

A TOOLKIT FOR POWERING SOCIAL MEDIA GROWTH WITHIN THE PLURALISM ECOSYSTEM

June 2025

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INTRODUCTION:

A NEW DIGITAL CHAPTER FOR PLURALISM

The challenges to building a more pluralistic society in America today are real and urgent. Deepening political divides, rising mistrust, rise of echo chambers, and growing isolation threaten the health of our communities and can make it challenging for us to live together across our differences. At the same time, democratic institutions—from checks and balances to civic norms and the rule of law—are under mounting strain.

And yet, this is also a moment of possibility. Across the country, organizations and leaders are working every day to overcome these challenges. Some are bringing Americans together across political lines, others are redesigning public spaces to foster connection, safeguarding election integrity, supporting local journalism, or advancing interfaith collaboration, just to name a few. While not every group uses the word pluralism, they share a common thread in that their work advances pluralistic values. For the purposes of this report, we refer to organizations who are advancing these values as the “pluralism ecosystem.”

There are many ways to define pluralism. For this project, we draw on the definition offered by New Pluralists, a collaborative of funders, researchers, practitioners, and storytellers working to nurture a culture of pluralism in the US.

Pluralism is both a worldview and a practice—one that honors every person’s dignity, embraces the strength of our differences, and invites participation and collaboration to solve shared problems¹

In today’s media landscape, advancing pluralism requires more than leading meaningful research and programs—for these values to scale in reach, it also demands effective communication that can shape norms and reach broad audiences.

If you’re working to advance those values but struggling to amplify your message online, this toolkit is for you.

¹ New Pluralists and ORS Impact. Pluralism under Pressure: Assessing the Status of a Core American Value. August 31, 2024. PDF. <https://www.datocms-assets.com/141895/1731011397-pluralism-under-pressure-litscan.pdf>

WHY THIS TOOLKIT, WHY NOW

This resource was developed through a collaboration between [More in Common](#), [BridgeUSA](#), [+More Perfect Union](#), and [Listen First Project](#)—partners who over the past year **collaborated** to pilot a digital learning community. With support from New Pluralists, we studied how organizations across this broader landscape are using social media, where gaps exist, and what strategies can help close them.

We saw real promise—and real pain points. Many groups don't have dedicated communications staff. Social media often takes a back seat to program work. Even when messaging is strong, algorithms don't always reward nuance, bridge-building, or collaboration.

This toolkit is rooted in those insights. It offers concrete, field-tested strategies for organizations looking to grow their digital presence with purpose. Whether you're just starting out or trying to scale what's already working, you'll find guidance here on how to:

- Clarify your goals and audience
- Choose the right platforms and formats
- Use tools for monitoring impact and expanding reach
- Share stories that resonate without compromising your values

Our hope is that this guide helps you feel more confident, more connected, and better equipped to make your work visible in a noisy digital world.

UNDERSTANDING THE LANDSCAPE:

SOCIAL MEDIA CHALLENGES FACING THE PLURALISM ECOSYSTEM

The digital landscape is chaotic, fast-moving, and often unforgiving—and yet, it remains one of the most powerful arenas for shaping public imagination. Organizations advancing pluralism are doing essential work within this space, but they're doing so while navigating a set of persistent structural challenges. These aren't failures of effort or vision—they're the product of a system that wasn't built for nuance, dialogue, or bridge-building. But by understanding these shared barriers, we can begin to design smarter, more strategic approaches that align our values with the digital world we're trying to influence.

Key challenges include:

- **High Costs & Limited Resources:** Building a strong digital presence takes time, tools, and staff capacity. Many organizations in the pluralism space operate with lean teams and modest budgets, which can make it challenging to invest in dedicated communications staff or platforms for social media management, social listening, and lead generation.
- **Difficulty Reaching Key Audiences:** Identifying and connecting with the right audiences online is an ongoing challenge. Expanding beyond familiar circles often requires a more intentional approach to audience discovery—grounded in data, creativity, and experimentation.
- **Siloed Efforts:** Although many groups share aligned missions, opportunities for collaboration and cross-promotion are still growing. Strengthening coordination across the field can help reduce duplication, increase visibility, and extend collective impact.
- **Balancing Relevance & Integrity:** The fast-paced nature of social media tends to reward simplicity and speed, which can create tension with the thoughtful, nuanced communication that defines pluralism. Finding ways to remain timely while staying grounded in mission and values is a shared priority.
- **Challenging Social Media Algorithms:** Social media platforms often favor content that

provokes strong reactions—sometimes making it harder for bridge-building messages to gain traction. Navigating these dynamics with creativity and persistence is part of the work.

- **Polarized Media Landscape:** In an increasingly fragmented media environment, it can be difficult to reach across divides or ensure messages are received in the spirit they were intended. With careful framing and strategic distribution, pluralism organizations can still make meaningful inroads.

Our goal with this project was to gain traction on these challenges by

- Developing a shared, data-informed understanding of audiences
- Exploring pooled tools and services to lower barriers to entry
- Growing engagement and reach for pluralism-oriented organizations
- Creating a community of practice for digital strategy

VISUALIZING THE PLURALISM ECOSYSTEM ON SOCIAL MEDIA

To strengthen the pluralism movement's digital strategy, we set out to better understand how pluralism-oriented organizations are positioned—and connected—online. Specifically, we asked:

- How much do our social media audiences overlap?
- Are we reaching new people, or mostly the same communities?
- How can we expand our collective digital footprint?

These questions guided a pilot project to visualize part of the pluralism ecosystem and explore its online reach.

Using the New Pluralists [pluralism ecosystem framework](#) as a starting point, we narrowed our focus to a subset of the field. We conducted a network analysis of Twitter/X followers from a sample of 88 pluralism-oriented organizations that work on bridging and reducing toxic polarization at the national level and that have a social media presence. Many of these organizations are within the New Pluralists network or are otherwise prominent within the broader ecosystem.

To limit scope and ensure clarity, we analyzed one platform—Twitter/X. Twitter/X is currently one of the best social media platforms for analyzing social networks as most profile and interaction data is public by default, and the relationships between users are clear, with followers/following relationships well-defined and engagement clear through replies, mentions, and retweets. Its application programming interface (API) is also one of the most accessible to researchers for web scraping using third-party tools.

Collecting available follower data through web scraping, we built a network map of shared audiences, encompassing over 1.2 million followers in total. We examined patterns of overlap to understand how organizations cluster, and we analyzed audience characteristics to gain insight into who is engaging with this work.

This analysis is not exhaustive. Instead, it offers a snapshot—enough to identify patterns and start asking more strategic questions about reach, resonance, and growth.

WHAT THE NETWORK MAP SHOWS

The visualization, shown in a static version below and in an interactive version [here](#), reveals a prominent central cluster of 20 organizations that are highly interconnected on Twitter/X.² These groups include BridgeUSA, Aspen Institute, Brennan Center, Greater Good Science Center, and Solutions Journalism Network. Outside the cluster are 68 additional organizations, including More in Common, Listen First Project, +More Perfect Union, News Literacy Project, Othering and Belonging Institute, and Braver Angels. These groups are less connected in terms of follower overlap on Twitter/X.

This contrast suggests that while the “core” of the network may be tightly knit, much of the field’s potential for growth and diversification lies at its edges.

