

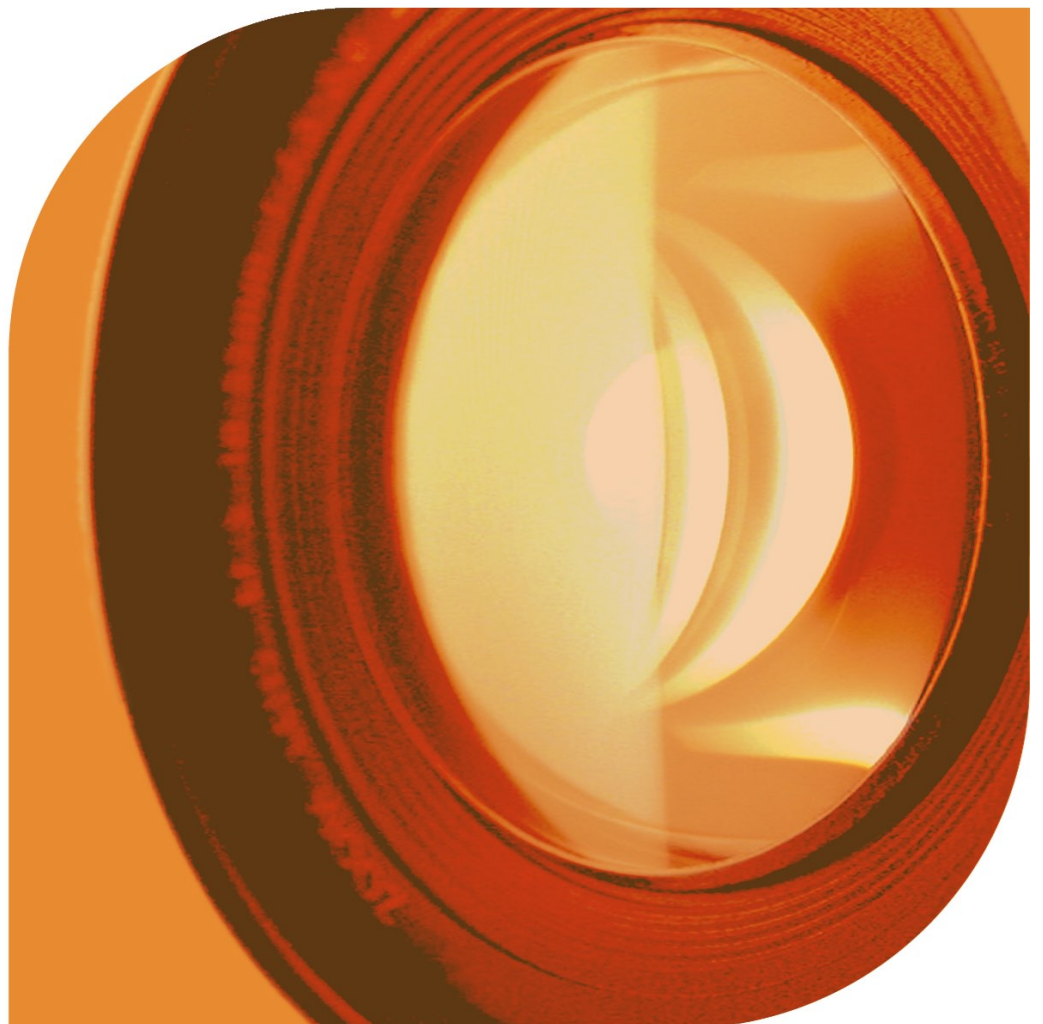
VIP Report

Product Review of Cision Social Media

In-depth, independent review of the product,
plus links to related resources

"Cision Social Media Dashboard – which is the key feature of the service reviewed – is described by Cision as ‘... a self-service, online portal that delivers real-time access to social media coverage, plus analysis and reporting tools that allow communications professionals to understand the impact of social media activity’ ”

June 2009



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About this Report

VIP Report

VIP (<http://www.vivaVIP.com/>) publishes in-depth reports on products, vendors and user experiences relating to premium content products. The monthly *VIP Magazine*, available by paid subscription, includes news analysis and highlights from the latest product reviews. Subscribers also receive, as part of their subscription, the full product review reports published each month.

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Contact Information

Free Pint Limited
4-6 Station Approach, Ashford,
Middlesex, TW15 2QN, United Kingdom
Registered Office: Delaport Coach House, Lamer Lane, Wheathampstead, Herts, AL4 8RQ
Registered Number: 3754481

Telephone: 0870 141 7474
International: +44 870 141 7474
Email: support@vivaVIP.com
Web: <http://www.vivaVIP.com/>



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Product Review of Cision Social Media

By Jonathan Gordon-Till



Jonathan Gordon-Till
[View Author Biography](#)

Cision Social Media is one of a number of products from media intelligence company Cision. The company's portfolio has been inherited through corporate acquisitions since formation as an advertising and news clipping service in the nineteenth century. Cision claims to have become the world's largest company in media monitoring and business intelligence.

Introducing Cision Social Media

Cision Social Media Dashboard – which is the key feature of the service reviewed – is described by Cision as ‘... a self-service, online portal that delivers real-time access to social media coverage, plus analysis and reporting tools that allow communications professionals to understand the impact of social media activity’.

Cision Social Media tracks Internet-based social media such as blogs, video-sharing sites, discussion forums and mainstream news websites. User-defined searches on keywords and other criteria (eg language) covering any period over the last 30 days can then be presented as a dashboard, with email alerts set up to monitor new posts or comments. Configuration of the Cision Social Media interface and search criteria is done by the user, enabling detailed customisation of searches and dashboard presentation.

Cision Social Media: VIP's View

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ <i>The range of social media covered by Cision is impressive, from blogs and some mainstream news websites to micromedia such as Twitter, and video and image sharing sites such as Google Video and Flickr.</i> ✓ <i>The ease with which one can set up and populate a dashboard is very impressive - and effective too. It takes a matter of 1-2 minutes to create a comprehensive dashboard to monitor, say, a current event.</i> ✓ <i>Comprehensive export, email and print options, as well as alerting to email accounts are all essential in such a service and Cision does this well.</i> ✓ <i>Analytical tools can be applied consistently across all logical media. For example, volumetric data are available for links to/from social media sites or for Twitter followers.</i> ✓ <i>Detailed workflow indicators can be applied to specific posts in the River of News widget, facilitating effective follow-up by a team of users.</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ <i>Although it claims to search over 100 million blogs as well as many other social media, searches conducted during this review compared slightly unfavourably with identical searches in Google Blog Search (although slightly better than searches in Technorati).</i> ✗ <i>For very large volumes of content, the Influence Viewer widget may take several hours to become populated as a working widget in the dashboard. For smaller volumes likely to be encountered in focused searches, the widget takes just a few minutes to load. This seems to be the only feature of Cision Social Media which is not immediately accessible to the user.</i> ✗ <i>Searching / monitoring is limited to the last 30 days (though 90 days' content is available on request). Although this is probably adequate for most purposes (social media form, after all, a rapidly changing landscape), there could well be occasions when users would like to look at media analyses much further in the past.</i> |
|--|--|

"Cision claims to have become the world's largest company in media monitoring and business intelligence."



Sources of information and information partners

Cision is not a provider of content through the Cision Social Media tool, but relies on searching the blogosphere and other third-party social media such as Myspace or Flickr and presenting that as organised search results (in the case of blog entries for example) and analysed volumetric and influence tracking charts.

Audience

Cision Social Media is primarily aimed at those who need to keep track of comments and discussions in Internet social media. This includes, for example, communications, marketing or advertising professionals who might use the service for researching advertising channels or for monitoring the influence of a marketing campaign. As Cision Social Media monitors a broad range of social media, and facilitates analysis by a variety of criteria (eg language, source, topic, keyword, etc) it could be seen as a rival to mainstream news monitoring organisations and a key enhancer of in-house social media monitoring teams which rely on manual searches through Web search engines. Others, such as investor relations teams or those involved in reputation management, will find this Cision service aimed at them.

A potential audience for Cision Social Media, although not explicitly stated in its publicity material, is corporate researchers – perhaps those who need to investigate competitor activity (from a marketing perspective, say) or investment analysts who may value consumer perception (following a product launch, say) as an indicator of future stock value.

Coverage / content

Cision reports that its Social Media tool can ‘... track and report on over 100 million blogs, social networking sites, microblogs, tens of thousands of online forums, and over 450 video and image-sharing sites’.

“Cision Social Media tracks Internet-based social media such as blogs, video-sharing sites, discussion forums and mainstream news websites.”

