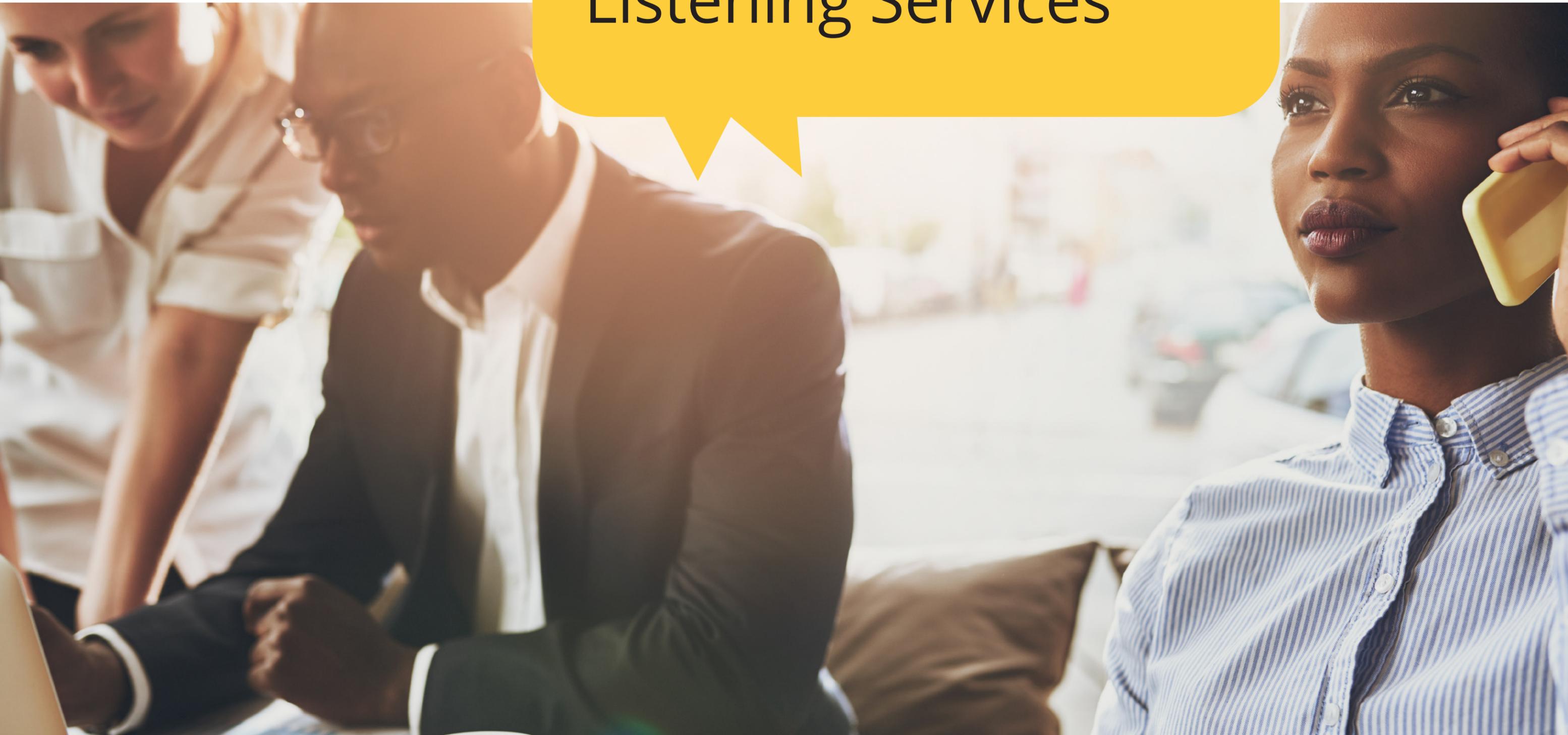


# Buyer's Guide: Social Listening Services





## Table of Contents

Introduction	3
The invention of "Like"	4
Why you need a social listening solution	5
Must-haves	6
Why 'hands-off' can hurt you	7
About ICUC	8



# Introduction

Social media changed the face of customer relationships. Consumers today are so accustomed to online communities, social media is becoming the go-to when a customer wants to share an experience—good or bad—about a brand or business. But this new mode of communication can present many risks and challenges, especially for the businesses that enter this world unprepared.

Social media monitoring and listening services give business like yours the resources and capabilities to fully understand and manage this new paradigm of communications and marketing. They extend the abilities of your social media market-

ing team and can even reveal insights about your audience, that you can use to make strategic decisions related to your business goals.

To make an informed choice on social listening services, however, you need to understand the nuances of online communities, the types of challenges that businesses like yours might have to face, and the crucial difference between automated and fully-staffed listening solutions. In this Buyer's Guide, we attempt to answer some of the questions you may have, when looking for a social media listening solution.

