

Twitter Advice For (and From) Content Marketers

Marketing Tips You Can Use to
Boost ROI By Doing Business on
Twitter

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MEQUODA DAILY
Helping Publishers Make Money Online

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Why Twitter Matters to Online Publishers

Preface by Don Nicholas, Managing Partner, Mequoda Group

Can a social networking and micro-blogging service promote your digital publication and be a significant source of new email subscribers?

You might be surprised. We certainly were.

We've been reading about, watching and talking to other online publishers about social media marketing for close to two years now. Until recently, we really didn't know where it fit in the Mequoda System strategy.

What we saw was that when online publishers built their topic forums, or their own social media websites, the results were often disappointing.

Ad-driven online publishers told us they had trouble selling sponsorships on user generated content pages. Few advertisers wanted to sponsor user-generated content, because few forum users clicked on the ads.

User-driven websites didn't seem to know what to do with public forums either. The need for users to register in order to post to the forum was a plus. But most of the forum software programs were crude and not tied into an email subscription program or database. So a user could be a forum user without becoming an email newsletter subscriber.

For a long time, forum signups and so-called social networking didn't amount to much in terms of website visitors who could be monetized.

Eventually a few publishers learned to integrate the two signup processes, and social forums became significant builders of email circulation. But social media was slow to get traction as a proven online publishing revenue generator.

Now imagine our surprise when looking at the Google Analytics results for January of 2009, we discovered that Twitter had become the seventh largest contributor of inbound traffic for Mequoda Daily. By February, Twitter had become the second largest source of Mequoda's incoming traffic.

Over the next 30 days, Twitter generated 480 arrivals, with an average of 2.2 page views per visit. Sixty-eight of those visitors were new to Mequoda Daily, and 29 percent stuck around to read something.

But that's not the end of it. Many Twitter members use Twitter applications (like TweetDeck and Twhirl) to interact on the social network. Inbound traffic that comes from any links clicked on in a Twitter app is categorized as "direct traffic" in Google Analytics.

According to bit.ly, (the tool we use to track our links on Twitter) we had 903 additional visits from Twitter apps alone. That's a total of 1,383 visits in those 30 days from content we post on Twitter.

Overall, Mequoda Daily, the blog, has a 68 percent bounce rate, which is about average for a Mequoda System website. (While at first blush, a 68 percent bounce rate may seem high, the more search traffic a site receives, the higher its bounce rate. Mequoda.com receives at least half of its incoming traffic from organic search — nearly 40 percent from Google.)

Websites with low bounce rates have a high percentage of repeat visitors; nearly everyone who shows up already knows them.

The Mequoda traffic from Twitter bounces at a slightly higher rate — 70 percent. So does traffic from Google (71.6 percent bounces). Both send visitors to Mequoda who don't necessarily know who we are. Mequoda's overall bounce rate across all sources is 68 percent.

Mequoda Daily's editor saw the potential of social networks long before the boss did

At first, I was not convinced that Twitter was worthwhile as a social media strategy.

But what Amanda MacArthur, Mequoda Daily's Editor & Publisher, has demonstrated to me is that the troika of Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook should be part of Mequoda's social media strategy.

Mequoda now has almost 3,000 followers who subscribe to the Mequoda Twitter feed. If you're not familiar with Twitter and want to see how Amanda is using it to integrate with the Mequoda Daily blog, check out <http://twitter.com/mequoda>.

Who else is following Mequoda on Twitter?

A cursory examination reveals that most of our followers, regardless of age, are other journalists and publishers. Many are other authorities who blog about online publishing. Some are experts that are revered as minor celebrities. And as such, they are opinion group leaders.

So, even if not a single one of the Mequoda Twitter followers ever buys one of our paid products, we are delighted to have them as subscribers because they influence and help shape the opinions of other Mequoda Daily subscribers.

Such is the value of social networking.

8 Lessons Learned from Being a Publisher on Twitter

8 Big Twitter Mistakes We Made and 8 Ways We Fixed Them

When we first opened our official Mequoda Twitter account in May of 2008, the results were a little dismal and discouraging. For about five months, we accumulated very few followers and hit a plateau around 100.

However, from being part of the “Twittersphere” we’ve learned many lessons that we thought might help any publisher looking to be successful on Twitter.

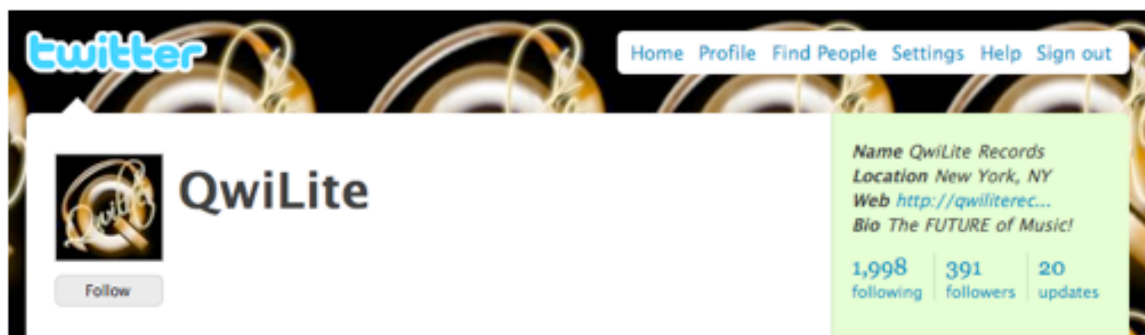
Below are the mistakes we made, and how we fixed them:

1. We used Search.Twitter.com to follow every publisher on the planet.

Why this doesn’t work: When someone looks at your profile before following you, one of the first things they’ll notice is the ratio between the people you’re following and the people who are following you. If you’re following 858 people and have 6 followers, that’s an immediate turn-off. Twitter folk won’t follow you.

How we fixed it: To fix the initial mistake, we un-followed everyone who wasn’t following us in order to even out the ratio. Now, we make sure that when we do add people it’s in very small increments of 5 or 10. If they don’t follow us back, we un-follow them. It sounds petty, but Twitter is a give and take relationship. Unless that Twitter user really is delivering content that you want to hear, no need to keep following. To maintain the ratio, we now use the free TweetLater service to un-follow anyone who has un-followed us.

