



Klout

What Is Klout?

[Klout](#) calls itself the “measurement for your overall online influence,” but what are they really trying to do? To understand Klout’s goal, you have to **understand influence itself and the difficulty in measuring social media ROI**. In the beginning, social media was measured in followers and fans, and for a time, life was good.

But with companies joining social media sites by the tens of thousands, everyone got followed and eventually tricks, software and [spam accounts](#) ran wild. Newcomers were able to create large ‘followings’ and social media service clients couldn’t tell who was legitimate, and who had purchased a great ‘friend adder’ software program.

If we can’t count on raw numbers to tell us who’s popular online, then what can we do? Enter Klout.

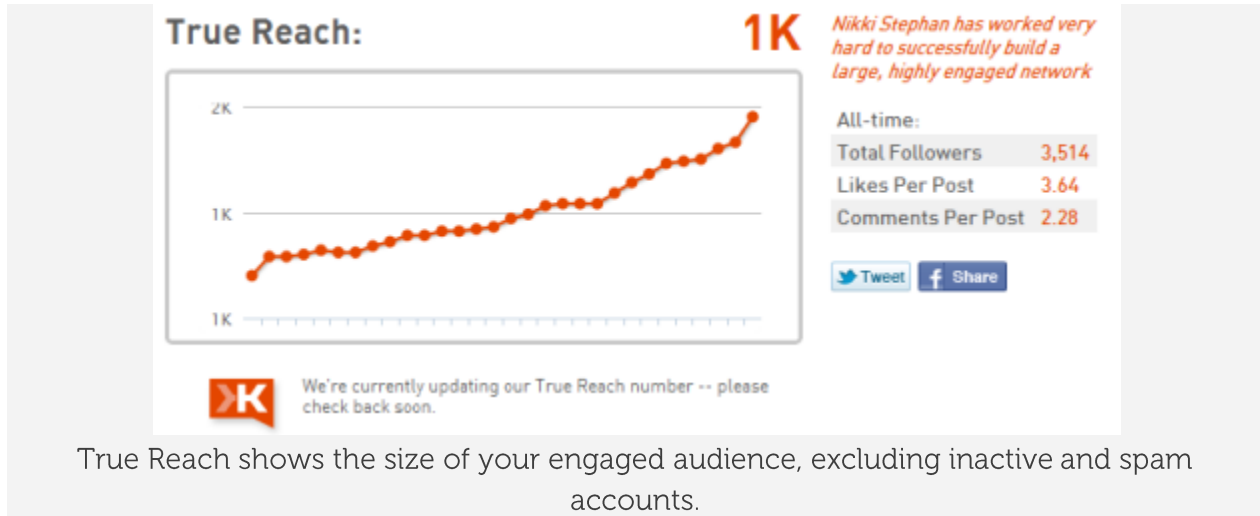


How Does Klout Work?

Klout primarily uses Twitter and Facebook (with plans to integrate LinkedIn) along with over 35 different variables to **determine your real social media reach**. Klout groups your score into three different metrics: True Reach, Amplification Probability and Network Influence.

