



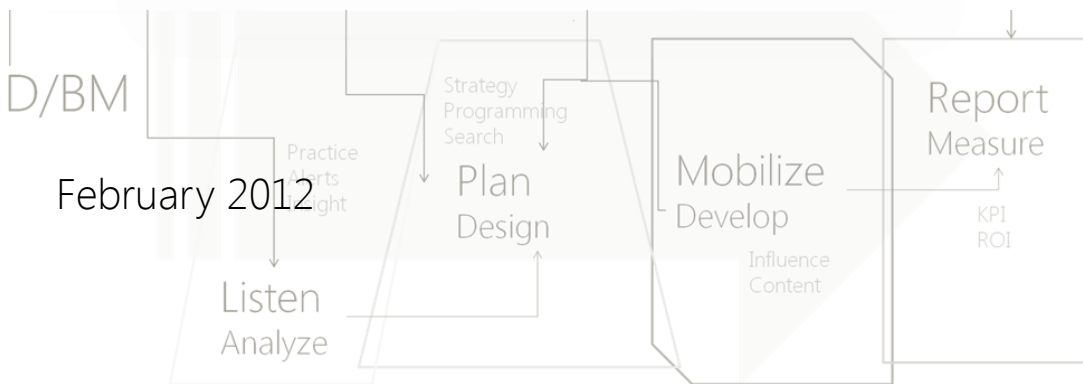
Burson·Marsteller



微博

WEIBO

Seven steps to better corporate reputation, crisis preparedness and digital communications in China.



Establishing a Digital Presence in China

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China

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Weibo



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Seven steps to better corporate reputation, crisis preparedness and digital communications in China.

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Choose Your Direction Explore Your Potential

Platforms
Audiences
Competitors
Integration

Define Your Goals Design Your Presence

Listen
Analyze

Practice Alerts Insight
Strategy
Program
Plan
Framework
Following
Content
Engaging
KPI / ROI

Mobilize
Develop

Influence
Content

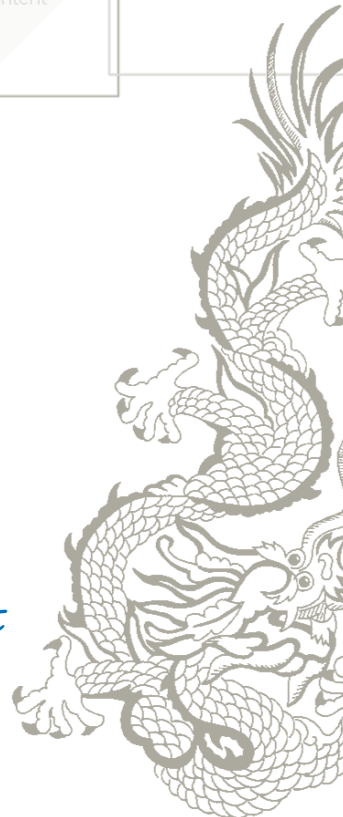
Report
Measure

KPI
ROI

Manage Your Streams

Followers
Influencers
Campaigns
Integration
Resources
Issues

Plan Your Action Optimize Your Content



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Welcome

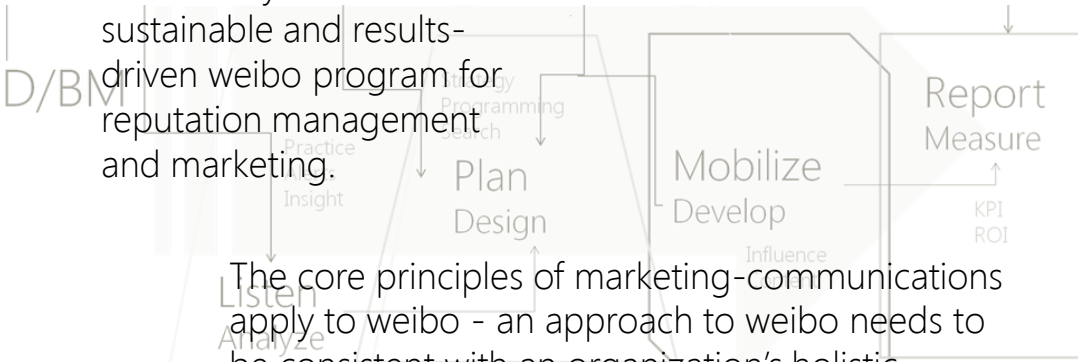
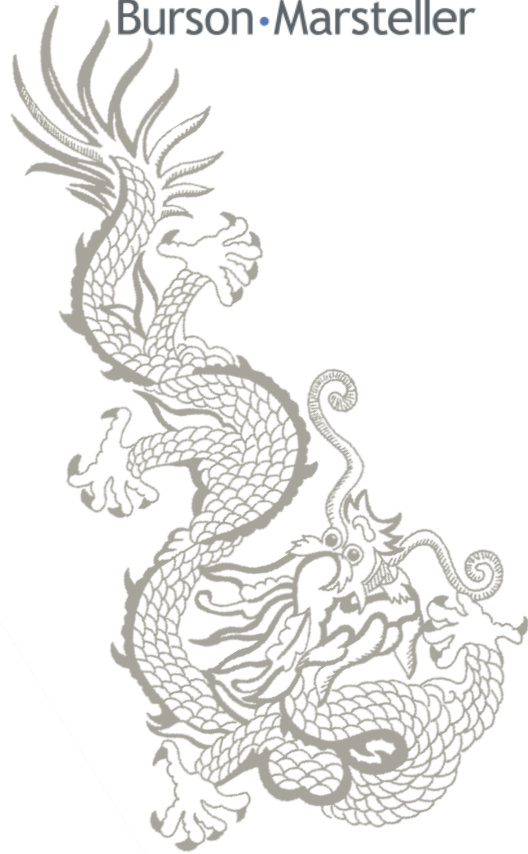
Weibo is a powerful digital communications and marketing channel.

The popular uptake of this real-time microblogging social technology in China has been unprecedented – and much has been written about it.

Not so much, however, has been said about how to successfully create a sustainable and results-driven weibo program for reputation management and marketing.

The core principles of marketing-communications apply to weibo - an approach to weibo needs to be consistent with an organization's holistic business and marketing objectives.

Yet, it's necessary to consider the unique features of weibo when developing a social media channel strategy, to ensure cross-functional benefit and in order to maximize effectiveness and ROI.





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China's Year of the Dragon is the year of Social Media.

Gaining popular traction at an unprecedented pace, Weibo has risen from the ashes from a platform that faced many challenges early on, to one that is, today, at the start of the Chinese Year of the Dragon, the undisputed phenomenon in China's galaxy of home-grown social media platforms.

Behind the hype, big challenges remain for companies.

All too often Weibo is used as a tactical measure for broadcast, push-based marketing. Weibo's tremendous opportunities for multinational brands and companies – as a two-way conversational medium that bolsters corporate reputation and aids crisis preparedness – has yet to be tapped.

Our goal here is to support you with an actionable framework for reputation, crisis and brand marketing online.

We hope these steps help lead to a more holistic and integrated approach to digital communications in China.

路灯 张亮

Zaheer Leon
Nooruddin Zhang





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About the authors



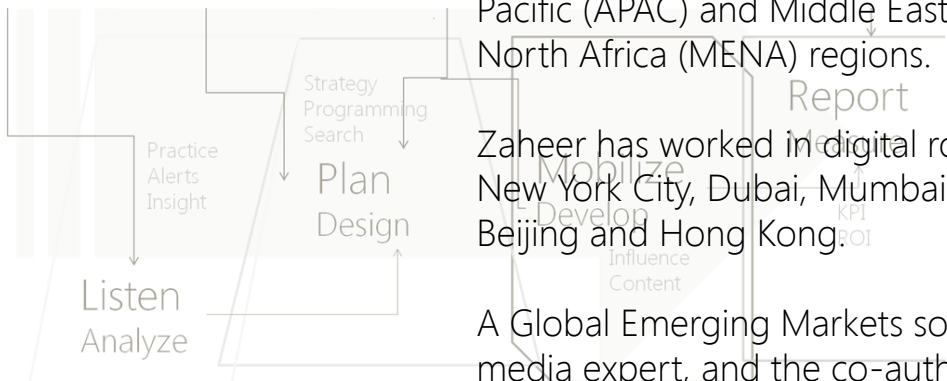
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Zaheer is the head of D/BM and Lead Digital Strategist.

An experienced digital professional with 14 years of integrated 360 digital marketing-communications, Zaheer's digital work experience spans a range of B2B and B2C industries and clients in the Asia-Pacific (APAC) and Middle East & North Africa (MENA) regions.

Zaheer has worked in digital roles in New York City, Dubai, Mumbai, Beijing and Hong Kong.

A Global Emerging Markets social media expert, and the co-author of the new book on social media strategy called "The Social Media MBA: Your Competitive Edge in Social Media Strategy Development and Delivery", Zaheer has been based in China since 2007.





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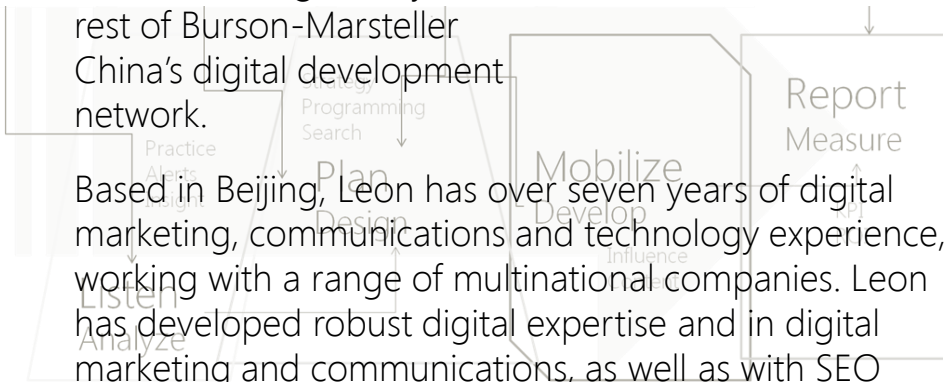
Leon Zhang is Burson-Marsteller China's Digital Strategy and Insights Lead.