What it looks like:

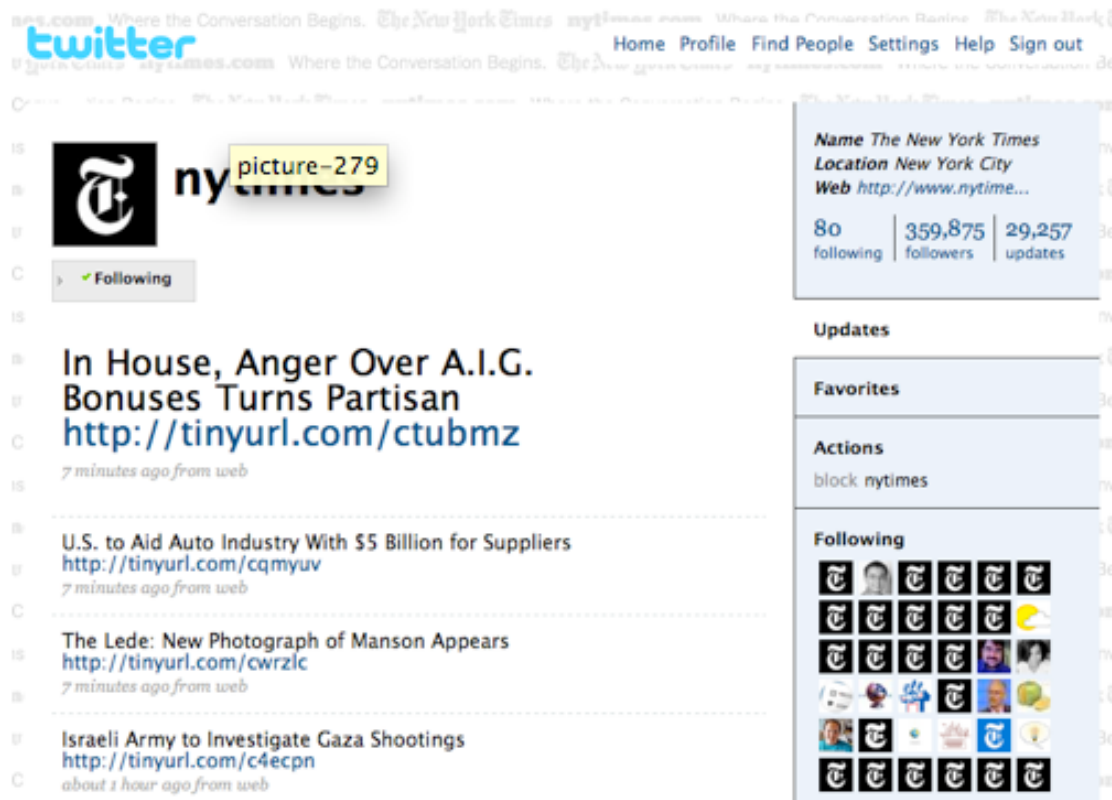


2. We used Twitter as a glorified RSS feed.

Why this doesn't work: Big publishers like The New York Times can afford to do this because they're such a huge brand. Small publishers apparently can't afford to do this. Why? Because then you're only appealing to the audience you already have. If only 5% of your audience is on Twitter, you're not going to grow and you're not going to develop a new audience.

How we fixed it: We stopped using the tool that automatically twittered links to our posts when they were published online. Now when we post a blog, we make it more conversational, for example "Why publishing is awesome – <http://www.link.com/story.html> (do you think publishing is awesome)?" In other words, we try to engage with our readers.

What it SHOULDN'T look like (unless you're the NYT, I suppose):



3. We branded the Twitter feed 100% Mequoda Daily.

Why this doesn't work: Again, this sort of behavior won't grow your audience. "Mequoda Daily" sounds like a publication. Telling readers up front that your only

purpose is to promote yourself isn't a good first impression. Twitter folks want to hear from a person, it's not meant for a one-way conversation.

How we fixed it: There's no doubt that you need to keep your brand intact, so we didn't strip everything away. Instead, we turned our avatar into a big "M" for Mequoda, a little mysterious, not so in-your-face and changed our username to simply "Mequoda". We also let readers know exactly who the person was behind the account. That's Amanda. So when you look at our Twitter profile, you'll see that it doesn't say "Mequoda", it says "Amanda MacArthur, Editor & Publisher of Mequoda Daily".

What OURS looks like:

The screenshot shows a Twitter profile for 'mequoda'. The profile picture is a blue square with a white 'M'. The name is 'mequoda'. The bio reads: 'Amanda MacArthur, Editor & Publisher of Mequoda Daily - Maintaining the Best Practices in Online Publishing and Marketing.' The profile shows 2,943 following and 2,979 followers. There are 859 tweets. The main content area shows a tweet from @joe_kl: 'Thanks, we use WhatCounts as our ESP :)'. Below this are several promotional tweets from Seesmic, including one about Twitter being the most linked to social media outlet in email marketing campaigns, another about Mashable's Twitter Guide Book, and a third about a report for #freereportfriday. The bottom of the profile shows an RSS feed link for 'mequoda's tweets'.

4. We didn't make friends before we started marketing.

Why this doesn't work: Who actually likes going to the mall and walking by the cell phone kiosks? You know the ones. You don't know these people, but here they are, shouting at you from across the mall, trying to make a sale.

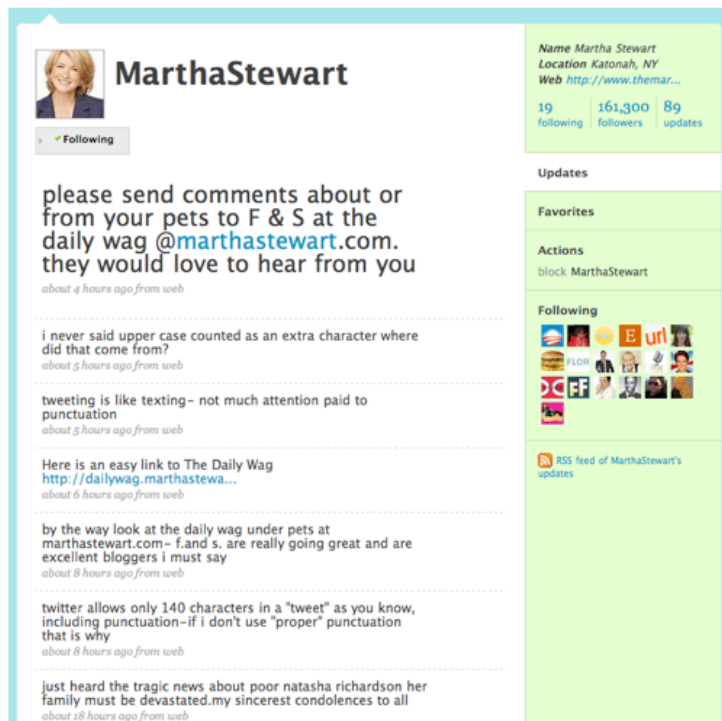
How we fixed it: For a short while, we just stopped linking to anything of ours other than blogs. I started promoting helpful tips from other sites, responding to other people's tweets, and began to get involved as a person, not as a marketer. You might consider this a waste of time, but you should consider it building your reputation.