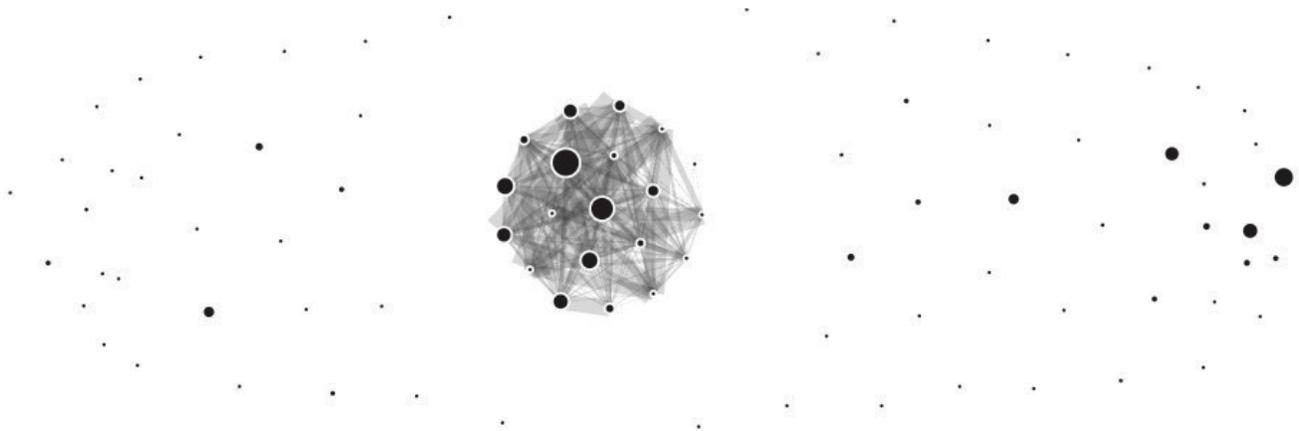


Figure 1: Network analysis map of Twitter/X follower overlap for all 88 organizations. Links indicate % shared Twitter/X followers. Points are individual organizations and size indicates # of Twitter/X followers. [Interactive link here.](#)

² In Figure 1, each **dot** represents one organization, sized by its number of Twitter/X followers. Each **line** represents **follower overlap**—the more shared followers between two organizations, the stronger their connection on the map. What stands out most is this **dense central cluster** in the middle. Its presence is robust to different ways of displaying and analyzing the data.

WITHIN THE CLUSTER: DENSE CONNECTIONS AND SHARED NARRATIVES

Organizations inside the highly networked cluster share significant audience overlap. Their dense interconnectivity on Twitter/X suggests shared influence within the field.

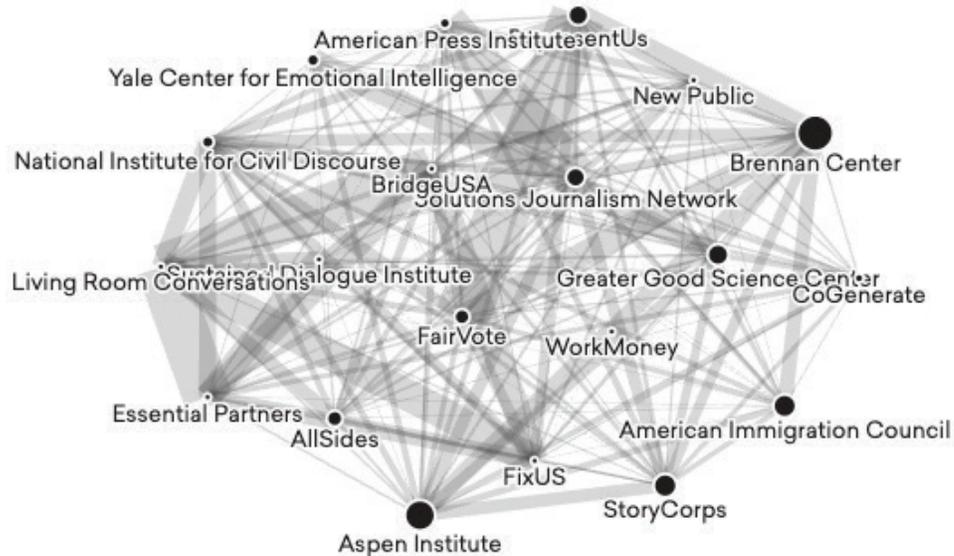


Figure 2: Network analysis map of Twitter/X follower overlap for the 20 organizations within the cluster. Links indicate % shared Twitter/X followers. Points are individual organizations and size indicates # of Twitter/X followers. [Interactive link here.](#)

The structure of the network reveals a strong pattern of shared followership—individuals who follow one organization in the cluster are likely to follow several others as well.

OUTSIDE THE CLUSTER: DISTINCT AUDIENCES

By contrast, organizations outside the cluster tend to have far less overlap in their Twitter/X followers.

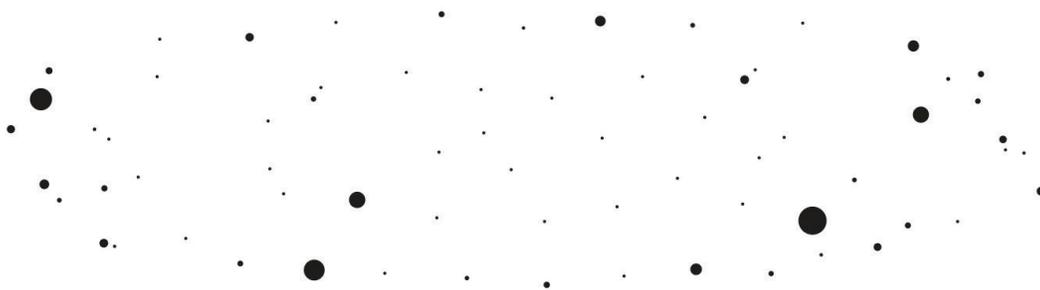


Figure 3: Network analysis map of Twitter/X follower overlap for the 68 organizations outside of the cluster. Links indicate % shared Twitter/X followers. Points are individual organizations and size indicates # of Twitter/X followers. [Interactive link here.](#)

This looser connectivity is not a disadvantage—it may represent a frontier for growth. These organizations often reach educators, researchers, students, and community builders who may be newer to the bridge-building conversation. Their audiences are less saturated, and their messages may offer unique cultural or topical entry points to pluralism.

WHO ARE THE FOLLOWERS?

The network map visualized in Figure 1 displays this section of the pluralism ecosystem’s over 1,200,000 Twitter/X followers.³ Over 964,000 of these are unique followers. Roughly 8% of accounts follow at least one organization within and outside the cluster. This drops to 1% for accounts that follow at least two organizations within and outside the cluster.

The audience within this section of the pluralism ecosystem is more likely than the general Twitter/X audience to be women, academics, researchers, and journalists. We find significant overlap in the Twitter/X audiences of the organizations within and outside the highly networked cluster.

Group	Total Followers (Mean)	Total Followers (Median)	% Overlapping Followers (Mean)
Within Cluster	35,623	18,785	0.97%
Outside Cluster	8,292	3,638	0.85%

Table 1: Statistics of within cluster followers and outside of cluster followers.

Organizations within the cluster have about 4x as many followers as those outside the cluster on average, as shown in Table 1. These organizations also tend to share a higher percentage of their followers with one another—meaning their audiences significantly overlap. Within the highly networked cluster, the 20 organizations share 0.97% of followers on average, with the percent of shared followers between two organizations ranging from 0% to 9.13%.

Followers of clustered organizations are more likely to be women, journalists and legal professionals. These followers have a greater interest in politics and business. Followers of non-cluster organizations include relatively more men, teachers, researchers, and students who tend to be more interested in topics of family, parenting, and books.

³ We scraped this available follower data from Twitter in August 2024.

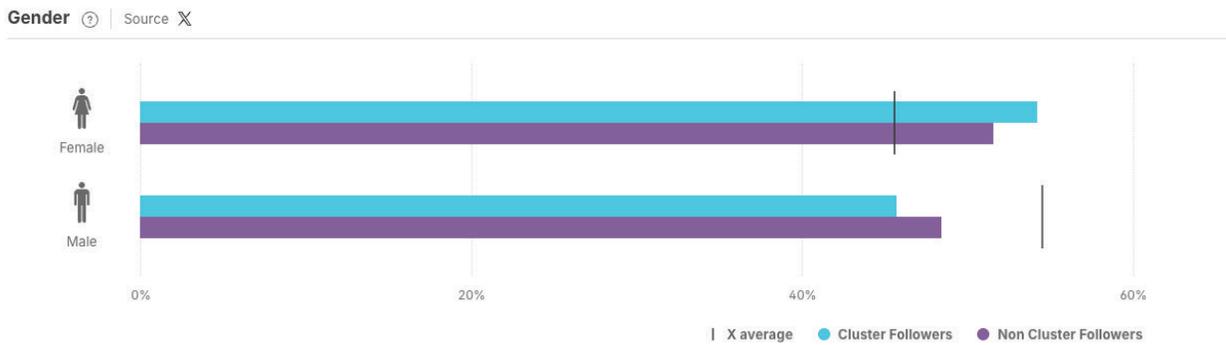


Figure 4: Breakdown of gender by within-cluster followers (blue) and non-cluster followers (purple). Screenshot from Brandwatch.