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# The invention of “Like”

“We’ve just introduced an easy way to tell friends that you like what they’re sharing on Facebook with one easy click,” the post began. “Wherever you can add a comment on your friends’ content, you’ll also have the option to click ‘Like’ to tell your friends exactly that: “I like this.”

With that February 2009 announcement, the world’s most popular social network brought the Like button to the world. It’s the universal sign of assent, the thumbs up, the up-vote—but its influence goes beyond Facebook. There is now a way to say “I like this” on every social network. It’s the lingua franca of the online world.

So it’s telling that the most requested feature on Facebook is the exact opposite feature: A dislike button. For many years Facebook resisted this request;

they wanted to foster a positive environment, not empower the haters. But they eventually relented. In March 2016, they added Facebook Reactions.

The point is, even on Facebook—a social network consisting largely of verified users communicating with friends and family—people crave a way to share negative feelings. What happens when people communicate outside their peer group on the internet?

People get mean. Psychological research shows that anonymity increases unethical behavior. There is a reason people in cars are likely to exhibit behavior behind the wheel that they wouldn’t in person. It’s called the online disinhibition effect, and it has real effects on the way people interact with each other online.

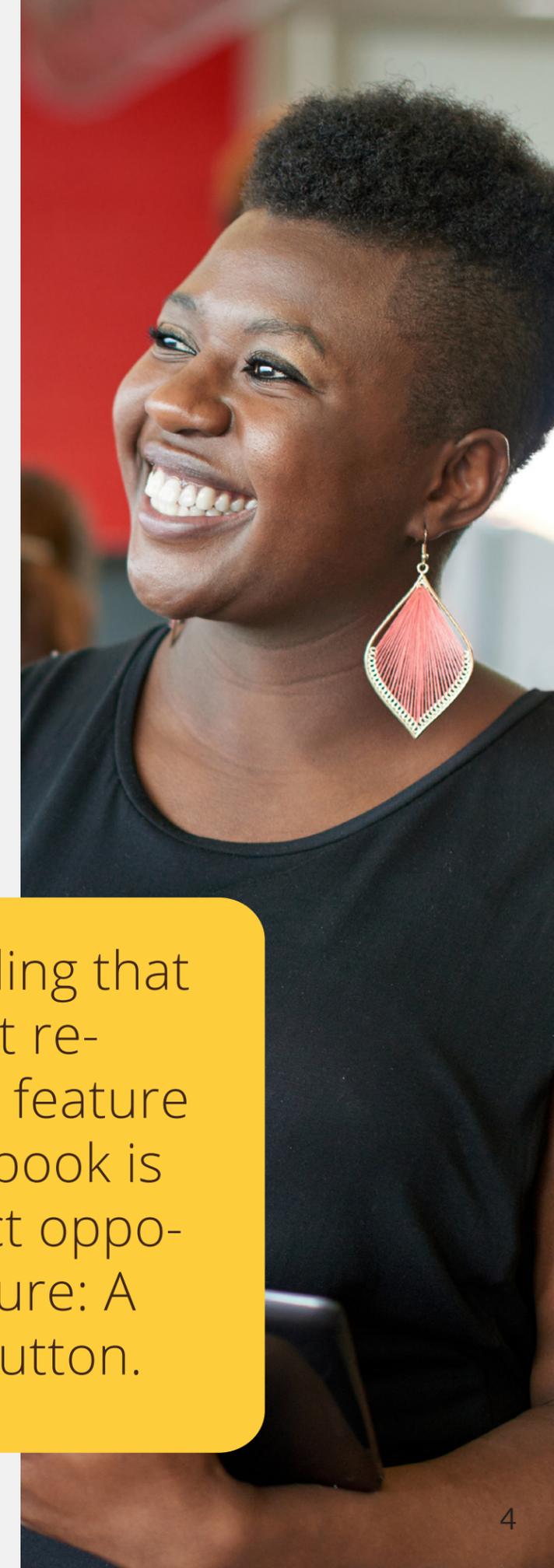
Even though legislation exists against online trolling or harassment, the burden of enforcement has fallen to those that own the forums. That typically means networks like YouTube, Facebook, or Twitter employ scores of user operations

staff. For publications, like blogs and newspapers, the challenge of moderation is so prohibitive, many of them disable comments altogether.

This presents a conundrum for a business like yours. While the social networks are doing their part to remove harmful content, they are dealing with an impossibly high volume of requests each day, and in general, are responding to flags. Their priority is not to protect the reputation of businesses like yours, or to make sure your audience has a positive experience with your brand.

That’s up to you.

... it’s telling that the most requested feature on Facebook is the exact opposite feature: A dislike button.





