



The #1 social media metric no one is talking about.

My friend, a brilliant attorney named Erin Ogden of OgdenGlazer, LLC in Madison, recently told me this story:

*“I saw another attorney today at lunch who I hadn’t seen in awhile. He said, ‘Oh, Erin! I am going to be sending a client your way. It is a friend of a friend who I think will fit with you well.’ Now, did he already make that connection prior to lunch? Probably, knowing him. But now the thought has solidified and the push to follow up is more present than before. Did it ‘get’ me the original thought for referral? No. But it got it closer to actually happening. And I have found that once you get one referral from someone, you get more. **You become more entrenched as top-of-mind.**”*

Top of mind. What a powerful yet nebulous term. In my estimation, ‘top of mind’ is really a lesson in associations. The smell of a campfire is something you may associate with summer nights, while the sound of a whistle may remind you of a particularly good coach (or one who made you run when you messed up—thanks Coach Damron). In Erin’s case, an attorney saw her and it triggered the “referral for Erin” association.

Top of mind.

*What a powerful, yet often under-played,
benefit of social media.*

ROTOMA—the ROI of Social Media Top of Mind

There's one question I hear more than any other when designing digital and social media campaigns for prospective customers: **“What’s my ROI?”** (Return on Investment)

How often have you asked yourself this question in relation to your online business activities?

How often have you tried, in vain, to calculate your return on investment in digital and social media? Has it led to apathy? Or worse yet, a negative association altogether?

Can this stuff really work? Can social media really help me in my business? **The answer is yes, because of the one social media metric no one is talking about.**

First off though, let’s go back to 2008.

I had a sales job (um, I mean I was regional sales director, and later a regional vice president) that required travel from Madison to Indianapolis. I'd work in Indianapolis starting Monday morning, stay there during the workweek to visit customers and prospective customers, and return to Madison on Friday evening.

Challenge No. 1

Madison is in the Central time zone. And Indianapolis? The Eastern time zone. In other words, you lose an hour driving to Indy and gain that hour back on the way to Madison. Because my typical Monday meetings would start in Indianapolis at 9 a.m., I would leave Madison at 2:30 a.m. to make it on time.

Challenge No. 2

You're driving on Monday mornings from Madison to Indianapolis. What do you do in the car during that time? Listen to music? Audiobooks? Foreign language instructionals? I did all of those things. After a few weeks of the same Monday morning routine over and over, I realized I was wasting a lot of time. “I should really make phone calls,” I thought to myself.

Challenge No. 3

Is it socially acceptable to make phone calls before 8 a.m. Central time on a Monday morning? Nope. Don't ever do that. Trust me.

Here's what I discovered though. It was okay to call people at their place of business, if I knew they wouldn't be there. "What's the point of that?" you may be asking yourself.

This is the point: During that five-and-a-half hours in the car, I was able to leave almost 200 voicemail messages. I wouldn't just leave voicemails to follow up, check in, or touch base. You know, those terms we so often use when we just want to ask someone, "Are you ready to buy yet or not?"

Instead, I'd tell stories via these messages to highlight what was happening in my industry. I'd share thoughts on what I saw working well, what I saw not working well, and what my prospective or actual customers could learn from my experience in the sales field.

Nobody answers office calls at 5 a.m.— and that's a good thing.

I left those voicemails knowing two things:

- 1.** Customers and prospective customers, arriving at their offices on Monday morning, would press a button to listen to their voicemail and they'd hear my voice.

- 2.** Customers and prospective customers would be reminded of me as a result of hearing my voice.

For any of us working in business, there's a huge difference between someone thinking about you and someone not thinking about you. To use a term from biology, there is virtual half-life related to this fact. As the chasm between 'not thinking about you' and 'thinking about you' grows, the less and less likely it is that someone will consider you and your business at the right time.

During my long Monday-morning drives, the voicemails I'd leave—from a very binary standpoint—could be summed up in two regards:

- 1.** Either I left those voicemails or I didn't. I'd use time productively or simply waste it.

- 2.** Either my customers and prospective customers were thinking about me or they weren't.

ROTOMA—the ROI of Social Media Top of Mind

As easy as it was for me to leave these voicemail messages, it was equally as easy for me not to do it.

I really had no idea which voicemail had impact and which didn't. But if I didn't take those actions, though, I had absolutely zero chance of maintaining top-of-mind awareness. At least these voicemails gave me a chance. Without the activity I had zero return, while with the activity I at least had a hope of some return on my time investment in the form of 'top of mind' presence in those customers' minds.

Guess what happened?

It wasn't necessarily the Monday morning I'd leave those voicemails, nor the Monday after that, or even the Monday after that one, but eventually, I'd hear back from these customers and prospective customers. They'd say, "You know, Spence, a few months ago you shared a story, and I'm running into a similar situation now. What was that story again?"

These people, with whom I was trying to stay top-of-mind, would ask me for help as a consultant, not as a salesperson. They would ask for my assistance very, very early in the sales cycle, and not near the end when I would compete based on price or another commodity.

Let's consider this same situation when it comes to your social media.

How difficult is it to post something on social media? About as easy as something gets, right? You type some words, add an image if appropriate, and hit publish, post, or share. How easy is it not to post on social media? Equally as easy, right? There are no looming deadlines or demands.

There's a major difference between my voicemails and our social media shares though: scale.

Think about this; it would take me over a half a working day to reach fewer than 200 people in 2008, and now you can reach hundreds (or possibly thousands) of people in minutes.

**Let me repeat that—
it's possible for you to reach thousands of people
in minutes, even seconds, via social media.**

Back to my friend Erin:

“Social media can be both a vehicle to get me in front of people through posts and showing that I am a source of knowledge, but it can also help me find things to use to reach out to people. I am a content provider so I get people mentioning my posts quite often, but even as a content consumer it can help me find a topic for an email, phone call, or even an in-person chat about something other than the weather.”

What Erin said is key for two reasons:

1. Social media can first be used to listen. Find out what people are talking about before saying something.
2. Being a content provider (and not just a consumer) is the key method for maintaining top-of-mind awareness.

An idea this powerful deserves its own acronym: **ROTOMA**

If ROI = Return on Investment, and I invested time to become ‘top of mind’ with my customers, what I’m really looking for is a **return on my investment to achieve ‘top of mind’ awareness with my customers. *Eureka...err...ROTOMA!***

Instead of worrying about the ROI of social media, concentrate on something much more simple: ROTOMA.

How can you maximize your own ROTOMA?

Stop spending your time sending emails or voicemails to follow up, check in, or touch base. Remember, those terms we so often use when we just want to ask someone, “Are you ready to buy yet or not?” Instead, tell stories through social media (as well as through email and voicemail) to highlight what’s happening in your industry. Share your thoughts on what’s working well, what’s not working well, and what your customer or prospective customer can learn from your experience.

Either you’re communicating on social media or you’re not. Either you’re top-of-mind with someone or you’re not. Share your experiences and share your wisdom, and watch your ROTOMA through social media soar.