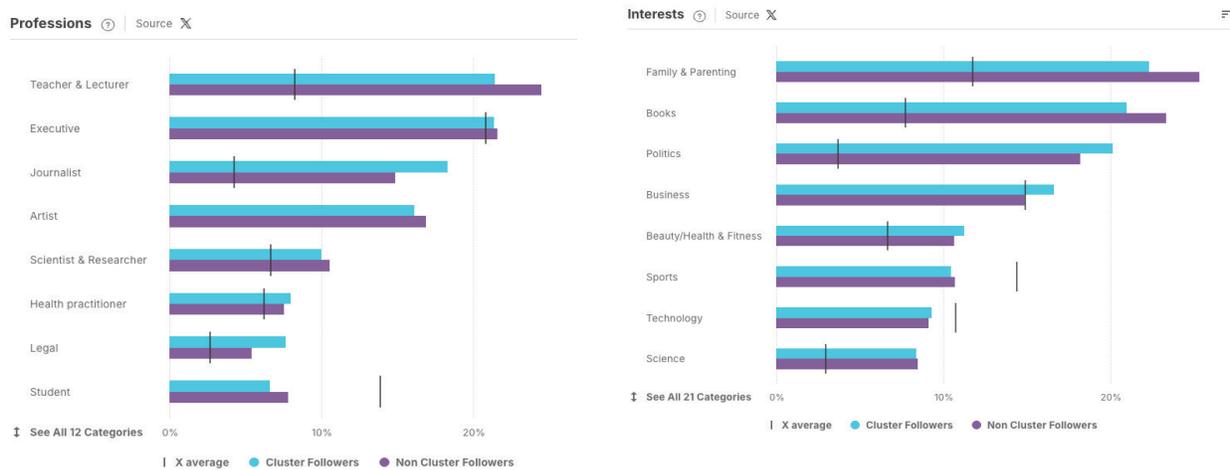


Figure 5: Breakdown of professions (left) and interests (right) by within-cluster followers (blue) and non-cluster followers (purple). Screenshot from Brandwatch.

Despite these differences, followers across both groups are similarly engaged—retweeting, replying, and sharing content at comparable rates, as shown in Figure 6.



Figure 6: Engagement levels (posts, comments, likes, etc.) for the cluster followers (blue) and non-cluster followers (yellow) are similar over time. Screenshot from Brandwatch.

The conversations followers participate in frequently center around high-salience political topics, with President Trump and national politics emerging as shared points of focus—albeit from different narrative angles. Cluster followers tend to lean more toward policy discussions and global affairs. Non-cluster followers more often focus on domestic issues and cultural concerns.

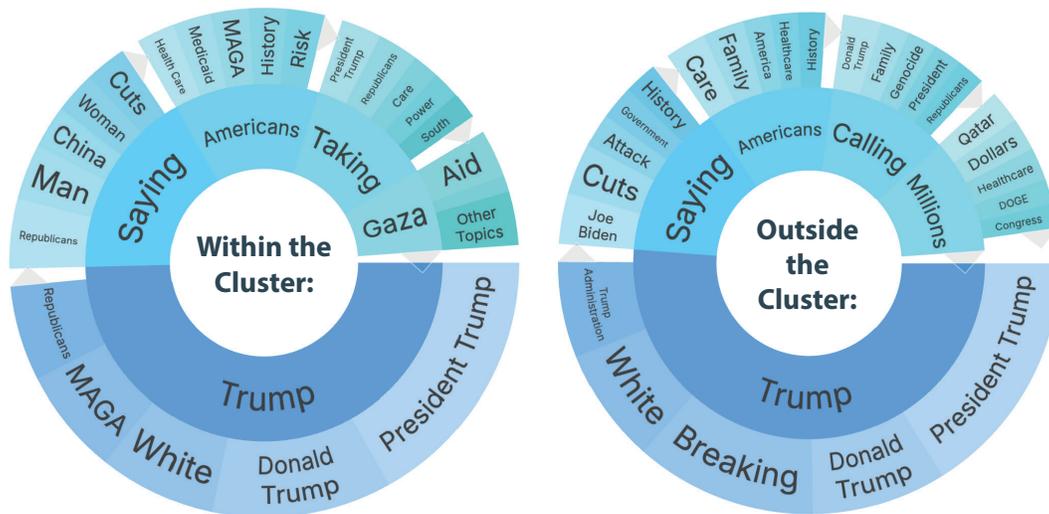


Figure 7: Topic areas most discussed by cluster followers (left) and non cluster followers (right) at a specific point in time. In this example, Trump is a main topic theme for both sets of followers, as shown with the inner ring, with the outer-ring words reflecting related sub-themes. For example, “MAGA” is a sub-theme discussed under the umbrella of conversations about Trump. Screenshot from Brandwatch.

These two visualizations in Figure 7 show the most common phrases and topic pairings mentioned by followers of cluster and non-cluster organizations. While they reflect two distinct networks, the central theme is the same in both: President Donald Trump.⁴

This reinforces something important: regardless of position in the network, a large portion of online engagement still orbits around a shared set of political figures or flashpoints—in this case, President Trump. That said, the surrounding topics differ:

- Among cluster followers, we see themes like MAGA, Gaza, care, risk, and aid, which may reflect a more globally aware or media-savvy conversation space.
- Among non-cluster followers, we see family, healthcare, Qatar, and DOGE—potentially signaling more domestic, lifestyle, or platform-native topics.

⁴ While Brandwatch offers insights into the top topic themes and sub-themes, the political affiliation of those within and outside the cluster is not explicitly captured. However, Brandwatch does provide tools to ascertain the political perspective these conversations may take. By clicking on any of the themes, one can view the individual social media mentions that comprise the theme. Using the built-in AI mention summary tool, organizations can get quick snapshots of how these themes are being discussed.

PARTNER PERSPECTIVES

Within the Cluster:

“We’re **sharing audiences** and not branching out much in our events, outreach, campaigns, and messaging.”

“Our **content is reaching people who are already in the bridging space** (such as partners, stakeholders, funders, academics, and journalists). This may not be helping the field **reach wider audiences** who are unaware of bridge-building.”

“Maybe we can look to the organizations outside the cluster—their audiences and messaging—as **first steps toward expansion.**”

Outside the Cluster:

“Linking up with the highly networked cluster of organizations and their followers may be ‘low-hanging fruit’ for expanding our audiences. **Journalists are a key audience** we want to reach more.”

“Being outside the cluster may allow us to try out different messaging and campaign approaches with audiences adjacent to the bridging and depolarization space. This may help the field as a **whole reach new followers and conversations.**”

“This network map only shows us Twitter/X, and the lack of networked audiences may reflect 1) press networking, and 2) **significant movement away from Twitter/X** for our field towards LinkedIn, Instagram, and Bluesky.”

KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM THE NETWORK VISUALIZATION

Cluster Position Is Descriptive, Not Prescriptive: Whether an organization is inside or outside the highly networked cluster is not a strategic choice—it’s a reflection of organic patterns shaped by content, audience, and visibility.

Both Positions Offer Strategic Advantages: An organization being inside the cluster means access to shared narratives and larger audiences. Being outside the cluster may enable more experimentation, diversity of voice, and access to overlooked communities.

Cross-Cluster Collaboration Is Key: Organizations can benefit from forming partnerships across network lines. These relationships can broaden reach, seed new audiences, and enrich the pluralism ecosystem.

Use Network Insights to Shape Strategy: If your organization is within this highly networked cluster, consider expanding into new spaces through partnerships or content tailored to non-core audiences. If you’re on the outside, look for ways to build bridges back into the cluster by aligning moments, messaging, or audiences.

Lift Each Other Up: Cross-amplification—highlighting one another’s work in public—can help the entire field grow. It fosters visibility, trust, and resilience in a media environment that often rewards division.

BUILDING A STRONG SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGY

For groups working to advance pluralism, civic engagement, or social cohesion, a well-designed social media strategy isn't just a nice-to-have—it's essential for building visibility, growing trust, and expanding impact. At its core, **social media allows organizations to reach new and diverse audiences** that might otherwise be difficult to access through traditional communication channels. Whether it's a young person scrolling through Instagram or a policymaker browsing LinkedIn, the right message at the right moment can create connection and inspire action. A strong digital presence opens doors not just to more people—but to more kinds of people, across geographies, identities, and interests.