“Cision is not a provider of content through the Cision Social Media tool...”

“Cision Social Media is primarily aimed at those who need to keep track of comments and discussions in Internet social media...”

Clearly it is difficult to list every source covered by Cision, but prominent ones include Flickr, Twitter, YouTube, Myspace, LinkedIn, and Google Video. An additional statement on the company’s website tells us that this coverage is increasing, presumably as the popularity of the blogosphere and social computing continues to grow. Mainstream news websites are also included, such as guardian.co.uk.

Content does not seem to be de-duplicated and may skew the analysis statistics slightly. For example, on 17 May the text of a Press Association press release entitled ‘Eurovision was amazing, says Jade’ was picked up between 21:30 and 22:00 on some dozen local UK newspaper websites (for example, *Isle of Man Today*, *Bridlington Free Press*, *Fleetwood Today*, *Driffield Post*, *Sunderland Echo*); each was returned in a Cision search causing an anomalous view of social media around that story. Nevertheless, Cision consultants are able to de-duplicate content on behalf of client organisations through their managed dashboard services.

Search options

From the users’ perspective, Cision Social Media is divided into two parts: search configuration and reporting. ‘Configuration’ and ‘Dashboard’ labels on the title bar lead the user to the relevant screen.

The default view when entering Cision as a regular user is a saved dashboard view, from which the user gets an instant snapshot of the social media status relating to a set of search criteria created by him or her.

“Others, such as investor relations teams or those involved in reputation management, will find this Cision service aimed at them.”

“Cision reports that its Social Media tool can ‘... track and report on over 100 million blogs, social networking sites, microblogs, tens of thousands of online forums, and over 450 video and image-sharing sites.’ ”

Configuration

For the new user, it is first necessary to set up one or more searches in Cision Social Media. These are termed Topic Profiles in Cision and are created in the Topic Profile Manager [Fig 1].

The user will typically set up a new Topic Profile for each topic on which Cision analysis and reporting is required (for example, MPs' expenses, North Korean nuclear tests etc).

Flexibility within Cision allows for each Topic Profile to be analysed in different ways, so the Topic Profile can be considered a search theme. In other words, if, in the case of a news story such as the election of a new US president, the user wants to focus on specific issues

"From the users' perspective, Cision Social Media is divided into two parts: search configuration and reporting."

"For the new user, it is first necessary to set up one or more searches in Cision Social Media."

within this broad topic, the Topic Profile can be presented as a series of dashboard widgets, each on a particular sub-topic (eg blog analysis from Spanish sources, micromedia reports from named sources etc).

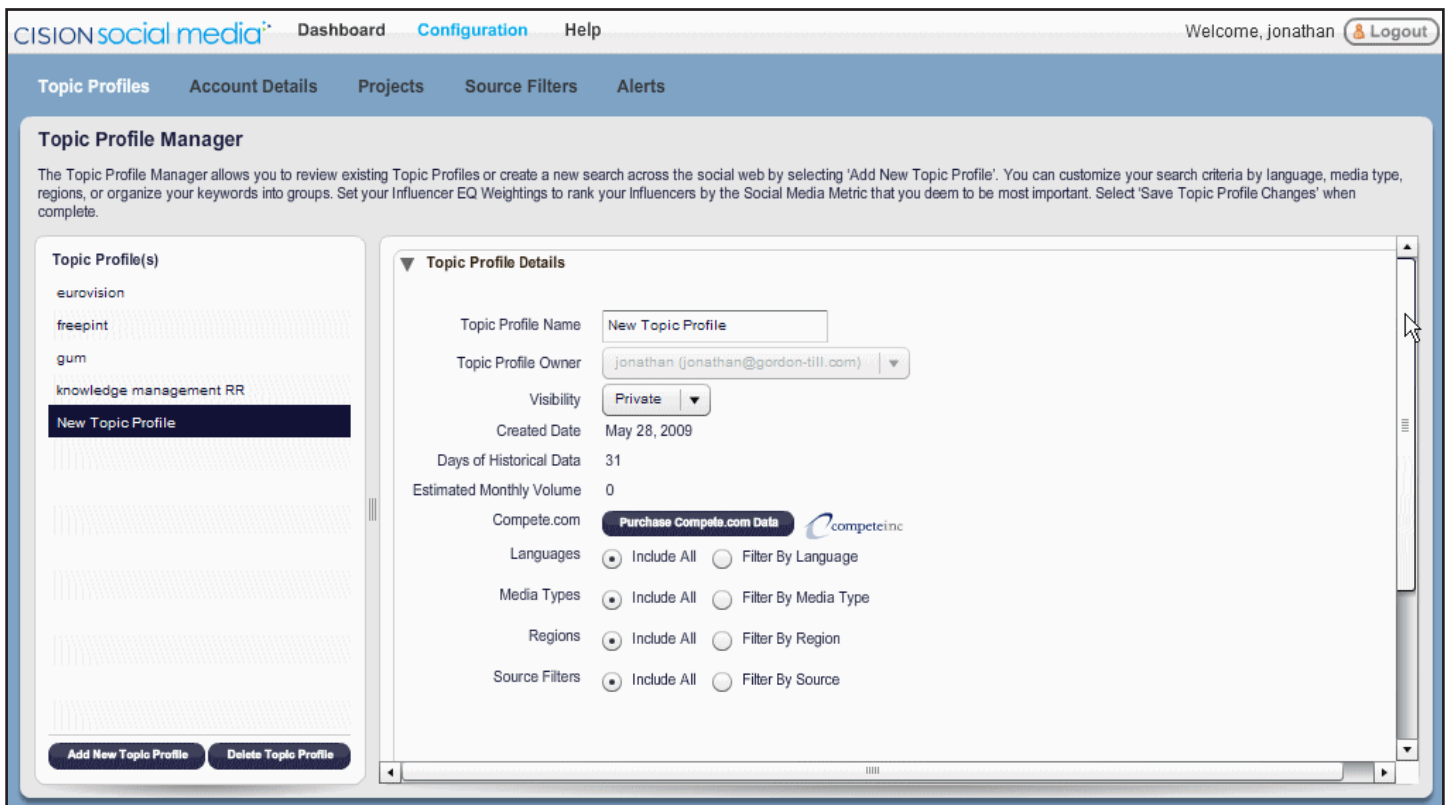


Fig 1 - Topic Profile Manager

The Topic Profile Manager screen allows for up to 14 Topic Profiles to be set up. Setting up a new Profile (or editing an existing one) is largely intuitive and based mostly on

tooggling radio buttons on or off, or by selecting from look-up lists.

"Flexibility within Cision allows for each Topic Profile to be analysed in different ways, so the Topic Profile can be considered a search theme."

"The Topic Profile Manager screen allows for up to 14 Topic Profiles to be set up. "

A few fields in the Topic Profile Details window are not configurable – these are the date on which the profile was created, the cumulative number of days' historical data (new searches go back 30 days to begin with) and an estimated monthly volume of records.

Looking next at the user-configurable fields, we begin to understand the level of detail offered by Cision. In turn, these are:

- **Topic Profile Name:** As the term suggests, a freetext field where the user can give a descriptive name to the profile (eg 'Presidential elections')
- **Topic Profile Owner:** Where a Cision account is managed by more than one user, the email address of the profile creator is selected from a look-up value. For this review, only one user (ie Profile Owner) existed, and this was presented as a greyed-out email address
- **Visibility:** Clearly, in a corporate setting, there are likely to be different groups of users who have particular interests in certain profiles. For example, the Strategy team may be interested in Topic Profiles relating to competitors, the Marketing team may be interested in social media activity following a new product launch, and so on. This field allows the profile creator to select, from a user-defined list, a particular user group whose members will all have access to the same Topic Profile. The default setting is 'private'
- **Languages:** The user can select which language(s) the Topic Profile should search. Cision currently searches in any combination of 9 common languages – English, French, Spanish, German, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Chinese and Russian – according to the principal language of the blog or other media searched. The default setting is to include all languages
- **Media Types:** Not surprisingly, users can select any of a number of social media, namely blogs, videos, images, mainstream news, micromedia, forums and comments. A sub-set of forums, forum replies, can be selected. Being able to narrow down the profile by media type is useful when, for some popular events, the blogosphere is particularly active and many hundreds or even thousands of reports are likely. Depending on topicality, the user may, for example, choose to focus a search on blogs or micromedia such as Twitter.

"Where a Cision account is managed by more than one user, the email address of the profile creator is selected from a look-up value."

