10 Examples of Social Media Command Centers

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Introduction

They certainly look impressive: sleek, glass-enclosed rooms equipped with large TV screens displaying global heat maps, dials, and live-streaming Tweets. But can a social media command center actually help your organization listen and respond in an increasingly social world?

First, a quick definition: a social media command center is simply a dedicated area where a company's social media team can monitor and engage social conversation around their brand and market.

They can be a state of the art showpiece, or just a grouping of desks in a room. The real point of social media command centers is to allow real-time monitoring of trends around marketing efficiency, customer service, and risk management, and make it easy for passing execs to gauge the social health of the brand at a glance.

The command center handles daily workflow and triage, and is poised to ramp up and implement a crisis management plan. The command center coordinates with other departments in the company: customer service, public relations, sales, marketing, and others.

This ebook highlights 10 command centers created by the American Red Cross, Dell, Gatorade, and seven other leading organizations. Read on to learn why they're raving about them — and how you can create a command center of your own.

Salesforce Customer Company Command Center

Powered by the Marketing Cloud, the Customer Company Command Center is Salesforce's central hub for social media processes and best practices. The Command Center is staffed by a team of community managers and social customer support reps, enabling them to manage over 50,000 brand mentions a month. The Command Center helps Salesforce connect previously siloed departments like sales, PR and support, resulting in the ability to turn social insights into actions.

There are a series of custom visualizations which were built on the Salesforce Platform and and are pulling in real-time social media data from the Marketing Cloud. Covering topics such as Industries, Products, and Company, people can understand how Salesforce is listening to conversations, engaging as needed, publishing relevant content and even how our social ads are performing.

The Salesforce command center includes:

- Three community managers and one support rep with eight 27" Mac cinema displays for those working

- Large flat screens on the back wall showing custom visualizations using the Salefsorce platform and pulling in real time data from the Marketing Cloud

- Tall Twitter tower shows real-time tweets about Salesforce

- iPads with self-led video tour application .

"The command center has been an incredible internal catalyst, showing our employees how committed we are to being a customer company as well as empowering them with social data. It's helping us show our customers how they too can turn social insights into actions with the Marketing Cloud."

—Nathan Freitas,
Senior Community Manager, salesforce.com

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"Setting Up Your Command Center: The Dreamforce Story"

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Dell

Dell has long been a leader in social media. Over 10,000 employees have now completed their Social Media & Communities University program to be brand advocates online. But a key challenge was finding the thousands of conversations about Dell and getting them to the right teams.

Through Dell's Social Media Listening and Command Center, we aggregate and find our way through the 25,000 conversations about Dell every day (more than 6 million every year). And that's just conversations happening in English! We're monitoring conversations in 11 languages 24/7, and each one is an opportunity to reinforce our brand...

With the tremendous amount of information being generated, we can track basic demographics, reach, sentiment, subject matter of the discussions, the sites where conversations are happening, and more. We leverage these analytics to identify customer support needs as they happen, influence product development, insert ourselves into conversations with IT decision makers and connect with people having the most impact on these conversations. It's this kind of reporting that enables us to better understand our customers and ultimately to be a better IT partner.

—Karen Quintos, Dell CMO (source)

In December 2010, Dell become one of the first companies to launch a social media command center. Based at company HQ in Round Rock, TX, twelve full-time employees monitor conversations about Dell and its products around the globe, responding via @DellCares or forwarding the post to the right internal team.

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*"Social Media Command Centers: A Sign of What's to Come"*