Leon drives digital consultancy, strategic planning, and trainings through B-M's China offices, working closely with the rest of Burson-Marsteller China's digital development network.

Based in Beijing, Leon has over seven years of digital marketing, communications and technology experience, working with a range of multinational companies. Leon has developed robust digital expertise and in digital marketing and communications, as well as with SEO and SEM strategies.

With a passion and energy for all-things-digital in China, Leon founded DigiMarketing.cn, one of China's first specialized web portals in digital marketing topics, in 2008.





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Without a strategy, weibo can lead companies to weak ROI

Organizations in China are very interested in weibo – many have jumped in head-first, some with more success than others - yet others remain hesitant due to the lack of systematic approaches and processes. Many organizations have set up official weibo accounts, but they are still at the initial stage, without systematic planning and management.

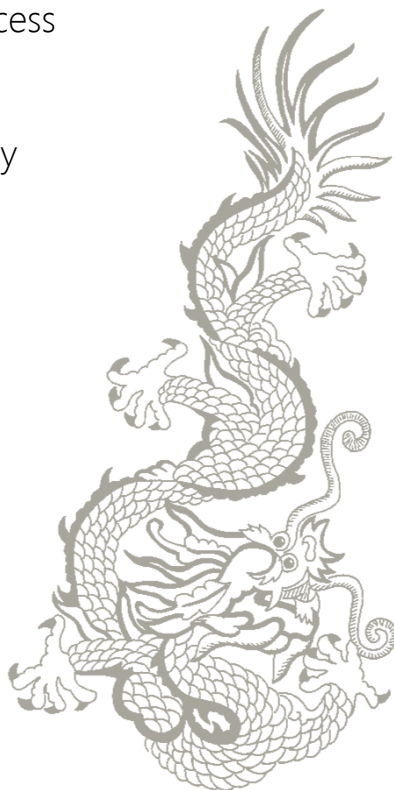
To help you get started

with a weibo strategy for business, we have summarized our D/BM strategic framework and implementation process for your reference.

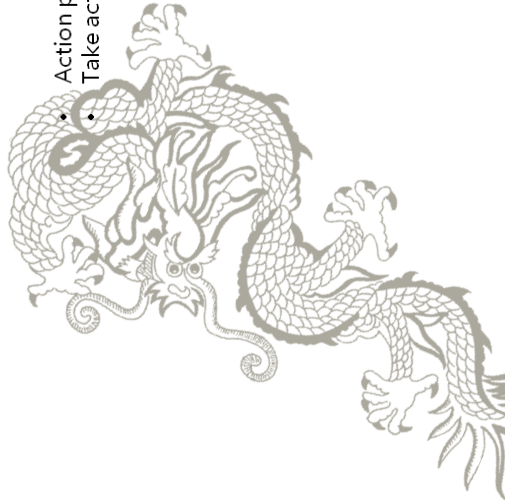
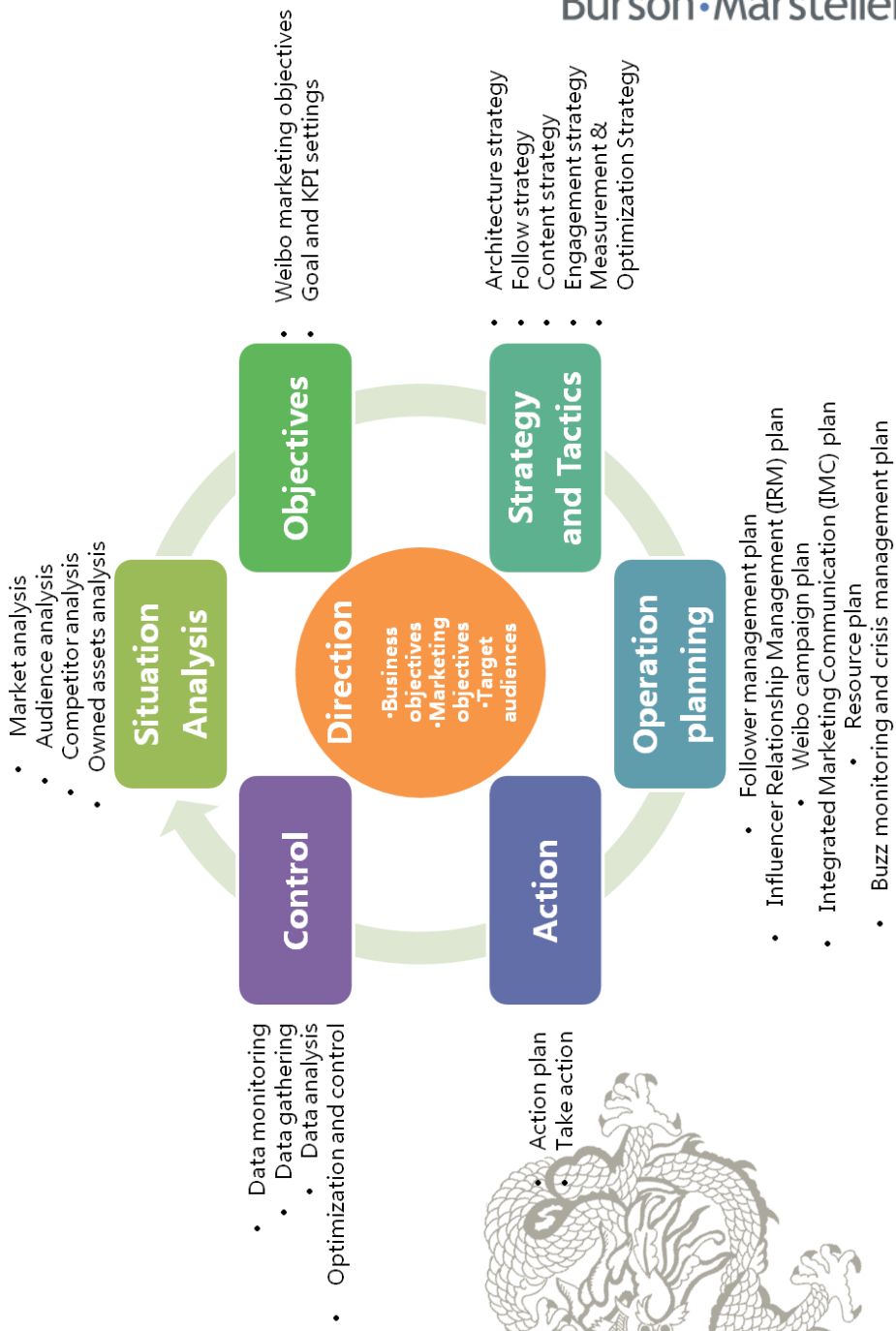
To make our guide useful we have by consolidated both the general and unique characteristics of weibo for communications and marketing.

This guide is an introduction of the holistic framework for weibo.

Let us know how it goes!



7 steps to get started with corporate weibo marketing



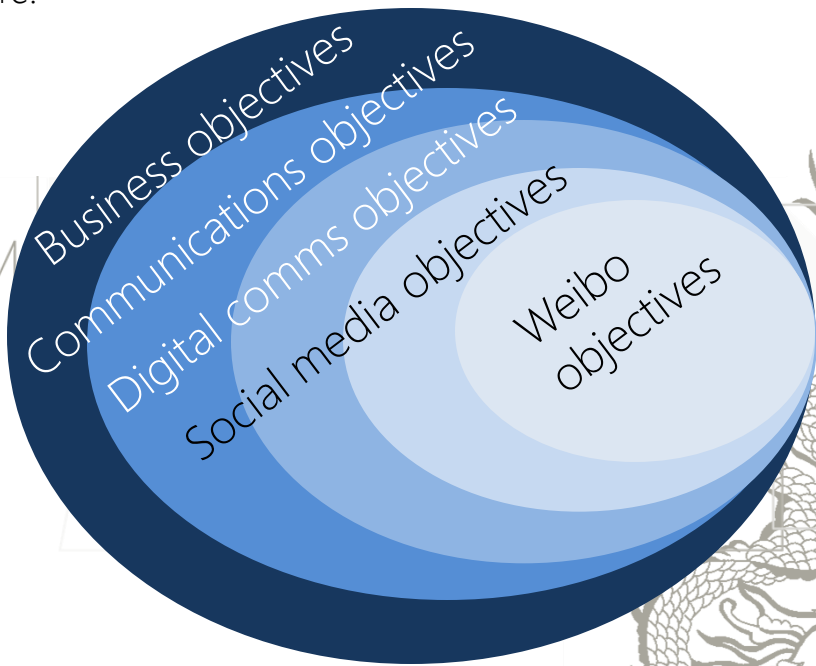


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Step 1 Choose Your Direction

Before moving into a strategic planning exercise for your organization's weibo, it is first necessary to confirm your overall direction. This means being clear about your business objectives, your communication objectives and your target audiences.

Business objectives are the operational goals that an organization expects to achieve in certain period. For example: To increase sales of Product A by 20% in Tier 1 cities in China in 2011. Or better brand reputation against an initial benchmark score.



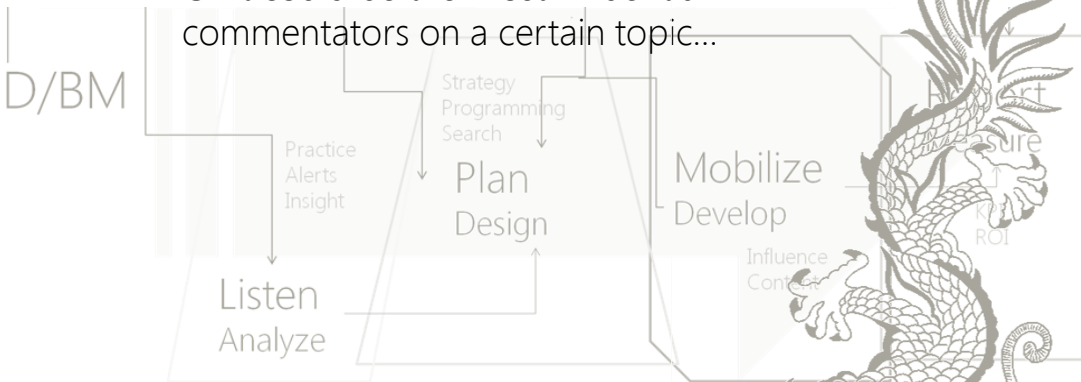


Properly map your objectives

Communications objectives are the results that companies expect to achieve through communications with an audience. For example: To enhance consumer awareness of Product A in Tier 1 cities in China in 2012. Or to create a perception of high performance-cost ratio.

