



7 Essential Marketing Rules for Twitter

Tweamr.com
Responsible Twitter
Marketing

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Introduction

Twitter has the potential to impact almost every aspect of marketing for almost every size and type of business. Companies that embrace Twitter and learn how to harness this potential will gain definitive, sustainable competitive advantages, but jumping in without first understanding the ecosystem and its rules can have disastrous consequences.

No one can predict exactly how services like Twitter will evolve. Many experts are comparing Twitter to Google or Facebook in terms of its potential as a business as well as its market influence. Some even say that Twitter is the first real potential competitor for Google.

Even if you aren't ready to buy that, it's safe to say that Twitter is well positioned for the future. They have a solid management team and financial backing, and its community of users, partners and developers are massively loyal and growing exponentially. Twitter has all of the ingredients for long-term success and all kinds of businesses – from Dell Computer to mom and pop pizza joints – are already using it to improve customer intimacy and to generate incremental business.

7 Essential Marketing Rules for Twitter was designed to help kick-start the process of effectively integrating Twitter into your marketing mix. It is part tutorial, part resource guide and part checklist. Businesses should discover tools and strategies that you can implement whether you are already using Twitter for or not.

Please let us know if you found this guide useful. We also encourage you to forward this document, to follow us on Twitter (@Tweamr) and subscribe to our free email newsletter on responsible Twitter marketing.

Best regards,



Aaron Zitzer – co-founder, Tweamr.com



Rule #1: Planning Matters

One of the best metaphors for Twitter is that it's a bar. Unlike Facebook where you know interact with 'friends', on Twitter you can engage with almost anyone. There are millions of simultaneous conversations happening on thousands of topics. It can be overwhelming. It can also be enlightening.

The open nature of Twitter is what makes it so compelling as a potential tool for business. However, businesses that think they can create an account and start spewing sales pitches are in for a rude awakening. Not only will that strategy fail, the Twitter community could turn on the company and create a public relations nightmare for the business.

Marketing isn't about pushing products. It's about understanding market needs, analyzing competition, identifying the positioning 'sweet spot', building awareness and credibility, developing and supporting a community of loyal customers and more. Twitter can be used for any or all of these marketing objectives. In fact, one of Twitter's unique strengths is its 'discovery' capabilities. We'll look at this a bit **more in Rule #**

What do you want to accomplish? What are your goals and how will you know that you're successful or going the right direction? You can start Rule #2 before having these fully completed, but you need to have your Twitter objectives nailed down before you start tweeting.

Here are some questions to ask yourself:

- > Can I reach the right audience to achieve my objective? Are those users even on Twitter?
- > What do you want users to do or what do you want to learn from them?
- > Are my competitors on Twitter? How are they using it? What types of tweets are they posting?
- > What is the priority of the different goals? Which one should you do if you could only do one?
- > How much time and effort can you realistically commit to your Twitter effort?
- > What is the absolute minimum that you must do? (see Rules #2 and 4)

Resources

- ❖ search.twitter.com - search for words or phrases
- ❖ twithority.com - authority-ranked search
- ❖ twitdir.com - a Twitter user directory
- ❖ blog.fluentsimplicity.com/twitter-brand-index/
- ❖ twibs.com – find businesses that use Twitter

Checklist

- List your key marketing objectives
- Identify which can be achieved on Twitter
- See what your key competitors are doing
- Prioritize list and determine how to measure



Rule #2: Listen First

Remember how we said Twitter is like a bar? How would people react if you walked into a bar (or coffee shop or other public place for socializing) and you started shouting about whatever was on your mind? Best case they'd ignore you. More likely, you'd be thrown out – and maybe never allowed back.

The same applies on Twitter. Don't spam. Relevance is essential. The Twitter community is judge and jury. It can be difficult to recover from a bad reputation so it's best not to get one in the first place.

If you're just getting started on Twitter, be sure to listen (read) for a while before you start posting or replying. There's nothing wrong with being a voyeur. Even if you're already on Twitter, take a step back and just listen once in a while. Do it on a fairly regular basis. Twitter is evolving quickly.

So what are you 'listening' for?

- > What are the hot topics, most popular links from tweets, or most popular users?
- > What are the types of tweets that get re-tweeted most?
- > What are the users in your industry or target audience tweeting about?
- > What is the tone / style that seems to get the response you'd like?
- > What are people saying about you, your company, your products, your competition, ...?
- > What are some examples to avoid? Users who have been black-listed. What did they do?

