

Petro Canada: Mitigating Potential Risk and Crisis using Social Media Intelligence

Summary: A case study that illustrates how Nexalogy Environics helped Petro Canada fully understand the state of their reputation in social media on a wide gamut of issues. The effort enabled Petro Canada to successfully prepare marketing campaigns, review policies, and develop appropriate corporate responses to mitigate risk and crisis leading up to and during the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver.

1. Introduction

Petro Canada has been attuned to corporate risk issues for many years through its Corporate Social Responsibility group. Though they had achieved good results monitoring their risk in traditional media, in 2008 the company turned its attention to social media. Petro Canada had begun to view social media as an important potential source of information about perceptions in the community about the company, its products, and its practices.

Nexalogy Environics was engaged to analyze the blogosphere relating to the company and its potential risks. Following our initial report, we produced monthly updates on emerging issues of concern, allowing Petro Canada to anticipate and address challenges before they arose.

Petro Canada needed clear information on what the state of their reputation was in the public eye with a complete picture of who was talking about them, what they were saying, and what activities, events and issues connected those conversations. In addition, they sought insight into where to focus their marketing efforts, intelligence into what policies and procedures might require further development, and insight into trends and concerns to prepare public responses to relevant environmental issues.

2. Challenge

Petro Canada's Corporate Risk Group had been scanning the media for stories related to key issues of concern, but were aware that another conversation was happening at the public level, through blogs and social media. However, they did not have the in-house expertise needed to extract, organize and analyze this rich source of data. Petro Canada turned to Nexalogy Environics to help with this new effort.

Greta Raymond sat on the Executive of the Petro Canada's Corporate Risk Group. She knew they needed a third party to ensure the Company had the intelligence they needed to manage risk and crisis across a whole host of issues.

"One of the greatest challenges we faced was finding out what issues were of concern to the public that we weren't prepared for.

"It's almost impossible to try to keep tabs on everything that's being said in the electronic media world. You could do a search for Petro Canada and see what's there, but to look at linkages to various issues and linkages between issues, it's almost humanly impossible to do."

"We needed to see where our position was, and report some accomplishments, get prepared, make sure we had information on the topics that might come up so that we were organized on our policies, positions, and be sure we had proof points."

Petro Canada hired Nexalogy Environics to dig deeper into the public conversation surrounding their industry and activities. They didn't just want a list of bloggers and groups that were talking about them; they wanted a clear picture of how those conversations were connected in order to be thoroughly prepared for potential crisis management.

With comprehensive expertise in the areas of marketing communications, semantic analysis and social media intelligence, Raymond saw Nexalogy Environics as a clear fit to take on the project.

3. Implementation: Nexalogy's Approach

3.1 Data Gathering

Using its advanced semantic data mining tools and techniques, Nexalogy Environics set to the task of tracking and extracting relevant opinions and conversations from the millions of blogs and other social media on the web.

Nexalogy then cleaned the dataset, creating a highly accurate context-relevant database that contained keywords, concepts and associated conversations and opinions that were of concern to Petro Canada.

3.2 Data Analysis

Armed with a unique dataset of conversations, opinions and news exclusively surrounding Petro Canada, its competitors, key issues, and relevant conversations, Nexalogy analysts began to organize and understand the data using computer and human-assisted techniques.

They created three key visualizations of the blog-based conversation to help comprehend the dataset.

Publisher Map

- Precise information on who was talking about relevant issues including individuals, activists and interest groups.
- Key issue and topics sectors were identified, providing a focus on who was most concerned about each of those topics, such as citizens, investors, athletes, companies and special interest groups.
- The Publisher map revealed which of the issues in the blog-based discussion were more or less important, and how each issue related to all of the other issues being studied.

Lexical Map

A Lexical Map is an overview of the most important concepts in the overall discussion and their relationships to one another. For Petro Canada, the Lexical Map revealed where associations between issues were being made. For example, key issues that formed linkages between human rights, aboriginal issues, climate change, and the 2010 Vancouver Olympics.

