

# KOL Digital Listening: Going Beyond the Search for Digital Opinion Leaders

Over the past three years the amount of scientific discussion online has accelerated. Digital platforms like social media, websites, blogs, news, and video are being used by the medical community to share new data, discuss treatments, and educate about diseases across all therapeutic areas. Medical affairs has turned to these sources to identify digital thought leaders who are influential in their therapeutic areas. This is a great start, but the true value of digital listening goes beyond the identification of new experts.

## Key Opinion Leaders Online

More important than identifying new digital thought leaders is the ability to generate insights and prepare for better engagements with existing KOLs. In a recent study of more than 50,000 KOLs, Acceleration Point found that 54% have online content relevant to a disease or treatment. Looking specifically at Twitter, depending on the therapeutic area between 18% and 40% of KOLs were active. The average KOL who is active on Twitter has 2,200 followers with a quarter of them identified as other healthcare providers.

Finding true digital thought leaders is also important. Across the data in the Acceleration Point study the average digital thought leader has four times more scientific content than the average KOL. However, there are typically only 20 to 30 true digital opinion leaders globally for any disease. These are often credentialed experts, producing scientific content, distributed through their own channels, with a significant reach. While each expert has a larger number of contributions, digital thought leaders only make up a small percentage of scientific contributions online.

## Three Keys to Effective KOL Digital Listening

Finding and analyzing content can be challenging. Many teams start with searching

Google, Twitter, LinkedIn, and other digital sources. Having more sophisticated methods for gathering and analyzing digital insights is important.

There are three keys to effective KOL digital listening:

### 1: Look Beyond Social Media

There are millions of digital sources worldwide. Social media is an important source, but for a holistic view it is important to capture other sources. News is one of the largest sources and ranges from therapeutic area specific news like Oncology Today to consumer news like CNN. There are also video sites such as YouTube and Vimeo. Or, podcasts hosted by digital thought leaders, industry partners, or third parties. Finally, blogs are also found on a variety of websites.

Monitoring across numerous sources lends to the necessity of a tool that will pull data into a single view filtered down to only relevant scientific content. In Acceleration Point's study, 60% of KOLs' contributions are about a disease or treatment. It is important to quickly and easily filter out the remaining 40% of content that is not relevant.

### 2: Earned Versus Owned Content

Many KOLs don't post content themselves. They don't always have Twitter, YouTube, or blogs. The thoughts of many KOLs are found on sources owned by others. When someone's digital influence comes from sources owned by others, it is called earned content.

A news interview is an example of earned content. The thoughts expressed are those of the KOL but the owner of the content is the news outlet. Another example is article publication — a KOL writes the article, but their institution posts it on the company website. One last example is a recorded lecture that is posted on a third-party YouTube channel rather than on the KOLs channel.

Acceleration Point's study found a 500% increase in content when both owned and earned content are searched.



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### 3: Artificial Intelligence

Scanning through thousands of individual posts, articles, and videos is not practical. A good artificial intelligence engine, trained specifically for medical, saves time and streamlines finding trends in data.

AI identifies discussions about specific diseases, related treatments, and relevant medical topics. It reveals new topics that have been mentioned, how these topics have changed over time, and quickly identifies which experts have been talking about the topics.

With modern tools built specifically for medical affairs, it is easy to capture what KOLs are saying in the digital space. These new sources quickly uncover new insights and allow for more effective engagement with KOLs. <sup>PV</sup>

*Acceleration Point has been helping medical affairs leaders generate insights, engage KOLs, and ensure effective operational processes for over ten years. Our clients embrace us as partners to ensure that you have the right approach, process, technology, and support to achieve your medical strategy and drive the value of medical affairs.*

*For more information on digital listening tool options, visit [accelerationpoint.com](http://accelerationpoint.com).*



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