

How to Choose the Right Social Media Archiving Strategy

By Blane Warrene

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Social media is where the customers you need to reach are interacting – not just the next generation of investors, but your current clients of all ages and strata. And the economics of these social media (blogs, Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter and YouTube) are compelling – they offer low cost-of-entry, relative ease-of-use and nearly immediate feedback.

Advisors who have embraced “social” as an important component of their marketing and service toolbox must monitor and manage the content they distribute. Social media archiving solutions bridge the gap between public social media platforms and the advisory practice. They collect and store postings and comments made by you and others on social media platforms and store the information in a readily accessible database. There are a variety of archiving providers and I review the ways in which this can be accomplished, along with the pros and cons of each approach.

While regulators have not completely caught up with the technology curve on social media, some clarity emerged over the last year. The regulatory guidance from [FINRA](#) and the [SEC](#) validated that largely social media is treated as one or more of the following:

- Advertising
- Client correspondence
- Static electronic content requiring pre-approval by compliance

Compliance professionals now have the necessary information to move forward with a social media archiving strategy.

Compliance is not the sole reason for maintaining a record of your social activities, though. Equally important is the market intelligence the archived social media data offer for your business. Listening is an important component of using social media effectively. Along with the content you create and contribute, hearing what your connections are saying and sharing provides valuable business intelligence. Through targeted searches, you will have the ability to:

find out what is said about your content and how it is shared
discover what is most important to your clients, prospects and other social connections
monitor and analyze topics important to you and your business



You have multiple choices for archiving, and the right one is determined by the type of business you run and your use of social media. The most common approaches are:

Hardware: computer equipment installed in your office

Private Network: a closed social network where advisors invite clients to participate

Software Proxy: combination of web- and locally-based software tools

Web-based: Requires only a web browser on a computer or mobile device

All of these approaches offer compliance, surveillance, moderation and reporting capabilities at varying levels. Moderation is particularly important from a compliance perspective. Depending upon your regulatory requirements, some content needs pre-approval prior to publication on a blog or other social network. Moderation tools enable you to allow your users to create social content and submit it – then you can use either automated or manual review tools to approve or deny it.

Let's review some of the pros and cons of these different approaches. The sample vendors noted in each category below all focus on serving the financial services space.

Hardware

In organizations where your users are all working across a single network (including secure remote access), hardware can be deployed by IT administrators to manage access to social media. These units work in conjunction with (or as) your network firewall to provide archiving and other services.

The hardware approach is optimal for a business where computers are managed and supported by a central IT staff. It offers security, as well as reporting and archiving capabilities.

A good example of this solution is provided by [Facetime](#). Their customers include the Chicago Stock Exchange, Morgan Keegan and Sun Trust.

Private network

The private social network has emerged as an alternative to public networks (Facebook, Twitter, etc.). These solutions offer controlled web-based environments with their own blogging, messaging and other content-creation capabilities. Advisors using private networks can invite their clients to join and interact with them.

This is optimal for an organization that does not require or completely prohibits access to public networks and public blogs sites.



[LinkedFA](#) heads this category. The firm is developing a long-term revenue model for premium features; for now, advisors can register for free.

Software proxy

This hybrid approach uses web-hosted tools and a layer of software on your local computer (i.e., it works with your web browser – like Internet Explorer, Firefox or Safari) that acts as an intermediary between your web browser and social networks. Your company sets the policies for use of social networks as rules. You then interact with the social networks through a web portal that enforces those rules.

This is ideal for environments where your users perform all social media activities on a computer configured with the software described above. [Socialware](#) is a good example of this hybrid approach, focused primarily on financial services organizations.

Web-based

The web-based approach takes both hardware and locally-based software out of the picture. Instead, you use a web browser on your computer or mobile device to interact with your social media archive. The archive and tools for managing your social data are web-hosted for use online, or can be downloaded for offline use and integration to other systems.

This approach is optimal for organizations that are geographically dispersed and use multiple computers, web browsers and mobile devices.

[Arkovi](#), my company, is a provider in this space, serving financial advisors and institutions.

Questions you should ask

In choosing a provider for social media archiving, consider what you seek to accomplish and how you will accommodate compliance needs, measure your actions and analyze the data you will be collecting.

- Do you require moderation of social media content?
- What are your monitoring needs for the user? For the supervisor?
- Can I search the archive? Build reports?
- Do I need an IT staff to manage the system?
- Can I download the archive into my backup solution for the rest of my business?
- Can I monitor what is said about me, or about targeted keywords and phrases?
- Can I use any device to create content for social networks?

The power of social media for business has been reflected in the pioneering examples of Best Buy, Comcast and Dell. These firms proved that core business activities including



customer service (Comcast), buying decisions (Best Buy) and product marketing with special deals (Dell) can leverage social media to generate revenue. In 2010, the financial services industry has also warmed up to using social media (see www.advisortweets.com, which follows advisors on Twitter, to listen in on the conversation). By identifying and addressing your compliance needs with social media archiving, you have peace of mind as you take advantage of this new channel for your interactions with clients and prospects.

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