5. We didn't make much conversation.

Why this doesn't work: Twitter is a social network. People on social networks, especially ones with a large B2B crowd, know that you're a marketer. They just don't expect to be marketed to all the time. When someone decides to follow you on Twitter, the first thing they'll examine is your profile. If every Tweet you send is a self-promotion, you will not build an audience.

How we fixed it: The funny thing about Twitter is that you actually have to work at being a marketer, when being a human being is so much easier. Nowadays, we try to follow a rule of 80% conversation, 20% marketing. You may need to adjust that number depending how often you tweet. If you're unsure, just look at your profile page and ask yourself, "would I follow this person?" To fill in the gaps, sometimes our tweets are about what Kim and I are eating for lunch, or which book Olive our office dog found and is currently eating.

What it SHOULD look like:



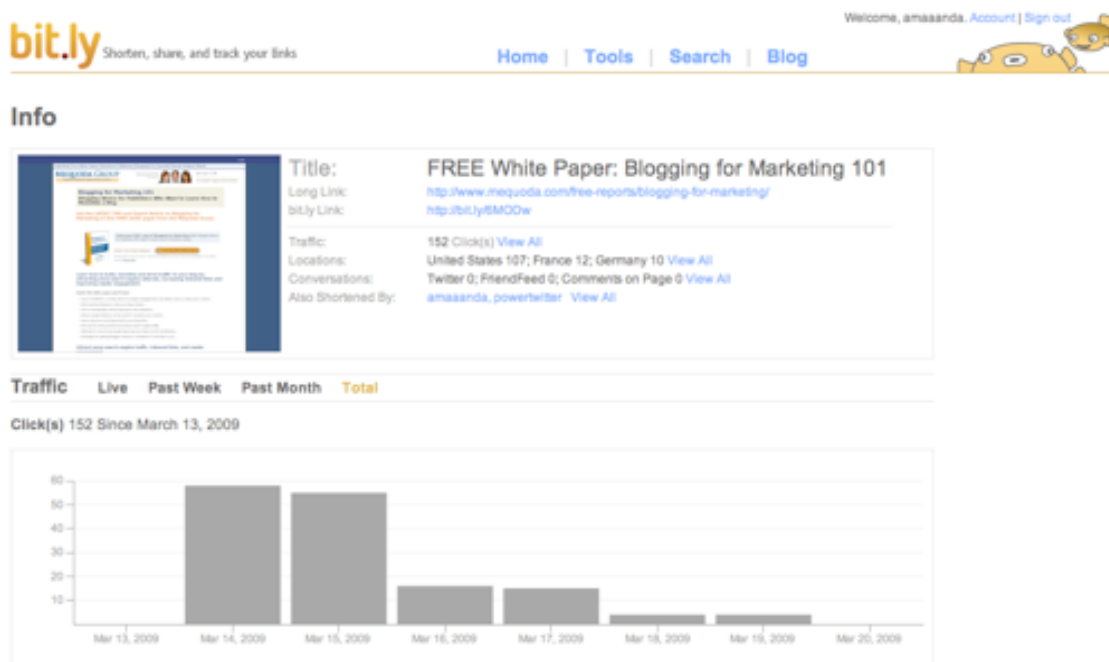
The image shows a screenshot of Martha Stewart's Twitter profile. The profile header includes her name, location (Katonah, NY), and website. It shows she is followed by 19 people, has 161,300 followers, and has made 89 updates. The main content area displays several tweets, including one asking for comments about pets, another discussing punctuation, one providing a link to 'The Daily Wag', and others about bloggers and a tragic news item. On the right side, there are sections for 'Updates', 'Favorites', 'Actions' (with a 'block MarthaStewart' option), 'Following' (with a grid of user avatars), and an 'RSS feed of MarthaStewart's updates'.

6. We didn't track anything.

Why this doesn't work: It's hard to convince your boss that spending an hour or two a week on Twitter is good for the company until you have some numbers.

How we fixed it: Once we found in Google Analytics that Twitter was our third biggest traffic-driver, we could finally gloat a little. Upon further investigation, it turned out that our traffic from Twitter wasn't even the whole story. We started using bit.ly to track the links we was putting out there, and as it turns out, we were actually getting triple and quadruple the traffic we originally thought. Why? Google Analytics doesn't voluntarily track traffic from Twitter clients and applications, and most active Twitter users use a desktop or mobile app to manage Twitter.

What you WANT to see:



7. We didn't talk about anything newsworthy.

Why this doesn't work: Evergreen content is great, but news is easy to spread, especially when it's original content.

How we fixed it: The most glorious day in our Twitter life was the day that Don wrote this blog: Lesson from the Obama Campaign: Email Marketing Rocks!. Around 5am the next day, the BarackObama Twitter account followed us. Then came a tidal wave of around 200 new followers throughout the day and the next

day. If we'd been tracking links back then, we'd have some idea of where the traffic came from, but to this day we have no idea except that it had something to do with a pass along on Twitter, not our blog.

8. We kept our Twitter account from our readers.

Why this doesn't work: Sometimes when you try out new media, you might be embarrassed of "jumping on the bandwagon". Especially when you're starting out and you don't have a big following yet. Well, don't. Your regular readers are your biggest fans, why not invite them to the party? They can serve as a great base to show your new audience that you have people out there who like you.

How we fixed it: Every time we talk about Twitter, we link to our Twitter account. In our daily newsletter, there is now a link to follow us on Twitter, and also in some of our email signatures. Don't be afraid to send a direct email inviting readers to follow you. We recently got an email from Mark Ragan (Ragan.com), explicitly soliciting followers... plus a little bump for their upcoming conference.

What Mark Ragan did:

From: Mark@Ragan.com
Subject: **Would you follow me? I'll follow you? No, I'm not a stalker.....**
Date: March 5, 2009 3:11:57 PM EST
To: Amanda MacArthur
Reply-To: Mark@Ragan.com

Dear Amanda,

Are you on Twitter by any chance?

I am writing to ask if you'd follow me. I know: it sounds a bit cultish. But hey, I gotta walk the talk, don't I?