"The user can select which language(s) the Topic Profile should search."

Unfortunately, there is no guidance on what social media are included within the Media Types filter. For the typical user, they will be sufficiently intuitive and provide an adequate specificity of media type but, for the advanced user or where a major monitoring campaign is being undertaken, the ability to select more detailed media types would be useful.

However, the Source Filters field allows the user to refine the profile further to cover only specific sources within the media type. Before selecting sources in the Source Filter field, they need to be defined by the user in the Source Filters screen. This takes the user away from the Topic Profile screen to an equally intuitive screen in Cision Social Media where the user can create named groups of URLs (eg a new Source Filter could be set up called 'US news sources' where the user would type the URLs of favourite news websites with RSS feeds and/or popular political blogs). The Source Filter, once set up, can then be applied to any Topic Profile. And, like the Topic Profiles themselves, named Source Filters (eg 'US news sources') can be shared with other groups of Cision users.

As well as selecting the named source(s) on the Topic Profile screen, the user can choose whether to include or exclude all content from the named sources. This adds a very useful degree of precision when carrying out an analysis of, say, a mainstream event such as US presidential elections, when coverage by social media is likely to be extensive.

- **Regions:** Where sources can be identified by their geographic origin, the user can choose to select any combination of these. The look-up field in Cision lists countries and similar territories (eg dependent territories), but not macro-regions such as 'European Union' (EU) or 'South America'. This is

"...users can select any of a number of social media..."

"...the ability to select more detailed media types would be useful."

"The Source Filter, once set up, can then be applied to any Topic Profile."

a slight inconvenience if one wants to monitor, say, social media from a particular region such as the EU; each country in a desired region has to be selected. Despite this drawback, especially when a relatively complex macro-region such as the EU is being chosen, it does mean that the user has full control of the constituent countries of a region.

- **Keywords and Keyword Groups:** This separate section of the Topic Profile Manager screen allows users to define which keyword(s) they want Cision Social Media to pick out of the selected social media. As with the Media Types field, user-defined groups of keywords can be set up, which is useful if a number of Topic Profiles are set up for discrete subjects but a common group of keywords is wanted. To add to the flexibility of the keyword search, keywords and keyword group selection can be on the basis of whether the social media content contains or does *not* contain specified text. A query builder allows quite complex groups of keywords to be set up.

It appears that keyword truncation is not possible with Cision Social Media. For example, a search for 'knowledge management' returned plenty of hits, but truncating and adding wildcards (eg 'knowledge manage\$', 'knowledge manage*' or even 'knowledge manage') returned no hits.

"To add to the flexibility of the keyword search, keywords and keyword group selection can be on the basis of whether the social media content contains or does not contain specified text"

Despite the absence of keyword truncation, Cision makes its Social Media product flexible with useful features such as a function to copy or move keywords from one named group to another. The buttons which perform this and related functions (eg Add, Edit, Delete) are clearly labelled and simple to use.

The login screen provides the option of including Russian and East Asian fonts. For this review, a Topic Profile was set up for 'knowledge management' appearing in Russian-language media (keywords "управление знаниями"). No filters were set (eg Media Type, Source, Region), apart from selecting the Russian language option. Cision clearly provided content in Cyrillic [Fig 2].

But, considering the service was covering all available media types (blogs, videos, images, mainstream news, micromedia such as Twitter, forums, forum replies and comments) only four items were reported. This compared with some eight in a parallel [Google Blog Search](#) – which included only one item found in the

Cision search - and just two in all media types in [Technorati](#) over the same period. Simple comparisons like this suggest that Cision's reach into social media is not as extensive as, say, Google's, though there is nothing to suggest that important sources are missed.

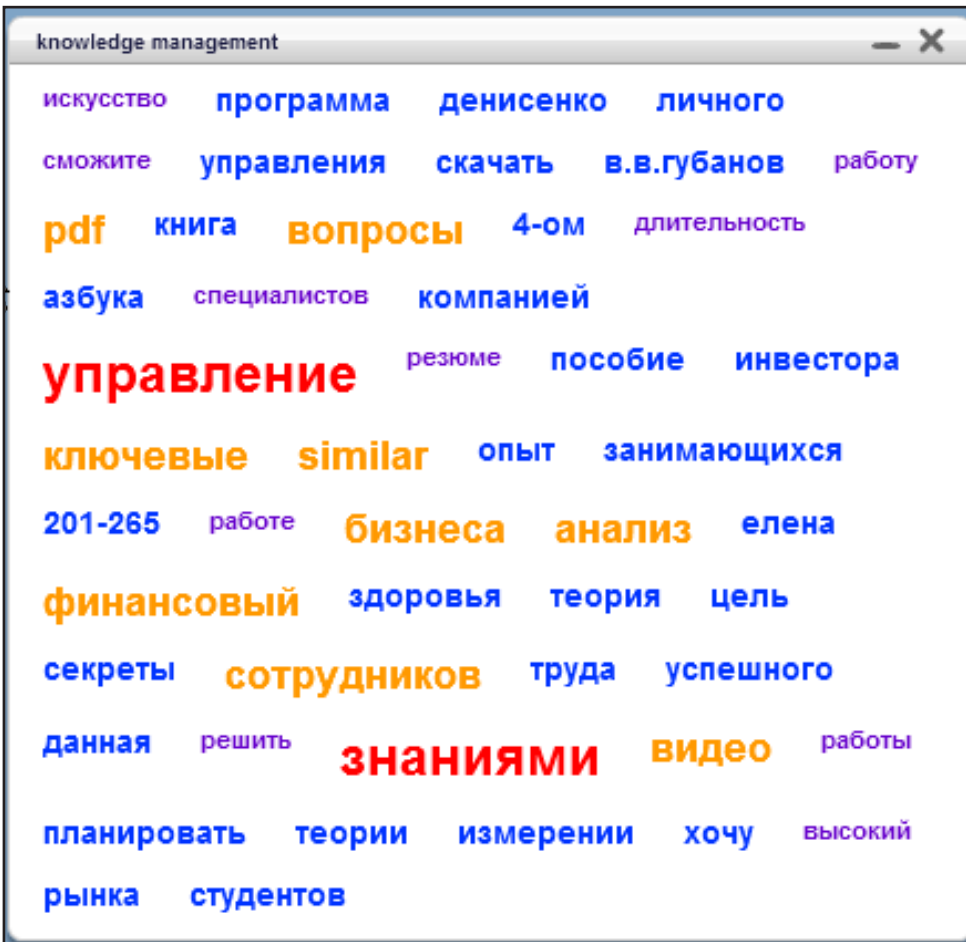


Fig 2 - Knowledge Management

"It appears that keyword truncation is not possible with Cision Social Media"

"The login screen provides the option of including Russian and East Asian fonts."

Search results

Results are returned in an unformatted sans serif font throughout, which is convenient for consistent browsing and analysis, but lacking any important formatting contained in the original source (eg blog). This may prevent the reader from perceiving the full impact of a piece of formatted text in the way the original author intended, but that should not detract from the fact that, in Cision, the user has the ability to compare and analyse many thousands of discrete social media entries with just a few clicks of the mouse.

Dashboard

The star of Cision Social Media is the dashboard, through which the user can choose to present any of a number of search results or analyses [Fig 3]. Up to eight nameable dashboards can be created by the user, each one containing any combination of graphical outputs of the Topic Profiles set up by the user. Typically, each dashboard might relate to a particular Topic Profile, but there is nothing to stop a user combining a number of outputs (or 'widgets') from any of the Topic Profiles into any one dashboard.

"The star of Cision Social Media is the dashboard..."

"Up to eight nameable dashboards can be created by the user..."