This isn't meant to be a comprehensive list but it should give you an idea what to look for and how to go about it. Some of the resources below will help. As you're listening, you'll undoubtedly find users that you want to follow, links you want to bookmark, etc. These are all added benefits of listening.

The main purpose of listening is to help you find your voice (Rule #3) and prevent the onslaught of negativity if you start tweeting away without first understanding what works and doesn't work on Twitter.

Resources

- ❖ [tweeterboard](#) - Twitter user "leaderboard"
- ❖ [twitturly.com](#) - what's being linked-to most often
- ❖ [tweetmeme.com](#) - what are the hot topics
- ❖ [twitterlocal.net](#) – finds Twitter users near you
- ❖ [twist.flaptor.com](#) – spot trends in Twitter
- ❖ [hashtags.org](#) – most popular tags on Twitter

Checklist

- Follow peers, competitors and popular users
- Read their tweets and look for patterns in the type of tweets, voice, frequency, etc.
- Use tools to find and analyze popular links, topics, keywords
- Look for examples of what not to do



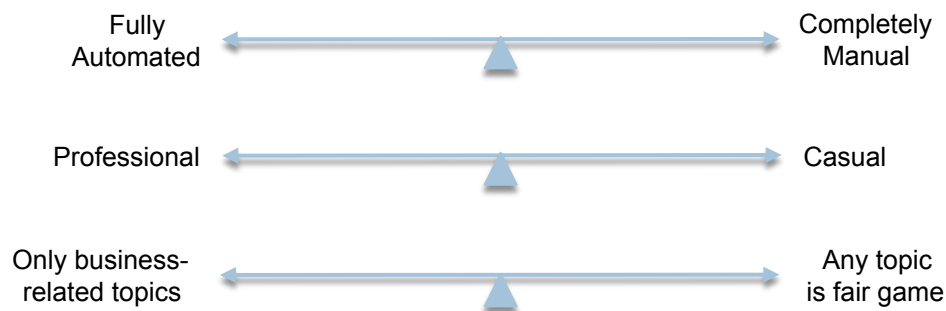
Rule #3: Find Your Voice

When you were listening in the previous rule, you certainly noticed many different styles of tweets. If you didn't, you should go back and listen harder.

While there is no right or wrong answer for what your Twitter style or voice should be, there are definitely considerations to make before you start tweeting. You need to make sure that your voice is appropriate for the objectives that you are trying to achieve and the image that you want to portray. You should document the characteristics of your chosen voice and why they are important – this is especially useful if you will have more than one person tweeting for your organization or if you plan to hire ghost writers.

So what are the characteristics that you need to consider? One way to think about the characteristics of your Twitter voice is to map out several vectors with different extremes on each end then decide where your ideal position would be on each vector. It's unlikely that you'll be at either extreme, but the vector will allow you to easily visualize your voice.

Here are some possible examples. You can use this and can add others. Where should your pointer be?



In addition to showing where you want to be on each vector and why, it can also be useful to give example appropriate and inappropriate tweets as well as 'rules' about responding to other users, re-tweeting, handling customer complaints and other use cases. Do you respond to an irate customer publicly? Do you try to reply to all DMs? Assume that anything you write could become public – even if it was sent as a DM.

Resources

- ❖ Follow popular users (overall and in your space)
- ❖ twitterholic.com – most popular users
- ❖ [retweetist](#) – users re-tweeted most often
- ❖ twitterfeed.com – automate blog posts to Twitter

Checklist

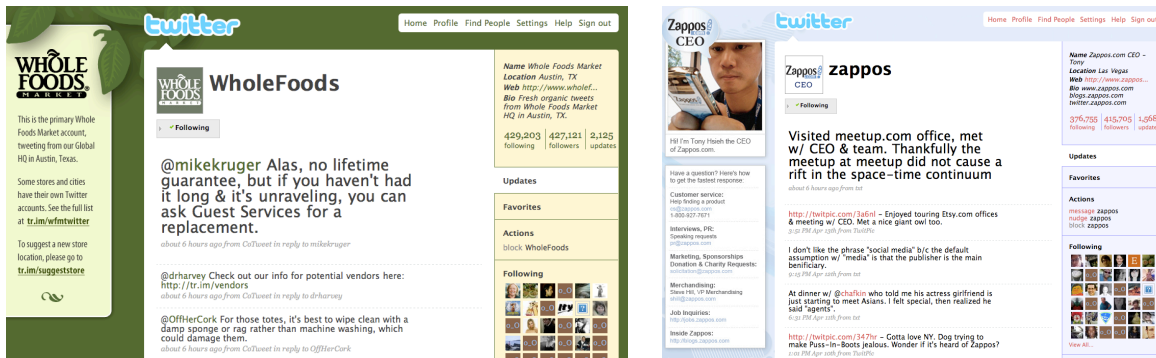
- Analyze popular users – what's their voice?
- Whole Foods - @WholeFoods
- Zappos - @zappos
- Guy Kawasaki, Steve Rubel, Shaq, ...
- Document the characteristics of your voice, plus any 'rules' and use cases