I promise not to pester you with boring tweets.

This link (<http://twitter.com/mark347>) will take you to my page. Just hit "follow" under my picture.

I hope all is well with you,

Mark

P.S. Are you coming to our Corporate Communicators Conference in Chicago this May?
Is anyone else from Mequoda Group?

P.P.S. As always, I'm looking for story ideas for Ragan.com. Let me know if you guys have made any breakthroughs in your comms department, OK? Just hit "reply" to this message to get by the usual gatekeepers.

[Remove yourself from this mailing list.](#)

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This isn't meant to be a sneaky plan of attack on how to con Twitter folk into following you.

People are going to follow you on Twitter if you're contributing to the conversation in a way that's valuable to them. That's all you have to do.

Measuring Twitter in Your Business with Twitter Metrics and Tools

How to tell if Twitter really does drive traffic, and if it does, how so?

If you dug a little into the Google Analytics of our site, you'd see that Twitter is our #3 source of incoming traffic next to Google and direct links (email).

Whether you consider Twitter a customer service or marketing tool, we've used it to build relationships with our current readers, introduce ourselves to new readers, conduct surveys, promote our products, and even solicit positive comments on our blogs when someone leaves a negative one.

Big sites with big traffic are great places to drive traffic to your own site, whether it's on Twitter, in blog comments, with a Facebook fan page, or whatever is appropriate for your niche.

Twitter happens to be a great place for those in the B2B market, and it's proven to be very successful for us.

The trouble with driving traffic from external sources is that you don't always know (other than through website analytics), how these portals are working for you. Google Analytics can tell us that Twitter drives a big percentage of our traffic, but how do we know which links and conversations are driving traffic?

This is where **bit.ly** (<http://bit.ly>) comes in. Bit.ly is a neat little tool you can use on micro-blogging networks (like Twitter) to track who is clicking on your links.

There are other tools, such as HootSuite, TwitClicks and TweetBurner, but we still prefer bit.ly due to its simplicity and ability to be used across many sites, not just Twitter. Other popular link shorteners include **Tr.im** (<http://tr.im>) and **Su.pr** (<http://su.pr>), which have similar features.

You would NOT want to use bit.ly, however, when posting comments on blogs. This is because bit.ly changes the structure of your URL, and many analytics packages won't pick it up as an inbound link to your blog.

Inbound links from Twitter (and many other social networks) however, are set to no-follow anyway (as requested by Google).

If you're wondering whether a site uses no-follow tags, check for the "rel=nofollow" qualifier. If they are, use bit.ly and track, track, track away.

Twitter Metrics – What to Measure

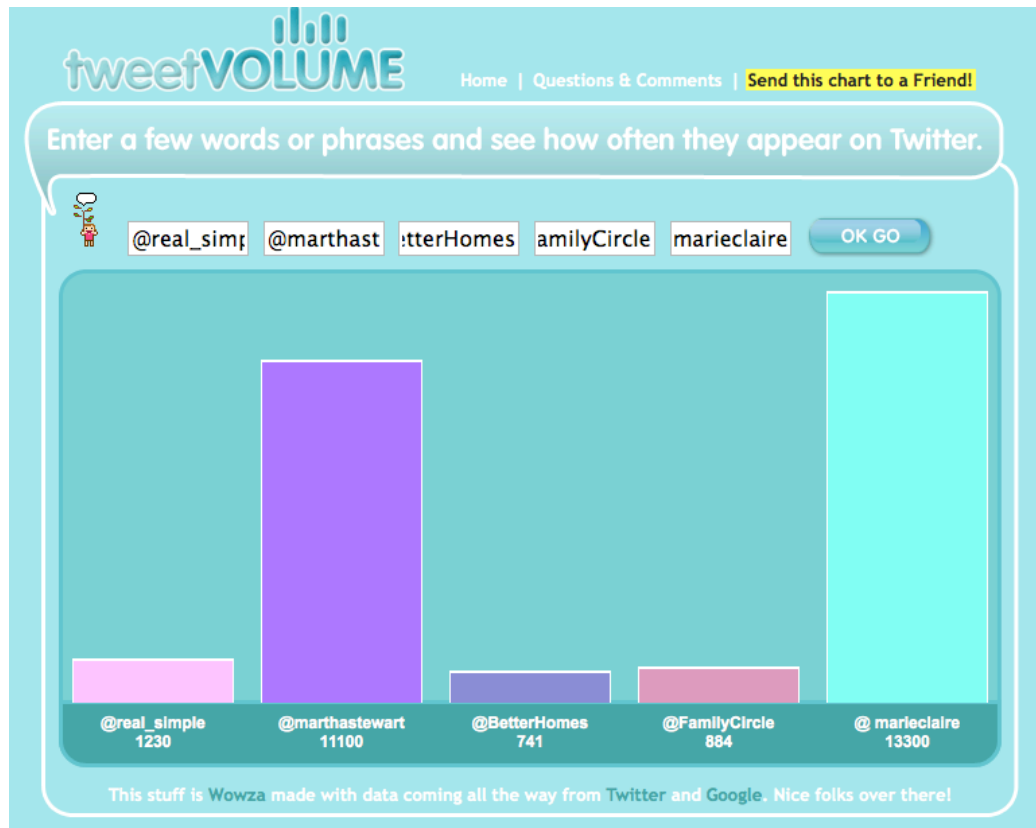
With bit.ly you can measure how many people click on your links, where they're from, when they clicked on them, whether others re-tweeted your message, and some pretty interesting statistics about the page you're linking to.

You should also pay attention to the types of "tweets" that get clicked on. By watching how your followers respond (or don't respond), you can plan future messages accordingly.

Another tool we find helpful is **UseQwitter.com**. With their daily email digest, you can find out who has stopped following you on Twitter, and the last tweet they saw before they made their decision. Use your un-follow metric to determine what type of content users respond to (and don't respond do).

On occasion, you might also want to check out TweetVolume and Twitter-Friends.

TweetVolume.com is the Compete.com of Twitter. You can use it to track the success of your competitors on Twitter by comparing how many times you're all mentioned on Twitter. Then you can use the stats from the above tools to increase your volume.



Twitter-Friends.com gives you 19 metrics about your own usage such as Twitter Rank, Loyalty (Stickiness), Conversational Rank and other interesting metrics. It comes with all kinds of pretty graphics for those “convince the boss that Twitter is useful” presentations.