The Lexical Map was also a key component of the ongoing monitoring plan delivered to Petro Canada. On a periodic basis such as this, it is possible to compare Lexical Maps produced over time to observe how they change as old issues become less pressing to the blogging public, and as new concerns or opportunities arise.

Lexical Map: Example

The following map is an example of the type of map that was produced as part of the ongoing monitoring performed for Petro Canada. A thorough human analysis of the map provides valuable information about which issues of concern are more or less important and their relationship to one another. In this case, note that the size of the cluster and the size of each node within it demonstrate that by this time, discussions of the then-upcoming merger with Suncor were dominant in the discussion.

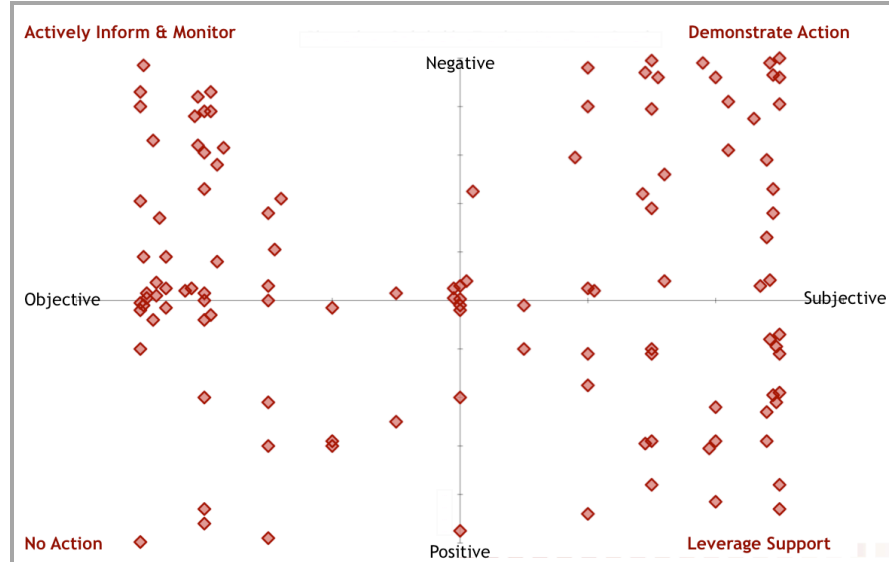


Stakeholder Typology Graph

A Typology Graph is a visualization of the key bloggers in the conversation that have been scored on two axes. From this graph, Nexalogy was able to reveal who discussed Petro Canada positively, negatively or using a neutral tone. It also revealed which individuals or organizations might require immediate engagement, those whose opinions should be monitored closely, and key areas where marketing efforts needed to be focused.

Example: Typology Graph

Each dot on this graph is a specific blog that has been scored on two axes by a trained human analyst.



3.3 Ongoing Intelligence

Over the course of the following six months, Nexalogy Environics continued to monitor social media web activity in order to follow up on changes to the conversation.

They provided Petro Canada with continual reports and recommendations on which groups/individuals to continually monitor, what issues to focus on in publicity campaigns, what languages to launch the campaigns in, where to build on positive reputation momentum, and where their corporate social responsibility activities needed to be further publicized.

4. Results

With such detailed, ongoing intelligence about which issues related to Petro Canada were of primary concern to the public, Petro Canada was able to take appropriate steps to refocus their effort on several of the categories of potential risk they had been monitoring for some time in the mainstream media. In addition, though, the key result of the overall effort was to give Petro Canada the information they needed to avert a public relations crisis during the 2010 Winter Olympics.

Greta Raymond and the Petro Canada Corporate Risk Group were impressed. “The whole Nexalogy approach is something that would take 5000 people mining the data and information and trying to make sense of it – so you wouldn’t do it,” Raymond said.

She was especially impressed with the analysis/intelligence reports Nexalogy Environics provided. “Even given the information, you need experienced human beings to interpret and make sense of it to figure out what your strategy and tactics are going to be.”

“Nexalogy’s work confirmed some of the things we were worried about and showed us things that we were wrong to worry about. They also showed us what to prioritize and where to further engage with the public.”