



With Connie Bensen

LET'S TALK:  
Social Media ROI

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Defining a Social Media  
Marketing Strategy:  
**Breathing new life into  
Corporate Marketing  
content and collateral**

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5th in the Social Media ROI Series

# Defining a Social Media Marketing Strategy: Breathing new life into Corporate Marketing content and collateral



The ROI of Listening to your Customers' Needs

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## Executive Summary:

Utilizing the social web for marketing a brand requires a paradigm shift of understanding and action on the part of the marketer. Consumers are demanding it. They have a full arsenal for blocking traditional marketing messages and are choosing not only how they receive their information, but what and who they trust in. Consumers can directly influence whether a brand is successful or not and the implication of this requires marketers to shift their focus to listening to consumers if they want their brand to be successful in this era of social change.

## Introduction

The paradigm shift in marketing requires consideration of a new philosophy. Marketing is no longer about creating the perfect message and then broadcasting it; as mentioned, consumers are increasingly blocking those channels. Marketers need to take a few minutes and step back and consider how their audiences are interacting online. This approach will provide the guidelines for effective social media engagements and a corporate marketing strategy.

"Marketers must shift their focus to listening to consumers if they want their brand to be successful in this era of social change."

Organisations need to recognise they are not merely responding to a new media form, social media, rather, they are responding to a permanent and far reaching social change, of which social media is merely one manifestation.

– Michael Hulme, Professor, Institute of Advanced Study, Lancaster University Alterian Brands at Risk Report

**Let's Talk!** about social media strategies that transform your marketing and build your brand.



# Defining a Social Media Marketing Strategy: Breathing new life into Corporate Marketing content and collateral



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## From the Consumer's Perspective

To make the transition into this new type of marketing, it is important to understand why consumers are tuning out marketers, what they want, and the benefits that brands can derive from a participatory methodology. This will enable the marketer to easily adapt to best utilize the social channels with a focus on customer engagement.

Why are consumers tuning out your carefully crafted marketing messages?

- They don't care about glossy PDFs filled with marketing clichés .
- They are not interested in flashy corporate websites.
- They are aligning themselves with brands that have integrated their marketing messages with their customer service and product development.

What do consumers want?

- They want brands to create products and services that they need.
- They want brands to listen to their concerns and respond in a timely manner. And this doesn't necessarily mean a formal press release. Consumers want to talk with people.
- They are demanding authenticity and transparency. For example, if the customer service wasn't good enough, then they want an apology. If the product didn't work properly, then they expect a resolution.

And what are the benefits to the brands that accomplish the above?

- Listening to consumers provides an invaluable guide to what interests them, how they want to be communicated with, and through which channels.
- Consumers will uplift the brand and promote it in social networks via word of mouth (which is far more powerful than traditional marketing and cannot be bought).
- For example, take the following snippet from a conversation between Ray Wang, a consultant with Altimeter, and one of our customers:

**Ray Wang:** thanks for the feedback on #alterian. would be curious as to why you chose them over the other guys. Thanks! DM pls #smm #scrm

**Customer's response:** @rwang0 complete vision - inline w/ our views & their products deep along w/ a deep prod roadmap. #alterian #scrm #smm

There is no way that our marketing material could express this in a more convincing way.

- Consumers will share their passion for a brand's products and provide quotes for references that are priceless.
- They will create user generated content that can be repurposed. This content often resonates far more effectively in target markets than corporate collateral or messaging.

Understanding why consumers are tuning out marketing messages and what they want from your brand will help you to implement the right strategy to fulfill the objective of more effective marketing. The ROI of listening and brand building is a much more effective reach on your marketing efforts, and lower costs.



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## A New Philosophy for Marketing

As stated earlier, marketing now requires a new type of content in order to gain the attention of potential customers and it needs to be placed where your audience is researching. There are three key points to consider:

### 1. Create content that is educational and informative.

Consumers don't want a marketing message pushed at them. They are using the web to learn and become better informed. They are sharing information and influencing their peers' purchases. Creating content that appeals to that need will have a much higher probability of being read. It will build brand visibility and create positive word of mouth. Informative content will be repeatedly shared which will also build search engine optimization (SEO).

