

Twitter Best Practices

Instructions: This tip sheet accompanies the Twitter Peer Learning Sessions and Workshop developed by Beth Kanter. You can find more materials in the wiki: <http://socialmedia-strategy.wikispaces.com/Twitter>

Twitter includes two approaches:

- **Engagement:** Tweeting in real time to engage and reach out to your network
- **Timeless Tweets:** Prescheduled tweets that contain your messaging

Part 1: TWEETING FOR ENGAGEMENT IN REAL TIME

It is important not to just talk about your organization or blast out your message. Twitter is a conversational medium. Brainstorm some conversation starters related to each event. Conversation starters are questions. What content should you point to?

	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thur	Fri	Weekend
Retweet Your Followers						
Share a link to news relevant to your field w/question						
Share a link to news relevant to your field w/summary of best point						
Inspirational quote						
Something funny						
Ask questions						
Introduce people in your network						
Answer questions						
Ask an industry expert a question or retweet						
Find an influencer in your network and be nice to them						



Ideas for What To Tweet in Real Time

1. Personal thoughts and reflections that suit your brand - this helps people feel more trust towards you and your brand and strikes up conversations
2. Events (both your own and other events your audience may find interesting) - this makes things interesting and, perhaps, gives you a way to meet your followers
3. Contests ("The first three people who answer this trivia question get....") - they drive more followers and interest in what you tweet
4. Replies (@twittername) - this comes from listening to your followers (you have to follow back to see their tweets). The more personalize the reply, the higher the impact.
5. Thank people for their RTs. If you are lucky to lot of people re-tweeting you, than put all the user names in one Tweet and say thanks, don't do it individuals.
6. Direct replies. This isn't in the public timeline, but it helps build deeper bonds to talk directly to someone like this. This is helpful to answer people when it is a private matter or when you want to show concern
7. Breaking news or announcements - if it is interesting and relevant, tweet it
8. OH's (overheard) - someone say something in the office or when you are out and about that cracks you up? Put OH in front of the Tweet
9. Shout outs - @twittername rocks! Thanks for the great link: <http://insertlink.com> These make people feel great, too.
10. Retweet others tweets.



Tips and Tricks for Engagement

1. Keep Office Minutes – A time that you check in consistently on Twitter to interact with your following.
2. Have conversations with influencers in your topic area. If they reply, it's likely to garner a few followers with similar interests.
3. Have conversations with your peer organizations
4. In addition to following lists and having conversations, actually follow these people. Some will follow back! Per #1, try to engage them in a conversation. See if you like their Twitter feeds. You may want to keep following them regardless of a reciprocating follow back.
5. You don't have to follow everyone who follows you. There are no rules. It is better to follow the few to get to the many.
6. Create your own lists of people you find interesting and will connect with your goals. This compliments the people you enjoy following, and encourages them to follow you back.
7. When you tweet content, make sure it's not all about you and tweet interesting items and valuable information.
8. Introduce your Twitter followers to each other so they can garner more value. This is what called Network Weaving.
9. Participate in hashtag # referenced conversations or start your own conversation using a hashtag (#) for an event. These are usually being tracked by several folks and can lead you to larger followings with people that have similar interests. Monitor key words and phrases and respond appropriately.
10. Craft your tweets so they are 120 characters or shorter, so they can be easily be re-tweeted
11. Don't use the RT button on Twitter, but actually cut and paste and put RT before it. Then, if space allows, put you in your thoughts.



Created by Beth Kanter, Beth's Blog



<http://www.bethkanter.org>

<http://socialmedia-strategy.wikispaces.com/Twitter>

11) Writing Tweets: Omit needless words, one thought per tweet, describe simplify avoid

Wordy:



Better:



Part 2: TWEET PLAN FOR TIMELESS TWEETS

“Timeless Tweets” are those about your organization and can be scheduled in advance. This is only part of your daily Twitter content. Don’t make the mistake of relying solely on the scheduled tweets in the tweet plan to connect with people and expect to build your following. You still need live tweets to engage with people (see next section.) Live tweets help you to connect with people in a way that brings them beyond Twitter and leads them along the path you want to take with them.

Step 1: Choose Your Preferred Audience

Before you begin crafting your tweet plan, give some thought to whom you want to connect with on Twitter. There are many different types of people who could help your organization.