Social media also offers a unique opportunity to **humanize your work**. Through authentic storytelling—whether it's a quote card, a behind-the-scenes video, or a short-form personal reflection—you can lift up the voices of your team, your partners, and the communities you serve. In a digital landscape often dominated by institutional language and abstraction, this human touch builds emotional resonance and helps people see themselves in your mission. Fostering real-time engagement will enable you to participate in conversations as they happen, respond to current events with agility, and invite direct input from your audience.

This interactivity strengthens relationships, builds community, and creates feedback loops that help organizations stay relevant and responsive. A strong social media strategy amplifies the real-world impact of your work. When done well, your digital efforts can help drive awareness of initiatives, increase participation in programs, and create a broader sense of collective momentum. In a media ecosystem where attention is scarce, **social media provides a vital platform to show—not just tell—how your organization is making a difference.**

THE SOCIAL MEDIA FUNNEL: TURNING REACH INTO RESULTS

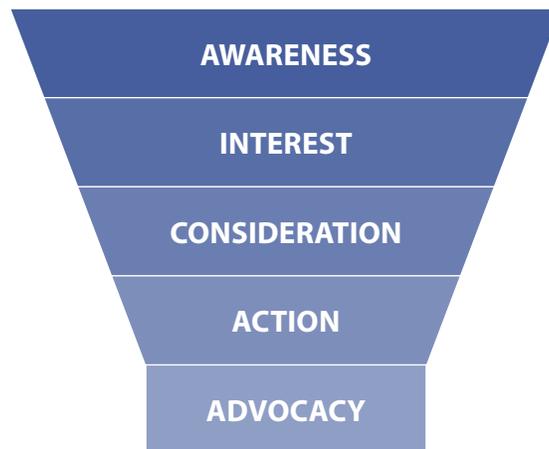


Figure 8: Social Media Strategy Funnel

Understanding the social media funnel helps you design content and campaigns that move your audience from passive awareness to active engagement and long-term advocacy. Each stage plays a distinct role in building relationships and deepening impact. Here's how to make the most of it:

Awareness: Broad, engaging content to capture attention

At this stage, your goal is visibility. You're introducing your organization, your mission, and your values to people who may not know you yet. Think visually compelling posts, short-form videos (like Reels or TikToks), or timely graphics that highlight your relevance. Avoid heavy text or niche language—this is your first handshake.

Interest: Relevant, curiosity-sparking posts

Once you've caught someone's eye, give them a reason to learn more. Interest content should create a sense of "tell me more," often by tapping into shared values or posing meaningful questions. Use carousels, infographics, or quote cards that start to unpack your work while inviting interaction. Ask questions, offer polls, or highlight a surprising insight.

Consideration: Thought leadership, reports, webinars

Now that your audience is curious, give them substance. This is where you showcase your credibility and the depth of your mission. Share links to research, recorded events, or behind-the-scenes content. Consider long-form captions or short threads on X/Twitter that contextualize a problem and show how your work helps solve it.

Action: Clear calls-to-action for sign-ups, events, or donations

Your audience is ready to take the next step. Make it easy. Whether it's registering for an event, signing up for a newsletter, or making a donation, action posts should be direct and focused. Use strong verbs, minimal friction (think one-click signups), and reiterate the impact of participation.

Advocacy: Mobilize your community to spread the word

Advocates turn engagement into a ripple effect. Ask followers to share their stories, repost your content, or invite friends to attend events. You can spotlight community voices, run challenges, or create templates for user-generated content. This stage strengthens your network and builds credibility through peer-to-peer amplification.

TACTICS TO APPLY THE FUNNEL

- **Define Your Goals:** Not every post needs to do everything. Before you create content, ask: Are we trying to grow awareness? Drive sign-ups? Deepen relationships? Your goal determines the content format, tone, and call to action.
- **Know Your Audience:** Use audience research—surveys, analytics, and social listening—to understand who you're reaching, what they care about, and how they prefer to engage. Different segments may need different messaging at each stage.
- **Choose Platforms Strategically:** Not all content works on all platforms. Instagram and TikTok are ideal for awareness and interest; LinkedIn is often better for consideration and advocacy; newsletters and landing pages help close the loop on action.
- **Measure Performance:** Start simple. Use KPIs that match your goals for each stage of the funnel.

KEY TERMINOLOGY AND KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (KPIs)

Understanding and tracking your digital performance starts with a shared language. Below are essential terms and the key metrics (KPIs) that help you measure progress across the social media funnel—from awareness to advocacy.

Key Terms:

Engagement: Interactions such as likes, shares, comments, replies, and reactions. High engagement signals that your content is capturing attention and sparking interaction.

Reach: The total number of unique users who saw your content. Reach helps gauge how far your message is spreading.

Audience: The people who follow, engage with, or are otherwise exposed to your content. Understanding your audience allows you to tailor messages that resonate.

Resonance: A qualitative measure of how deeply your content connects with your audience emotionally or intellectually. Resonance can be reflected in thoughtful comments, shares with personal notes, or user-generated responses.

Conversion: The process of turning interest into action—such as signing up for an event, subscribing to a newsletter, or making a donation.

MATCHING KPIS TO FUNNEL STAGES

Each stage of the social media funnel serves a different function and calls for specific metrics to track progress and refine your strategy:

Awareness: Broad visibility and introduction to your brand or mission.

- Follower Growth
- Reach & Impressions

Interest: Capturing curiosity and inviting further engagement.

- Engagement Rate (likes, comments, shares)
- Saves or time spent on content

Consideration: Providing substance and credibility to help users evaluate your value.

- Click-through Rate (CTR)
- Content Downloads or Video Views

Action: Encouraging meaningful participation or contribution.

- Event Sign-ups
- Email Subscriptions
- Donations

Advocacy: Mobilizing your audience to amplify your message organically.

- Post Shares
- Mentions or Tags
- User-Generated Content Submissions

CHOOSING THE RIGHT PLATFORMS:

PLATFORM

STRENGTHS

X (Twitter)

Real-time updates, public debate, journalist access.

Instagram

Visual storytelling, youth engagement, culture.

TikTok

Short-form video, high virality, Gen Z + Millennial focus.

LinkedIn

Thought leadership, professionals, institutions.

Facebook

Community organizing, older audiences, event support.

Bluesky

Decentralized community-building, early adopters.

Tip: Look at where your audience is already active. Prioritize one or two platforms and build consistency before expanding.

X (FORMERLY TWITTER): FAST TAKES & THOUGHT LEADERSHIP



Strengths: Ideal for real-time commentary, public debate, and connecting with journalists and policy influencers.

Best Content: Threads unpacking ideas, current event reactions, quote graphics, and retweets.

Audience: Media, academics, politicians.

Tactics:

- Use Lists to track key voices.
- Respond to trending threads.
- Post during news spikes.
- Use polls and open-ended questions to engage.

BLUESKY: EARLY ADOPTER EXPERIMENTATION



Strengths: A rising, decentralized platform for digital rights and democracy advocates.

Best Content: Short posts, conversation starters, newsletter cross-posts.

Audience: Tech-savvy progressives, open-source thinkers.

Tactics:

- Start early to claim your space.
- Mirror content from Twitter/X with a softer tone.
- Use for message testing and idea-sharing.

INSTAGRAM: VISUAL STORYTELLING



Strengths: Great for brand-building and engaging younger, diverse audiences.

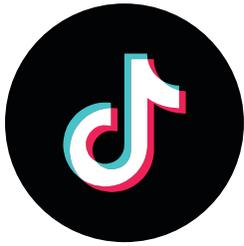
Best Content: Reels, quote carousels, behind-the-scenes, infographics.

Audience: Millennials, Gen Z, creatives, educators.

Tactics:

- Use consistent visual branding.
- Prioritize Reels for reach.
- Leverage Stories for Q&As and polls.
- Create carousels for explainers or how-tos.

TIKTOK: GEN Z DISCOVERY ENGINE



Strengths: Huge potential via the For You Page; great for civic education and cultural storytelling.

Best Content: Explainers, reaction clips, short event videos, Duets.

Audience: Gen Z and young Millennials.

Tactics:

- Feature relatable spokespeople.
- Use trending sounds with intention.
- Caption everything.
- Keep it light, creative, and mission-aligned.

LINKEDIN: INSTITUTIONAL CREDIBILITY



Strengths: High-trust space for policy, funding, and hiring visibility.

Best Content: PDF carousels, staff perspectives, milestones, blog cross-posts.

Audience: Nonprofits, funders, researchers, educators.

