which content performs better than other content. It's also a question of which time slots, or which ways of targeting things. When I use a more laid back, fun attitude, people tend to engage more, they tend to click more often.

I'm sure some people would be more business-y, right? You can start to analyze that, and that allows you to start to optimize it.

The other side of it is, that we also recently launched more of a conversation side of it. So, what that means is, that we're actually showing all the replies for weeks comments, likes and what not on Twitter and Facebook. I should say, those as the two big networks that we support right now. We will be branching out to blogs, YouTube, and stuff like that in the future.

So, really what we're giving the ability to do, is post to your networks and to measure the impact. The last piece of that, is that we do integrate with your website by pushing, as I said, data to your web analytics. That is done in a structured way so that no-one really has to think about it. You set it up once and then we automatically do it.

That way, whenever you post a link anywhere, it always has information about who posted it, what time it was posted, if there's any campaign which you want to include, what shell it was posted to. So when you look at Google Analytics and set up things 50% direct, the you start to see Twitter and Facebook show up, even if someone is using something like TweetDeck, or a mobile application, because we're filling in that data.

So we're starting to make your website analytics more valuable. And the last piece of that website, is that we also do conversion tracking, so that can start to understand exactly the value that everything drove. So I can say that when I posted this stuff onto Facebook, or this stuff onto Twitter, it drove leads or sales, or whatever it is that you want tracked.

And that's naturally what we things as, a practical point of view of helping you to measure and manage your marketing, that you can understand the true order of live social media.

Mark: Wow, yes, that's awesome. It sounds kind of like Google Analytics conversion tracking, but specific to social media, which is something, that there's not a lot of solutions out there that do that.

Adam: Yes, we're excited about that.

Mark: Yes. So who is the ideal client for you? Would it be the medium to larger corporations, or can small business owners use this toll as well?

Adam: I mean really, it does fit well across the board for our pricing, which is right now at $150 a month. It is a little high for smaller businesses. However, if your business uses the free tools and you're seeing value, and you want to optimize that, I definitely that's checking it out. We do have a 30 day free trial, so you can try it out, get in there and see if you can prove that value. For people who are a little bit larger, so for someone like a coffee shop or something, it's definitely not the right fit, it's a little bit overweight. With the detailed analytics we provide, Excel reports and stuff like that, it is a bit much.

But for people who are, whether it's for agencies it makes a lot of sense because we take out the monotony. We track your Facebook and Twitter accounts. Every night we download a whole bunch of metrics for them and we build up Excel reports. They're downloadable by timeframe.

You just save yourself all that time of logging in and dumping it into Excel. So, there's a good market there for anybody who is in the mid-market space, or anybody who has got a little bit of a marketing budget to spend, and sees social media as something that can generate money for them. You can easily justify this, if you can find a few extra clients, or sell a few extra items in your store by optimizing social media, then you can justify the expense.

Mark: OK, awesome. I will say that I did the free trial and it's a great tool. I highly recommend that everyone goes and at least tries it out. You also do weekly demos, is that right?

Adam: That's right. I think if you go ar.gy/webcast, I believe that links to the latest sign up page for the demos. You can go and check out the webcast, that's Saturday evenings or afternoons for you to check out, and let's just walk through the tool and it gives you an overview. Also, just check out argylesocial.com, we do cover the features and some information and some responses from some of our users.

Mark: All right Adam. Well hey, I appreciate your time and good luck with everything with Argyle Social.

Adam: Thank you very much, thanks for your questions, it was a great conversation and take care.

Mark: OK, I'll talk to you soon. Bye.

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