### 2. Ensure that content exists for consumers at all points in the buying cycle, including after point of sale.

Take the time to evaluate the buying cycle for your products and services. People may not even realize that they have the problem that your product resolves. Alternatively, they may know that they have the problem, and are in the exploratory phase to find a solution, but are not aware of your brand. In this case, you could create whitepapers or ebooks that address the problem and lightly blend in product and brand specific information along with contact information. This will build brand awareness. Providing educational material builds trust around your brand and will cause people to support your brand or cause much more quickly. Their interest will be piqued and they will now be ready to explore more information about your products and company.

It is also important to have resources that best describe how to use products that consumers have purchased. Not only is this an excellent time to support your products, but it is also the perfect opportunity to introduce upselling and cross selling options.

### 3. Placing the content in shareable social networks encourages the magic of word of mouth.

The secret to social media marketing is to have your content found all over the web. It is naïve to think that everyone will come to your corporate website. As a general rule, corporate websites are the last place that people look for information.

It also isn't enough to create educational information and place it on your website or blog as there is not a high probability that people will find it. Shareable sites, for example YouTube, Slideshare and DocsToc offer brands the ability to create content in the format that is preferred by that community. Placing content on these sites allows people to freely take the material and embed it into their own website or blog – for example a video from YouTube or a presentation from Slideshare. Slideshare can also be set up to feed into LinkedIn and Facebook, thereby further spreading your content.



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## Defining a Social Media Marketing Strategy

A social media marketing strategy is based on listening. There is so much more to engaging with customers or prospects via social media than simply creating a Twitter account or a Facebook fan page. An effective social engagement strategy is based on five steps:

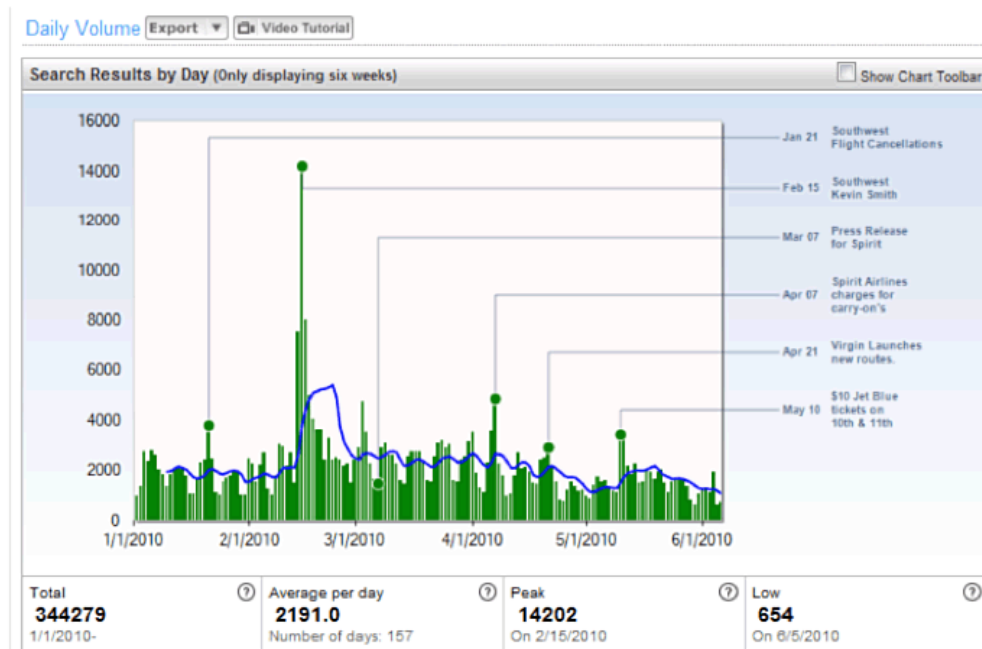
1. Listen using a comprehensive tool
2. Decide on Objectives and Plan Strategy
3. Metrics Defined by Objectives
4. Benchmark and Execute
5. Measure, Report and Refine

## 1. Listening

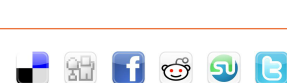
This step is key. The social web is comprised of a huge array of social networks. The challenge is to understand how your target markets are interacting online and in which channels.

