

Twitter Tutorial on Maximizing Website Traffic

Twitter Basics that Will Help You
Better Use and Understand the
Popular Social Media Platform

Don Nicholas
Amanda MacArthur
Chris Sturk

Mequoda Team

Don Nicholas
Managing Partner

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Senior Partner

Aimee Graeber
Senior Partner

Laura Pittman
Senior Partner

Amanda MacArthur
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Mequoda Group, LLC
Customer Service
(866) 713-1005
530 Wood Street Unit B
Bristol, RI 02809

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An Introduction To Twitter

This social tool redefined RSS by turning it into an interactive and community-based experience

Twitter would call themselves a “service for friends, family, and co-workers to communicate and stay connected through the exchange of quick, frequent answers to one simple question: What are you doing?”

For publishers, it could be considered more of an interactive RSS feed.

For most users, this is how Twitter works:

After entering the site, you type into the box what you’re doing in 140 characters or less. Below the box, you have an RSS feed of all of your Twitter friends. Every time they send a "tweet" (aka: an update on Twitter) you get an update.

Sounds simple right? You might ask yourself why anyone wants to be “on” 24 hours a day and share with the world what they are doing at every moment. But this site is HUGE and the target audience includes anyone that enjoys social media.

Additionally, Twitter acts like something as a chat room for people who choose to use it that way. People can choose to respond to "tweets" by typing an @ symbol before their friends' username. If you were writing to us on Twitter you would say: **@mequoda - your articles are the best**. Well we hope you'd say something like that. Twitter users use this feature often and it would be helpful to have someone on your staff, if you're using Twitter, be the voice of your Twitter account if you intend to use it as a community tool in addition to a distribution tool.

How is Twitter Helpful to Publishers?

When we attended the Web 2.0 Expo in 2007, Twitter was everywhere. Last minute session updates, feedback on sessions, quotes by speakers, and meeting places were all being fed into Twitter by both attendees and event organizers. At the 2008 PodCamp NYC, the story was still the same: notes and quotes being thrown up from each session, updates from speakers, links to conference coverage and more was being updated by the second. You couldn't bump into one person who did not have a Twitter account.

With such a large user base, why aren't we all tapping into the network? Some of the biggest news publishers such as *The New York Times* has a New York Times Twitter account that is just an RSS feed of their website. The account current has 2,373,847 followers. When they update, Twitter updates with the article title and a [tinyurl](#) link back to the article on nytimes.com. Imagine if you had 2,373,847 followers that might click back to your site at least once or twice a day... Sounds like an effortless yet productive concept, no?

A 'Did You Know?' About Twitter

Statistics on who's participating in Twitter conversations

According to Twitter's homepage, you can use the popular network to "share and discover what's happening right now, anywhere in the world."

But who is really making up the 25 million unique users Twitter has? I'm sure this question has passed through the minds, or the mouths, of anyone using the platform to market for their job or update followers on new content.

According to a recent study from the [Pew Research Center](http://www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2010/Social-Media-and-Young-Adults.aspx?r=1), [http://www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2010/Social-Media-and-Young-Adults.aspx?r=1] young adults between the ages of 18 and 29 use Twitter the most. A third of online members of this age group actively create posts or read status updates.

If your target market involves 18-29 year olds then you are in luck. Regardless of whether or not you're directly marketing through Twitter, you can be creating relationships with this target audience.

Twitter is not for teens

It's not necessarily that the networking platform isn't for teens, but teens don't seem to be incredibly interested in it. Only 8% of online American teens ages 12-17 are using Twitter.

In a time when social media is all the rage, and when the younger generations are typically all over the popular components in technology, why is Twitter not something they bother with?

Two theories come to mind. First, Twitter only allows for 140 characters. Messages have to be kept short (on a side note, this often creates a mental workout for copywriters using the platform for promotion). Second, Twitter isn't the most "social" piece of social media out there. You can't directly invite friends or share content like pictures or videos as easily as you can with a network like Facebook.

What Twitter's for

Now that we know some of the demographics behind the audiences that are actually using Twitter, it's important to discuss what it's actually being used for.

When first exposed to Twitter I felt it was a great idea if utilized correctly. I

looked at it as a global think-tank, a way for progressive minds to work together on subjects that they were passionate about. Furthermore, I saw it as a very direct news source for niche topics. By using it a person can be easily informed by matters that would interest them through a brief Tweet.

Not to say that this type of usage isn't present, but it isn't one of the main uses for Twitter. In fact, according to a [study](http://www.pearanalytics.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/08/Twitter-Study-August-2009.pdf) [http://www.pearanalytics.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/08/Twitter-Study-August-2009.pdf] conducted in August of 2009 by Pear Analytics, "News" related usage was the least popular while "Pointless Babble" was noted to be the most common use of Twitter.