Within communications objectives, fall digital objectives, and within digital objectives lies social media objectives.

Target audience is the group of people that the organization expects to reach. For example: 18 to 22-year-old students in Tier 1 cities in China. Or it could be the most influential commentators on a certain topic...



Always begin with objectives and audiences





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If this sounds basic... it's because it is!

Your direction is wholly-related to the success of your strategy. Its development is a key stage in your larger social media strategy development.

Because this is so basic and fundamental, it is often overlooked. This can lead to your efforts working in the wrong direction.

It is essential to confirm your overall business direction at the very beginning, and that's also why "Direction" is at the core of our D/BM holistic strategic planning process for weibo.

With the overall direction as the strategy's foundation, we can then further develop tailored and strategic plan for weibo.

*Confirming a direction
informs stronger social
strategy and execution
– leading to stronger
results*





Step 2

Explore Your Potential

A good situation analysis should review both the internal and external, macroscopic and microscopic environments of a business. It can serve as an Evidence-Based foundation for objective setting, strategic planning and management.



For weibo, analyze 4 groups

First is the target audience that an organization would like to influence;

Second are an organization's direct or potential competitors that are marketing to the same groups;

Third is internal; employees of your organization.

Fourth is everyone else.



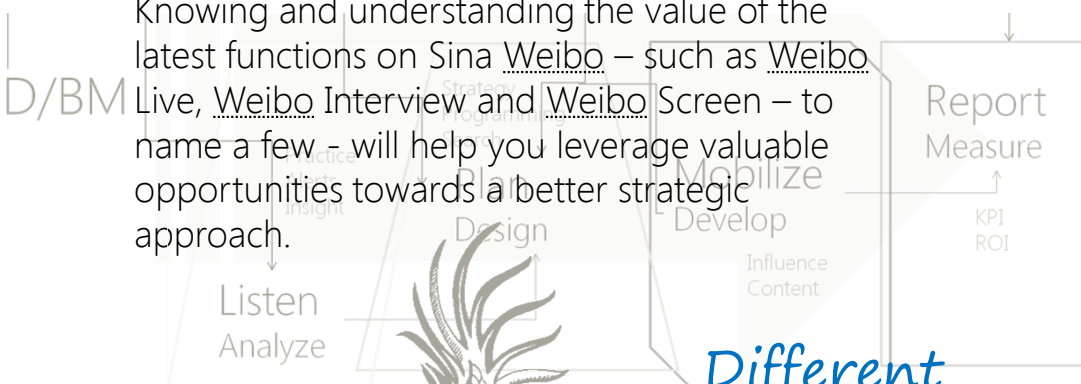


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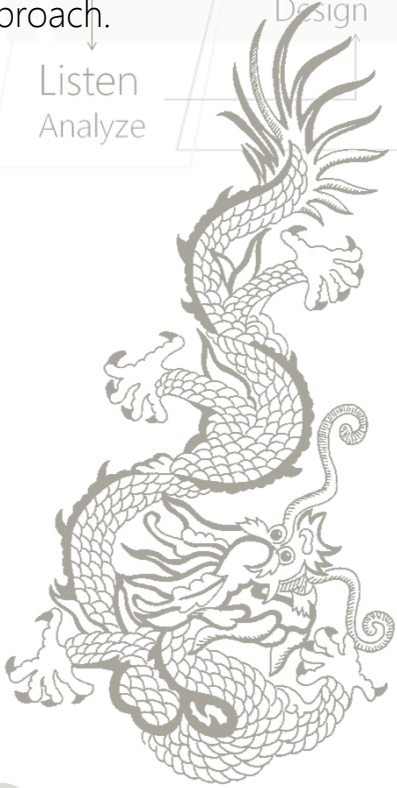
Which weibo functions can a company leverage?

A good analysis of existing state of play, trends and the overall environment of weibo will help you find communications and marketing potential.

Knowing and understanding the value of the latest functions on Sina Weibo – such as Weibo Live, Weibo Interview and Weibo Screen – to name a few - will help you leverage valuable opportunities towards a better strategic approach.



Different weibo platforms might have different audience segments



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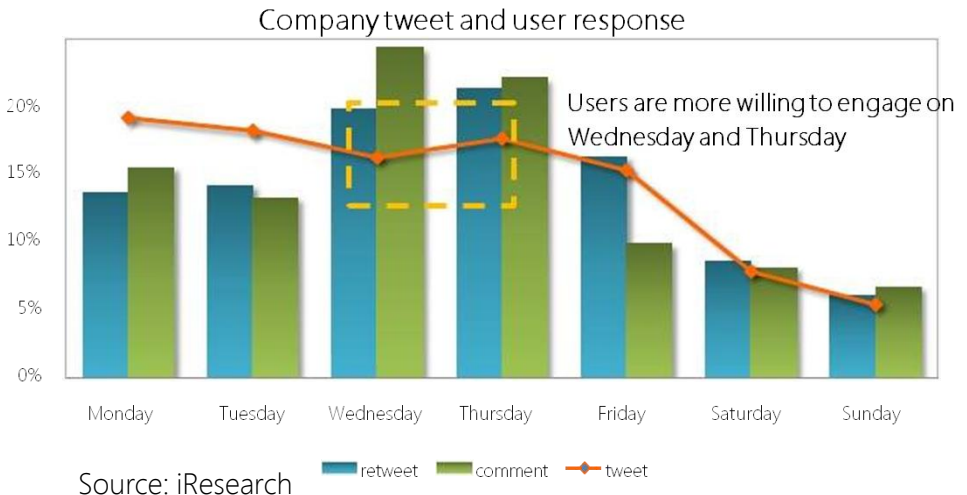




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Use research and social listening to inform programming decisions

Quantitative industry reports that are openly available provide important data and information.



For example, from a recent iResearch industry report* we can see that ,from 2009 to 2011, the popularity of weibo rose dramatically, while the number of bloggers and social network users has declined.

There is abundant data already available that can serve as a good basis for weibo platform analysis.





Platform selection

What are the most relevant features of weibo?

Understanding audience preferences and meeting these needs will help meet targeted marketing and communications goals.

For example, timelines based on 24-hour or week-long analysis of audience tweets, comments and shares, will help you to identify the best times to engage. As shown (see previous page), the number of shares and comments on Wednesday and Thursday is higher for this particular audience. Organizations that target this audience can take advantage while planning content and engagement strategies.

For different organizations and different audiences, behavior will be different. This calls for companies to use social media listening tools to better understand their core audiences, to serve them with targeted content, and to develop marketing strategies and plans.

Use real-time listening to understand your audiences on weibo better





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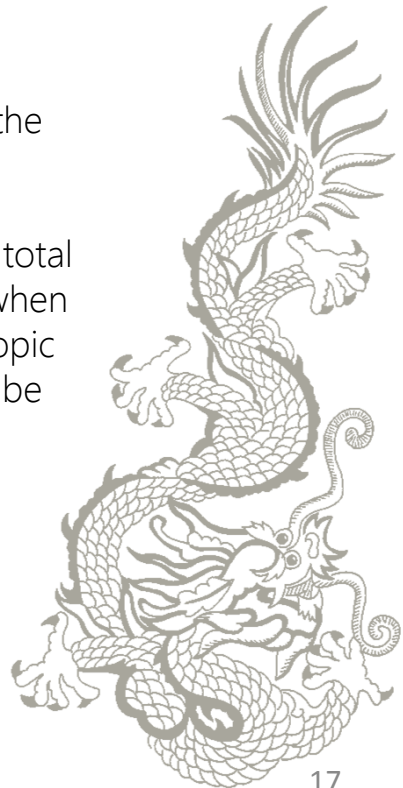
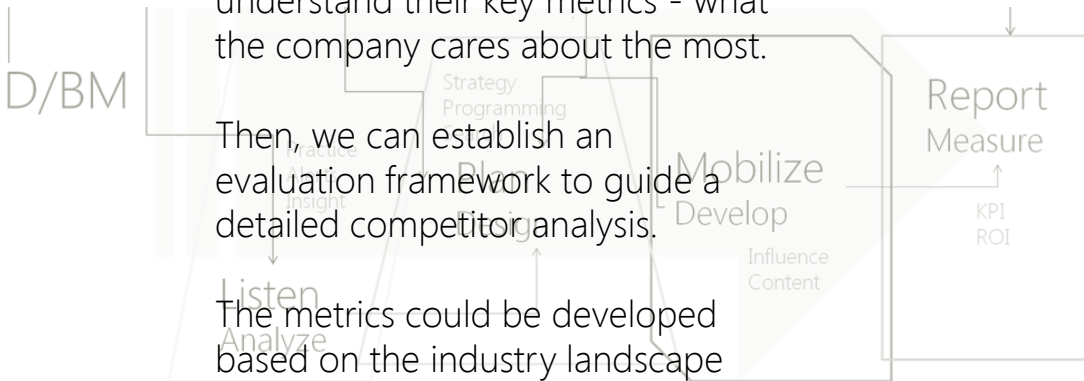
Mind your competitors...

When analyzing industry competitors, we need to understand their key metrics - what the company cares about the most.

Then, we can establish an evaluation framework to guide a detailed competitor analysis.

The metrics could be developed based on the industry landscape and particular needs of that organization.

For example, to understand the current industry, some basic metrics, such as number of followers, number following, total number of tweets, the date when they posted the first tweet, topic focuses and so forth, should be measured.





Stalk your competitors!

When considering a competitor's unique activities on weibo, such as competitor interaction frequency and content, an organization can develop activity-related metrics, such as the number of shares and comments.