M TwitterFriends

@From
@To
Conversations
Statistics
Visualization
Net
Top
Inactive
Online
Map

People mequoda replied to

shelbykraus	
dreamofitaly	
olivethedog	
tradingnothing	
garymccaffrey	
robksawyer	
mashable	

Refresh

People who replied to mequoda

michelle2colby	
shirleybrady	
felicedunas	
cerosdotcom	
dreamofitaly	
bdresher	
philmonk09	

Refresh

mequoda by numbers (5 Aug 2009)

	M mequoda	o_o Average
Size of relevant net (outgoing)	7	
Size of relevant net (incoming)	7	
Fans	26	22
Loyalty ("Stickiness")	26.9%	
Twitter Rank	91271 of 518498	
Ratio of outgoing to incoming contacts	1:1	
Overlap of outgoing and incoming net	14.3%	
Tweets sent / day	3.9	6.2
Follow cost in milliscobles	182.3	294
Average Tweet length	98	82
Exact 140 char Tweets	%	3.1%
Replies sent / day	1.4	1.9
Conversation Quotient (CQ)	36.2%	30.7%
Conversational Rank	86276 of 202954	
Replies received / day	1.6	2
Retweet Quotient (RQ)	10.3%	2.9%
Links posted by mequoda / day	1.9	1.1
Link Quotient (LQ)	50%	17.8%
Replies with Links by mequoda's friends / day	1	0.4

mequoda's TwitGraph

Twitter Rank

Network Overlap for mequoda

■ Outgoing
■ Incoming

Calculate stats for another Twitter user

Username:

Twitter Advice For (and From) Content Marketers
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While the above two tools are explicitly for Twitter, we must come back around to bit.ly or any type of link-tracking application as an essential tool for tracking your success anywhere on the web. Don't just engage, measure that engagement!

Mastering Twitter Search and Using it to Build Business

Taking Twitter Search and turning it into your own social media strategy and online reputation-monitoring machine

Possibly one of the greatest features of Twitter is that it's flexible. Any person or company can build upon the service and create their own online application. One of these applications was originally called Summize and was more or less a Twitter search engine. Twitter quickly bought Summize and the service is now simply **Search.Twitter.com**.

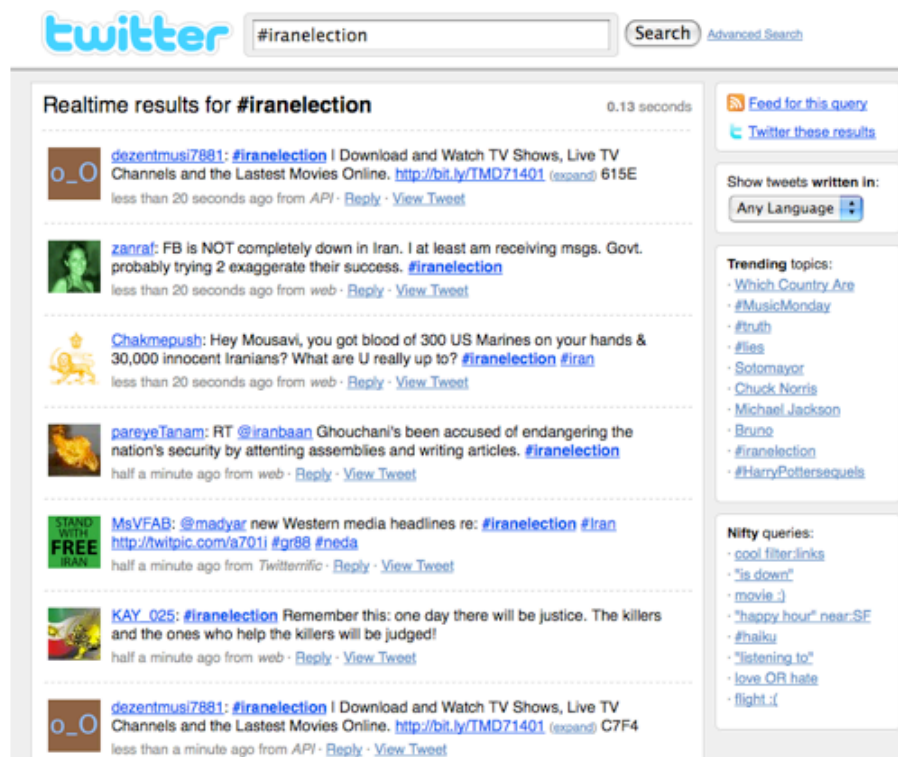
Search.Twitter.com allows anyone (read: even if you're not on Twitter) to search for a topic, brand, person or anything else and see what's being said.

As content publishers, we commonly use tags to define our own content. As a Mequoda best practice, we tag our blogs with keyword phrases so that we get found in Google and each keyword phrase has its own tag page on our site.

In Twitter, tags are referred to as hashtags.

A hashtag is simply a keyword with a # sign in front of it. For example, right now a very popular hashtag is #IranElection.

If you search for #IranElection on Search.Twitter.com, you'll find everyone who has used that hashtag in their tweets.