Rule #4: Look Alive

Creating an account on Twitter and leaving the default profile photo and background is a sure-fire way to show Twitter users that you're not serious about Twitter or the Twitter community as a whole. There is no excuse for not investing in the small effort that it takes to create a rich profile page and profile photo.

Have a designer create something that integrates well with the Twitter profile page. The Whole Foods and Zappos examples below should give you some ideas. Look at your competitors and do something better! If you don't have the skills in-house, there are plenty of freelance designers that can create something totally custom without spending much. Check elance.com or other similar sites. Of course you'll want to complete the profile information and include a URL – consider a specific landing page on your website.



There are several couple schools of thought on profile photos. For businesses, more and more logos are showing up. In our opinion, logos are not in the right spirit. Twitter provides a unique way for businesses to deliver a human touch. Our recommendation is to use a good quality, properly formatted photo if you can. There are many articles on the topic. Do a quick search to get more information and suggestions.

Now you're ready to promote your presence on Twitter. Promote your Twitter user name on your website (malaria.nomore.org), in email signatures, direct mail pieces, business cards, etc. If you are tweeting regularly, consider displaying them on your website or blog. There are plenty of tools that make it easy.

Resources

- ❖ twitter.com/zappos
- ❖ twitter.com/WholeFoods
- ❖ cooltwitterpages.com
- ❖ bubbltweet.com - could be useful, but use caution
- ❖ twitr.org, wefollow.com – directories to list yourself
- ❖ twitthis.com – enable easy tweets from your website

Checklist

- Secure your Twitter account name(s)
- Complete your profile page – custom!
- Spend some time on your profile image
- Implement off-Twitter promotions / tie-ins



Rule #5: Grow Your Flock

Several strategies exist to help grow your flock on Twitter. Some are a bit controversial. We'll save those for later. Hopefully we don't need to explain the benefits of having a lot of followers. The real question is, "Are you attracting the followers you need to get to your goals?"

Rule #4 covered the first step. Letting your existing customers and partners know how to find you on Twitter will get you some followers. The second strategy is to follow companies and individuals within your industry and/or region. Some will follow you in return. But there are other benefits.

Many tools look at the relationships between users (who's following whom) and make recommendations based on that information. As a result, following users with certain characteristics can actually help you attract followers. Genuine engagement (Rule #6) is also key to gain followers and builds off of the users you follow. Another totally acceptable way to gain followers is to follow interesting people. If you find someone who tweets interesting things related to your business, see who she follows, and follow her.

Auto-following users based on them following you or using third-party tools (some listed below) is where you start to get into a grey area. Tools are already starting to show up that look at the ratio of followers to friends for ranking and other purposes. It's probably not a good idea to get your ratio completely out of whack. "Follow many but don't auto-follow everyone" is probably the best approach. For example, automation could be set up to auto-follow only users that RT or DM your account. At least you know that there is a higher level of engagement and relevance. Keyword-based auto-follows should be used very selectively if at all. MSN Money follows users that tweet stock tickers.

Twitter's position is pretty clear, it recently disabled its auto-follow feature.

"We're going to discontinue autofollow because this behavior sends the wrong message. Namely, it is unlikely that anyone can actually read tweets from thousands of accounts which makes this activity disingenuous." – Twitter co-founder, Biz Stone

Resources

- ❖ mrtweet.com
- ❖ twitterholic.com
- ❖ twollow.com
- ❖ whoshouldifollow.com
- ❖ twellow.com

Checklist

- Complete off-Twitter promotions (Rule #4)
- Follow relevant users (industry, region, ..)
- Engage in the Twitter community (Rule #6)
- Use discretion with tools and autofollow



Rule #6: Engage Genuinely

Look before you leap when it comes to Twitter. You are embarking on a journey. It can't be viewed as a one-time event. You have to nurture and support your efforts. If your initial level of activity begins to wane, your followers will notice and will feel a sense of abandonment. Start with a comfortable, sustainable level of engagement. Engagement on Twitter is like the inverse of product pricing – it's easy to drop prices and easy to increase Twitter engagement, but doing the reverse is exponentially more difficult.