A social media monitoring tool allows a brand to efficiently:

- Gauge the amount of conversations around a brand and competitors



- Identify where the target markets are interacting both online and offline. Focus on the places where your consumers are most active.

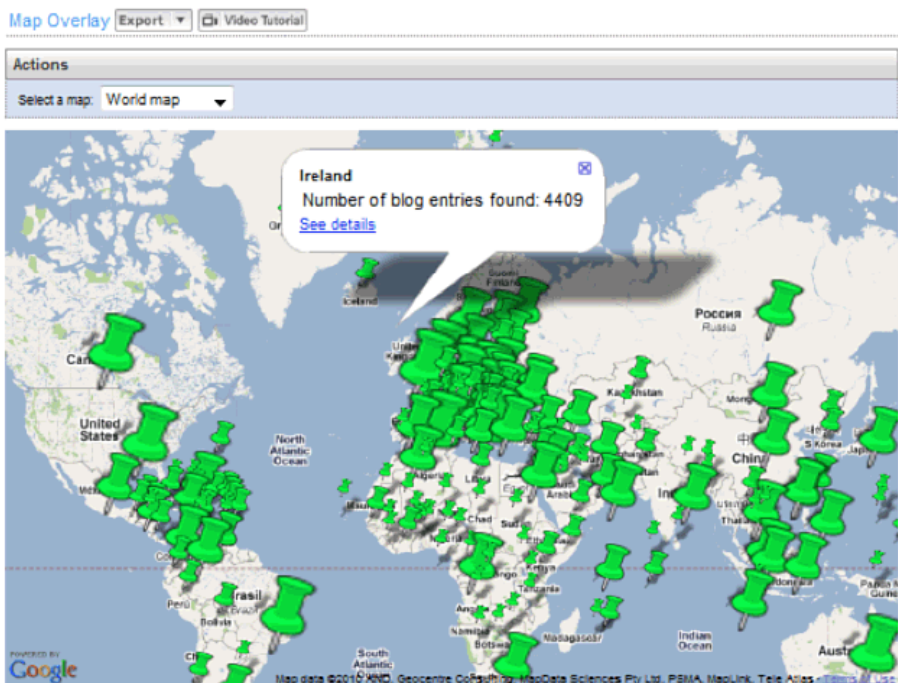


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Results Domain [ Top 100 ]	Count
<a href="http://www.facebook.com/Southwest">www.facebook.com/Southwest</a>	15418
<a href="http://www.logibuy.com/latestdeals.aspx">www.logibuy.com/latestdeals.aspx</a>	4331
<a href="http://www.facebook.com/VirginAmerica">www.facebook.com/VirginAmerica</a>	3214
<a href="http://youtube.com">youtube.com</a>	2869
<a href="http://www.flyertalk.com">www.flyertalk.com</a>	1448
<a href="http://www.disboards.com/forumdisplay.php?s=1ccodd572d9b71aecba9106d5c14364a&amp;f=16">www.disboards.com/forumdisplay.php?s=1ccodd572d9b71aecba9106d5c14364a&amp;f=16</a>	1443
<a href="http://www.facebook.com/easyJet">www.facebook.com/easyJet</a>	1437
<a href="http://businessdaily.com">businessdaily.com</a>	1375
<a href="http://forum.zingrate.com">forum.zingrate.com</a>	1308
<a href="http://www.disboards.com">www.disboards.com</a>	1296
<a href="http://deepwateroffshore.com">deepwateroffshore.com</a>	1052
<a href="http://www.indeed.com/forum/job/flight-attendant.html">www.indeed.com/forum/job/flight-attendant.html</a>	1003
<a href="http://www.facebook.com/JetBlue">www.facebook.com/JetBlue</a>	849
<a href="http://www.reddit.com/r/reddit.com">www.reddit.com/r/reddit.com</a>	797
<a href="http://twitter.com/Spirit_Helper">twitter.com/Spirit_Helper</a>	733
<a href="http://biz.yahoo.com">biz.yahoo.com</a>	727
<a href="http://www.tripadvisor.com">www.tripadvisor.com</a>	702
<a href="http://Airlines.love.com">Airlines.love.com</a>	676
<a href="http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Main_Page">commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Main_Page</a>	650
<a href="http://www.docxaminer.com">www.docxaminer.com</a>	645
<a href="http://pressrelated.com">pressrelated.com</a>	607
<a href="http://answers.yahoo.com">answers.yahoo.com</a>	599
<a href="http://travel.alltop.com">travel.alltop.com</a>	565
<a href="http://www.radio-alpes.net">www.radio-alpes.net</a>	558
<a href="http://www.getbestcoupons.com">www.getbestcoupons.com</a>	546
<a href="http://www.holidaylettings.co.uk">www.holidaylettings.co.uk</a>	534
<a href="http://pnewswire.com">pnewswire.com</a>	531