Tactics:

- Encourage staff resharing.
- Use personal voice for engagement.
- Align posts with key announcements.
- Tag collaborators to boost reach.

FACEBOOK: COMMUNITY & EVENTS



Strengths: Effective for event RSVPs, groups, and reaching older or local supporters.

Best Content: Events, long-form posts, livestreams, group prompts.

Audience: Adults 35+, multigenerational families, faith-based and local groups.

Tactics:

- Use Facebook Events with email integration.=
- Start or maintain community groups.
- Repurpose Instagram Reels.
- Post natively for best results.

CONTENT CREATION AND ENGAGEMENT BEST PRACTICES:

- **Mix it up:** Combine videos, carousels, text threads, and stories.
- **Keep it real:** Don't overproduce. Authentic > polished.
- **Show faces:** Human connection drives resonance.
- **Be timely:** Respond to news events or social trends with your perspective.
- **Use narrative:** People remember stories, not statistics.



CASE STUDY LEVERAGING CURRENT EVENTS FOR RAPID RESPONSE: BRIDGEUSA ON TIKTOK

This BridgeUSA TikTok [video](#), contrasting the tone and tenor of previous presidential debates with the 2024 presidential debate, garnered **9.7M views**. It demonstrates the power of leveraging quick turn-around video content and applying it to current events to achieve virality.

PAID STRATEGY AND ROI ON SOCIAL MEDIA: A PRACTICAL GUIDE

Paid advertising can be a powerful tool for amplifying your organization's reach. By allocating budget to high-performing content, you can significantly increase visibility, especially for event promotion and targeted campaigns. While cost-per-click (CPC) benchmarks vary by platform, a good benchmark is to aim for under \$1 CPC for optimal ROI.

BOOSTING POSTS & A/B TESTING

Boosting your best content is a simple and effective way to expand reach. It's equally important to test different formats—like headlines, visuals, and audiences—to find what resonates most. For instance, you might run two versions of a civic challenge post, each using different imagery, to see which yields stronger engagement.

MEASUREMENT INFRASTRUCTURE

Measuring your results is crucial to understanding impact. Tools like Google Analytics help track conversions and referrals, while platform-native analytics (on Meta, Twitter/X, LinkedIn) provide performance data on impressions, engagement, and demographics. For deeper insights, consider using social listening platforms such as Brandwatch to monitor conversations and brand sentiment in real time.

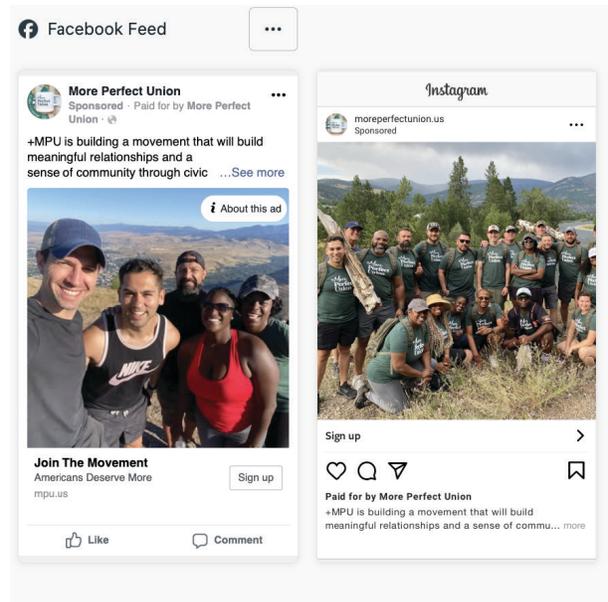
UNDERSTANDING RETURN ON INVESTMENT (ROI)

Return on investment isn't just about financial outcomes—it's about understanding your influence. Comparing CPC with cost-per-conversion can reveal campaign efficiency. Consider attribution models to see how your social media efforts contribute to broader goals. ROI should also be evaluated in terms of reach, resonance, and strategic visibility.

CASE STUDY USING FACEBOOK ADS TO FUEL MEMBERSHIP GROWTH: +MPU ON META

+More Perfect Union launched two 8-week lead-generation campaigns from October 2024 until January 2025. The first, and the cheapest campaign, targeted Americans interested in community service and clubs using Lookalike Audiences based on +MPU membership list and website visitors from Facebook's pixel. The second campaign was targeting those same audiences but narrowing the age to 25-45 year olds. +MPU's campaigns featured 8-12 dynamic mobile-first videos and photos and leveraged FB/IG's native lead-form for higher conversion rates.

As a result, +MPU **gained 24,653 new members** at a blended \$6.37 CPA, with over 5.5 million impressions with a 11.5% CTR. As an added bonus, the organization recruited **two new Chapter leaders from the ads.**



POWERING GROWTH THROUGH LEAD GENERATION

Social media followers are important, but they're just the beginning. To build a sustainable digital strategy, organizations need to move beyond passive engagement and focus on generating leads: individuals who express meaningful interest in your mission and are open to deeper relationship-building. Lead generation helps turn fleeting attention into ongoing participation, funding, and advocacy.

A lead might be someone who signs up for your newsletter, downloads a resource, registers for an event, or interacts with a campaign landing page. Unlike followers, leads give you a way to reach them directly—via email, customer relationship management (CRM), or custom outreach—making them one of your most valuable digital assets.

Start by creating **lead magnets**—compelling reasons for someone to share their contact information. Effective options include:

- Free downloadable resources (toolkits, reports, checklists)
- Newsletter signups
- Webinar and event registrations
- Social media contests, challenges, or quizzes

Once you've generated interest, direct users to clean, mobile-friendly **landing pages** that make it easy to opt in and provide clear next steps.

NURTURING AND ACTIVATING LEADS:

Capturing leads is just the start. The real value comes from how you engage them over time. A strategic lead nurturing plan might include:

- **Personalized outreach:** Custom emails based on a user’s behavior, interests, or sign-up source.
- **Automated campaigns:** “Drip” email sequences that introduce your work and invite deeper engagement.
- **Hybrid approaches:** Mixing automation with human touchpoints—especially for key partners, donors, or collaborators.

Popular tools include **Mailchimp**, **ConvertKit**, **HubSpot**⁵, or any CRM that supports segmentation and automation.

SCALING OUTREACH WITH PHANTOMBUSTER AND AUTOMATION TOOLS:

To reach more potential leads while minimizing manual effort, organizations can use automated outreach tools—cloud-based platforms that simulate human activity at scale.

One of the most versatile and affordable tools in this category is **PhantomBuster**⁶. It allows you to automate a range of social engagement and lead generation tasks across platforms like LinkedIn, Twitter/X, and Instagram, including:

- Sending DMs or messages to followers or connections
- Extracting profile data (emails, job titles, biographical info) from LinkedIn, Instagram, Twitter/X, Facebook Groups, and Sales Navigator
- Automatically following or unfollowing accounts based on keyword searches or audience overlaps
- Liking, commenting on, or retweeting posts that match campaign hashtags or interests

These scripts (called “Phantoms”) are highly customizable and can be scheduled to run on a recurring basis. When used responsibly, they can dramatically increase your visibility, streamline lead capture, and grow your network without adding hours of work.

Note: Always review platform policies before deploying automation, and prioritize privacy and consent when collecting or messaging leads.

⁵ Mailchimp costs range from free for up to 500 contacts to around \$13–\$30/month for basic plans and \$350/month or more for advanced features. ConvertKit offers a free plan for up to 1,000 subscribers, with paid plans starting at \$15/month and scaling to \$59/month or more based on list size. HubSpot starts with a free plan, but meaningful marketing features begin at \$50/month, with advanced plans costing \$890/month or more.

⁶ PhantomBuster offers three paid tiers—Starter at \$69 /month for 20 hours, 5 slots, 10K AI and 500 email credits; Pro at \$159 /month for 80 hours, 15 slots, 30K AI and 2,500 email credits; and Team at \$439/month for 300 hours, 50 slots, 90K AI and 10,000 email credits. The starter plan was sufficient for the needs of this project.

CASE STUDY

MORE IN COMMON'S SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGY EVOLUTION

More in Common has adopted a few strategies that have increased its engagement on social media. The first is when publishing data across its platforms, it has been more intentional about creating data-driven content to enhance their ability to communicate key findings. This includes creating colorful, eye-catching data visualizations made on Flourish; research summary decks on Canva; and long form newsletters on Substack. These bite-sized data packages are promoted on X, Bluesky, and LinkedIn. More in Common's new strategy has resulted in several of its reports reaching wider audiences, such as *Is Gen Z Giving Up on Democracy* report being re-tweeted by Steve Rattner.