To properly define "Pointless Babble" for you, pretend that you were checking your recent Tweets and one said, "Drinking OJ from a paper cup." That, my fellow readers, is pointless babble to the max. It holds no significant information and it doesn't contribute anything but egocentric drivel to the internet space.

To be fair, the second highest usage category was named "Conversational." This incorporates back and forth Tweets between users. These Tweets may be extremely intelligent and thought-provoking messages comprised of 140 characters. Or they may not. I can't say for sure, but the possibility and potential is definitely there.

Becoming more familiar with the audiences on Twitter may help you reach your target market easier. It may also tell you which markets to avoid.

Learn How To Make Twitter a Top 10 Traffic Source

You'll succeed with Twitter by following this information

Twitter is comprised of people who love to share information. If you can properly inform and engage this audience you'll be mastering word-of-mouth promotion and increasing traffic to your website.

For us, Twitter is our third largest source of website traffic, behind organic Google searches and direct website traffic.

Tips from an expert

Amanda MacArthur hosted the [Twitter for Publishers 2010](http://www.mequoda.com/webinars/twitter-for-publishers-2010/) [http://www.mequoda.com/webinars/twitter-for-publishers-2010/] webinar on March 16th. The webinar included some very useful information on how to make Twitter one of your top 10 traffic sources.

According to Amanda, if you want Twitter to be one of your top ten traffic sources, all you have to do is use Twitter, and use it effectively.

“Build your audience and followers on Twitter with relevant news and helpful anecdotes and it'll easily be your single largest source of traffic next to search engines. Create content, push content, and the traffic will come.”

Start using the platform often and its ability to generate traffic will come.

Another Twitter tip

Amanda outlined ways of generating followers and thus, generating traffic. “In order to get people to follow you, you need to follow other people. Try going to Search.Twitter.com [http://Search.Twitter.com/] and looking up keywords relating to your business. Find people that are asking questions that you can answer, or saying something you can comment on.”

“Follow these people and respond to them because about 40% of the people you follow will follow you back. Later on if you feel like un-following people that aren't following you back, you can use a tool like [Refollow.com](http://www.Refollow.com/) [http://www.Refollow.com/] to do so.”

Amanda stressed the need to be proactive. She stated, “The point behind Twitter is that you can't wait for people to come to you. You need to find people to follow and talk to them so that they'll follow you back.”

Promote for your Twitter account and other social networks

Use your articles, email newsletters, and website space to build a base of followers that already like you.

The more people that follow you, the more people will click your links, and the more traffic will come from these sources.

For people who don't read email or RSS feeds, Twitter is the best way to reach them without being interruptive.

What you should do as a Twitter user in order to increase traffic

To fully take advantage of the communication lines Twitter has created, one must pay attention to the balance in tweets. Marketing through social media has to be carefully done since many users aren't looking for advertisements. As Amanda mentioned, begin following others and commenting on their tweets. As your list of followers grows, you can then focus more on the content you are tweeting.

Using bit.ly to Track your Real Twitter Traffic

Why use Twitter if you can't track your results?

The more data you're able to collect during your campaigns, the better you're able to see what strategies are beneficial to your success.

As many publishers are now using Twitter to connect with fans, I wanted to supply you with a method of tracking your traffic by utilizing bit.ly.

[bit.ly](#) is a website that allows you to shorten, easily share and track the URL links you create. This service is especially helpful for Twitter users since only 140 characters are allowed in tweets. With bit.ly, even extremely long website addresses can be transformed into more usable sizes, and then tweeted to followers.

Tracking traffic with bit.ly

If you're spending the time to participate in social media marketing with Twitter, then you should know where all your traffic is coming from. Guessing, assuming, or hoping the links you're tweeting are being clicked on is not a proper strategy. You need something more concrete, and bit.ly provides that foundation.

The process behind tracking your traffic with bit.ly is really pretty simple. The following steps walk you through it and bring you closer to real-time Twitter statistics.

1. Become a registered bit.ly user by signing up for a [free account](#).
[<http://bit.ly/account/register?rd=/pages/about/>]
2. After signing into your account, shorten a long link with bit.ly.
3. Add a plus sign "+" to the end of your bit.ly link. (Note that you can also skip adding the "+" manually by simply clicking on the "info+" link on bit.ly.)