Where does your audience reside?

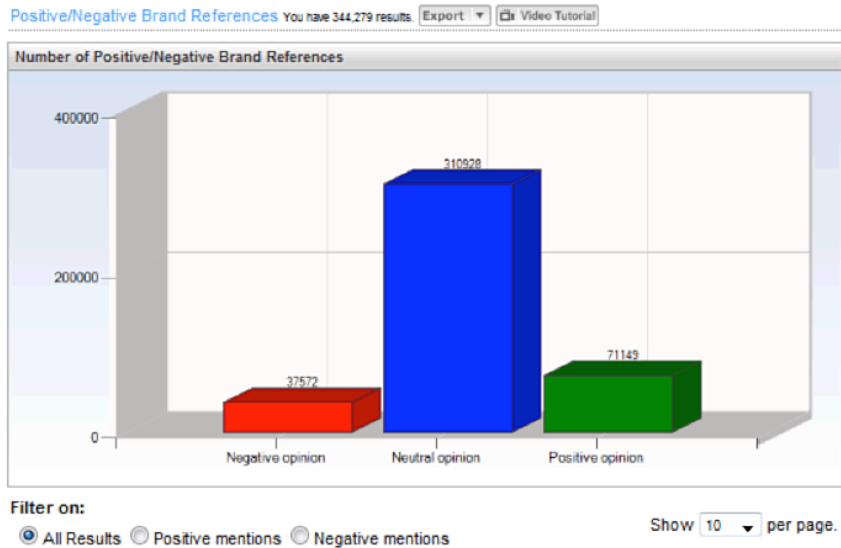


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## The ROI of Listening to your Customers' Needs

- Establish the sentiment and tone around the brand and products
  - How do consumers feel about your brand?
  - Engage in conversations with them and find out what they do or don't like.



- Gain insight on competitors and industry topics



- Determine main themes of the conversations



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Themes [Export](#) [Video Tutorial](#)

Basic and Advanced Theme Clouds can be created for all results or specific categories.

The content of the results from the category is analyzed and displayed in a cloud chart. This represents the main ideas of the conversations. Click on New Graph to choose a category to analyze.

Actions

Ryanair Twitter Theme Cloud [New graph](#) [Delete graph](#)

Basic Themes Graph

£20 accused aer air aircraft airline airlines airport attacked back board boarding book booked budget business cabin cancelled card charge charges cheap cheaper check childish cork cost costing crew day deal deals delay delayed denied dublin easy easyjet eats edinburgh eur europe extra fares fee flew **flight** flights fly flying france girona good hate high hour in-flight ireland irish jet jobs lingus liverpool london low low-cost make media michael million minute money news oft online passenger passengers pay people phone plane pos prestwick puerile routes ryan ryanair service stansted tarmac ticket time today travel visit water winning worst wrong year

- Ensure that marketing messaging is connecting with consumers. (Are you speaking the same language?)

## 2. Objectives and Strategy

Marketing's primary objective is to increase brand visibility which in turn will create a path for inbound leads and sales. Another important objective is to support internal communications.