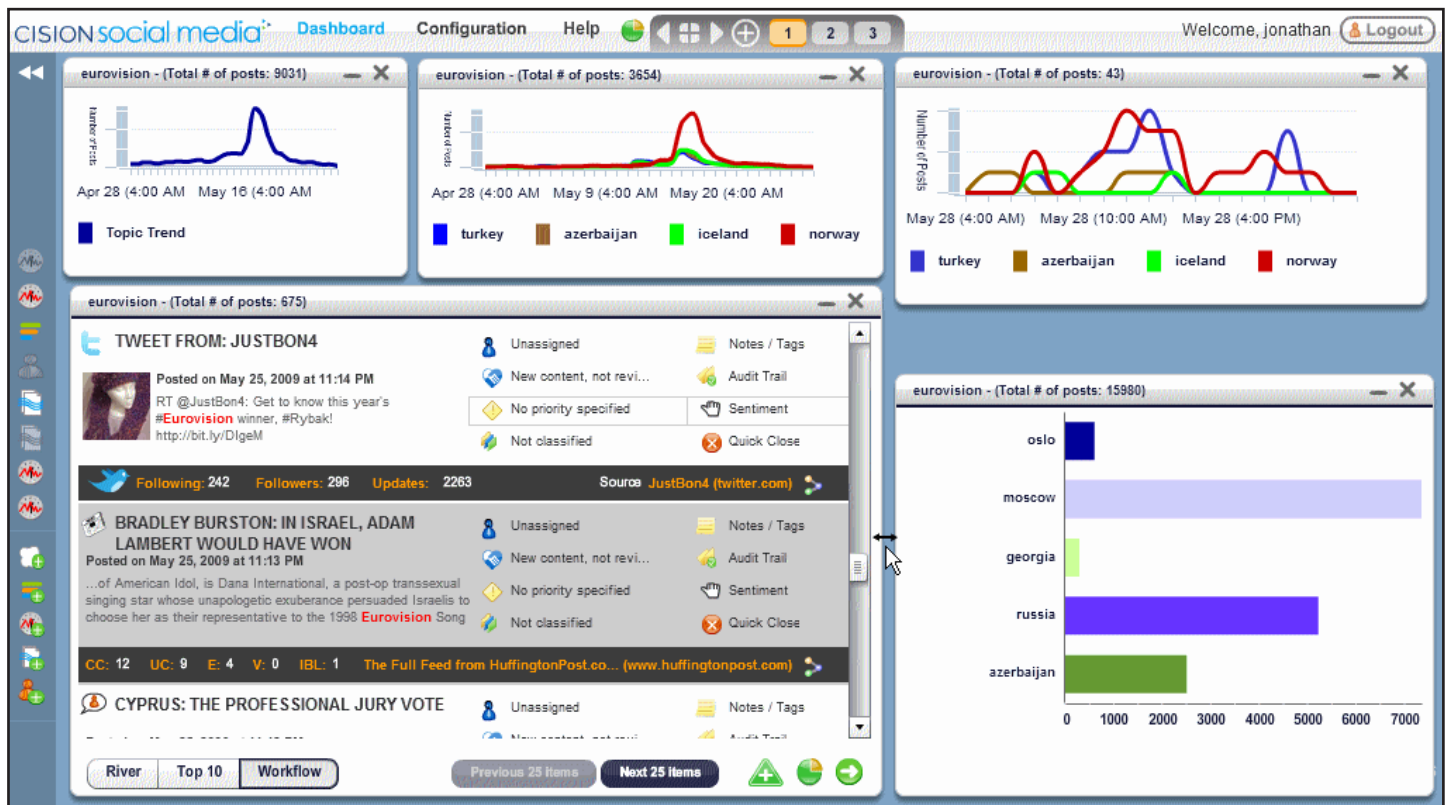


Fig 3 - Dashboard

Creating a new dashboard is a simple matter of clicking on a single on-screen button, after which a dashboard name can be given and the content of the dashboard configured. Deleting any of the dashboards which the user has created requires the user to go to a multi-dashboard view and select the appropriate delete button(s).

Each dashboard has the following five widget options, each of which has a number of configurable features and reporting options:

- Conversation Cloud
- Topic Analysis
- Topic Trends
- River of News
- Influence Viewer.

To create any of these widgets, the user simply clicks on the appropriate icon. No textual guidance is provided on the screen to identify which icon does what but, as with so much of Cision Social Software, hovering the pointer over an icon (or many other parts of the screen) displays a brief description.

Once set up, each widget can be re-sized or moved simply by dragging the sides or title bar of the widget. This useful feature means that multiple widgets can be sized and positioned on the screen to suit the user's screen resolution and position preferences.

The content of graphical widgets (Topic Analysis and Topic Trends) is fluid, meaning that, when a widget is re-sized, the chart contained within it is re-sized in proportion to the widget shape whilst supporting text on the chart such as the chart key is anchored to one side of the widget to ensure it is always visible. Widgets containing tabulated data contain text of a fixed size which may be obscured when the margins are changed.

Each widget can be toggled on or off, which may be useful if several widgets are set up on a dashboard to monitor a particular event but the user only wants to see a selection of them at any one time. Where a widget is 'switched off' (ie it is de-selected) it appears as a greyed-out icon in the margin.

Conversation Cloud

During a marketing campaign, for example, or in the case of the US presidential election example given above, the user may wish to see which other issues are being discussed in social media such as blogs. To facilitate this, a Conversation Cloud can be generated based on the frequency of words used within the social media themselves. This appears in a similar way to a 'tag cloud', which many readers will be familiar with, in which the most frequently used words are highlighted or emphasised whilst less frequently used ones are less prominently displayed [Fig 2].

As well as displaying larger text for more frequently used words, colour can be associated with each character size to make it easier, visually, to identify common themes. A simple colour palette allows the user to customise the colour related to each band of frequency – for example, the most common words can be displayed in red for emphasis, all the others in blue.

By clicking on any term appearing in the Conversation Cloud, the user can then choose from a number of extended options. Each option creates a new widget, for

"Once set up, each widget can be re-sized or moved simply by dragging the sides or title bar of the widget."

"Each widget can be toggled on or off..."

example another Conversation Cloud in which all items containing the newly selected term are presented as a sub-set of the original Conversation Cloud. Other options available from the Conversation Cloud include:

- Open a River of News within the item list based on the word selected. The chosen word will be highlighted
- Open Topic Trends which displays a chart of the daily frequency of the selected word.
- A range of graphical displays including:
 - View by Language
 - View by Media Type
 - View by Post Tag
 - View by Region
 - View by Sentiment
 - View by Source Tag
 - View by User Assignment.

Each newly created widget can itself be analysed further by clicking on various feature points embedded within the text or chart. With this, the user can carry out very detailed investigations of the nature of content - for example, what were the most popular media types containing a particular term in a chosen language, and in which region was the term most widely used? Clearly such extended analysis is only effective if the sample population (ie the number of blog entries or comments) is sufficiently large; otherwise only the simplest of charts or displays is shown, which does not inspire the user.

"...a Conversation Cloud can be generated based on the frequency of words used within the social media themselves."

"By clicking on any term appearing in the Conversation Cloud, the user can then choose from a number of extended options."

"Each newly created widget can itself be analysed further by clicking on various feature points embedded within the text or chart."

Topic Analysis

This displays as a bar or pie chart showing the frequency of keywords (or keyword groups) within the Topic Profile search criteria. For example, in this review a Topic Profile was created for any reference to the Eurovision Song Contest in the last 30 days.

By choosing the Topic Analysis widget, it was possible to plot a chart displaying the relative frequency of uses of certain words (eg *Moscow* 7216 mentions, *Russia* 5185 mentions, *Azerbaijan* 2460 mentions, *Oslo* 533 mentions, *Georgia* 290 mentions. Total number of posts, 15,683.) By simply editing the keywords it is possible to analyse the relative frequency of any other word(s) within this dataset of 15,683 posts. To aid visual clarity, the user can specify bar or pie segment colours.

By hovering the pointer over a bar or pie segment, the word frequency is displayed (as given above). Then, by clicking on the bar or pie segment, a range of extended options opens – *Open River of News*, *Open Topic Trends*, *View by Keyword Group*, *View by Language* etc - similar to the Conversation Cloud example previously.

A very nice feature with the widgets is the hidden extra segmentation and count dimensions which only appear

“To aid visual clarity, the user can specify bar or pie segment colours.”

“A very nice feature with the widgets is the hidden extra segmentation and count dimensions”

when the pointer moves over the widget’s title bar. Here, two new lists of options appear from which the user can select the following:

- Segmentation by classification, engagement level, language, media type, region, sentiment, user assignment.
- Count by number of posts, comments, views, votes, Twitter followers, on topic inbound links, total inbound links, unique sources.

Fig 3a shows a bar chart of the 15,683 Eurovision posts displayed by the number of posts for each of the selected keywords (*Moscow*, *Russia*, *Azerbaijan*, *Oslo*, *Georgia*) segmented by media type. Hovering the pointer over one of the bars displays the media type, number of posts and frequency (eg *Russia*, videos, 1362 mentions, 26.25% of total).