More in Common also evolved its lead generation strategy. Instead of merely messaging organizations to follow and promote its work, More in Common instead proactively reached out to target accounts with their newly released data from the *The Connection Opportunity* report, which might be of interest to owners of social media accounts. While the engagement was modest, More in Common did receive more direct responses with this outreach tactic than just asking accounts to follow More in Common.

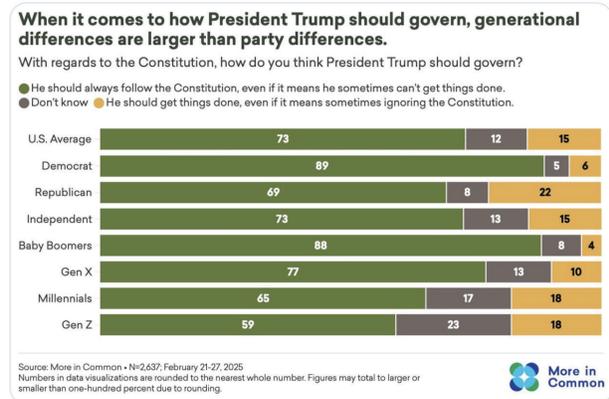


Steven Rattner
@SteveRattner



Wow — 69% of Republicans think Donald Trump should always follow the constitution, but only 59% of Gen Zers do (regardless of party).

Is this a story of young people fed up with the status quo, or do they just not understand the importance of rule of law?



10:15 AM · May 2, 2025 · 34.2K Views

179 209 616 36

Figure 9: Tweet advertising More in Common's report, *Is Gen Z Giving Up on Democracy?*

TRACKING AND ANALYZING PERFORMANCE VIA SOCIAL LISTENING

Social listening is a vital tool for understanding how your organization is perceived, assessing campaign effectiveness, and identifying emerging narratives in real time. It helps teams stay agile and responsive in a rapidly changing media environment, achieve improved measurement of sentiment, engagement, and reach, and gain a clearer picture of your organization's position within broader public discourse.

Platforms like Sprout Social, Hootsuite, and Meltwater offer accessible analytics. For deeper, customizable insights, we focus here on [Brandwatch](#)—a premium tool built for strategic monitoring across platforms, including via real-time and historical dashboards.⁷

WHAT BRANDWATCH ENABLES YOU TO DO: CAMPAIGN MONITORING AND PERFORMANCE TRACKING

- **Track Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)** like engagement rate, share of voice, and volume over time
- **Monitor brand or issue visibility over time:** Track how often your organization, campaign, or keywords are being mentioned across digital platforms.
- **Identify spikes in attention:** Spot peaks in mention volume that may correspond to news coverage, campaign activity, or viral moments—and trace them back to their source.
- **Gauge media impact:** Understand how specific stories, events, or message pushes influence

⁷ Over the past year, the annual cost for accessing the [Consumer Research](#) tool within Brandwatch with capacity for five queries is approximately \$32,000.

public conversation in real time.

- **Track who's talking:** Metrics like unique authors show whether growing attention is being driven by a few loud voices or a more distributed chorus.
- **Surface trending themes:** Detect which topics are gaining traction alongside your brand or issue—valuable for anticipating public interests and aligning messaging accordingly



Figure 10: Key Insights for More in Common (US only) social listening tracking via Brandwatch.

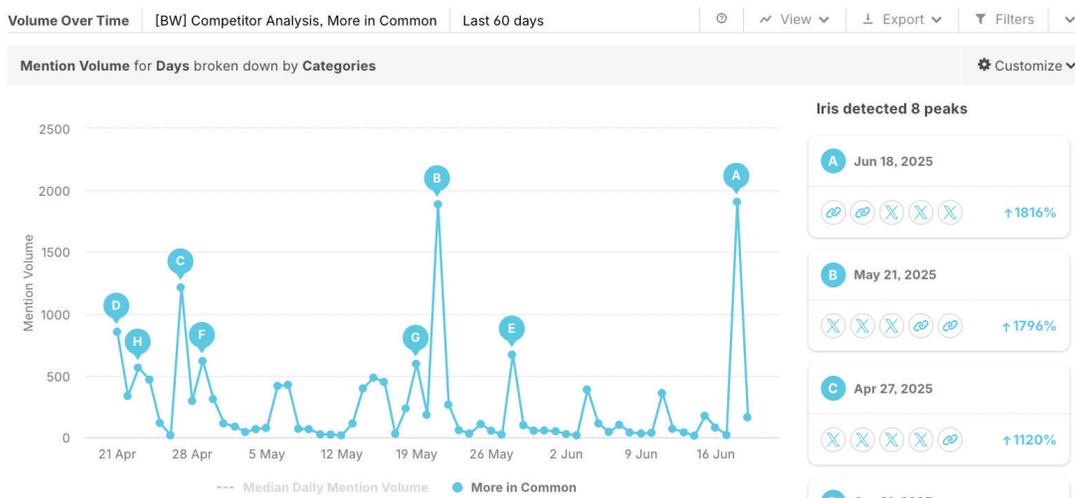


Figure 11: Mention volume over time for More in Common social listening query. Peaks identified by Brandwatch AI tools. Screenshot from Brandwatch.

Sentiment and Emotion Analysis helps organizations in the pluralism ecosystem gauge how their messages are landing by tracking public tone and emotional response at scale—revealing trends, uncovering audience feelings beneath the surface, and flagging reputational risks before they escalate.

- **Track tone at scale:** Analyze the overall sentiment of social and media mentions—positive, neutral, or negative—to understand how your organization or message is being received.
- **Surface underlying emotions:** Break mentions down by emotion (e.g., joy, sadness, fear, anger) to uncover what's driving engagement—and what people are feeling beneath the surface.
- **Monitor trends over time:** Observe how sentiment and emotional tone shift across campaigns, news cycles, or issue areas, helping guide your content strategy and response planning.
- **Flag reputational risks early:** Use negative spikes in emotion or sentiment as early warning signs for emerging narratives or potential backlash.

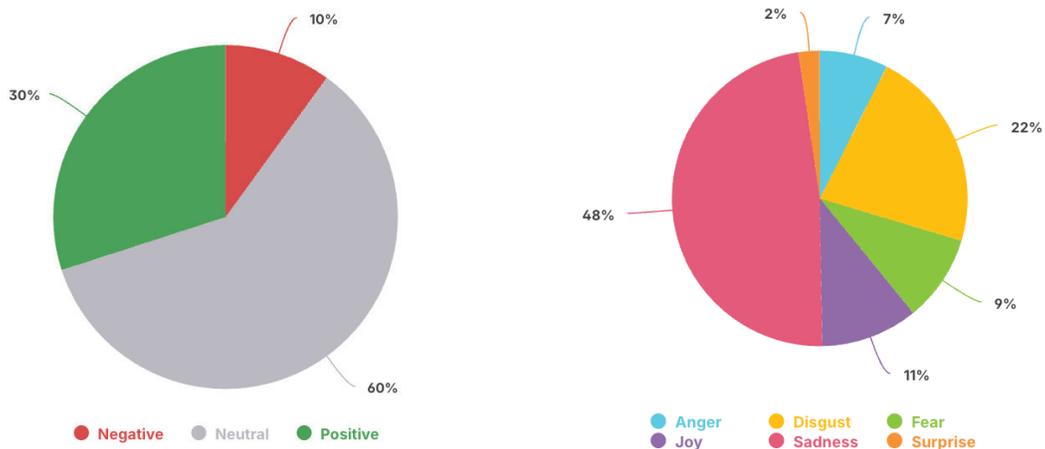


Figure 12: Emotion sentiment analysis (left) and valence sentiment analysis (right). Screenshot from Brandwatch.

Peer and Competitor Analysis helps pluralism-oriented organizations understand their position in the broader digital landscape—revealing who is leading key conversations, how platforms are being used across the field, and where strategic opportunities exist to differentiate, grow, and amplify impact.