The strategy to accomplish these three things will be based on the information gathered during the listening stage of a social media engagement. It provides insight into:

- Customer personas and demographics
- Where to engage online with target markets=
- Who the influencers are and what they're advocating for around the brand
- The negative conversations being held online

As stated earlier, remember to create content that appeals to consumers at all stages of the buying process. For example:

A product marketing manager offers a webinar or white paper on the latest version of a product. Traditionally the webinar was placed on the intranet for staff to view and learn from, but the consumer's thirst for knowledge encourages brands to turn their information loose. Brands need to consider creative ways to leverage social networks:

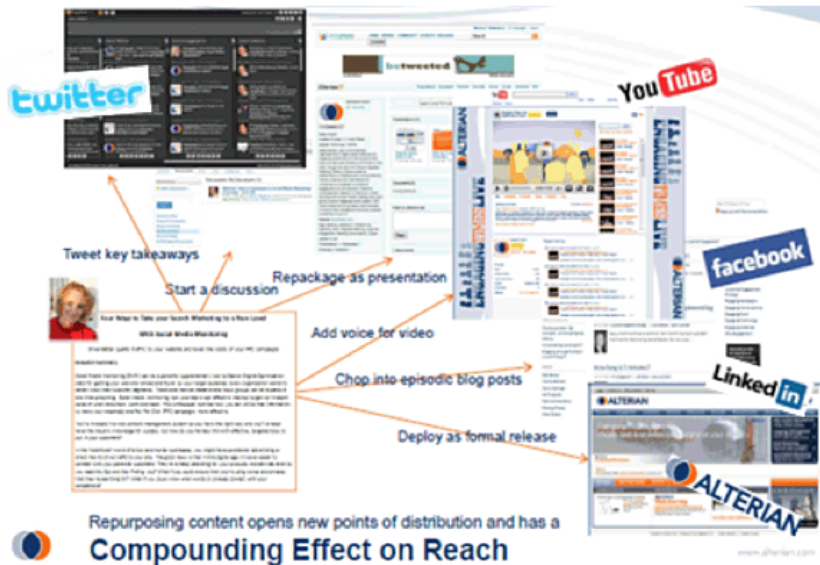
- Create a white paper and place on the corporate website or on Slideshare
- Create a slide deck that outlines the content and place on Slideshare
- Interview a customer/brand advocate and place on YouTube and on the corporate website
- Host and record webinars and podcasts
  - Place the links in LinkedIn Groups, blog comments where appropriate and Facebook
  - Share the links on Twitter



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Tip: All product information should be made available for consumers to find. If you are concerned about competitors finding it, consider that they are gathering the information in other ways already.

**3. Benchmark and Execute** The metrics of a social media engagement strategy will be based on the objectives. The most common metric is to increase the number of conversations by a certain percentage. It is also easy to measure the increase in the number of conversations in a certain channel. For example, an organization might specify that it wants to increase its brand visibility by 15%. These metrics can be added to traditional web metrics: number of subscribers, number of visitors, number of comments, etc. Using a chart like the Compare Dates chart in SM2 offers an excellent way to compare.

## 4. Metrics

Assessing the current level of brand awareness and brand image surrounding your company provides the basis for future comparisons. As you execute your social media marketing strategy you can reference the baseline and comprehensively note and measure your progress. It is important to remember two points of effective social media marketing:

1. A social media engagement is a long term commitment. It can be done in campaigns, but they need to build.
2. Brand building requires consistent engagement over time



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## 5. Measure, Report & Refine

The final step is measuring progress. In addition to quantitative aspects of measuring your brand, keep track of qualitative aspects such as quotes by product advocates. These are great additions to your marketing collateral. And advocates love seeing their names being referenced.

Reporting is key and will provide guidance on future social media efforts. The reports should include quantitative aspects such as amount of daily conversations, distribution of those conversations across multiple channels, and also the sentiment and tone of those conversations. The qualitative aspects of recording significant interactions, feedback and comments are also invaluable. All of these should be compared against progress towards the objectives. This is the time to make comments about what is working and what is not so that the engagement can be adjusted. This information should also be routed to management.

## The Human Aspect

Social media engagement is far more than utilizing technology in Facebook or Twitter. It requires a human to interact online. The social media specialist role is fast becoming a mainstream position in organizations. Companies are realizing the value of having someone lead their social media efforts. This role frequently falls under the umbrella of corporate marketing.