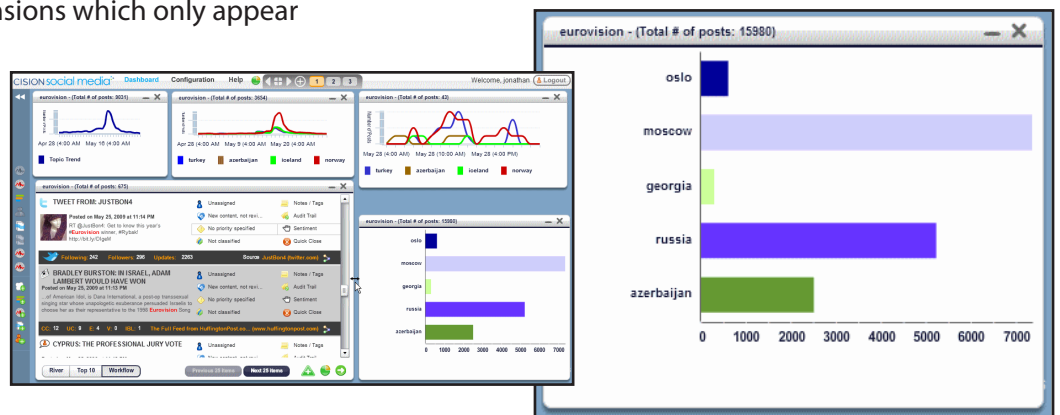


Fig 3a - Eurovision Posts By Selected Keywords

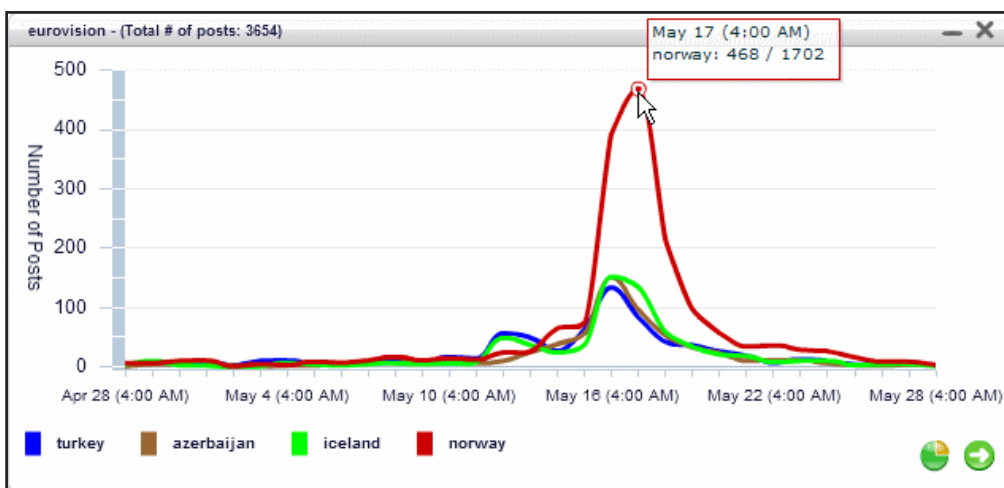


Fig 4 - Line Graph Showing Frequency of Keywords

Topic Trends

Using a similar configuration menu, the user can create a line graph covering a range of dates (between current day and 30 days ago) showing the frequency of keywords at frequent intervals [Fig 4]. Where the date range covers only 1 or 2 days, the graph shows the frequency of keywords at hourly intervals [Fig 5]. In some charts, the interval can be as little as 10 minutes! As the date range increases, so the interval increases, creating a smoother curve.

As with the Topic Analysis widget, hovering over points on the graph displays the keyword frequency at that point [Figures 4 and 5]. Extended analyses available here include opening a River of News or a Conversation Cloud.

"By clicking on items in the graph legend, it is possible to remove related lines on the graph."

"This widget is useful for creating very simple but effective graphs of the frequency of any word in the social media associated with a Topic Profile."

By clicking on items in the graph legend, it is possible to remove related lines on the graph. So, for example, where the user is plotting, say, five keywords of which two are relatively equally common and appear to interfere as lines on a graph, by clicking on the legend value of one of the keywords, the user can remove the corresponding line from the graph.

This widget is useful for creating very simple but effective graphs of the frequency of any word in the social media associated with a Topic Profile. And the ease with which new keywords can be included or excluded against a timeline makes this widget perhaps the most intuitively appealing.

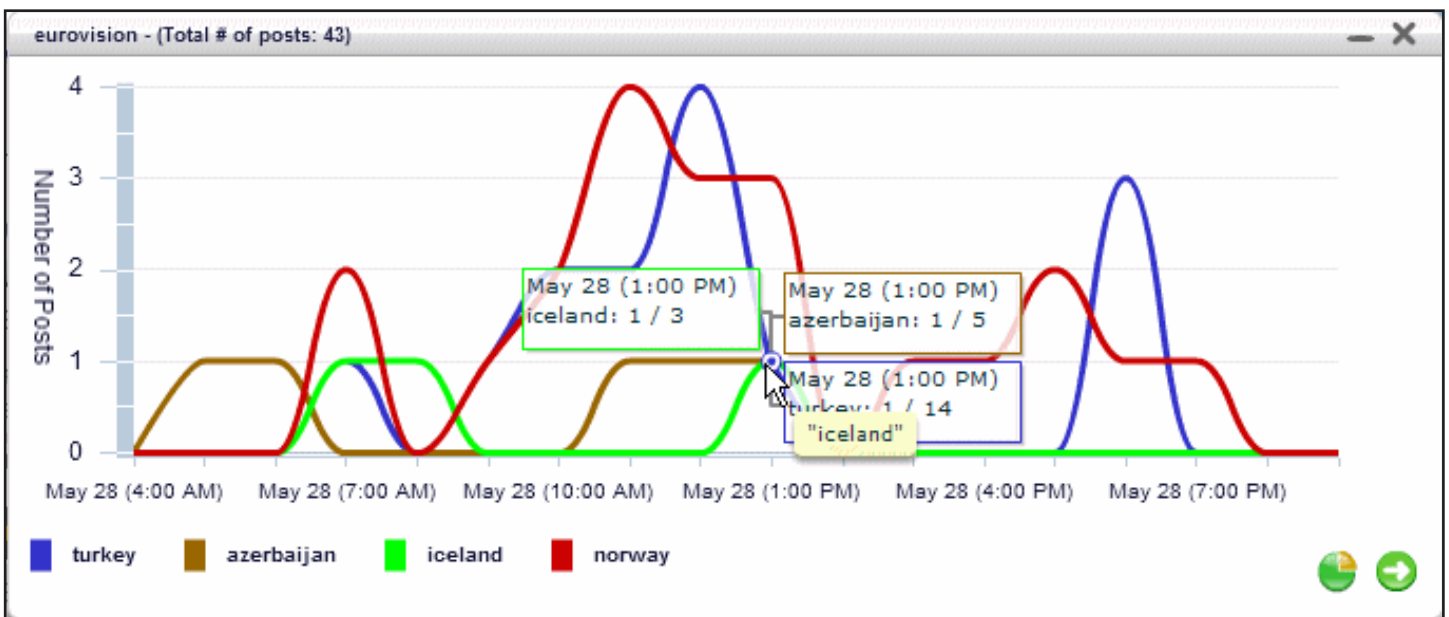


Fig 5 - Frequency of Keywords at Hourly Intervals

River of News

This metaphorically-named widget displays a list of social media posts (depending on the Media Types selected) with the keyword of the Topic Profile (eg 'Eurovision') highlighted in coloured text and displayed as a keyword in context (KWIC) format [Fig 6]. By clicking on one of the

posts, a media viewer is launched displaying the full text of the post in an unformatted sans serif font. Then, by clicking on the title of this media viewer, the original post (eg blog) opens in a new window. (A source reference beneath each entry in the River of News also provides a link to the original post.)