Cisco

Cisco is changing the way people connect and collaborate with social media. They recently launched their new Social Media Listening Center which enables employees, customers, partners and visitors to view real-time Cisco conversations from the social web. It's even packed with an interactive experience featuring six touch screens.
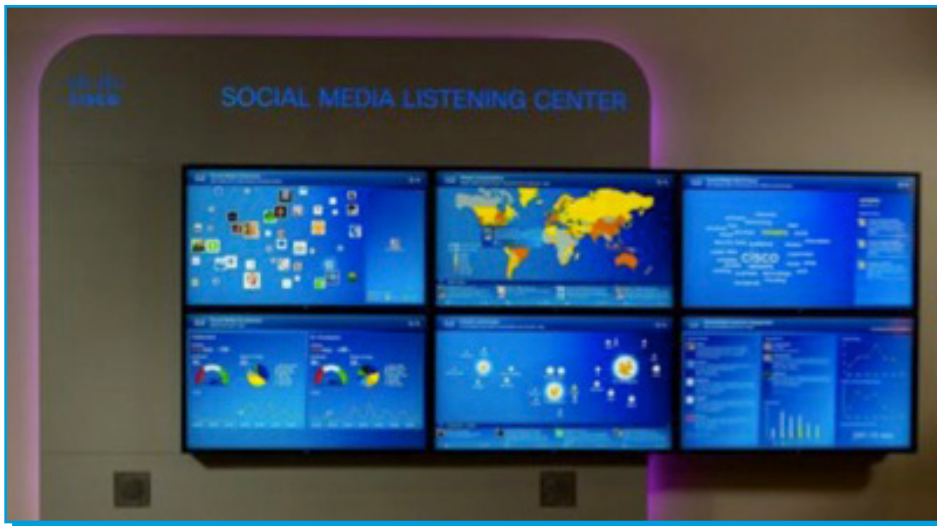
Cisco's screens track social media customer engagement, highlight CiscoLive conversation, display a Twitter-based global heat map, what influencers are Tweeting about Cisco, what conversations are happening around various members of their product family, and display a social media word cloud with current trending topics.

They've also installed a 2-screen kiosk in front of their CEO and CMO's offices so company leaders can keep one eye on the social health of the brand.
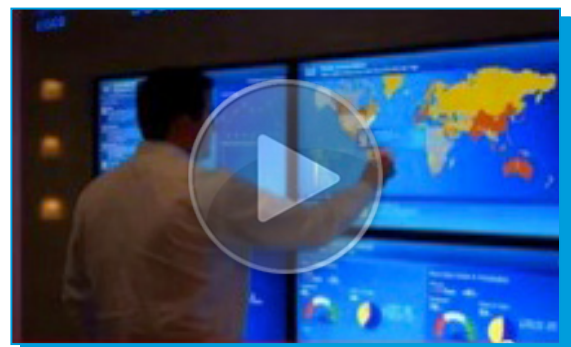
> Start by diving into the conversations; identify what is most valuable. Is it measuring mentions, crisis management, or something more tactical, like identifying actionable conversations and responding to customers? Create a playbook so you know what to do when someone or something turns up the heat.
> Be prepared for a lot more attention from your managers and executives, and form a strategy around internal adoption, because a listening center is going to magnify the work your teams have been doing. Focus on supporting or achieving existing or emerging business objectives and social listening will be easy to sell and will even become a critical measurement tool and strategic advantage.
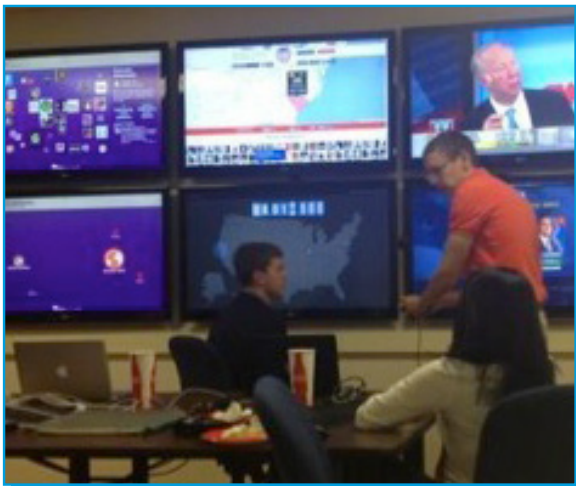>
> *—Charlie Treadwell, Social & Digital Marketing Manager at Cisco (source)*

Cisco manages over 70 Facebook pages and 100 Twitter accounts. The listening center routes customer conversations to the teams at Cisco that are best equipped to respond.