# Why you need a social listening solution

Managing your brand reputation on social media is important. For most businesses however, attempting to do this in house would divert resources from other business goals. By seeking out a social listening solution you can extend your social media capabilities at a fraction of what it would cost to self-staff

and more effectively. Furthermore, depending on your industry, location, and recruiting budget—finding that staff can be near impossible.

Social listening is more than just listening. Social listening solutions identify trends as they are unfolding and help brands determine the impact of ongoing campaigns. They can assess for sentiment, location, demographic information, Net Promoter Score (NPS) and other metrics you are tracking. Ultimately, an effective social listening system uses insights from data to help discover new customers, and generate new leads, and help companies reach their business goals.

Social media listening solutions give brands a third option besides going to battle on their own or going dark: enlisting the trusted help of trained and skilled subject matter experts who will vigilantly protect their brand reputation online.

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# Must-haves

According to our research, there are three things that every social media listening solution must provide.

## 24/7/365 Availability

When it comes to your social presence online, consumers expect brands to be available to them at all times. So unless your customers only talk to you during business hours in your time zone, your social listening solution should offer around-the-clock monitoring 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

Effective social media monitoring solutions employ engaged professionals working across the world in different time zones to ensure your brand is never closed, and that someone is always listening. Your business's time is better spent focusing on strategy and actioning than summarizing the insights a social listening solution provides.

## Easy scalability

When a brand experiences a social media crisis, it's likely to strike without warning. When it does it's important to be able to scale resources up at a moment's notice. This is pretty much impossible to achieve in-house, unless a company hires lots of extra people, and trains them in social media crisis management.

Resources means more than just people. While it certainly takes time and money to hire teams to listen and moderate your social networks, knowledge is even harder to scale at speed. An effective social listening solution is up-to-date about trends in the social space, new platforms, and industry best practices. When working properly, a social media management solution acts like a secret trove of resources that you can activate precisely when you need it.

## A bigger toolbox

A company's own social media team often isn't looking—or doesn't have the

capabilities—to look outside its own channels. Social media management services can act as your complete eyes and ears and listen to conversations happening just outside your reach.

They have dedicated tools and technology that can listen and identify a burgeoning crisis closer to its origin point, and can determine what types of stories might have the potential to go viral in a negative or positive way. Once they identify such stories they can address them before they have a chance to pick up too much traction.

Social media management services can act as your complete eyes and ears and listen to conversations happening just outside your reach.





# Why 'hands-off' can hurt you

Some businesses are turning to automated solutions to listen to their social media. They employ sophisticated natural language processing software to crawl the internet for keywords and are able to process high volumes of content faster than humans. But we feel that such solutions are not good enough to provide useful results for most brands.

In March 2016, Microsoft unveiled Tay, a "chatbot" targeted at young millennials in the US. The chatbot had a Twitter handle and would converse with you with memes and contemporary slang. Twitterers immediately started peppering the bot with queries. Tay responded with funny lines and memes. But in less than 24 hours, the bot's performance proved inadequate.

Or to put it succinctly, the Microsoft bot tweeted out, "Hitler was right."

While chatbots are part of an emerging trend in automation, the story of Tay reminds us that genuine communication with humans is still not something machines can do. Tay's software was sophisticated enough to be able to respond to jokes on Twitter. But ultimately the bot could only parrot back what it was told; ironically, it was internet abuse that led to Tay's becoming an internet troll itself. Once internet users understood Tay's recognition patterns, they manipulated its output in highly offensive ways, thereby harming the brand. This should prompt an obvious question: would you trust your brand to a robot? Ultimately, even Microsoft doesn't think so. From a Verge article called the Secret Rules of the Internet, a Microsoft researcher named Kate Crawford explains:

"Moderation is a profoundly human decision-making process about what constitutes appropriate speech in the public domain."

It's possible that the artificial intelligence required to represent brands in a genuine and human way could someday exist, we're still a ways from that day. Firms looking for reliable social listening solution, should trust a 'hands-on' option that hires and employs skilled professionals, from different cultures and languages, than can represent your brand in a sophisticated and nuanced way.

"Moderation is a profoundly human decision-making process about what constitutes appropriate speech in the public domain."



## About ICUC

ICUC is the global leader in Social Media Management.

Our experts provide vigilant protection on every social media channel to enhance and safeguard your brand 24/7/365.

Through Social Moderation, Community Management, Social Listening, and Social Media Customer Service we protect the smallest start-ups to largest global brands, such as Disney, Starbucks, Coca-Cola, and Google.

ICUC is your scalable eyes and ears, preventing small problems from amplifying around the world while building communities that strengthen your brand.

**icuc • social**  
creating common ground

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We Would Love To  
Talk To You About  
Your Social Media  
Strategy

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