Using these metrics, you can review competitors' weibo usage.

If your company has a weibo account, it's good to include it as well for a comparison and benchmarking.

Doing so will help identify opportunities and challenges as we develop a powerful weibo and social media strategy.





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Existing weibo presences?

If your organization already has a weibo presence or presences, then it is essential to analyze your state of play.

Think of it as a “digital checkup” – first, you assess your current condition and compare it against benchmarks to identify any problems. Only then can you determine the prescription.

In addition to the competitor comparison, other analyses from different perspectives can be conducted to determine the direction of the strategy. This includes an organization’s existing own weibo situation analysis, target users analysis and industrial best practice comparison.

For example, by comparing the 24-hour distribution of company-generated tweets with the 24-hour distribution of shares and comments from your target audiences, it’s easy to review the effectiveness of your existing activities.



Step 3

Define Goals



Develop specific objectives and key performance indicators (KPI) for your weibo program.

Your weibo communication and marketing objectives should be consistent with business and integrated communication objectives. We follow S.M.A.R.T Goals: **Specific, Measureable, Attainable, Relevant and Time-Bound.**

Stage	Core	KPI	KPI objective
Appeal	Quantity of users	Number of followers	10,000 followers within 1 year
Resonance	Quality of users	Number of active followers	2000 active followers within 1 year
Advocacy	Word of mouth	Percentage of positive and neutral comments and retweets	Percentage of positive and neutral comments and retweets >80% within 1 year

Goals can be: To increase corporate or brand awareness. To improve word-of-mouth (WOM). To improve brand sentiment. To drive product sales.

Appeal

Attract weibo followers to grow stream awareness

Resonance

Ensure follower quality and encourage engagement (retweets and comments)

Advocacy

Gain positive WOM



Set achievable performance metrics



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The number of followers is easy to understand, but the number of active followers can be defined differently.

There are different levels of follower activity: followers who share or comment at least once a month versus those who share or comment three times a week, etc. Once confirmed, the criteria should not be changed frequently.

Otherwise, it will be impossible to compare different time periods.

When setting KPI, avoid the common mistake of ranking quantity over quality. That is one of the reasons the “zombie follower” prevails.

If a weibo stream has 2 million followers, but a tweet attracts only one comment and two retweets on average, then it's obvious that the relationship between this weibo stream and its followers is very weak.

The accumulation of high quality followers is similar to the accumulation of brand advocates - it requires sustained effort, building trust and relationships, and one should not expect success overnight.





Step 4

Design Your “Presence” by planning your strategy

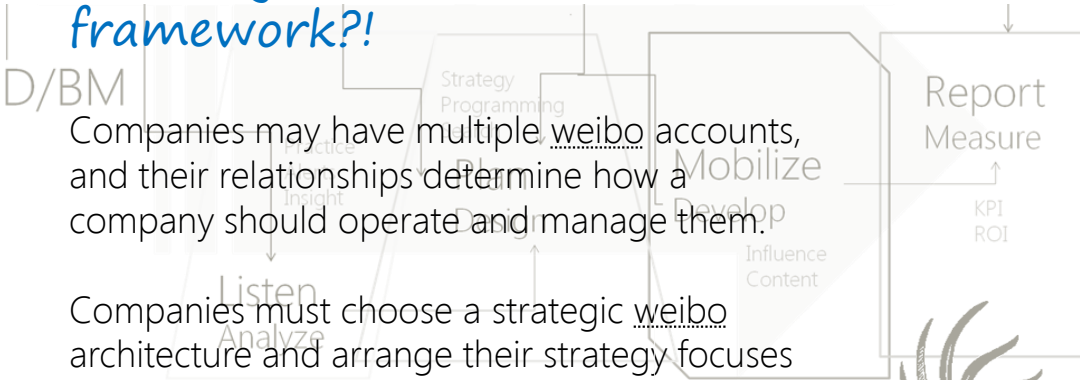
After deciding on your communication objectives and KPIs, you will have clear goals; the next step is to plan a strategy and tactics.

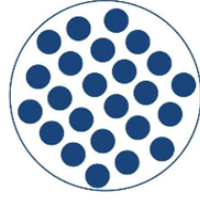
What's your weibo framework?!

Companies may have multiple weibo accounts, and their relationships determine how a company should operate and manage them.

Companies must choose a strategic weibo architecture and arrange their strategy focuses on the overall direction while tactics focus on the specific actions, and the two are tightly linked.

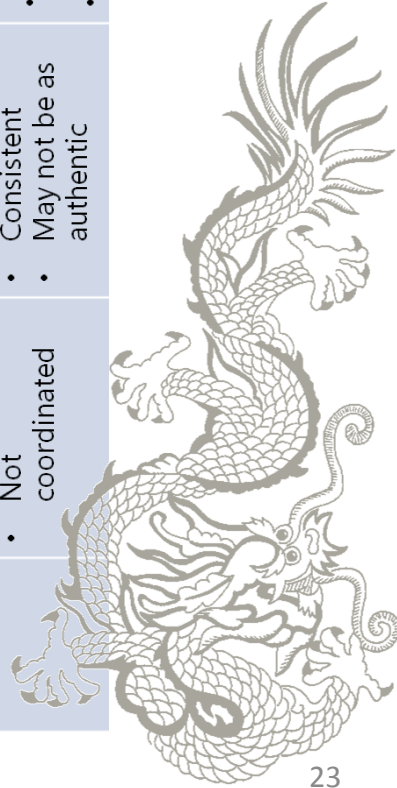
For weibo communication, the following five strategies are essential.



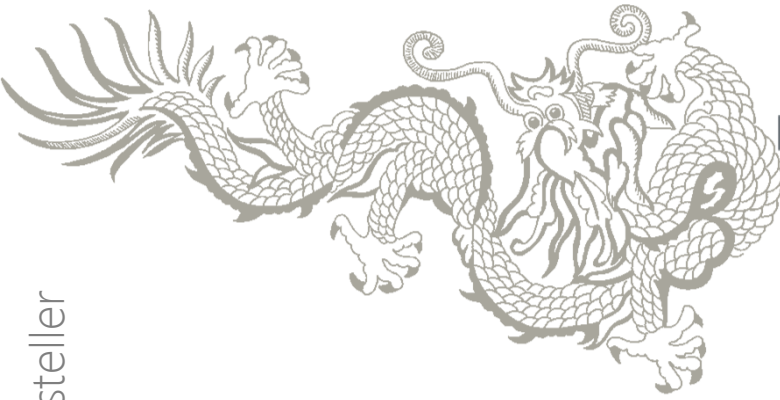


Weibo management structures

	Distributed	Centralized	Coordinated	Multiple Hub and Spoke	Holistic
Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organic growth Authentic Experimental Not coordinated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One department controls all efforts Consistent May not be as authentic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One hub sets rules and procedures Business units undertake own efforts Spreads widely around the org Takes time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Similar to coordinated but across multiple brands and units 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each employee is empowered Unlike distributed, employees are organized



Source: Forrester



Let the world know

A following strategy includes both who the weibo stream should follow and how it can attract followers.

To attract followers, promote your weibo presence. Don't be shy. Market your presence using all types of media available to your organization.

Owned

Promotion on media owned by the company, such as *official websites, email, and blogs*.

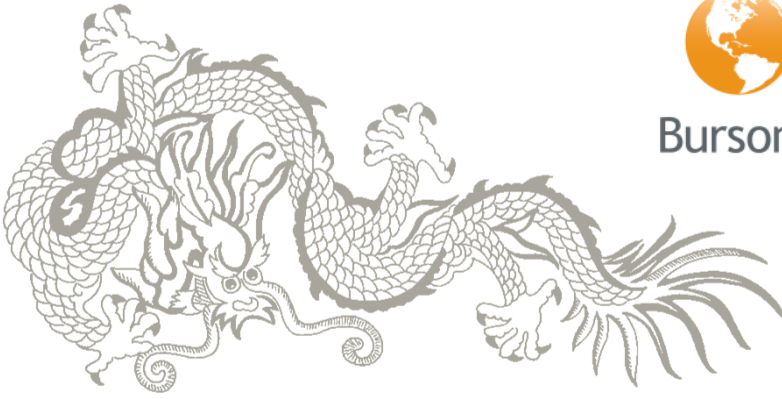
Paid

Promotion through traditional online / offline media buying, such as cooperation portals like Sina, Sohu, Tencent and Netease, and promotion through paid advertising.

Earned (+ Social)

Attracting new followers through current followers who share your tweeted content with their own extended networks.





Follow

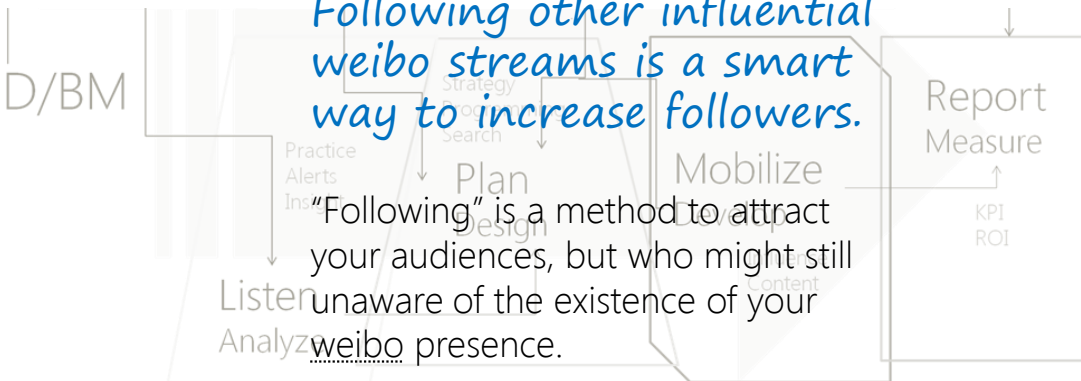
There are certain useful strategies and tactics to keep in mind when following others.

Following other influential weibo streams is a smart way to increase followers.

“Following” is a method to attract your audiences, but who might still be unaware of the existence of your weibo presence.