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"Cisco Transforms Social Media Monitoring with New Listening Center"

Clemson University

When Clemson University unveiled its social media listening center, it helped demonstrate the impact social media has made in the classroom. Teaching and learning are occurring in very different ways, and the professors and students at Clemson are embracing these changes and using social media to help them approach a number of new projects.

Students have the chance to explore research on a diverse range of topics, from the US election, to student athletics and the stock market. The project is the result of a great partnership between Dell, Salesforce Marketing Cloud and Clemson. The team at Clemson was so inspired by the work Dell was doing with their social media command center, that they went to Dell headquarters to see first-hand what was possible. They returned from their trip full of great ideas and a plan to bring this technology into their classrooms.

My students are learning to listen to the online conversations around private, nonprofit and public organizations. By learning how to listen and what to listen for they can understand how to better engage in the civil discourse around different parts of our society.

—Jason Thatcher, Associate Professor in Department of Management at Clemson University and Faculty Lead of the Social Media Listening Center (source)

Using their social media command center, Clemson students partnered with a South Carolina TV station, local CBS affiliate WSPA-TV, to share the social media coverage of the 2012 election during the station's live, nine-hour webcast.

Student researchers are tapping into the command center to monitor conversations about academics, NCAA athletics, alumni and student activities and community programs.

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"Clemson Social Media Listening Center in Partnership with Dell and Powered by Radian6"

American Red Cross

Eighty percent of Americans expect that emergency responders will monitor social networks, and a third assume that posting or Tweeting a request for help during a disaster will get them help within an hour, according to a 2011 Red Cross opinion poll.

In partnership with Dell, the Red Cross launched their Digital Operations Center to help monitor and respond to 70,000 crises per year — everything from house fires to hurricanes. Red Cross staff and digital volunteers can now listen in to online conversations, interacting directly with people who need help or have questions. They'll be equipped to rapidly share life-saving safety and preparedness information and match up people to resources.

One of the most helpful components of the Digital Operations Center is the global heat map, which starts glowing the moment something begins to happen.

> It's going to give us a better idea of what is going on on the ground. During an emergency, information is like gold. It is so valuable. And we know that the more information that we have during an emergency, the better we can serve those people that need our help.
>
> —*Gail McGovern, President and CEO, American Red Cross (source)*

Photo courtesy of Dell Inc.

Sending disaster workers on the ground to find out exactly where the needs are can take days. The Digital Operations Center allows the Red Cross to spot trends and help disaster workers make smarter decisions about local needs and problems.

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"Red Cross Launches Social Media Disaster Response Center"

Edelman Digital

Edelman Digital is the interactive arm of the world's largest independently-owned public relations firm. They've set up their own Social Intelligence Command Center (SICC), and perhaps no one has reflected as deeply about the possibilities of social media command centers in a real-time and connected world as has Edelman.

> The shift from social listening to social intelligence means using insights to inform engagement, drive content creation, build a community of advocates and, at the end of the day, cultivate meaningful relationships. Command centers are an evolution of call centers with a direct line to change the way business is conducted through customer feedback. Innovation in product development and customer service, increase in sales, decrease in call center volume, creation of efficiencies in supply chains; the intelligence from a command center is infinite, as long as you know how to use it.
>
> —David Armano, Managing Director of Edelman Digital Chicago (source)

Edelman's SICC monitors the social web to gather data for the following activities:

- Real-time analytics and team briefings

- Content strategy and development

- Community management (in concert with their clients)

- Summarizing trends and providing long-term insights

- Crisis management

- Planning and executing events and campaigns

- Training and consultation

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*"Five Thoughts on Running a Real-Time Command Center"*

Gatorade

Pepsico's Gatorade brand was one of the first out of the gate with a social media command center all the way back in April 2010. Inside Gatorade Mission Control in Chicago, five team members watch six large screens to see how the Gatorade brand is being perceived around the world.