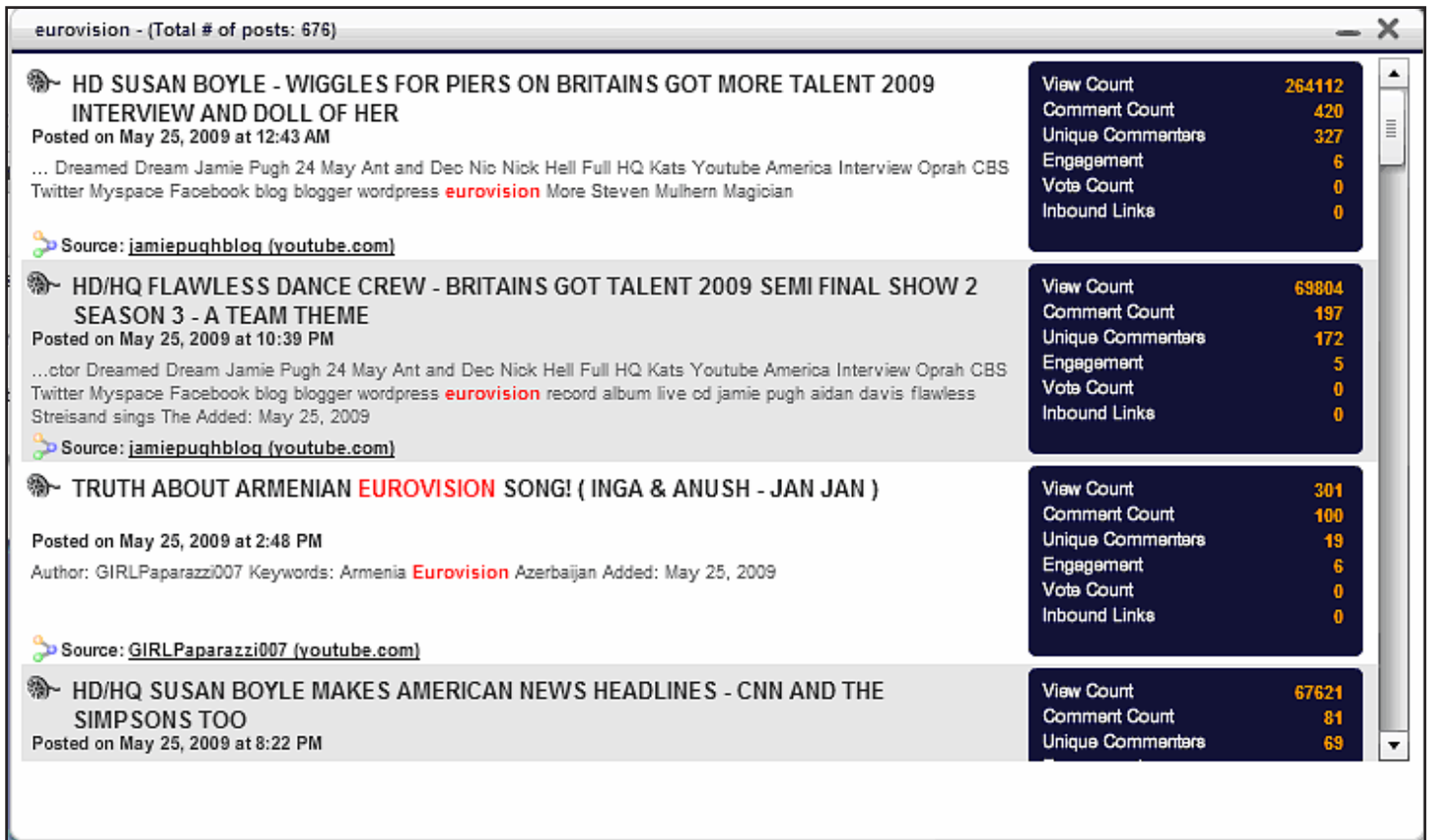
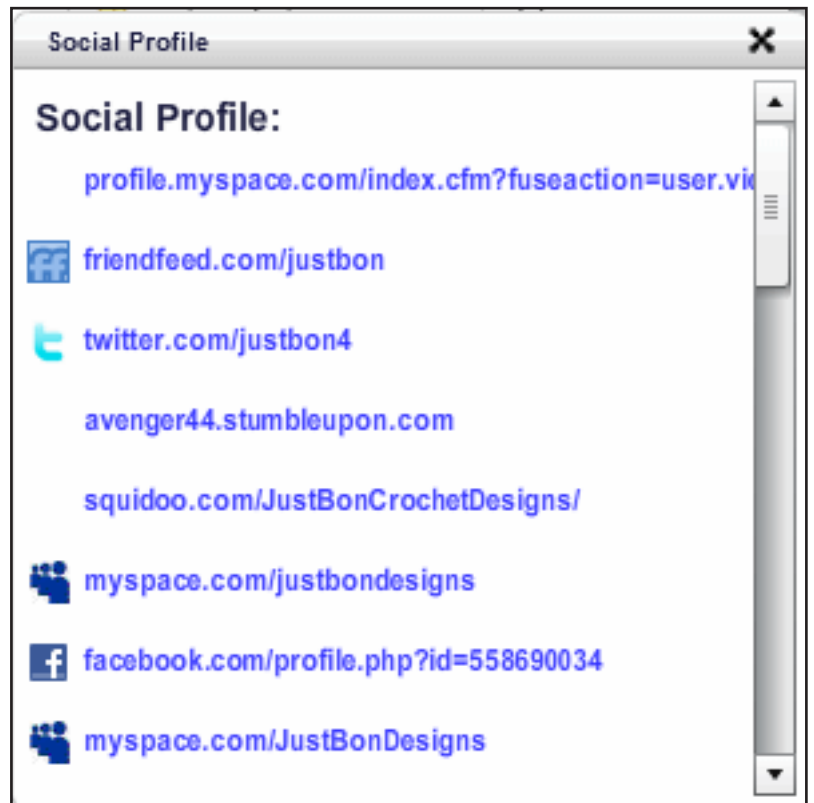


Fig 6 - Social Media Posts by Keyword of Topic Profile

Almost unnoticeable as a small icon below each entry is a link to the 'social profile' of the original site. For example, in Figure 7 we see part of one blogger's 'social profile' showing many possible associations with other social media.

From this, it is possible to identify additional blogs or other social media associated with the original blog, as well as email addresses and websites, and to navigate to a whole new set of connections. This is particularly useful when investigating the possible influence a blogger has in terms of the number and range of social media used.



"This is particularly useful when investigating the possible influence a blogger has in terms of the number and range of social media used."

Fig 7 - Social Profile

Posts displayed in the River of News can be sorted by a number of criteria, including the following:

- Comment count
- Engagement
- Forum thread size
- Inbound links
- Publish date
- Twitter following
- Twitter followers
- Twitter updates
- Unique commenters
- View count
- Vote count.

These are largely self-explanatory and provide a great way to analyse a large number of posts to identify which are likely to be the most significant or popular, for example, major political commentators' blogs. Some of these same statistics (comment count, unique commenters, engagement, vote count, inbound links) are permanently displayed alongside each post for quick reference so, at a glance, the user can see whether a post has a large number of unique commenters or inbound links.

By clicking on any of the values here, so-called dynamics graphs are displayed in which the view count, comments and commenters, and engagement are shown chronologically as three small line graphs. A separate 'Top 10' button at the foot of the River of News widget

A separate 'Top 10' button at the foot of the River of News widget launches a bar-chart view of the top posts"

"...an unexpected but nevertheless versatile feature is the workflow tagging which can be applied to each entry in the River of News widget."

launches a bar-chart view of the top posts – the default sorting is by number of comments [Fig 8], but the other options listed previously (engagement, forum thread size, etc) are also available.

For the first-time user of Cision Social Media, an unexpected but nevertheless versatile feature is the workflow tagging which can be applied to each entry in the River of News widget. That is, for each story, the user can manually assign a number of labels according to the relevance, importance or action required by the organisation. For example, if on looking at an entry in the River of News the user decided to allocate it to a colleague for follow-up action and to report that the entry is negative in sentiment, he will simply click on labels alongside the entry [Fig 9]. The full list of tags which the user can apply are:

- Assign to user – the user selects the name of registered Cision users
- Status:
 - New content, not reviewed
 - Reviewed, determining best response
 - Recommend follow-up
 - Commented, awaiting reply
 - Commented, closed
 - Referred