An organization’s weibo stream can reward “active brand advocates”, such as those who continuously engage with your weibo content – simply by following them back.

An effective following strategy can bring good results for your weibo program’s effectiveness.



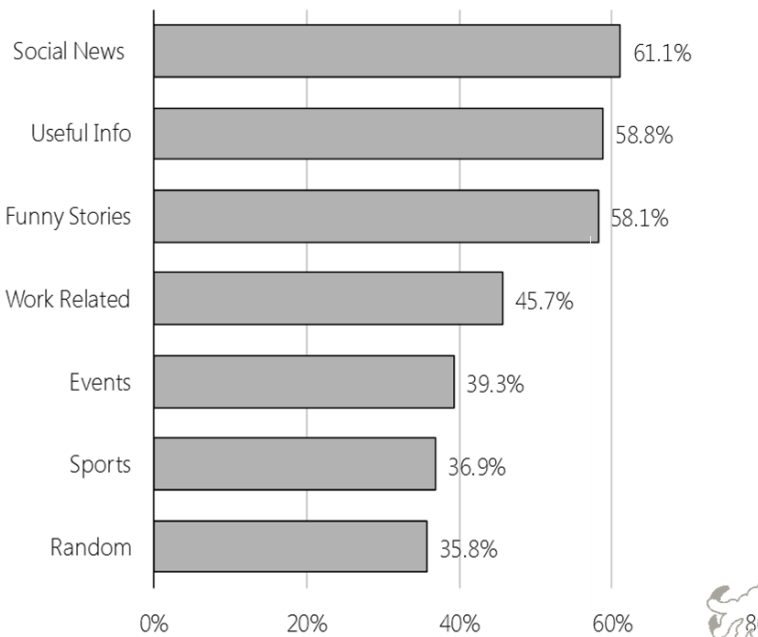


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Content, content!

A strong content strategy is vital to the success of your weibo program. Ensure the quality of your content, and post valuable content at the right times.

There are three important points to keep in mind while developing a content strategy. These are: topic, source and posting timeline.



*Topic, Source,
Timeline*





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What topics should your weibo posts cover?

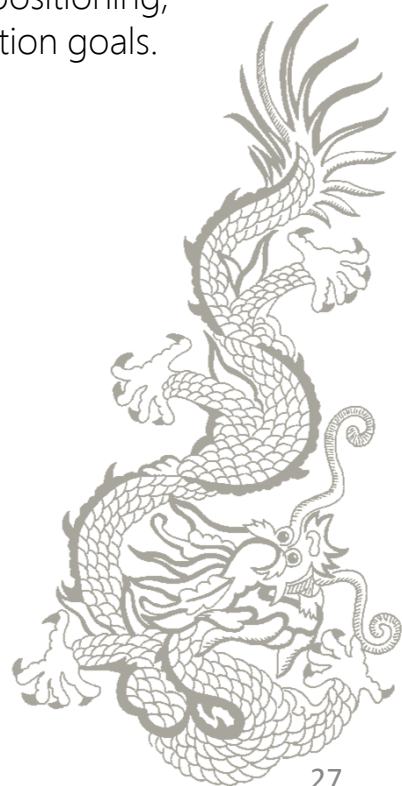
The most frequently shared content on Weibo

Top 3 topics: 1) hot social news and events, 2) helpful info and tips for users or their friends, 3) humor and interesting news.

Organizations can and should take advantage of these topics

and integrate them with corporate positioning, business objectives and communication goals.

*Tell stories,
be generous,
and funny*





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The 1/3 Principle

Of course, a corporate or brand weibo must align with the corporate or brand communications objectives – and not simply be based on what’s trendy and popular!

A general rule of thumb is the 1/3 Principle for corporate or brand weibo content. This divides your content among three main areas of focus: Value-added content, Engagement content and Branded or Promotional content. Reviewing your audience’s feedback will help to fine-tune the content proportions specifically to your strategy and program.





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1/ Value-added

Useful information for users and their networks to increase shares and exposure

2/ Engaged

Content that encourages consumers to engage with the stream

3/ Promoted

Content related to the company's branding and products

Generally, weibo content sources can be divided into three categories: your organization, other weibo streams, and real-time response (e.g., replying to comments.)

The 1/3 Principle *can be a starting point with choosing content sources.* A third of your content can be sourced from each category.





Time to post

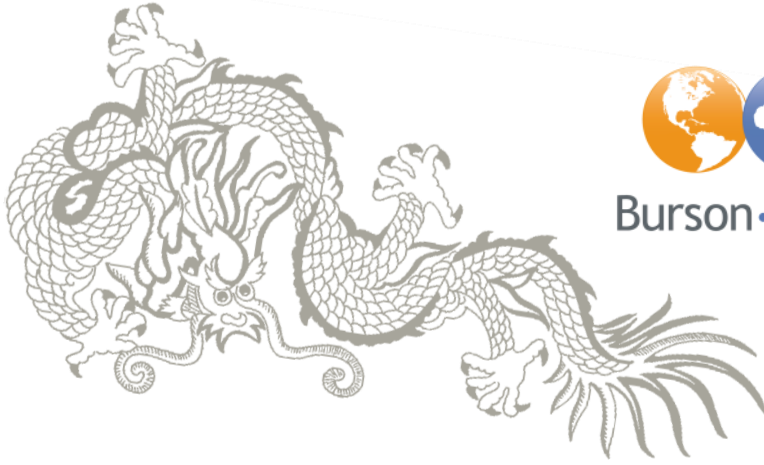
Now that you know what you are posting and where it will come from, we must decide when is best to post it. Depending on your business needs, you can develop annual, quarterly, monthly and weekly posting calendars.



Prepare and maintain a posting timeline (much like an editorial calendar) and develop and keep ready your content in advance to guide daily posts and updates. The table below is an example of a content posting timeline.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Topic					
Tag					
Message					
Type					
Form					
Content					

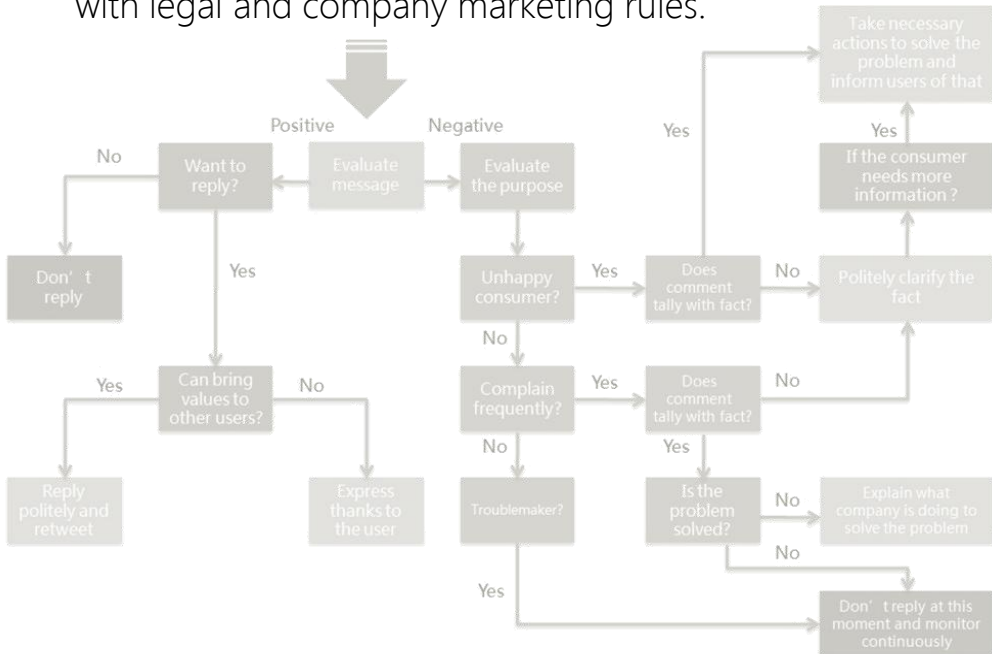




Define a process to respond and engage

The goal of an engagement strategy is to guide your weibo activities with your audience, such as shares (retweets) and responses.

Guidelines and management processes can help weibo operational team engage with users in different situations – while ensuring compliance with legal and company marketing rules.





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Reporting

Successful weibo communications and marketing requires long-term commitment.

Continuous review of reporting and optimization means ongoing improvement of performance.

The following steps are essential in measurement and optimization:

Monitoring: Collect data through continuous monitoring

Analysis: Analyze data for insights and recommendations

Optimization: Take action based on insights and recommendations

It's necessary to develop a measurement and reporting system, as the foundation for continuous monitoring, that is in-line with your KPI framework. This system will provide guidance for future optimizations through regular review and analyses with an organization's management team.

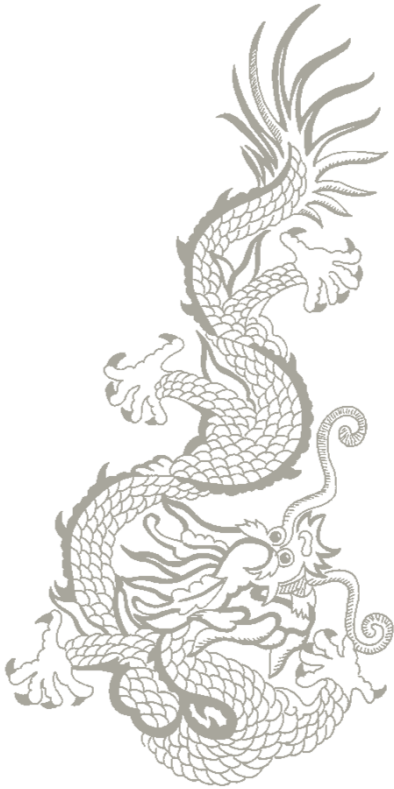




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Step 5

Manage Your Streams



Your official weibo presence is just as much a part of your corporate identity as is your corporate website.

Just like your website, your weibo stream is NOT a one-time investment - it requires ongoing operation and maintenance.