http://mashable.com/2010/06/15/gatorade-social-media-mission-control/
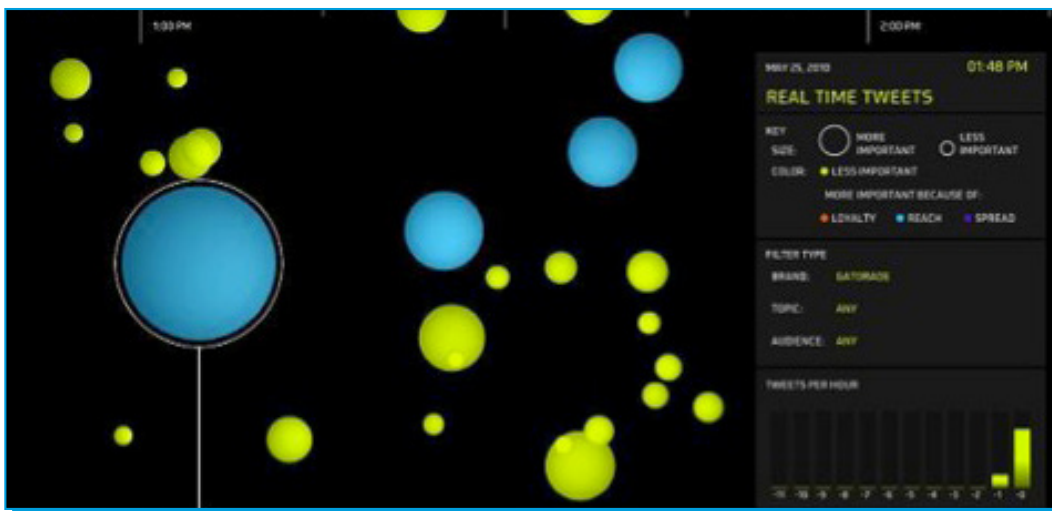
Mission Control team members monitor the social web for:

- Campaign analytics

- Web analytics

- Proactive social media outreach

- Tracking brand attributes

- Monitoring the sports landscape

- Tracking media performance

- Tracking sports trends and buzz
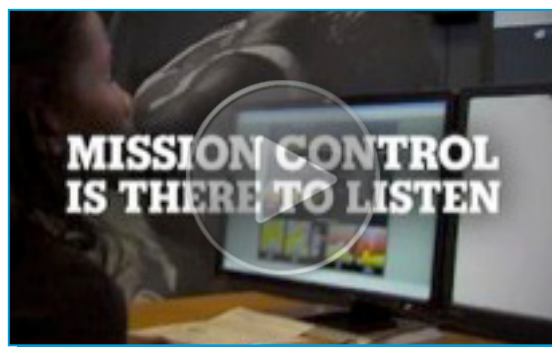
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"Inside Gatorade's Social Media 'Mission Control'"

We put in place Mission Control, and at the time, to be honest with you, it was as much about changing the behavior of our team internally. By putting this physical room in the building where we have people from different marketing disciplines – we have the PR folks in there, we have our digital folks, brand management folks – it was forcing them to see the dialogue in real time and act on it and communicate across the different functions of marketing.

Initially we said let's just start it as an experiment and put it in as a listening room and see what it can be, and quickly we realized its enormous potential because it's not just what you learn from it, it's how you very quickly engage with the consumer on the spot. We never anticipated how quickly it would replace a lot of our research techniques that we used to use.

As a brand, we have a very focused core consumer with high school athletes. I think we probably know more about who on Twitter is the most influential influencer of end user athletes than Twitter does, because we've made it our business to know that. And that, in and of itself, becomes a marketing tool to be leveraged.

— Sarah Robb O'Hagan, Global CMO and North American President, Gatorade (source)

By intelligently listening and engaging their community, the Mission Control team has actually been able to slowly change the online conversation about Gatorade from flavors and hangover cures to sports performance and protein recovery.

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Tampa Bay

The tens of thousands of 2012 Republican National Convention attendees proved a massive boon to the city of Tampa Bay. To make sure visitors had the best possible experience, 50 to 70 local volunteer bloggers and social media personalities were assembled in a massive social media command center just blocks from the convention center.