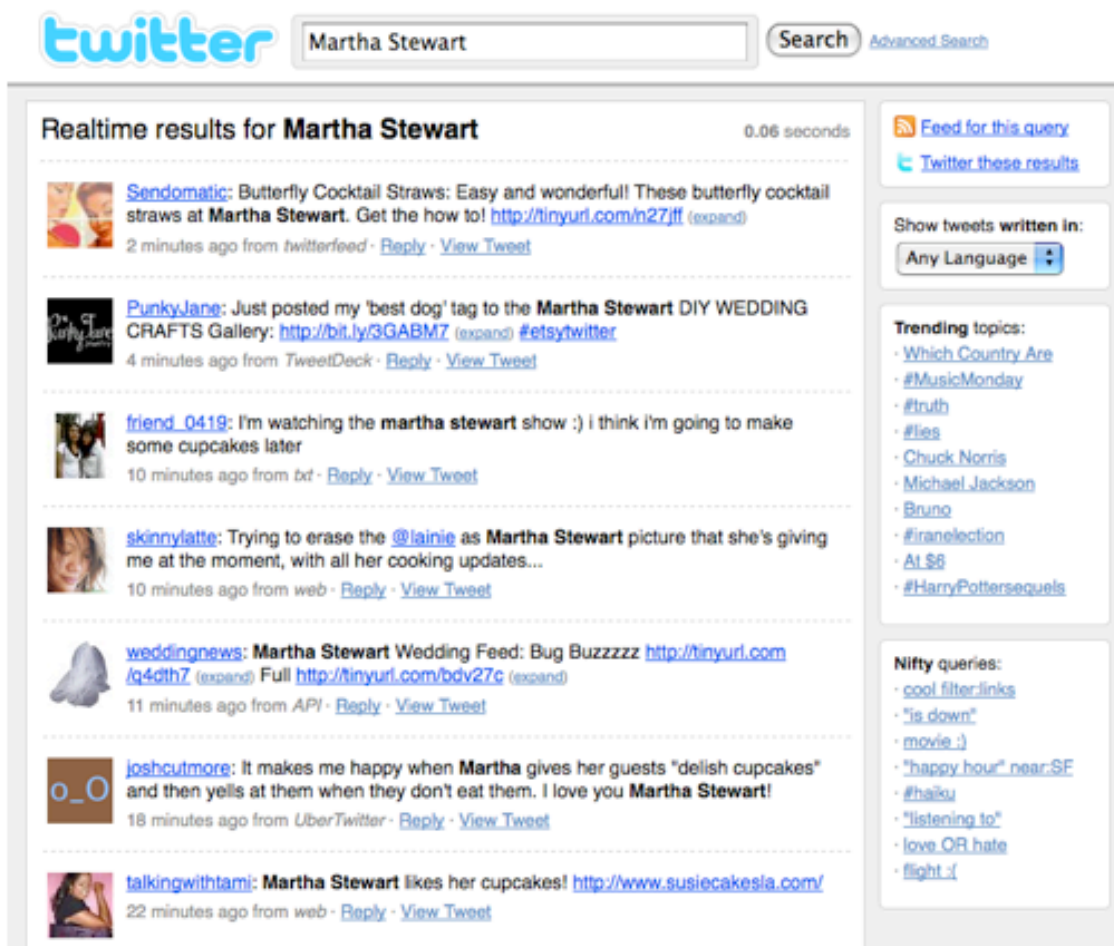
Of course, that's not the only thing that Search.Twitter.com can be used for.

Seven ways to use Search.Twitter.com for business

1. See who's talking about you – The best use of Twitter Search is to monitor your online reputation. Just type in your brand, editors or products to see if anyone has been talking about you.

We find that about 25% of people who link to our articles don't reference us as @Mequoda but instead as just Mequoda. When someone uses @Mequoda in their tweet, Twitter lets us know that someone is talking to/about us. When they don't, we would never know unless we used Twitter Search.

For example, Martha Stewart has a Twitter account, but these people below are chatting away about her without using her very simple @MarthaStewart link.



The image shows a screenshot of the Twitter search interface. At the top, the Twitter logo is on the left, followed by a search bar containing the text "Martha Stewart". To the right of the search bar is a "Search" button and a link to "Advanced Search". Below the search bar, the results are titled "Realtime results for Martha Stewart" with a timestamp of "0.06 seconds". The results list several tweets:

- Sendomatic:** Butterfly Cocktail Straws: Easy and wonderful! These butterfly cocktail straws at Martha Stewart. Get the how to! <http://tinyurl.com/n27jf> (expand) 2 minutes ago from twitterfeed · Reply · View Tweet
- PunkyJane:** Just posted my 'best dog' tag to the Martha Stewart DIY WEDDING CRAFTS Gallery: <http://bit.ly/3GABM7> (expand) #etsytwitter 4 minutes ago from TweetDeck · Reply · View Tweet
- friend_0419:** I'm watching the martha stewart show :) i think i'm going to make some cupcakes later 10 minutes ago from bt · Reply · View Tweet
- skinnylatte:** Trying to erase the @lainie as Martha Stewart picture that she's giving me at the moment, with all her cooking updates... 10 minutes ago from web · Reply · View Tweet
- weddingnews:** Martha Stewart Wedding Feed: Bug Buzzzzz <http://tinyurl.com/q4c9h7> (expand) Full <http://tinyurl.com/bdv27c> (expand) 11 minutes ago from API · Reply · View Tweet
- joshcutmore:** It makes me happy when Martha gives her guests "delish cupcakes" and then yells at them when they don't eat them. I love you Martha Stewart! 18 minutes ago from UberTwitter · Reply · View Tweet
- talkingwithtami:** Martha Stewart likes her cupcakes! <http://www.susiecakesla.com/> 22 minutes ago from web · Reply · View Tweet

On the right side of the search results, there are several utility boxes:

- Feed for this query:** A link to "Twitter these results".
- Show tweets written in:** A dropdown menu currently set to "Any Language".
- Trending topics:** A list of trending topics including "Which Country Are", "#MusicMonday", "#truth", "#lies", "Chuck Norris", "Michael Jackson", "Bruno", "#Iranelection", "At \$6", and "#HarryPottersequels".
- Nifty queries:** A list of suggested queries including "cool filter.links", "is down", "movie :)", "happy hour" near:SF, "#haiku", "listening to", "love OR hate", and "flight :|".

2. Hashtag your events – Assign a hashtag to your event. When the Mequoda Summit comes around, we use #MequodaSummit. This way people can tweet

about the conference and if you want to see what they're saying or quoting, all you need to do is search for the event hashtag.

3. Pay attention to other event hashtags – Say there's a free webinar going on from your competitor on the same topic as your upcoming paid webinar. You attend the free webinar, gather some ideas and take notes. If you're lucky, the webinar has its own hashtag.

When the webinar is over, you can search for the hashtag, or the name of the webinar and see what user comments came from it. If someone says "I wish they'd covered...." you can take notes to remind yourself what you should be covering in your own upcoming webinar. Listening is key.

An example of a hashtag for the PR 2.0 event, happening today with hashtag **#prkanecamp**:

4. Come up with topic ideas – If you’re looking for a blog topic, webinar topic or product topic, try searching for a generic phrase on that topic. Blog titles and questions that people have asked the Twitterverse will come up and you’ll have some new brainstorming ideas.

5. Hire someone – Looking through resumes on Monster.com? Try a search based on job titles, or simply “hire me” at Search.Twitter.com, especially if you’re looking for someone who’s social media saavy. It might be tedious, but it’s worth a shot.



6. Create new contacts – Twitter Search is a great tool for those new to Twitter (and even not so new) when you’re trying to discover new people to follow. Type in topics you write about to discover those who also cover your topics, or consumers who are currently linking to articles like yours.

If you’re a knitting magazine and you follow a devout knitter, they’re much more likely to follow you than say, Joe the Accountant (unless he’s knitter of course).