With a comprehensive strategy and concrete tactics, weibo operational planning is used to direct long-term maintenance, relevant activities and integration with other communications marketing channels.

This is critical for its success.



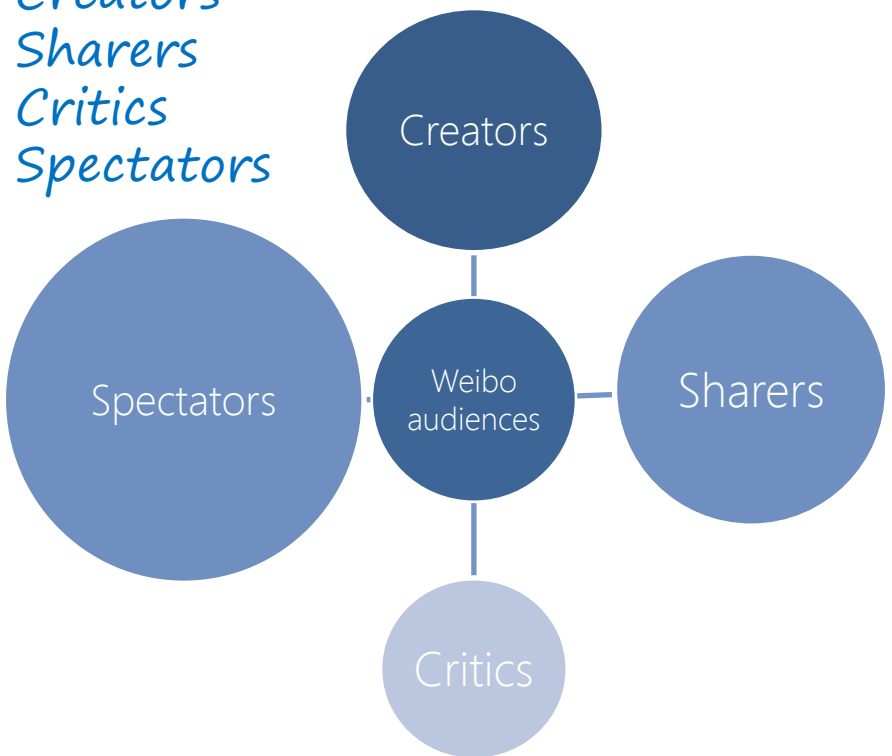


Forming a community. Your “wei-people”

Different weibo users have different behaviors. Approach your audience segments differently to manage them more effectively and to build stronger relationships and advocacy.

At D/BM we segment weibo audiences into 4 general types:

- Creators*
- Sharers*
- Critics*
- Spectators*



Weibo management principles can be developed based on your own groups' unique interests and characteristics.





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Nurturing influence. Your “wei-influencers”

Influencer Relationship Management (IRM) is another name for Key Opinion Leader (KOL) Management.

KOL Management is not simple, short-term or static. It is a long-term and dynamic process, that requires support of methodology and resources to maximize effects.

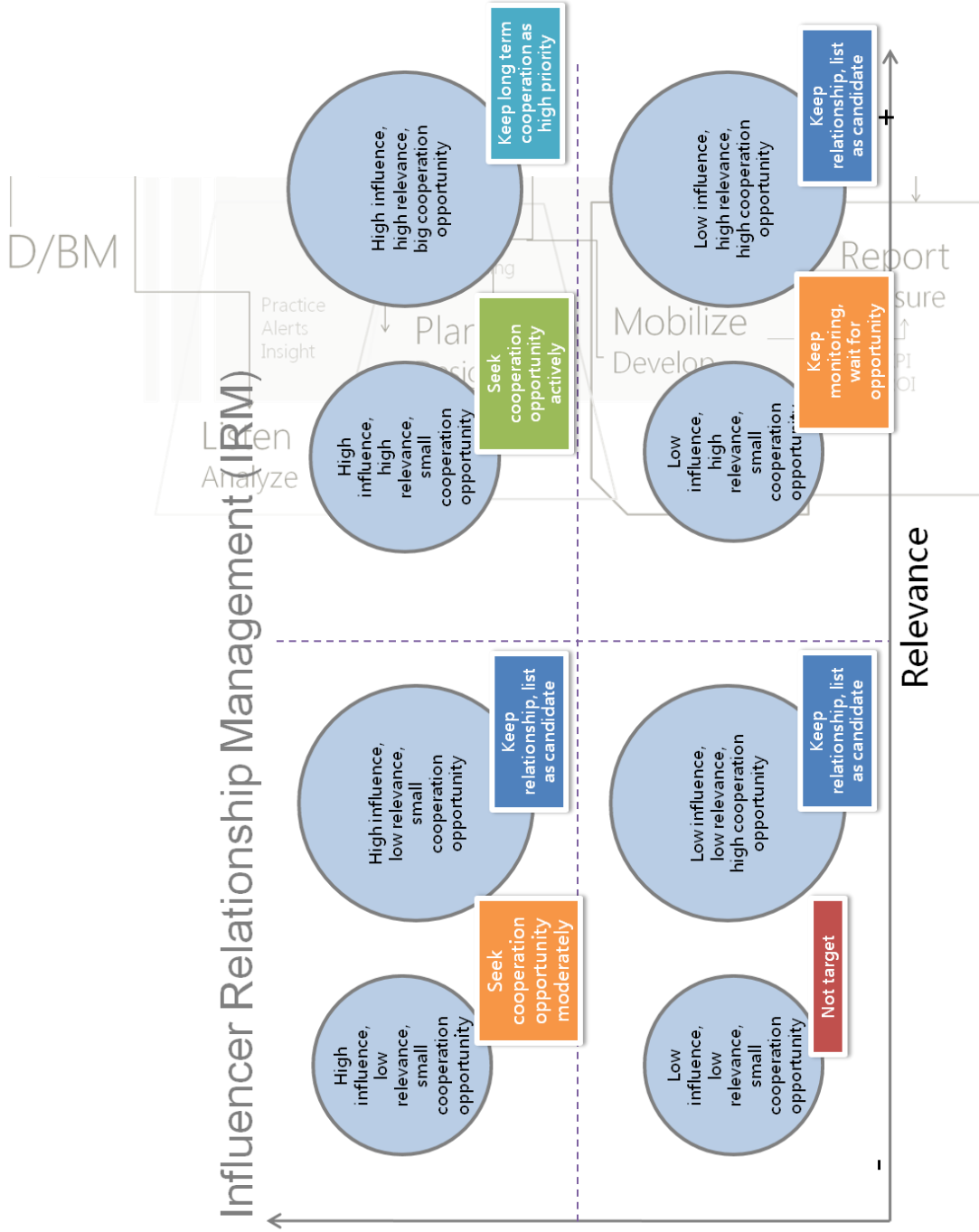
The benefits of good Influencer/ KOL Management can be massive for social media communications and marketing.

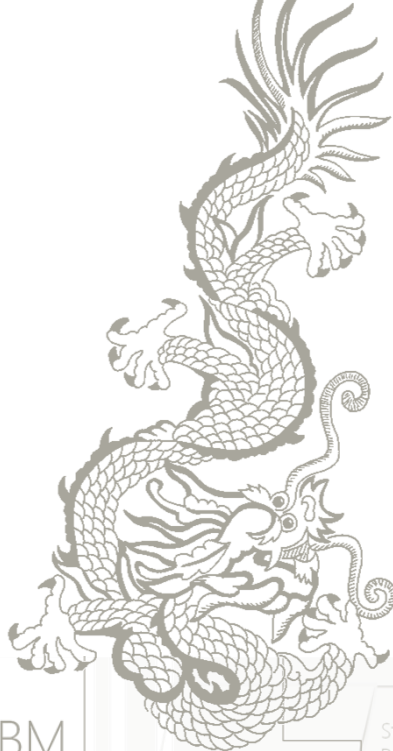
KOLs should be analyzed along 3 lines.

These are: *Relevance, Influence and Cooperation* opportunities. Relevance is the degree to which your organization’s communication objectives and content are related to the Influencer/ KOL.

Influence is the KOL’s power among peers and followers. Cooperation opportunity is the probability of working with the KOL. Based on these 3 factors, a KOL management model should be developed.







At D/BM we divide marketing and communications campaigns into the following types based on the objectives, content formats and channels involved:

1. Weibo campaign (weibo platform only)
2. Integrated online campaign (weibo + other online channels)
3. Fully-Integrated campaign (weibo + other online channels + offline channels).





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Weibo campaign guiding principles

The basic principles for planning a weibo campaign are as follows

Be consistent with overall business objectives and communication objectives;

Tailor particular communication approaches for target audiences

Select the most suitable weibo features as the campaign platform (such as weibo Big Screen, Weibo Interview, and so on).





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Insist on integration

Weibo is one of many channels of marketing and communications available to you in social media.

It is one approach to achieve an organization's overall communications and marketing objectives.

To be really effective, weibo **MUST** integrated with other marketing, communications, sales and customer service programs. Doing so will really serve a your overall objectives and show stronger value and results.

Think of weibo as a piece in the puzzle; a key part of the overall plan.





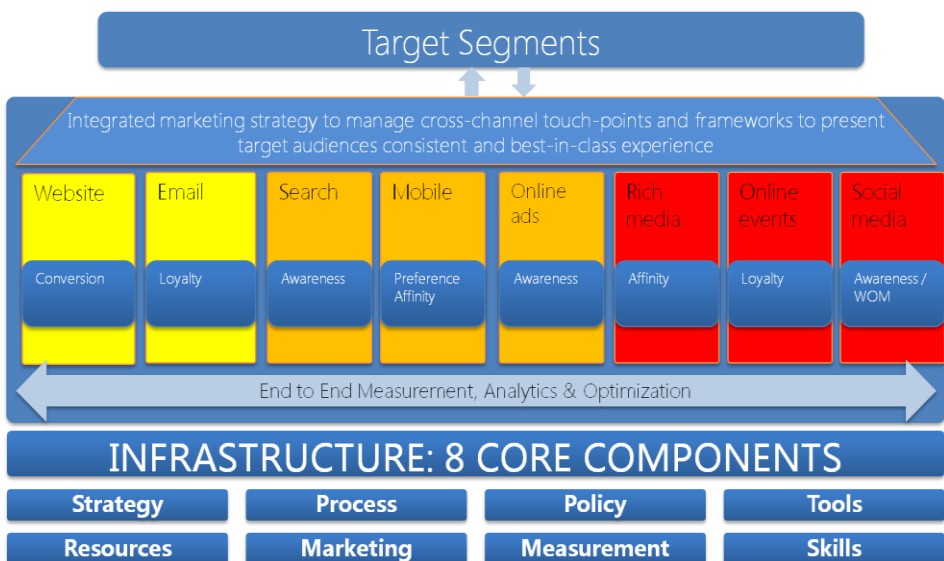
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An integrated framework

At D/BM, our framework for an integrated marketing strategy development facilitates cross-channel communication and delivers a complete brand experience to influencers, individuals and audiences.