Photo by Robert Neff

They called the volunteers the Herd. "Curators" sifted through thousands of messages mentioning Tampa or using the hashhag #TampaBay, routing posts to "engagants" who responded with suggestions for lost, hungry or bored out-of-towners.
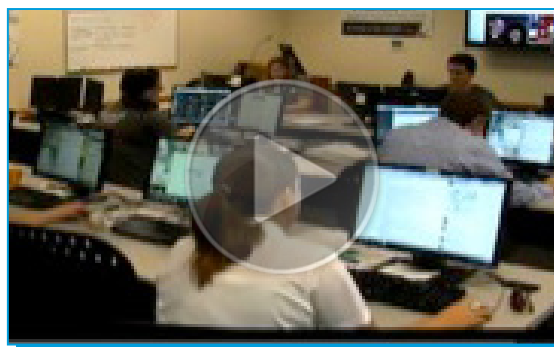
Trying to interact with people that are here, trying to change impressions, is absolutely huge. We saw that with the Olympics, we saw that with the Superbowl. So we got to thinking — why not do a social media command center, and listen in to what people are saying and try to help them navigate this destination, but also answer their key questions about what it is that makes Tampa Bay so special? I think we've really hit it out of the park so far."

—Kelly Miller, President & CEO of Tampa Bay & Company (source)

Tropical Storm Isaac delayed the convention start by a day and might have ruined the Tampa experience for many before it began. But the Herd quickly created the hasthag #rainydayrnc and used it to spread ideas for enjoying the city during the downtime. The result? Positive mentions of #tampabay rose to 72%, with only 4% being negative. (Contrast that to the London Olympics 60%:39% ratio.)

2012 MLB All-Star Game

Kansas City's efforts to make the 2012 MLB All-Star Game the most social one yet was a team effort. Mayor Sly James and the Kansas City Convention & Visitors Association (@VisitKC) reached out to the Kansas City Social Media Club, and more than 30 club members volunteered to staff what would become the All-Star Social Media Command Center. Kansas City-based H&R Block offered up their headquarters, social media monitoring equipment and expertise. And since H&R Block is used to dealing with high post volumes during tax season, their Social Media Strategist, Matthew Staub, was able to provide guidance on how to triage the conversations.

The KCCVA adopted the #KC hashtag in its event marketing and became the face of All-Star social outreach. Local ad shop Barkley developed a social hub on VisitKC.com to stream live tweets so even fans that weren't physically present could experience the game – and Kansas City – through the eyes of those who were. The city really pulled together to welcome all guests. They used Salesforce Marketing Cloud to listen for mentions of #KC, #ASG2012 and "Kansas City" across the social web, and responded to these posts over a four-day operation period.

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"Kansas City and H&R Block Launch a Social Media Command Center for the MLB All-Star Game"

The Social Media Command Center — the first of its kind for an MLB All-Star Game — was successful in generating excitement among baseball fans, as well as exposure for Kansas City as a tourist spot. Over 40,000 people attended the game, and the Command Center team filtered and tagged more than 30,000 social posts. The volunteers were able to use social to showcase their city in new and interesting ways, become a real-time virtual concierge through personalized recommendations. Guests were delighted, offering many kind words on social channels, which Command Center volunteers were sure to thank them for.

> As far as we know, this is the first time something of this scale has been done for an All-Star Game. We see it as this opportunity to really feature KC in a different way. I think it's the future. With every event we see more and more people turning to social media, more people expecting a response and help in that medium. We'll be there when they need it. We kind of have the best seat in the house to watch all the reaction, not just in Kansas City, but across the world. It's pretty amazing.
>
> —*Matthew Staub, Social Media Strategist at H&R Block (source)*

Movistar Colombia

> The Latin American market is changing from having just a community manager to monitor Facebook to forming command centers with monitoring tools and community platforms. Some of these companies are early adopters eager to take the risk of failing and to quickly overcome any social media hurdles."
>
> *– Jesus Hoyos, Owner, Solvis Consulting (source)*