If you are just starting your social media efforts it may be prudent to have someone that is avidly interested in social media kick off this new position. Give them a clear objective and allow them time on a daily basis to grow the brand presence. As the value is realized, the position will grow.

The social media specialist should have strong leadership skills, be project oriented and work cross functionally. They should also have very strong communication skills and a passion for providing excellent customer service and ensuring that customers' needs are met.

The use of information and the structural changes necessary to re-align the organisation to the individual are significant. They are accompanied by a similar requirement for new skills...

In the Alterian Survey, 40% of respondents stated their staff were 'not prepared to take advantage of the new channels'. There will need to be a major commitment to investment in appropriate skills.

Michael Hulme, Professor, Institute of Advanced Study, Lancaster University  
– [Alterian Brands at Risk Report](#)



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## Conclusion

The biggest challenge for corporate marketing is to understand their consumers' needs. Listening to the social web with a social media monitoring tool provides a variety of insights that can be employed to increase brand visibility and support many other departments in the organization.

This new direction of marketing requires a different take on marketing collateral. It is now important to create resources that consumers find helpful. And it is even more important to place it in shareable sites and provide them with the path to it. Creating content for all points in the buying cycle will ensure that potential consumers find your brand and products.

The foundation of social media marketing and engagement is listening using a comprehensive tool. This will point to the objectives and make the steps for a successful strategy apparent. A professional social media monitoring tool will also define the metrics and make it easy to benchmark, measure and report on them.

## Next steps

1. Try the [Freemium](#) version of Alterian SM2 (a professional social media monitoring tool)
2. Explore [resources](#) on social media monitoring
3. Request a [Little Book of Social Media Marketing](#) on some BIG marketing topics
4. Email [info@alterian.com](mailto:info@alterian.com) or call

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## About the "Let's Talk" Series with Connie Bensen

Social Media marketing is providing a whole new dimension for brands to connect with consumers. The social web is a vast entity and every marketer needs a tool to harness the information in the most cost effective and efficient manner. A social media monitoring tool offers the ability to maximize the digital portion of your marketing budget in order to create, execute, measure and report on a social media strategy.

The Let's Talk Series, by Connie Bensen, is a series of 10 whitepapers describing the variety of ways that marketers can increase the ROI of their marketing efforts. Topics will include how to use a social media monitoring tool for SEO, Lead Generation, Social Media campaigns, Customer Service, Competitive Insight, Corporate marketing, PR and reputation management, etc.

Connie is the Director of Social Media and Community Strategy at Alterian, which provides marketing software to help brands engage with their customers. She is a key voice amongst online Community Managers. Her blog, [www.conniebensen.com](http://www.conniebensen.com) is recognized as a leading resource for cultivating online communities, providing best practices for this emerging role and it is listed in Forbes.com as one of the 20 Best Marketing and Social Media Blogs by Women.

## SM2 Social Media Monitoring (SMM)



Alterian's SM2 is a social media monitoring and analysis solution designed for PR and Marketing professionals. SM2 helps you track conversations, review positive/negative sentiment for your brand, clients, competitors and partners across social media channels such as blogs, wikis, micro-blogs, social networks, video/photo sharing sites and real-time alerts.

## About Alterian

Alterian (LSE: ALN) empowers organizations to create relevant, effective and engaging experiences with their audience that help build value and reinforce commitment to their brand, through the use of the Alterian Integrated Marketing Platform. Alterian drives the transformation of marketing and communications, making it practical and cost-effective for companies to orchestrate multichannel engagement with the individual.

Alterian's unprecedented integration of analytics, content and execution through industry leading tools, such as the Dynamic Messenger email platform, SM2 Social Media Monitoring platform and the award winning Content Management solutions, enables companies to build integrated communication strategies which create a true picture of the individual.

Alterian works with marketing services partners, system integrators and agencies who recognize the need to plan and deliver coordinated customer engagement services in partnership with their clients. For more information about Alterian, products within the Alterian Integrated Marketing Platform or Alterian's Partner Network, visit [www.alterian.com](http://www.alterian.com) or the Alterian blog at [www.engagingtimes.com](http://www.engagingtimes.com).



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