



Technology Labs

Discover What Your Customers Really Think

Brand loyalty, mindshare, customer stickiness, buyer preferences – every consumer-facing organization from ice cream to insurance is all too aware that it lives and dies by its customers' opinions. Market research is a booming industry in itself even though investment in focus groups, market testing, brand audits, and even in-depth sales trend analysis can only bring companies so far into the minds of their customers. At the same time, the Internet is proving to be a powerful channel for voicing clearly points of view to a large audience. Accenture Technology Labs, the technology research and development organization within Accenture, developed Accenture Sentiment Monitoring Services to demonstrate how companies can meet this challenge by gaining business insight from new sources of information, such as that generated on the Internet. With better insight, companies can identify and act on trends in real time, and therefore compete more effectively.

How Accenture Helps

Accenture Sentiment Monitoring Services is a powerful search and analytical solution developed to help companies tap into the largest source of individual opinions on every topic imaginable – the Internet. The tool searches through a set of pre-selected sites for opinions that are relevant to a specific company or topic. Then, a language analyzer categorizes each opinion as positive, negative, or neutral. From media outlets to bulletin boards to personal Web pages, Sentiment Monitoring Services scans available information and builds a big-picture view of prevailing opinion. The tool is quick and accurate, bringing to light thoughts and ideas

that companies would either spend hours compiling by hand or perhaps never hear at all from traditional market research channels.

Companies today are using Accenture Sentiment Monitoring Services to assess public reaction to a new product, an evolving brand, or even a change such as a new chief executive officer. The application runs at the press of a button, taking snapshots every day or several times a day according to need. Companies are using Sentiment Monitoring Services to chart movement in consumers' opinions over time, tracking the rise and fall of a brand, for example, as it is affected by news coverage, changing lifestyles and preferences, or competitive activity.

Value Delivered

Here are a few of the unparalleled insights already delivered by Sentiment Monitoring Services to large companies around the world:

Act Locally, Pay Globally

The Internet has an amazing propensity to turn an isolated incident into a topic for discussion. When looking into their brand reputation, a leading retailer discovered a swelling wave of negative reaction to a purchasing decision made by a manager in one of its more than 3,000 locations. This single act ignited a spark of protest online that would never have caught the attention of corporate headquarters if Sentiment Monitoring Services had not detected the spike in negative opinion. As this retailer learned, sometimes your brand can be eroded without your even being aware of it.

Tap Into the Unpaid Product Experts

Few products inspire as much loyalty and create such a knowing customer base as cars. The Internet has plenty of forums for enthusiasts to rant, rave, and analyze over every detail about each make and model. One car company used insight gained through Sentiment Monitoring Services to help identify and prioritize features and enhancements

to include on future models. These passionate opinions from brand loyalists helped confirm other research findings and, in some cases, changed priorities on which features to advance.

Separate Conspiracies from Conspiracy Theories

A UK financial services firm recently experienced the Internet's unique ability to make a single voice resonate like a full chorus. The mutual company had chosen not to join a trend that led many of its competitors toward initial public offerings. One shareholder, who stood to profit considerably from a public offering, began to sow negative opinions throughout Web sites frequented by the company's other investors. The effort orchestrated by this individual and a few others included starting spurious rumors, questioning the reputations of board members, and even setting up a bulletin board for discussion about the company so they could actively suppress positive opinions. At the outset, Accenture Sentiment Monitoring Services had been used to better understand how the company's brand was perceived, but on delving into the source of negative opinions, it uncovered the intricate plot that had been hatched by a few and had influenced many.

Hear the Voters Speak Before They Cast the First Ballot

The research and development experts at Accenture Technology Labs have learned not to underestimate Sentiment Monitoring Services' ability to identify public opinion trends, even when the trends are counter-intuitive. While the rest of the world was shocked when far right candidate Jean-Marie Le Pen earned a spot in the second round of France's 2002 presidential election, the Labs team in Sophia Antipolis was not. The team had seen evidence of Le Pen's rising popularity, even though his eventual success in the first round was an unprecedented event in French politics.

The true power in Sentiment Monitoring Services lies not merely in the technology that drives the application, but also in the millions of opinions that are voiced on the Internet. Thanks to Accenture Technology Labs, suddenly, a cacophonous roar is distilled into a clear voice, a voice that can help companies shape strategies, plan products, and offer new services that are closely attuned to what their customers want.

About Accenture Technology Labs

Accenture Technology Labs, the dedicated technology research and development (R&D) organization within Accenture, has been turning technology innovation into business results for almost 20 years. The Labs create a vision of how technology will shape the future and invent the next wave of cutting-edge business solutions. Working closely with Accenture's global network of specialists, Accenture Technology Labs help clients innovate to achieve high business performance. The Labs are located in Chicago, Illinois; Palo Alto, California; and Sophia Antipolis, France. For more information, please visit our website at www.accenture.com/accenturetechlabs

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Thanks to
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