Social Media Command Centers are being utilized across the globe. Movistar Colombia has two social media command centers. One is permanently located at their offices and the other is a remote set up which moves to and from their different events, such as Campus Party 2012. They use their remote command center to monitor and manage social media and customer service issues.
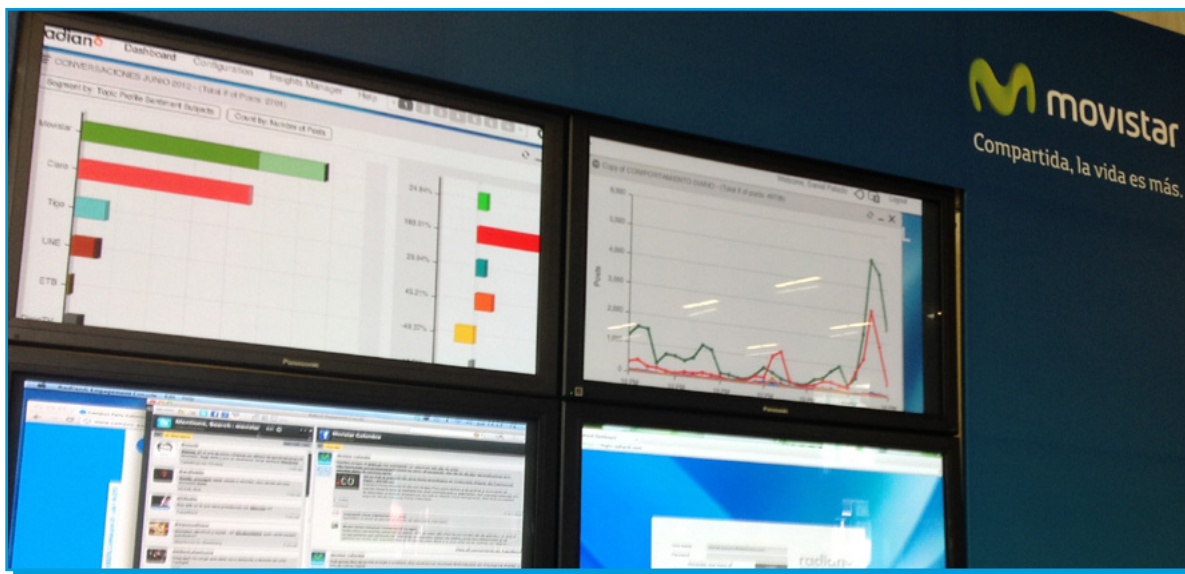
Movistar Colombia's remote Social Media Command Center at Campus Party 2012

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Remote Social Media Command Center by Movistar Colombia

Conclusion:
How to Build Your Own Social Media Command Center

Excited about the possibilities of your own social media command center yet?

Begin by determining the benefits you plan to achieve. Are you looking for a centralized understanding of online conversations around your brand, industry or competitors? Are your executives asking for an at-a-glance way of gauging the health of the brand? Are you about to host an event and need to maximize the positive buzz?

Whether you're a large corporation or a small business, you can have a command center. This is completely scalable to your needs. Before you begin, make sure you have the following in place:

- A social media strategy that ties into your broader business goals

- An established listening model

- An approved and well-understood social media policy

- A social media playbook

- A social media crisis plan

- A well-trained social media team

You don't have to spend the earth to create the physical space. What you really need is dedicated internet bandwidth, workstations, computers, and flat screen monitors. Place your command center in a highly visible location so everyone in the organization feels connected to their community.

Begin by selecting a social media monitoring platform to pull in relevant keywords around your brand. (You might find this guide helpful.) Think about event hashtags, speakers, participants and influencers.

Be prepared to categorize content into tiers such as Tier One for items requiring an immediate response, Tier Two for mentions that need a response but aren't urgent in nature, and Tier Three for items that need no reply, and then route them accordingly.

Determine what key metrics and information you want to highlight on the big screens. Advocates, influencers and fans? Consumer product mentions? Where in the world people are talking about you?

Your most popular products? Go back to your social media strategy and business goals to determine what's truly important.

The organizations we've highlighted here have all discovered the power of a social media command center — and they're all using them in a different ways. A social media command center might just be the ticket for your organization, too, to discover the true power of social.

🌐 Get Started

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