- Your current Twitter presence and how many real-time tweets you usually send each day
- Your audience and what they like. You are going to provide your preferred audience with content they want, so this is more a question of how much time they have for you

The important thing to remember is that your tweet plan only provides a backbone of tweets. It should not become your sole source of tweets on a regular basis.

Many people aim for a total number of about 20 tweets a day including both scheduled tweets and real-time tweets. In this case, a good number of timeless tweets to start with in your tweet plan would be 3 to 5.

Here’s an example. If you have 20 tweets a day on average and only 5 of these 20 tweets are from your tweet plan, you still have 15 tweets to engage with your followers and to respond to current news.

Step 3: Decide How Long You Want to Make Your Tweet Plan

After deciding how many tweets you want to put in your tweet plan each day, you need to decide how many weeks you want to run your tweet plan and schedule tweets in advance. Again, this will depend on certain factors and your audience. The two important considerations:

- How much time you have
- How quickly you can process the feedback you get from your audience to include in your next tweet plan

Step 4: Find the Keywords You Want to Use on Twitter



You use keywords in your tweets to send a consistent signal to tell others who you are, how you want to connect with them and what you want to talk about.

Choice of keywords. When choosing the keywords to use in your tweet plan, remember your preferred audience, the people you most want to connect with on Twitter. You want to use the keywords they use.

Number of keywords. The easiest way to write your tweet plan is to choose the number of keywords to correspond with the number of scheduled tweets you want to publish each day. So if you decide on 5 daily tweets in your tweet plan in Step 1, you should try to come up with 5 keywords.

This means your scheduled tweets will provide your preferred Twitter audience with useful information every day on each of these 5 keywords.

Suggestion: When choosing your keywords, keep Twitter's 140 character limitation in mind. Use short words or word strings. If you want to get your tweets re-tweeted, better to write 120 character tweets.

Step 5: Choose Different Formats for Your Scheduled Tweets

When you sit down to write your tweets for your tweet plan, you will need to write many in one sitting. Here's the math:

5 timeless tweets a day x 7 days a week = 35 tweets a week

So, if you decide to plan 4 weeks of tweets, you will need to write 140 unique tweets.

35 tweets a week x 4-week tweet plan = 140 tweets

This is a large number of tweets. So you want to make the task easy. Using different formats helps you to do this. You will be able to write many timeless tweets on the same keywords when you use different formats.

Another good reason to use different formats when writing your timeless tweets is to add variety. You don't want your Twitter feed to become boring.

Step 6: Write Your Timeless Tweets

You want to write your tweets to provide your preferred audience with the information they are most interested in. Each tweet must be unique content because Twitter does not allow duplicate tweets.

This next step of writing a series of unique tweets is simple if, for each tweet, you:

Keep your preferred audience in mind

Use one of your keywords

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Use one format to write your tweet

If you have chosen to use 7 different formats for your tweets, all you need to do is to write the number of weeks of tweets for each variation of keyword + format. For a 4-week tweet plan you will need something like this:

Tip: Use good Twitter practices when writing your tweets. Remember to include hashtags and limit your tweets to 120 characters to make it easy for others to retweet.

Step 7: Choose Your Times

You don't want to publish all of your scheduled tweets at once. This does not look "natural" in your Twitter feed and you would only reach the audience online at that time. You want to spread your tweets out throughout the day. Ideally you will also be publishing the majority of your tweets in real time. By spreading out your scheduled tweets, they will appear in between the other tweets in your Twitter feed.

Tip: Make note of the hours you use for your different keywords in each tweet plan. This allows you to test the best times for your different keywords the next time you schedule your tweet Plan.

Step 8: Schedule Your Tweets

Now it's time to schedule the publication of your tweets at the times you have chosen.

There are many tools available to do this. Hootsuite, Co-Tweet, Timely, and Bufferapp

Tip: Keep your list of tweets and refer to it along with the feedback you get from interactions with your preferred audience on Twitter to craft your next tweet plan. You'll want to track retweets as a metric for success.

Although a tweet plan is useful when your schedule gets busy, it's not a way to avoid real-time tweeting. The tweet plan's main advantage is to maintain brand awareness consistently and attract the people you want to meet on Twitter.

You must find a balance to make this work for your business. And you can only find this balance by jumping in, listening to your audience and tweaking the content you share on Twitter to get the best results.

More Resources:

<http://socialmedia-strategy.wikispaces.com/Twitter>