As an example I converted the link to our *Digital Media Strategy 2010* free report into a bit.ly link so that the stats from this link will be tracked. If you click on the link, it will bring you to the page where the statistical results are stored. This is the link - <http://bit.ly/9xrh2L+> [<http://bit.ly/9xrh2L+>]

The "+" will allow for the traffic to be tracked. As you can see, this is a pretty manageable link to use in Twitter or any other content-sharing location.

The original link was 85 characters long. If I did not use bit.ly for this link and went to post it on Twitter, I would have had 64 fewer characters to work with in my tweet.

Other Features

bit.ly offers a [number of other tools](http://bit.ly/pages/tools) [http://bit.ly/pages/tools] that will help your social media efficiency. Some of these include:

Sidebar Bookmarklet: This feature is placed on your browser and slides out to help you shorten links while also allowing you to see traffic, conversions and history. You can also use this to share your link on Twitter, Gmail, Email and Facebook easily.

Standard bit.ly Bookmarklet: This feature is similar to the Sidebar Bookmarklet, with the exception of allowing you to directly monitor traffic from it.

Browser Extensions: This feature allows you to expand bit.ly links on any web page to see the full original link and page titles before deciding to click or not.

Access Link Data Generated Outside of bit.ly: This feature allows users to see click totals and other tracking data about their links from outside sources like TweetDeck, Twitterfeed or Seismic.

Mobile bit.ly: This feature includes a simple mobile version of bit.ly for those on the go. A special version for Blackberry users is also available.

With the help of resources like bit.ly, you will never have to guess on the links you send out in tweets anymore. Save some space by transforming long web addresses into more manageable ones and monitor your social media statistics easier. For better reporting and efficiency, give bit.ly a try today.

TweetDeck for Publishers

Making your Twitter experience more manageable

TweetDeck was originally released on July 4th, 2008. The latest version, TweetDeck 0.33.2 was released a couple weeks back, on February 8th, 2010.

So for a little over a year and a half, the cross-platform application has been available for social media gurus using Twitter. But what does it do, and is it worth using?

What TweetDeck does

According to their website, “TweetDeck is the leading browser for the real-time and social web, allowing users to connect with Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and MySpace.”

The application shows you whatever you want to see, all at once. If you want specific Twitter accounts to be readily available, it can be set to do so. If you have business partners who are also friends, you can stay up-to-date with them via Facebook. If you’re waiting on a business partner, LinkedIn can be right at your fingertips.

This may not all sound too impressive, but put all these attributes on one page, divided up as you please so you can stay organized.

The ultimate social network tool

If you are the social networking type that has an account with all the main networks (ie: Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and MySpace) then you probably already have TweetDeck working for you.

If not, you may want to try it out. You can download a copy of the application completely free at [TweetDeck.com](http://www.tweetdeck.com/). [http://www.tweetdeck.com/]

TweetDeck’s benefit for publishers

If you’re a regular follower of our content then you know we are big supporters of social media. TweetDeck could benefit you by allowing the process behind social media to be more efficient.

Instead of constantly switching between websites, you can have all of them right in one location.

Using this application may also help you distribute your content easier and possibly help build your social media strategies by focusing on everything surrounding your niche. Monitoring any and all updates is much easier to do on one screen, and TweetDeck allows you to do so.

Features

In addition to the integration of social media sites, TweetDeck offers a lot of features that can be used to customize your experience. Some of the features I found most interesting are listed below.

Record, share and watch video clips, and view YouTube videos within TweetDeck – The sharing and watching of the clips isn't horribly impressive as that can be done in a number of locations throughout the web. However, being able to record videos right on TweetDeck sounds great for anyone wanting to video blog as a form of promotion for their content.

Share and view photos; now with added support for Flickr, Twitgoo and mobypicture – The additional support is what I like about this feature. It makes a lot of sense to have the ability to support popular photo sharing options like Flickr.

Follow topics in real-time with saved searches, editable from within the column – This relates back to the point I mentioned earlier about being able to monitor any activity related to your niche subject. Acting early and often on tweets or content that you're knowledgeable on may help turn you into a thought leader in your market.

There is a slew of other [features listed on the website](http://www.tweetdeck.com/features/index.html) [http://www.tweetdeck.com/features/index.html] as well. The time may be right to give [TweetDeck](http://www.tweetdeck.com/download/) [http://www.tweetdeck.com/download/] a try and potentially increase your time efficiency and content promotions.

Conclusion

Understanding the basics behind Twitter will lead you down a very social path, lined with some of the most loyal consumers on the planet. It is a place where word-of-mouth promotion is the culture. Follow our basic information, find where you belong in the world of Twitter, and begin tweeting. Honing your Twitter skills may lead to an increase in supporters and followers of your work.

Happy Tweeting.

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