7. Answer questions - Look through your blog posts for something specific and interesting you’ve written about. Now look for that topic in Twitter Search. Has someone asked about it? Don’t be shy, send along your article to help answer their question.

Note: Only try this last strategy once or twice a day, and only at that frequency if you’re posting at least ten times a day. Stick with a 10-20% self-promotion ratio on this because you do not want to annoy your followers.

Advanced filters used for Twitter Search

If you want to get fancy, there are also Twitter Search codes you can use, which I borrowed from this article at TwiTip: <http://www.twitip.com/7-%E2%80%98secret%E2%80%99-ways-to-use-twitter-search/>

Note: words highlighted in red are the variables.

To see who's talking about you, without including yourself in the results:

usernameA -to:**usernameA** -from:**usernameA** -@**usernameA**

To search tweets only from certain Twitter users:

from:**usernameA** OR from:**usernameB**

To search tweets to and from a certain Twitter user (like a competitor):

from:**usernameA** OR to:**usernameA**

To ignore chitchat and see only what a Twitter user links to:

from:**usernameA** filter:links

To ignore re-tweets and only search for original posts on a topic:

“**keyword**” -rt -via

To search for pictures on a topic or event:

“**event name**” twitpic OR yfrog OR post.ly OR twitgoo OR pikchur filter:links

Even if you're not using Twitter, we'd recommend using Search.Twitter.com to see if anyone has mentioned your brand, positively or negatively. And regardless of whether the feedback is positive or negative, we'd recommend reaching back out to them.

As a side-note, Search.Twitter.com has a memory of about eleven days. So if you're setting a social media dashboard for yourself, make a reminder to check at least once a week.

How Magazine Publishers Are Selling Subscriptions on Twitter

Incorporating a social media strategy into your subscription sales may mean giving more away, but receiving even more in return

Several months ago, I paid five dollars for a subscription to *Paste Magazine*. The thing is, if I wanted to, I could have paid a dollar.

Strange subscription model, right? Actually, *Paste* is just one among the many magazines who are struggling in our industry right now. As a privately owned company, they simply decided not to rely on the economy to get back on track or to wait for new investors.

Instead they decided that they'd be willing to offer subscriptions to anyone who paid them at least a dollar when they launched the Campaign to Save *Paste* [<http://www.pastemagazine.com/paste/letter-to-paste-readers.html>].



How Paste Magazine has turned \$1 into \$25

Over 10,000 people have taken *Paste* up on their offer since the campaign launched in April. I'm sure many of those people have paid a mere dollar, but luckily for *Paste*, even more people decided to pitch in a few extra bucks.

Editor-in-chief Josh Jackson says they've received over \$250,000 from 10,000 donors. It seems that plenty of people took advantage of the promotion to pay

“whatever they want”, but *Paste* is still technically getting \$25 per subscription which is \$13.12 more than they charge for an annual subscription.

The campaign has since dwindled, and *Paste* is no longer offering free subscriptions unless you donate \$350 or more, but the initial buzz was enough for them to be written up in dozens of newspapers, blogs and magazines about their plight.

Back to my original point— See, I probably wouldn’t have subscribed to *Paste* on any other day. Sure I’ve read their blogs and they’re great, but I already get enough magazines and *Paste* just wasn’t on my must-have list. However, through Twitter, I saw a tweet about the promotion that persuaded me to subscribe.

And *Paste* isn’t the only magazine using Twitter to inspire magazine sales and renewed interest. *Inked Magazine* is currently running a contest that asks people to re-tweet their content tweet in order to enter for a free subscription.



Will this immediately boost subscription sales? Probably not, but old readers of the magazine who may have unsubscribed years ago may start following them on Twitter and—assuming they don’t win the contest—possibly subscribe later on.

How can publishers make money when they’re giving everything away?

Well as you know, magazines thrive on ad dollars. The more subscribers you have, the more advertisers you’ll attract. The more you give away, the more people will be inclined to buy. This is easily seen with the example of *Paste*. They asked for a dollar, they got twenty-five dollars. Not too shabby.

Chris Anderson, author of bestselling *The Long Tail* has a new book called *Free: The Future of a Radical Price*.

He writes, “People are making lots of money charging nothing. Not nothing for everything, but nothing for enough that we have essentially created an economy as big as a good-sized country around the concept of \$0.00”.

For example, you can get the digital version of his book for free online. If you want a hard copy, you’ll be paying \$26.99.

[http://www.audible.com/adbl/site/products/ProductDetail.jsp?BV_SessionID=@@@@1920820986.1248711948@@@@&BV_EngineID=cccgadehliefijecefecekjdffidffg.0&productID=BK_AVEN_000001]

Anderson writes on his Twitter account:



This whole free “phenomenon” (which we’ve been telling you about about for years now, by the way), isn’t limited to publishers either. Nine Inch Nails front man Trent Reznor was recently quoted as saying, “Give your record away... Word of mouth is the only true marketing that matters.”

From our experience, the fastest way to “spread the word” is through Twitter. You publish 140 characters and suddenly it’s spreading from your follower list and re-tweeted into other people’s lists, and soon all of Twitter knows about you and your promotion. The more creative (and the more free), the quicker words will spread.

Using Twitter to Sell Your Books and eBooks

Using the 140 character strategy to create buzz around your books and ebooks

Both publishers and authors alike are using Twitter to sell their books online. From contests, to quotes, to reviews, we've seen people doing some creative things to get their books talked about on the web.

Here are five examples from five creative authors and publishers:

1. Offer signed copies and try to make it viral

Most recently, Hugh MacLeod of GapingVoid.com launched a social media campaign to sell his new book "Ignore Everybody: and 39 Other Keys to Creativity".

What started out as a blog series, that turned into a PDF (downloaded over 1M times), soon turned into a 176 page printed book sold online and in bookstores.

A big strategy for MacLeod is to offer "free signed copies" of his book to the first 500 people to order the book online and send him their receipt. It's a free extra copy, but yes you have to buy it first.

Recently, this was his tweet of choice:



2. Respond to people who talk about your book

In fact, consider them testimonials and re-tweet them. **@WarrenWhitlock**, popular author of Twitter books, often re-tweets nice things said about anything he's done, including his blogs and books. **@Tim_Ash** and **@JoelComm** are other examples of this.