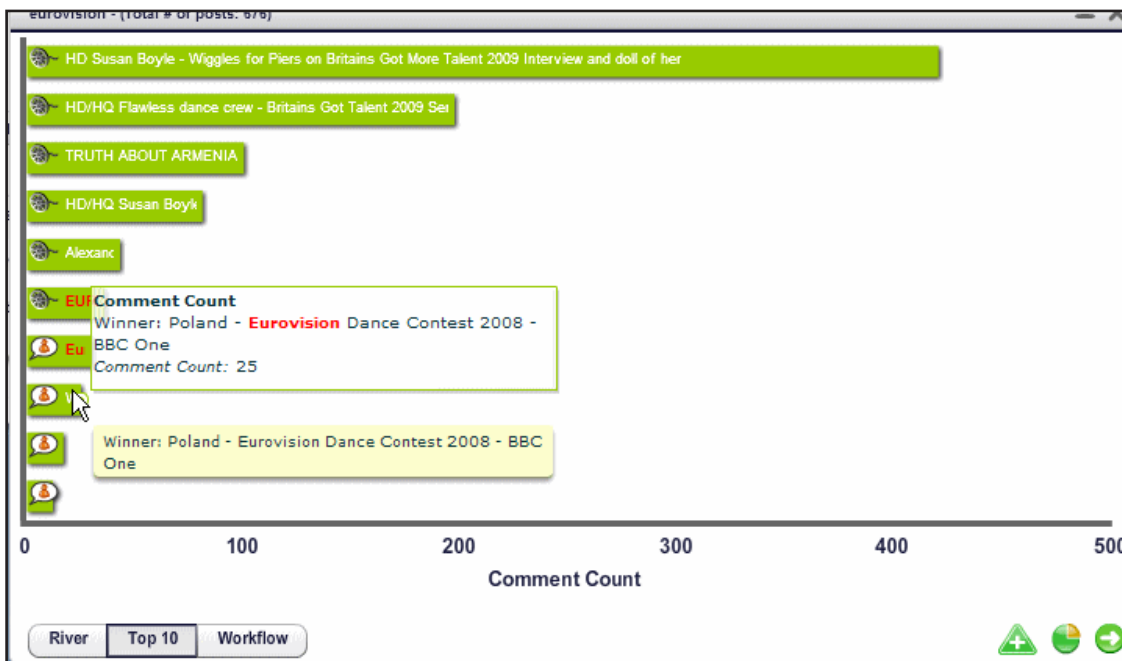


Fig 8 - Bar-Chart View of Top Posts

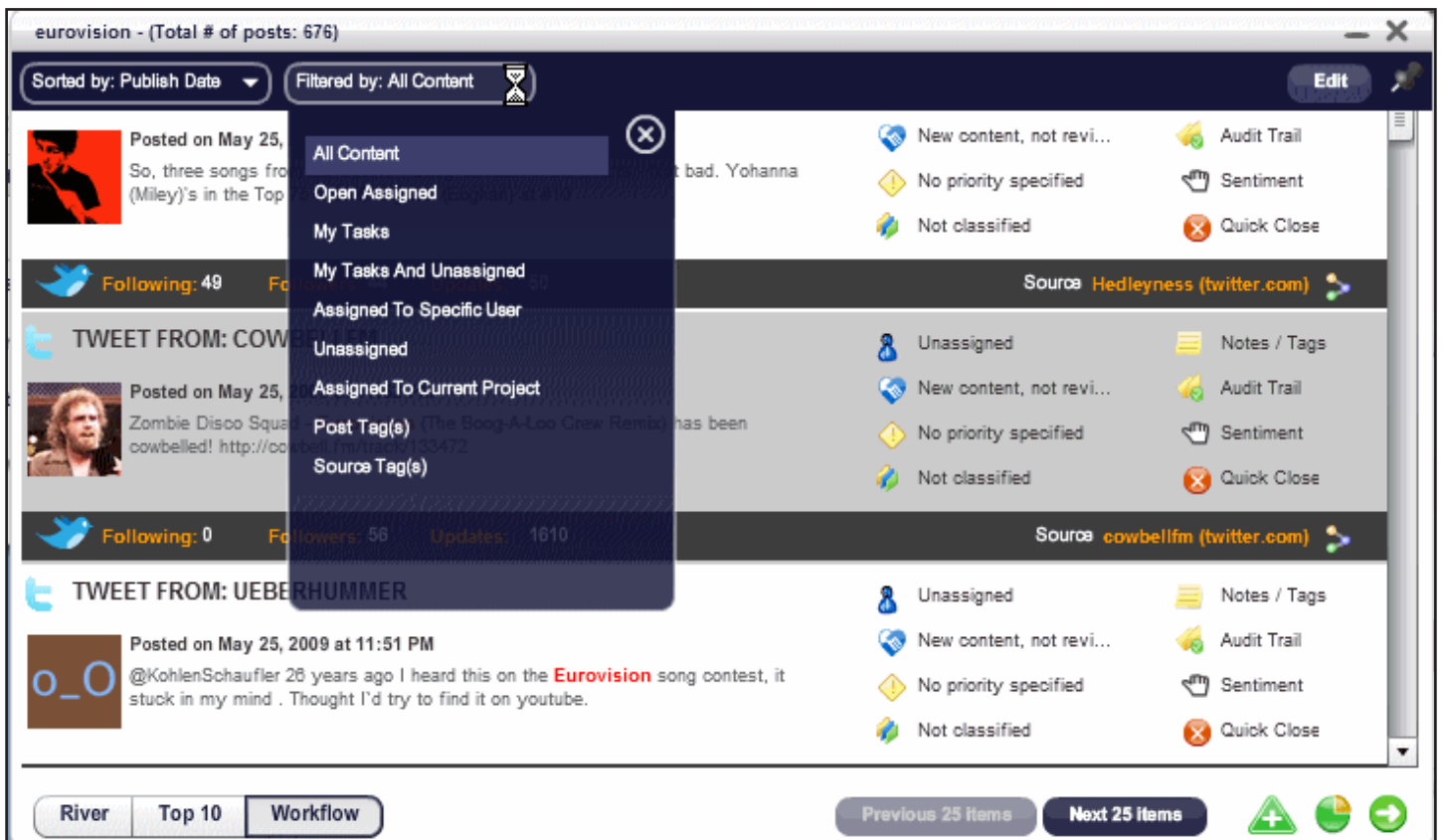
Resolved, no further action required
 Reviewed, closed, no engagement required

- Priority – low, medium, high
- Classification type:
 - Product review
 - Product / Service complaints
 - Product / Service compliments
 - Company / Stakeholder mention
 - Product inquiry
 - Company outreach
 - Sales lead
 - Legal financial
 - Legal / Can not respond
 - Unclassified
 - Recommendation or referral.
- **Notes / Tags** – Individual users can annotate the entry by adding a few words of text (eg 'This is an outrageous story!') and post tags or source tags (where a controlled vocabulary of tags is built up by the users and applied as required). The notes and tags added by users are listed alongside the users' names and timestamp, making it clear who has written what.

"Individual users can annotate the entry by adding a few words of text..."

- **Audit trail** – Complementing the notes and tags above, and other annotations made to the entry, this shows the names and timestamps of users' edits (eg May 20, 2009 3:40 PM - User 1 assigned post to: User 2, May 20, 2009 4:10 PM – User 2 changed priority to high).
- **Sentiment** – The user can apply any one of five levels of sentiment, signified by small hand symbols (eg thumbs up).
- **Quick close** – Selecting this greys-out the other labels (preventing further editing) and changes the status to 'Reviewed, closed, no engagement required'.

Fig 9 - Labels/Tags Alongside Entries



Having applied tags to selected entries they can then be filtered and viewed (or exported for follow-up action), as seen in Figure 9, by the following criteria:

- All content
- Open assigned
- My tasks
- My tasks and unassigned
- Assigned to specific user
- Unassigned
- Assigned to current project
- Post tag(s)
- Source tag(s).

This useful feature means that the subscribing organisation can examine a collection of blog posts, etc. and simply but effectively assign workflow actions to each post. Rather than having to download posts directly from the Web, say, into a Microsoft Office application and then manually sort them into 'to do' sets or apply sentiment labels, these actions and workflow management can all be done from within the Cision system itself. Then, when appropriate assignments and labelling have been done, filtered content can quickly be exported from Cision.

"This useful feature means that the subscribing organisation can examine a collection of blog posts, etc and simply but effectively assign workflow actions to each post."

Influence Viewer

The Influence Viewer widget allows users to see social media influencers ranked according to a variety of volumetrics [Fig 10]. That is, for each source (eg a named youtube.com account) the number of comments and links, etc. is displayed in tabular format allowing the user to rank according to any one metric. Ranking is done simply by clicking on the field label on the top row (similar to an Excel sort). The metrics (labels) used are:

- On topic posts
- Total comment count
- On topic comment count
- Total unique commenters
- Average engagement
- On topic inbound links
- Total inbound links
- Total vote count
- On topic forum replies.