Integrated communications and marketing is a huge and important topic.

Below we share our integration framework as a reminder that it must be kept in mind when planning weibo and social media strategies in China.





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Ready your resources

Often organizations jump onto weibo without planning resources and investment, and they end up failing, giving up and achieving very low ROI.

Proper resource planning is a step that must not be overlooked.

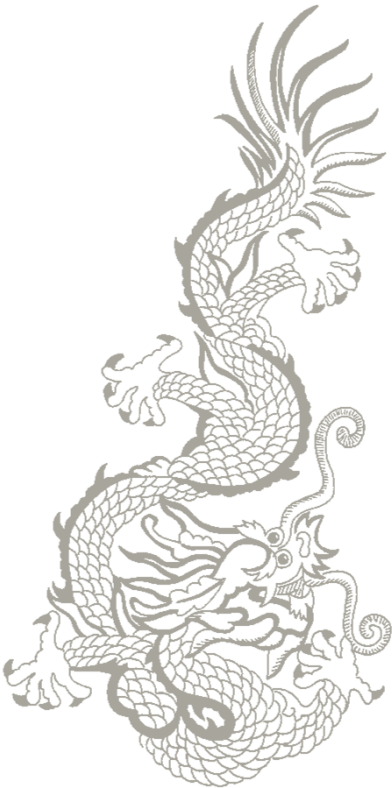
When we say resources we mean talent/ skills resources, financial resources, materials - and so on.

All are fundamental to ensuring successful and smooth operations.





Use weibo to manage Crisis



To so many organizations in China, weibo is a double-edged sword.

Few will argue that the potential for marketing and communications is great.

It looks so easy!

Yet, customers complain, people say negative things, and organizations tend to be unprepared to respond and deal effectively when crisis occurs.

This isn't what you were expecting or "signed up" for...

To manage crisis, real-time monitoring on weibo is critical.

Understanding sentiment trends and conducting the necessary research and analysis is the basis for strong measurement and ROI modeling.



Performance tracking



While there are many digital monitoring tools available for organizations to choose from, only a tiny handful can effectively monitor Chinese social media conversations and sentiment in real-time, and analyze results.

Select a solution that works specifically for the Chinese social media environment, which is unique.

We use an exclusive software to listen and track the performance of weibo and social media in real-time.



D/BM's Weibo & China Social Media Tracking System





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Step 6

Plan Your Action

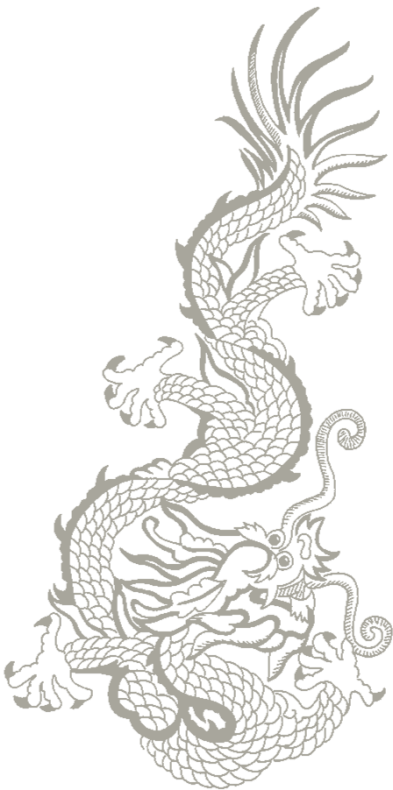
We are familiar with the saying -- "Implementation is the key to success". This can be applied to weibo.

After a holistic strategy and specific planning process, now it is the time for Action.

Practice makes perfect. All the good ideas, content and processes that we have prepared need to perform.

Develop an action plan - lay out the exact information of when and who to do what; and secondly, take solid actions.

Actions refers to action plans - change management and project management skills. We refer to the issues of modifications to organizational roles and structures later in this guide.





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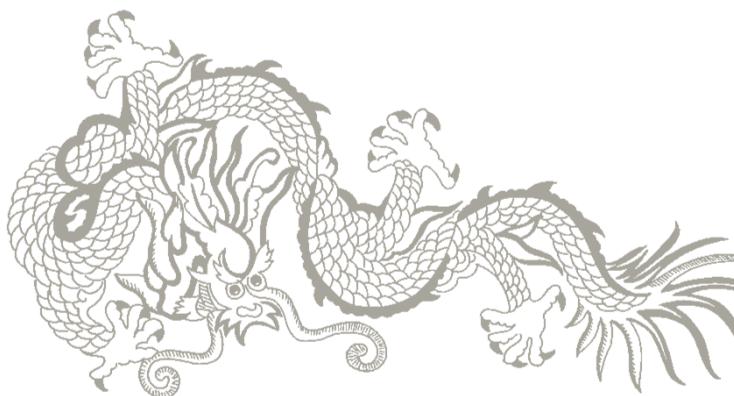
Empower your team. Roles and responsibilities

While planning action, it's important to assign roles and responsibilities within your organization or agency, and to set up the right team structure.

This is because in weibo management, different types of work and skill-sets are involved. Team members specialized in different areas will be required.

For instance, for an annual strategic weibo plan, more strategic planning talent and experience is needed. For general weibo content development and editorial calendar planning, more content and copywriting skills are needed. Video content requires video production skills. And so on.

Or as for those weibo picture editing and corporate weibo homepage design, graphic and user experience design capabilities might be required.





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Get set, go!

Depending on your organization's own requirements, consider both internal and / or external resources.

Internal resources mean existing internal teams - or recruiting new staff - for your organization. External resources mean outsourcing certain tasks to a professional agency.

Resource planning is critical, and all options have their pros and cons.

A typical approach that many organizations use is to assign an in-house person, or team, to take charge of weibo. For example, a social media manager or online marketing manager.

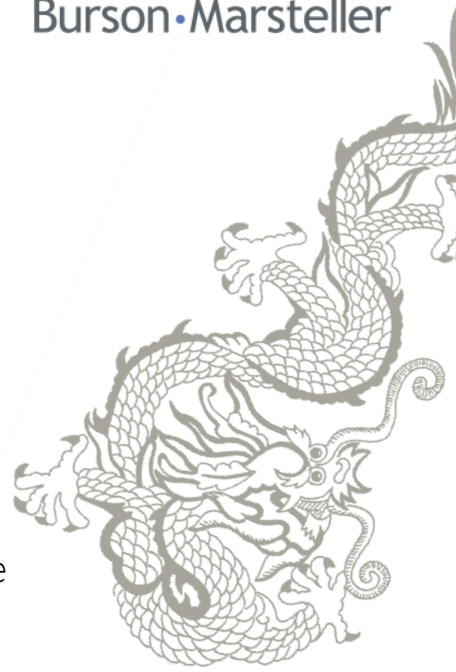
Other companies hire agencies (for example, a PR firm, or an interactive agency) to help with planning, execution, monitoring and optimization.

Decide what's right for your organization. No one size fits all.





Step 7 Optimize

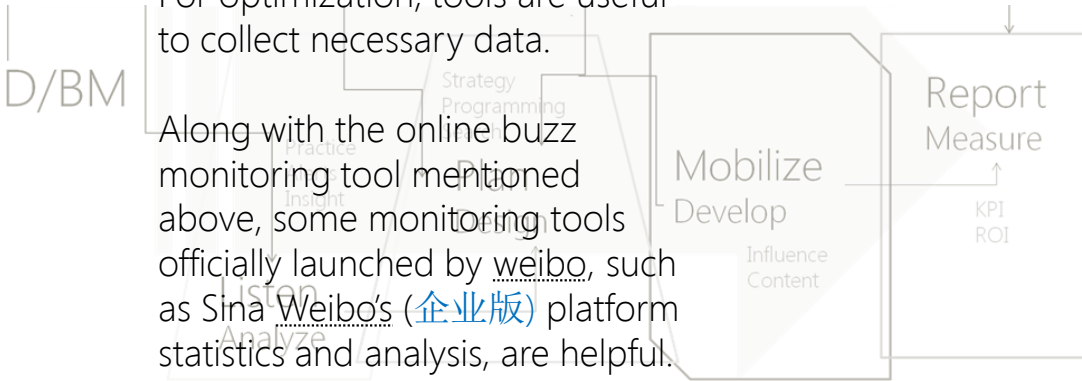


It is essential to maintain your presence on weibo to optimize its performance.

For optimization, tools are useful to collect necessary data.

Along with the online buzz monitoring tool mentioned above, some monitoring tools officially launched by weibo, such as Sina Weibo's (企业版) platform statistics and analysis, are helpful.

Analyzing data is a critical step to follow to gather valuable insights, that can serve you as further direction for future optimization.





Remember, Content is KING

With your weibo strategy now off the ground and in motion, the essential point to remember is that content is king.

Just like everything else, the shelf life of digital assets, channels and programs is related to the maintenance of presence.

A good digital housekeeper will ensure that the content is fresh and frequent, while quickly addressing any bugs and quirks.

There is no better way to conduct quality assurance for a digital campaign than the utilization of real-time monitoring tools.





Thanks for reading

This 7-step process might seem a little complicated at first, but, in fact, it is simple and very similar to all the many things that we do in our daily life.