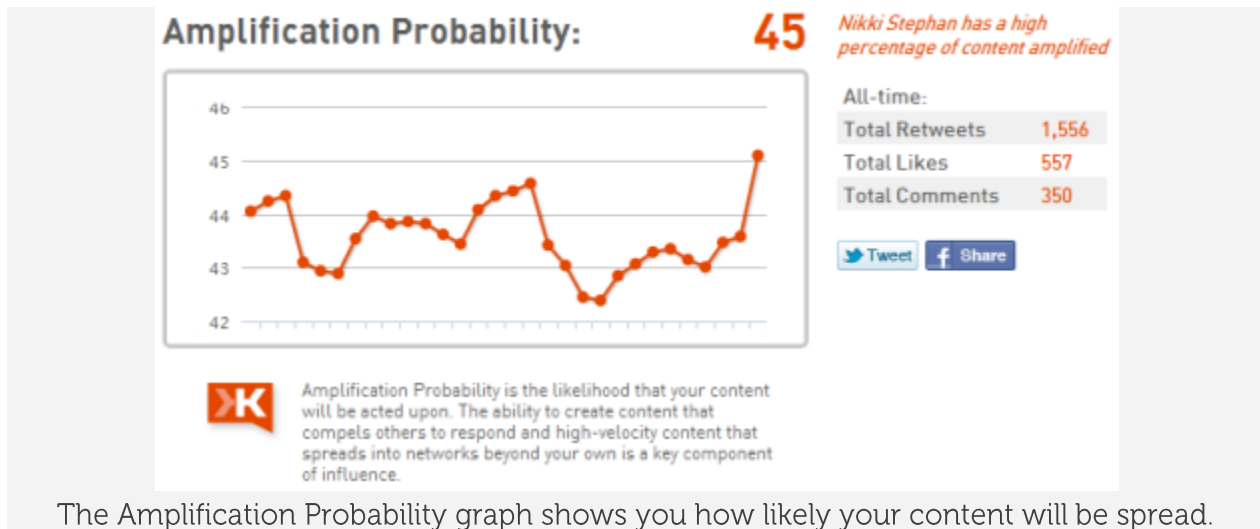
True Reach

True Reach aims to answer the question of whose audience is really engaged, and who just followed a bunch of spam accounts. Klout actually eliminates inactive and spam accounts from their algorithm and looks at how the rest of your audience reacts to content that you share in your Twitter and Facebook feeds. Additional metrics include how many people you’ve followed, and also how many lists you’ve been added to.



Amplification Probability

This metric is affected by what happens to your content after you send it out. Is it ignored? Is it retweeted? Do your messages start conversations, or are you just talking to yourself? In addition to the previous metrics, Klout also measures your outbound vs. inbound message frequency, giving preference to brands that are both in demand, and actively searching out conversations.



Network Influence



The Network Influence score is the online version of “How cool are your friends?” This metric lets you know how influential your engaged audience is, and determines if you’re influencing the ‘cool kids’ on the platform, or if you’re just inside an echo chamber of your own friends, who may not be very important (according to Klout).

This is where Klout gets a bit incestuous. **Klout uses its own Klout score to decide if your network is influential.** Think about this: How did Klout’s algorithm decide the first Klout score if part of the score is decided by others’ Klout scores? Is this a fatal flaw in the system? I’ll let you be the judge.



Network Influence measures the influence of those individuals who follow the original user.

Why Is Klout Important?

Klout is relevant simply because as marketers, we’re asked to measure things. Clients want to know ROI, managers want to know campaign reach, and so on. Klout is the closest thing we have to a *social media credit score*TM

Think about it. If you can’t tell your clients that looking at the number of followers or friends that they have on their profile is the way to know whether their social media strategy is working, then what can you do?

There are several metrics that are important, but there is no proverbial “one number to rule them all.” Klout is working feverishly to **get us close to that one metric that gives a quick snapshot of how we’re doing online.** Marketers will be happy, managers and C-Level executives will rejoice, and Klout will become the Experian of the web. The end...



Final Thoughts

It's tough to judge Klout today, because it's definitely a work in progress, the real question is, [is it effective?](#)

Unfortunately, you have to define the word *effective* for your brand. On one hand, Klout does give you a set of "golden rules" to live by online. **Join the conversation, mingle with important people, make sure that you're sending out valuable information and be there consistently.** Who can argue against that? If you're a brand that's simply engaging with an audience and wants to know if you're in the right ballpark, I don't see Klout's deficiencies as reasons to avoid the metric all together.

If you're a brand that intends to use Klout to reach out to the influencers in a certain niche, then I would have to caution you against Klout. Their algorithm is good, but not great. Just as fast-food restaurants budget in a certain percentage of their inventory as a loss, you should expect that some people will have "slipped through the cracks" and landed on your influencer list by mistake. If that's something that you can live with while Klout perfects their system, then go right ahead. If not, then you may want to wait a while.