The Eight Stages of Listening

Stage	Description	Resources Needed	Impacts
1 No objective at all	Organization has a listening program but has no goals, nor uses the information for anything resourceful.	Simple alerting tools, like Google Alerts and feedreaders will suffice.	At the basic level, simple self-awareness. Yet without any action from the data, this is useless.
2 Tracking of brand mentions	Like traditional "clip reports" of media relations, companies now track mentions in the social space. Despite tracking there is no guidance on what to do next.	Listening platform with report capability based on brand or product keywords.	Improved self-awareness to track volume of information, yet unable to track depth, and tonality of conversations. As a result, not a full understanding of opportunities.
3 Identifying risks and opportunities	This proactive process involves seeking out discussions online that may result in identifying flare-ups, or possible prospect opportunities.	In addition to a listening platform staff must actively seek out discussions and signal to internal teams. Alerting tools, and listening platforms are required.	Organization can reduce risk of flare ups before they become mainstream, identify prospects and poach unhappy competitors customers.
4 Improving campaign efficiency	Rather than just measure a marketing effort after it's occurred, using tools to gauge during in-flight behavior yields real-time marketing efficiency.	Dedicated resource to manage reactions, activity, and sentiment to a marketing effort, and the resources to make course corrections nearly real-time.	Campaigns can be more effective, as hot spots are bolstered, and dead spots are diminished.
5 Measuring customer satisfaction	In addition to customer satisfaction scores, organizations can measure real-time sentiment as customers interact.	Customer experience professionals will have to extend their scope to the social web, using a listening platform and sentiment analysis.	Brands can now measure impacts of real-time satisfaction or frustration during the actual phases of customer interaction. Then identify areas of improvement during customer lifecycle.
6 Responding to customer inquiry	This proactive response finds customers where they are (fish where fish are) in order to answer questions.	An active customer advocacy team that's empowered, training, and ready to make real-time responses nearly around the clock.	Customers will fill a greater sense of satisfaction, yet this teaches customers to 'yell in public' to get a response.
7 Better understand customers	Evolving the classic market research function, brands can improve their customer profiles and personas by adding social information to them.	Social CRM systems are quickly emerging that tie together a customer record and their online behavior, locations, and preferences.	The opportunity to not only serve customers in their natural mediums, but to offer them a richer experience regardless of their customer touchpoints.
8 Being proactive and anticipating customers	This most sophisticated form actually anticipates what customers will say or do before they've done it. By looking at previous patterns of historical data, companies can put in place the right resources to guide prospects and customers.	An advanced customer database, with a predictive application put in place, as well as a proactive team to reach out to customers before an incident has happened.	Identifying prospects and engaging before competitors can yield a larger marketing funnel, or reducing customer frustration as problems are fixed before they happen.