- **Understand your spot in the ecosystem:** Visualize where your organization sits in relation to others on key topics and conversations. Topic clusters reveal who’s driving which narratives, and where your voice may stand out or blend in.
- **Benchmark platform performance:** Compare your reach and channel mix against peer organizations. Know which platforms are driving engagement—whether it’s Twitter/X, online news, Facebook, or LinkedIn—and how your visibility stacks up.
- **Spot audience and message opportunities:** Identify gaps in topic areas or underutilized platforms where your organization could expand. For example, some orgs dominate Twitter/X while others lead on online news or LinkedIn—understanding this helps refine distribution strategy.
- **Reverse-engineer success:** By analyzing what’s working for others—topic focus, tone, or timing—you can adapt high-performing strategies to your own goals without reinventing the wheel.

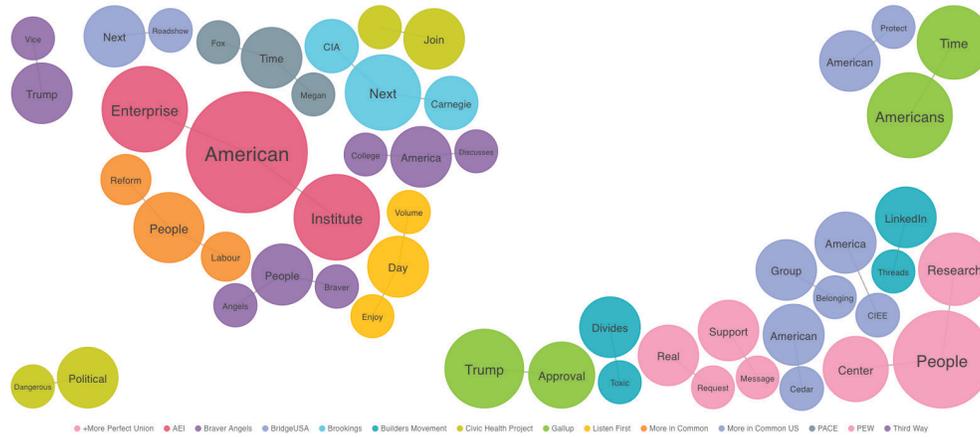


Figure 13: Topic cluster of 14 organizations in the pluralism ecosystem. Size represents volume, color represents organization. Screenshot from Brandwatch.

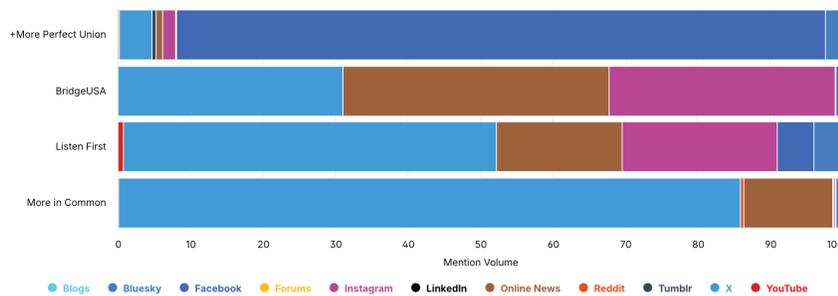


Figure 14: Mention volume (percentage) by platform type for four organizations in the pluralism ecosystem. Screenshot from Brandwatch.

Audience Panels and Psychographics provide a deeper understanding of who your audiences are and what drives them—combining custom segmentation with insights into values, interests, and behaviors to inform more targeted content, partnerships, and platform strategies in the pluralism space.

- **Curate custom audience segments:** Build panels around strategic groups—such as educators, Gen Z, policymakers, or media professionals—to understand how different cohorts engage with your organization or field.
- **Go beyond demographics with psychographics:** Analyze not just who your audience is, but what they care about—from political engagement to lifestyle interests—enabling richer message targeting and narrative framing.
- **Visualize audience composition at scale:** Charts like the below show gender balance and interest clusters across the followers of the 88 organizations in our pilot—providing a snapshot of who’s paying attention and what motivates them.
- **Inform content, partnerships, and platform choices:** Understanding audience affinities and traits helps you choose the right messengers, tailor your content, and prioritize platforms where your key demographics are most active.

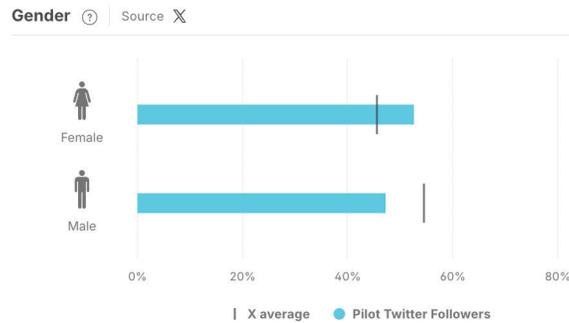


Figure 15: Gender breakdown of the Twitter/X followers of the 88 organizations mapped in the network pilot. Screenshot from Brandwatch.

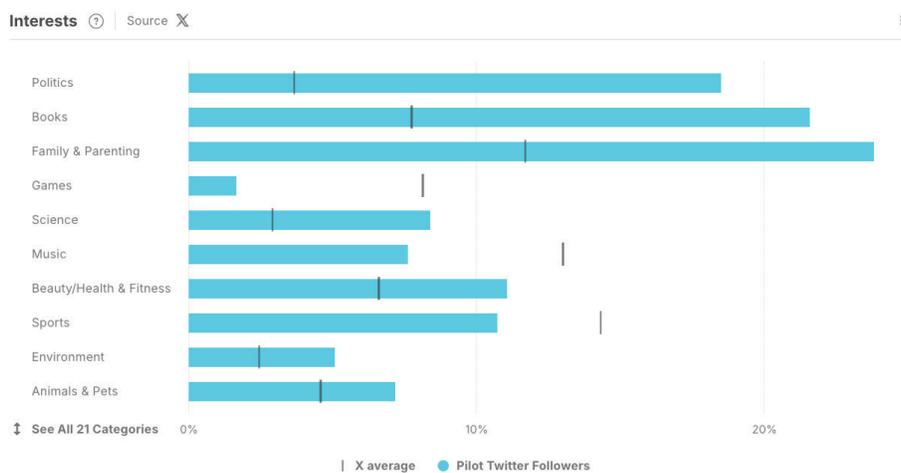


Figure 16: Interest breakdown of the Twitter/X followers of the 88 organizations mapped in the network pilot. Screenshot from Brandwatch.

WRITING EFFECTIVE QUERIES: THE ENGINE BEHIND LISTENING

Queries are the search terms and filters that power your social listening dashboard. A well-constructed query defines what you’re tracking—and ensures you’re capturing relevant, actionable information.

- Search across millions of data sources for mentions of key terms, phrases, or entities
- Filter by sentiment, geography, language, source type (news, forums, social media)
- Provide structure for reporting, alerts, and analysis

Tips for Writing Strong Queries:

- Use Boolean logic: AND, OR, and NOT to combine or exclude terms
- Include full organization names, acronyms, hashtags, product/campaign names
- Exclude irrelevant or similarly named entities to reduce noise
 - Example: “More in Common” AND polarization NOT (book OR poem)
- Tailor queries to strategic questions:

- Are we being mentioned in the context of this topic/issue?
- Is sentiment improving around our campaign?
- Are specific influencer groups engaging with our work?

UNDERSTANDING ROI:

Social media monitoring platforms like Brandwatch can help organizations quantify their digital reach and engagement, offering concrete data to justify communications investments. Real-time insights enable faster, more adaptive decision-making than traditional research methods, while integrated tracking can link digital activity to offline outcomes such as policy impact, event participation, or earned media coverage.

BARRIERS TO KEEP IN MIND:

However, there are important considerations. Brandwatch is a premium tool, so costs can be significant—potentially requiring coalition-wide licensing or grant support. There's also a learning curve; successful implementation may involve staff training or hiring consultants. With the volume of available data, organizations risk becoming overwhelmed, so it's crucial to begin with focused goals and clearly defined queries. Finally, dashboards require ongoing management to remain accurate, relevant, and actionable.

PARTNER REFLECTIONS ON THE VALUE OF BRANDWATCH:

More In Common: "Using Brandwatch's real-time custom alerts, our team was able to immediately detect when Grok, Twitter/X's AI chatbot, cited More in Common in a viral post on political polarization in America. This alert highlighted for us how Brandwatch can track organic mentions of our research across unexpected platforms, identify high-impact moments of public engagement, and understand how our insights are being interpreted and shared in broader conversations."