Here is an example:



There's a whole lot going on in the above tweet. If you need a transcription for it, here it is:

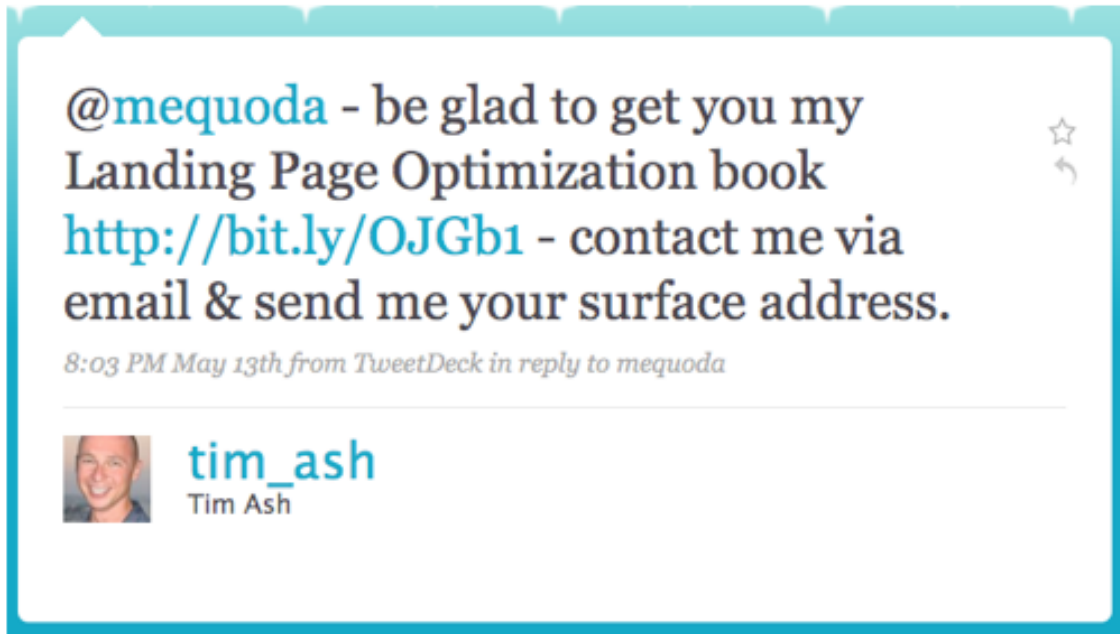
- RT = Re-tweet - Warren is copying and pasting what someone has said about him into his own feed
- #FollowFriday = A "hashtag" for "Follow Friday", which is twitter tradition for tweeps to recommend other tweeps
- thanks = his response to her tweet

3. Offer a copy of your book to bloggers on Twitter who are in your niche

All it takes is a simple search for the title of your book on Search.Twitter.com to see if anyone is talking about your niche.

Tim Ash (aka **@tim_ash**), author of *Landing Page Optimization: The Definitive Guide to Testing and Tuning for Conversions* is a great example of someone who

contacted us when we tweeted that we were looking for Landing Page books to review in a new series, and sent it to us for review on our blog.



4. Quote yourself

It might seem tacky, but all a tweet is, is a quote from you, right? John Kremer (aka **@JohnKremer**), author of 1001 Ways to Market Your Books frequently quotes himself (and others).



As a tip, we'd recommend making it a quote from the book, and then linking to the book itself.

5. Give away a free chapter

@DHampson is a marketer at PeachPit Press, who just today sent out a tweet about a free chapter for one of their books (by **@NoeFresh**). Then, all of his PeachPit friends re-tweeted the message to all of their followers.



peachpittv: RT [@DHampson](#) **FREE chapter from upcoming RED camera book** by [@NoeFresh](#) <http://tinyurl.com/pakvqk> (expand) - just go to 'Sample Content' and download!

16 minutes ago from web · [Reply](#) · [View Tweet](#)



Peachpit: RT [@DHampson](#) **FREE chapter from upcoming RED camera book** by [@NoeFresh](#) <http://tinyurl.com/pakvqk> (expand) - just go to 'Sample Content' and download!

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andreaLG: RT [@DHampson](#): **FREE chapter from upcoming RED camera book** by [@NoeFresh](#) <http://tinyurl.com/pakvqk> (expand) - just go to 'Sample Content' and download!

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about 1 hour ago from *TweetDeck* · [Reply](#) · [View Tweet](#)



DHampson: **FREE chapter from upcoming RED camera book** by [@NoeFresh](#) <http://tinyurl.com/pakvqk> (expand) - just go to 'Sample Content' and download!

about 1 hour ago from web · [Reply](#) · [View Tweet](#)

The Conclusion on Twitter

Traditional publishers are distributing their content and brand via Twitter with both a hands-off RSS approach and a hands-on personal approach

As part of their social media strategy, news and magazine publishers are already using the wildly popular site Twitter to distribute their content online.

Twitter is a no-brainer for any publisher who is trying to step up their game on the Internet. As a hands-off approach, you can link your RSS feed to your Twitter feed and be instantly connected to anyone on Twitter that chooses to follow you.

For a more hands-on approach (which we recommend), you should be injecting personality, external links and conversation into your feed.

We recently started talking to the co-author of the upcoming *Twitter Handbook*, Warren Whitlock. After a few exchanged emails, Amanda asked him how he thought traditional publishers should be using Twitter.

“I’m currently co-authoring a book on Twitter (TwitterHandbook.com) with a colleague I met on MySpace and introduced to Twitter. The open collaboration has now involved hundreds of people and we have had offers other publishing deals based on the buzz we are creating.

Twitter is a fantastic tool for connecting with the media people that are using it. I’ve done several interviews based on connections made on Twitter. In one promotional experiment, I offered a few copies of a new book. In minutes, we had people talking about the subject of the book, and telling their followers about the promotion.”

Whitlock feels, however that it’s important to engage your community. He told us “The best use of Twitter is when I listen. I open the feed of people I’m following and get news fast, a feel for what is important in other parts of the nation and world and see new opportunities. I read with an eye towards helping my friends. When I see a question, I answer.

When there is an interesting blog link, I go read and comment, adding as much value as I can in a couple of minutes to build relationships with others. When I engage in the community, listen to them and respond, I find that a simple link to my blog entry, or question about a project gets immediate response from real friends. In the past few months, I’ve gained hundreds of friends. Met up with some at live events, talked to many by phone, and done business with a few.”

David Berlind from ZDNet, in an article he wrote on the “Twitterization of mainstream media“ said, “Publishing one-liners takes only as long as it takes to type the one-liner. Subscribing to a source of one-liners the way an investor might subscribe to Bloomberg’s information services takes only seconds as well. Whereas Bloomberg puts a sophisticated system in the hands of an exclusive group of people on a private network, Twitter makes such a system available to everyone on the Web.”

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