Score	Influencer	Document Icon	Comment Icon	Message Icon	Profile Icon	Link Icon	Share Icon	Checkmark Icon	Refresh Icon
100	youtube.com [eurovision]	127 +	55861	0 +	35727	6	2	0	0
81	Eurovision Song Contest - Belgr...	76 +	6738	0 +	4477	4	21	0	39
72	Media: Organ Grinder guardian...	3 +	1706	108 +	731	6	13	0	16
68	Clomle44's SON Fanfiction	1 +	542	333 +	19	8	0	0	0
63	guardian.co.uk: Comment	6 +	773	139 +	510	6	8	0	0
60	youtube.com [SurpriseTurk]	103 +	16793	0 +	12134	3	0	0	0
59	youtube.com [BBC]	29 +	18408	0 +	14665	6	1	0	0
58	Celebrity gossip juicy celebrity r...	4 +	457	130 +	366	5	11	0	0
54	friendfeed.com [wijoo]	1 +	0	0 +	0	0	69	0	167
53	youtube.com [EurovisionGR]	32 +	38038	0 +	8445	3	1	0	0
52	Eurovision	33 +	N/A	0 +	N/A	4	0	0	0
40	youtube.com [emmanouelk...	4 +	7218	0 +	4586	7	0	0	0

View Posts for **Top 10 Influencers** Only include on topic posts

Fig 10 - Social Media Influencers Ranked According To A Variety of Volumetrics

Using this widget, the user can quickly see which sources appear to be the most popular, or the most well used or connected, and therefore make an assumption that a high ranking equates with high influence. For the marketer, this offers a useful tool to identify potential partners in the social media space, or for a stakeholder relations team to evaluate the potential impact of a news report picked up by a popular commentator.

A particularly useful feature of this widget is the weighting which the user can apply to each of the criteria. So, for example, if one wants to put emphasis on the number of unique commenters, additional weighting

"Using this widget, the user can quickly see which sources appear to be the most popular, or the most well used or connected..."

"A particularly useful feature of this widget is the weighting which the user can apply to each of the criteria."

can be applied to that; if one is not too bothered about the number of inbound links, weighting for that can be reduced. Changing weightings is done on sliding scales in a convenient graphical feature which looks like a graphic equaliser [Fig 11].

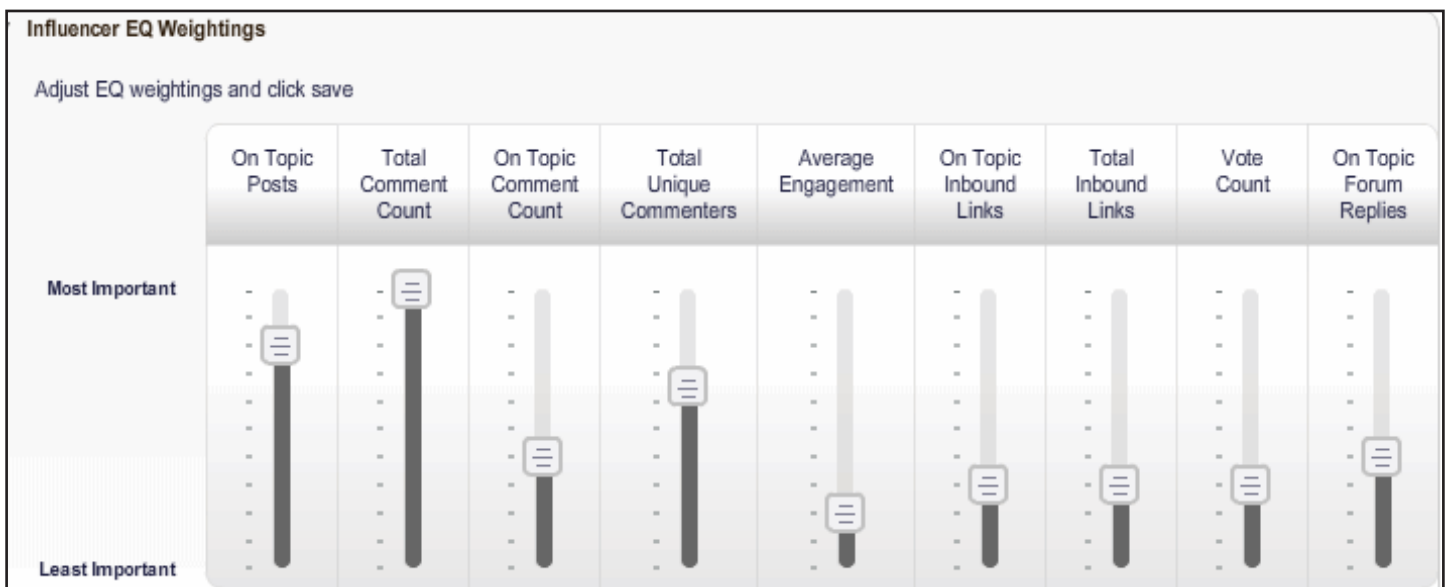


Fig 11 - Changing Weightings

As one might expect by now, by hovering over certain content in the widget, the full text of specific posts and comments can be brought up in a new widget. Also, the user can manually move individual posts up or down the ranking.

Printing, downloading and exporting

At the foot of each widget in the dashboard is an export report button with which the user can choose to export the content of the widget in a variety of logical formats (eg XML, HTML, PDF, CSV – depending on whether it is a graphical or tabular widget) and to destinations such as email or disk.

Because Cision Social Media covers the blogosphere and other social media sites, it is now not unusual to retrieve several thousand hits over even a short period (for example, of topical events). When downloading large

"...the user can choose to export the content of the widget in a variety of logical formats..."

volumes of content (eg blog comments), the system requires numbers greater than 5000 to be downloaded in separate tranches.

In the case of the tabular widgets (eg River of News), the number of items to be exported can be chosen; tabular widget content can also be converted to Adobe Acrobat PDF format using Cision's own converter. The format of exported tabular files (with automatically applied Cision header and footer) is perfect for instant forwarding as a current awareness service to key decision-makers.

"... tabular widget content can also be converted to Adobe Acrobat PDF format using Cision's own converter."

For graphical widgets, downloads to disk are available as Web- or print-quality, rendered as 1:1 or enlarged Microsoft Picture Manager files.

Alerts

As one might expect with a service which searches social media, alerts can be set up from the River of News. With this, the user (and/or designated alternative email addressees) can receive an email alert either at a specified time every day or as soon as new content is detected (at a minimum of 10-minute intervals).

Instant Messenger alerting is also available in the River of News widget, and comprehensive instructions are provided for setting this up.

Timeliness

Searches conducted in Cision Social Media are done in real time. That is, whenever the user wants to see an analysis of social media, or to see the content of, for example, micromedia posts then simply opening a dashboard will refresh the widgets by conducting a search of the relevant social media. This 'on-the-fly' feature means that analyses can be constantly updated. However, it also means that the dashboard is not dynamic in that it has to be manually refreshed.

For widgets reporting on a very short time range (eg current day) charts are resolved in 10-minute intervals. This is likely to be perfectly adequate for most organisations where up-to-the-second reporting of social media activity is not critical.

Help and user support

A link on the Cision Social Media site takes users to the dedicated Cision Social Media Training website. Here, we find a series of online training videos which cover such subjects as setting up and using the River of News or Conversation Cloud. Each one lasts just a few minutes and covers sufficient basic information for a new user to be able to use the system straight away.

Support is also available to subscribing organisations from Cision's own consultants, although this was not investigated for this review.

"... alerts can be set up from the River of News."

"Searches conducted in Cision Social Media are done in real time."

Costs

Costs are negotiated on an individual basis.

Contact details

Cision UK Ltd

Cision House
16-22 Baltic Street West
London, EC1Y 0UL

Tel: 0870 736 0010

(International enquiries +44 20 7251 7220)

Fax: +44 (0) 20 7689 1164

Email: info.uk@cision.com

Website: <http://www.uk.cision.com>

This review of Cision Social Media was conducted in May 2009 using Internet Explorer version 8.0 and a screen resolution of 1024 x 768.

"This 'on-the-fly' feature means that analyses can be constantly updated."

"A link on the Cision Social Media site takes users to the dedicated Cision Social Media Training website."

"Support is also available to subscribing organisations from Cision's own consultants..."



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About the Reviewer

Jonathan Gordon-Till has a wide range of experience in information management, knowledge management and competitive intelligence. He spent the first 17 years of his career as Information and Knowledge Manager at Aon Consulting in the UK, since when he has also worked for several years at a Regional Development Agency as Knowledge Manager.

He founded Oxford Business Intelligence in 2004, offering consultancy services in two areas: competitive intelligence, focusing on the mining sector in Russia and Kazakhstan; and knowledge management, focusing principally on adapting knowledge working behaviours to organisations' social, environmental and cultural contexts.

Jonathan is also co-founder of InfoEthics.org.uk, a consultancy offering advice to librarians, other information professionals and employers on ethical behaviours in managing or using information.

Jonathan is a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals and a member of many kindred bodies. He has a first degree in geology and Russian.

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