Take travel. The first step is to determine the direction (Direction), such as going taking a trip to learn more about the culture of a new place.

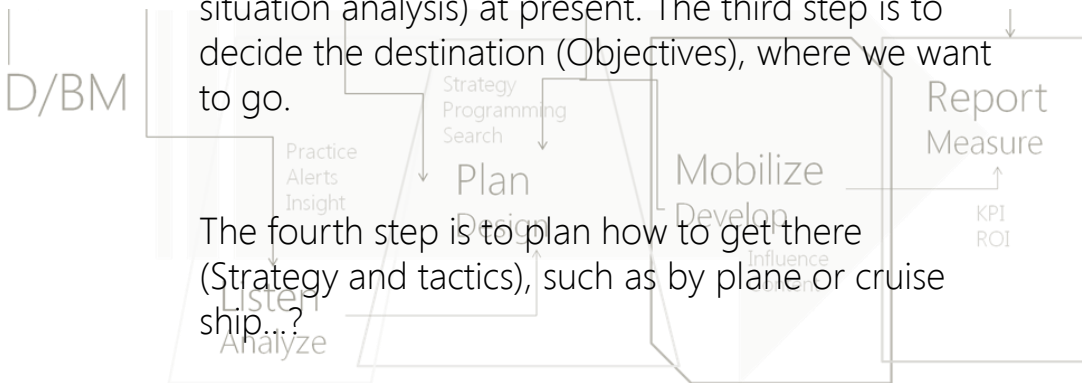
The second step is to see where we are (Current situation analysis) at present. The third step is to decide the destination (Objectives), where we want to go.

The fourth step is to plan how to get there (Strategy and tactics), such as by plane or cruise ship...?

The fifth step is to confirm exactly how to get there (Operational planning), such as which airline and route to take, how much to spend.

The sixth step is to develop an action plan and implement the program (Action), such as planning a travel schedule and booking your tickets (don't forget to do that!)

The seventh and final step is to maintain the process (Maintenance), such staying on budget.



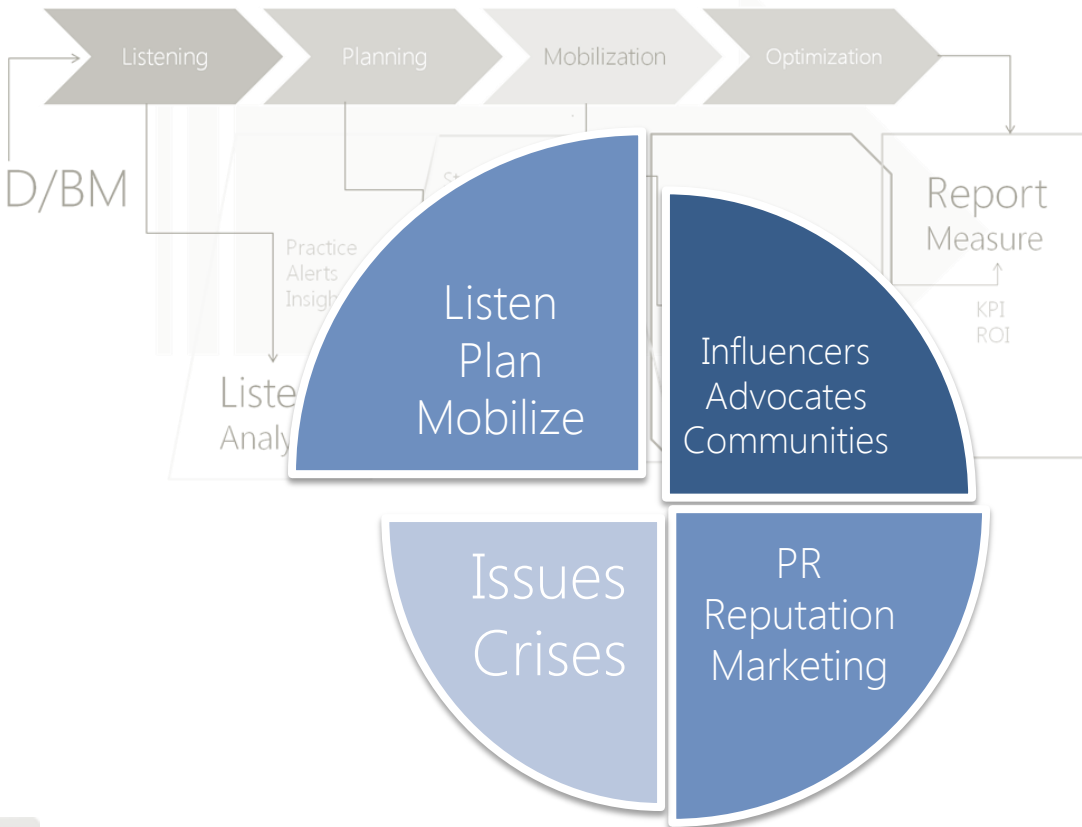


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What we do

We *identify your* social media influencers, in real-time, we *plan* innovative digital communications, and we *mobilize* corporate and brand programming for companies to promote their reputation in the digital age.



D/BM | China Digital and Social Media at Burson-Marsteller



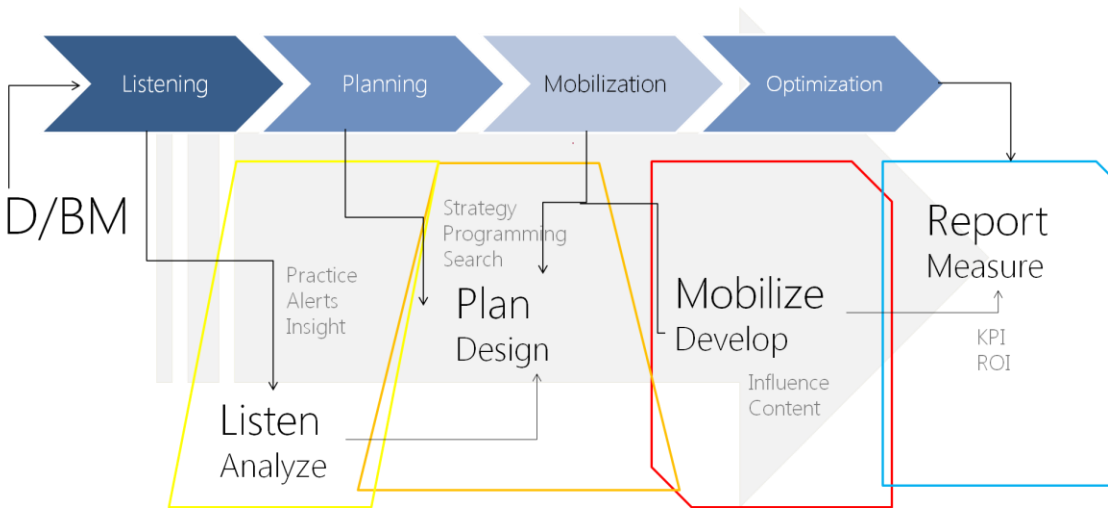


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We love this stuff.
Be in touch.

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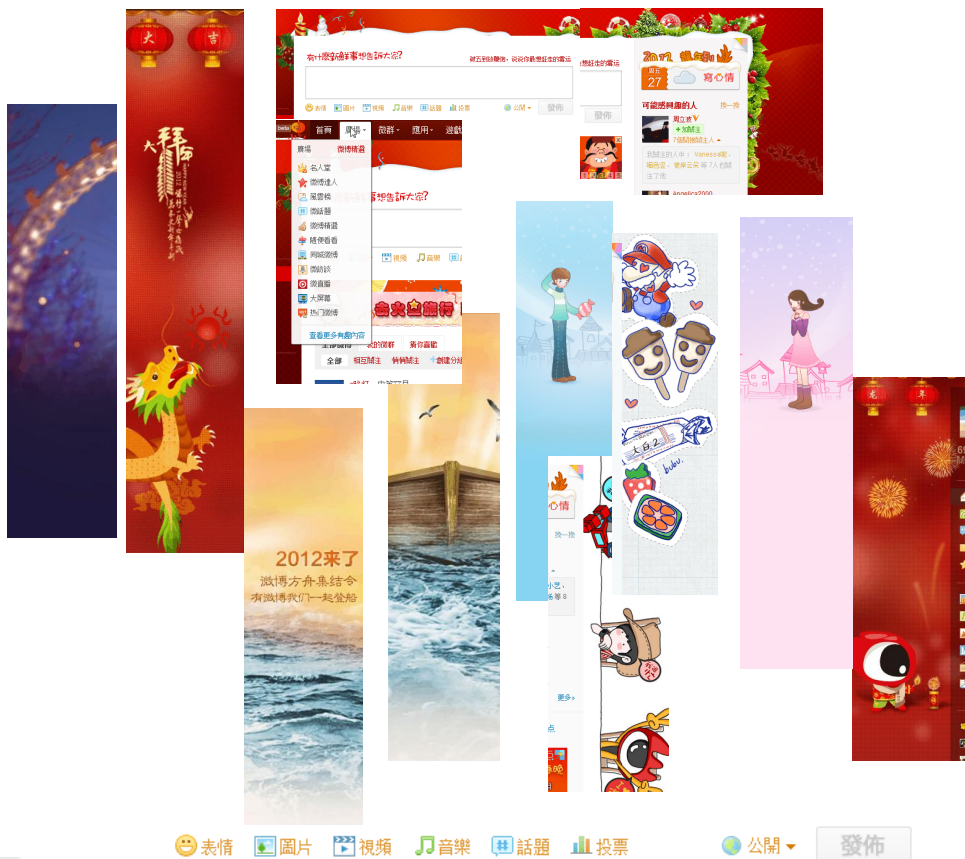




Thanks to

All our social media-savvy colleagues at Burson-Marsteller China who contributed greatly to the development of this Strategy Guide. Special thanks to:

Sherry Zhang, Te Chaobo, Vanessa Zhang, Annie Dickson, Maggie Hicks, Aaron Kreuzscher, Craig Adams and Chris Deri.





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Seven steps to better corporate reputation, crisis preparedness and digital communications in China.