+More Perfect Union: "I think Brandwatch becomes a super powerful tool when companies/organizations have a huge audience on many platforms and do a lot of press. One of the key differentiators of this tool is that it listens to many publications outside of just social media so it gives you a bigger picture of audience feelings about your brand. But given how expensive it is, I'm not sure the amount of actionable insights make the juice worth the squeeze for us."

Listen First Project: "Brandwatch is an incredibly helpful tool for understanding the broader context of how your content performs across platforms—especially in relation to others in your field. Its advanced filtering and segmentation capabilities allow for highly targeted analysis, but the platform does require time and expertise to navigate effectively. It's best suited for organizations with someone who can invest the effort to dig into the data and translate findings into strategy. The most actionable insights come from that deeper exploration, rather than quick, surface-level takeaways."

SOCIAL LISTENING WITHOUT BRANDWATCH: PRACTICAL ALTERNATIVES FOR THE PLURALISM SPACE

While Brandwatch is a powerful tool, it comes with a steep price and a learning curve that may be out of reach for some organizations in this space. Fortunately, there are more accessible ways to practice social media listening and track your digital environment effectively.

Here are some budget-friendly alternatives and strategies:

- **Use Native Platform Analytics:** Facebook, Instagram, Twitter/X, LinkedIn, and TikTok all offer built-in analytics. Regularly reviewing metrics like post performance, follower growth, engagement rate, and audience demographics can help you understand what's resonating—and what's not.
- **Set Up Google Alerts:** Track mentions of your organization, leaders, or key topics across the web with free Google Alerts. It's not real-time, but it's a simple way to stay informed on how your brand or issue area is showing up in public discourse.
- **Leverage Free or Low-Cost Tools:** Tools like Mention, Hootsuite, Sprout Social Lite, or Social Searcher offer basic listening features at a lower cost. You can track hashtags, brand mentions, sentiment trends, and competitor activity on a budget.
- **Monitor Comments and Tags Directly:** One of the most powerful forms of listening is paying close attention to your own comment sections, DMs, post shares, and @mentions. What are people asking? Celebrating? Pushing back on? Use these insights to inform content and outreach.
- **Conduct Manual Listening Campaigns:** Pick a hashtag, cause area, or influencer in your space and spend a few hours each month scanning related conversations. What language are people using? What content formats are performing well? Manual listening can reveal trends no dashboard will catch.
- **Collaborate Across the Ecosystem:** Consider sharing insights with peer organizations. Even informal coordination—like sharing monthly takeaways or audience patterns—can serve as a low-cost way to expand your listening capacity.

TOWARD A MORE INTEGRATED DIGITAL STRATEGY

For organizations working to advance pluralism, bridge divides, and strengthen democratic culture, social media is a vital tool, but it can't stand alone. To grow sustainably and authentically in today's digital environment, social media must be integrated into a broader, values-aligned digital strategy. That means connecting platforms, tools, and campaigns in ways that reinforce your mission, deepen trust, and invite meaningful participation.

THE CASE FOR INTEGRATION

Many organizations in the pluralism ecosystem manage social media separately from other communications and outreach functions. This can lead to missed opportunities to align messaging, engage new audiences, and turn online interest into real-world action. As digital platforms evolve and audience behaviors shift, there's growing potential to design more holistic strategies that bring together social, email, websites, content, and community in a unified, compelling journey.

Importantly, integration isn't about adding more work, it's about doing more with what you already have. When platforms work together, efforts are amplified, staff time goes further, and audiences experience your message with greater clarity and consistency. **Principles for a more integrated approach** include:

- **Connect Channels to Purpose:** Ensure your social media, email campaigns, website content, and events are in sync. Each channel should serve a role in advancing your mission and guiding audiences toward deeper engagement.
- **Make Lead Generation Part of the Plan:** Use social content to invite people into your ecosystem—through newsletters, downloadable resources, or events. Then, nurture those relationships through your CRM and outreach flows.
- **Repurpose, Don't Repeat:** Share your message across platforms in a way that respects each channel's strengths, while maintaining a clear, consistent voice.

- **Focus on What Matters:** Move beyond surface-level metrics. Prioritize trust, sustained engagement, and dialogue as indicators of meaningful connection.

MEASURING TRUST, ENGAGEMENT, AND DIALOGUE

Trust: indicators of trust are often qualitative, but certain patterns can signal a strong, credible presence.

- **Consistent follower retention** (low unfollow rate over time)
- **Positive sentiment** in comments, mentions, and shares (manually reviewed or tracked through tools like Social Searcher or Hootsuite)
- **Reputation-based mentions** (e.g., tagged in user posts as a trusted voice or resource)
- **High open and click rates** in email campaigns (for cross-platform trust measurement)

Sustained Engagement: Look for patterns that show people aren't just engaging once—they're coming back and deepening the relationship.

- **Repeat interactions** from the same users over time (likes, shares, or comments on multiple posts)
- **Return event attendees** or newsletter subscribers who continue to engage
- **Video watch time** (not just views, but how long people are watching)
- **Post saves** or content bookmarked as useful (available on Instagram)

Dialogue: Real connection happens when content sparks two-way communication.

- **Thoughtful comments** (not just emojis or generic replies)
- **Comment threads or user-to-user interaction** under your posts
- **DMs initiated by followers** in response to posts or Stories

MEETING THE MOMENT WITH NEW STRATEGIES

Digital growth is evolving. Paid reach is less predictable, and algorithms don't always reward the kinds of thoughtful, bridge-building content that define our field. But this also creates space for innovation. Pluralism-oriented organizations are uniquely positioned to model a healthier digital culture—one grounded in listening, nuance, and connection. By aligning social media with other digital assets and focusing on relationships over reach, organizations can build deeper trust with their communities and create the conditions for long-term impact.

For the four partner organizations who participated in this year-long project, we had an opportunity to test out two new strategies: a social media shared services model and a community of practice. And one goal looking forward is to understand where there are opportunities to become coordinated about building shared communications assets.

1. Building Together: The Promise of Shared Services

Many organizations in this space face similar constraints—limited budgets, small teams, and competing priorities. A shared services model offers one solution. By pooling tools, staff, and expertise across trusted partners, we can:

- Reduce costs and duplication
- Access specialized talent and data insights
- Coordinate messaging and amplify shared values

In the course of this project, we found that a shared services model—specifically sharing access to expensive and technical social media resources like Brandwatch and PhantomBuster—allowed us to make the most of limited resources as we tested various use cases for the technology.

2. A Community of Practice: From Alignment to Amplification

Integration can also extend across organizations. Coordinated digital strategies that advance pro-pluralistic communications can help amplify our collective voice, highlight diverse perspectives, and reach broader audiences with a message of dignity, dialogue, and shared purpose.

- **Collaborative Campaigns:** Strategic partnerships enable shared storytelling, broader reach, and deeper resonance.
- **Learning Communities:** Sharing tools, dashboards, and lessons learned strengthens the whole field.
- **Values-Aligned Influence:** Engaging trusted public figures and culture leaders can expand reach and bring pluralism into new digital spaces.

We found that a community of practice of even a small group of communications and research professionals at our pluralism-oriented organizations helped the group better understand how peer organizations run campaigns across different social media platforms and learn from similar efforts. We also found that with a pre-existing community of practice, cross-amplifying each others' campaigns comes easily.

CONCLUSION:

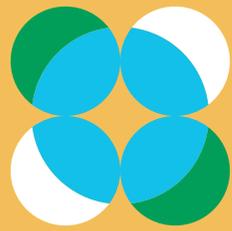
ADVANCING PLURALISM IN A COMPLEX DIGITAL LANDSCAPE

In a digital landscape that often rewards speed and division, advancing pluralism requires something different: intention, collaboration, and sustained connection.

This project began with a simple question: What would it take to help organizations doing vital bridge-building work expand their digital reach and impact? Over the past year, we've explored that question through research, shared tools, and pilot collaborations. The result is this toolkit—designed not just to strengthen individual capacity, but to support greater coordination and shared momentum across a diverse set of actors.

Because the truth is: no single organization can shift culture alone. But when groups working toward pluralism share resources, exchange insights, and cross-amplify one another's efforts, we strengthen both our individual and collective impact.

Whether you're part of a highly networked organization or experimenting at the edges of the field, the strategies in this toolkit are here to help you grow your digital presence with clarity and purpose. And by aligning our efforts—while honoring the differences that define us—we can build a stronger, more visible movement for pluralism, one that cuts through the noise and helps reshape our national conversation.



**More in
Common**