To get started, use search.twitter.com or another Twitter search method to see who is talking about you, your brand or a keyword related to your industry. Read up and then engage when you have something informative to say. If you are looking for your user name you can only see your replies in Twitter if someone starts a tweet with '@(your twitter name)' but sometimes people will put @yourname in the middle of their tweet. By searching "to:yourname" it will find any tweets that included your user name.

Using common sense combined with Rules 1-5, you should be in pretty good shape. The more time you spend on Twitter, the more efficient and effective you'll get. Below are some tips gathered from various Twitter users around the web on how to optimize your Twitter time and avoid potential Twitter landmines:

- ❑ Clients like Tweetdeck and Twhirl make it a lot easier to manage Twitter and make you more efficient.
- ❑ Understand and use direct messages (DM) (private), replies (public) and re-tweets (RT) correctly.
- ❑ You don't have to read every tweet or reply to every DM, but don't ignore them all either.
- ❑ Use URL shortening tools like TinyURL, tr.im and others for cleaner tweets and more characters for you.
- ❑ Comment on others' tweets and re-tweet what others have posted to build your place in the community.
- ❑ Don't take negative messages too seriously – but watch for trends and change your behavior if needed.
- ❑ Study the most popular RT'd tweets and users that are RT'd most often and model some of your tweets after them. You can periodically request that your followers RT key tweets, but don't do this too much.
- ❑ Keep a regular frequency of activity, don't go dormant, you can use tools to automate some but not all.
- ❑ Point out interesting things in your space and share links to useful info for the community. (@wholefoods)
- ❑ Don't 'sell' or get stuck in the apology loop. Be helpful instead. Inform when you do talk shop. (@jetblue)
- ❑ Have more than one Twitterer. People can quit or take vacations. It's also nice to have a variety.
- ❑ When promoting a blog post, ask a question or explain what's coming, instead of just dumping a link.
- ❑ Ask questions. Twitter is great for getting opinions and feedback.
- ❑ Twitter at events like trade shows to help build an instant "backchannel."

Resources

- ❖ tweetdeck.com – desktop Twitter client
- ❖ twhirl.org – another desktop client
- ❖ tr.im, tinyurl.com – URL shortening services
- ❖ monitter.com – monitor Twitter conversations
- ❖ twitdom.com – database of Twitter apps
- ❖ retweetist.com – who/what gets retweeted most
- ❖ retweetrack.com – another retweet tracker

Checklist

- ❑ Realistically estimate time available for Twitter
- ❑ Use tools to optimize your Twitter time
- ❑ Reply when you can but don't feel guilty
- ❑ Don't always push products or links
- ❑ Tweet about business and things loosely related
- ❑ Tweet for RTs but only request them periodically

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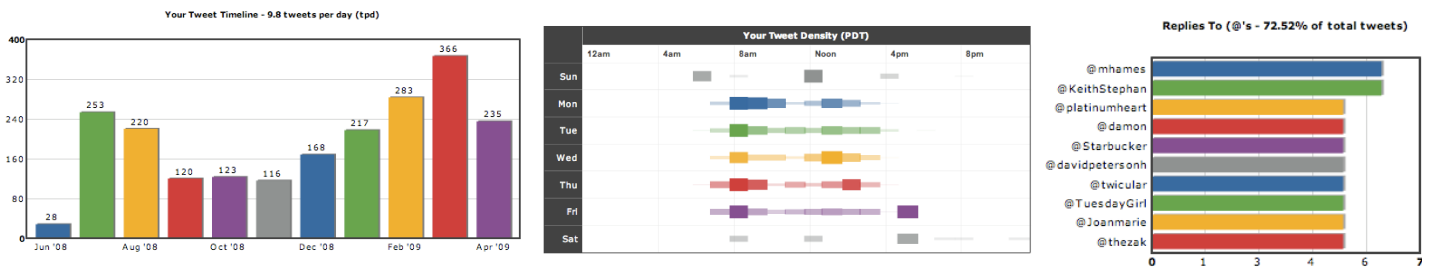
Rule #7: Track Your Results

Once you have everything in motion, you'll want to keep an eye on things to track your progress and to determine whether it makes sense to spend more (or less) time on Twitter. You can easily go overboard with measurements. Here are our recommendations on the 'must haves' and the 'nice to haves'.

In Rule #1 you set your Twitter objectives. What do you need to measure to make sure you're headed in the right direction? These are your key performance indicators or KPIs. Once you know what your KPIs are, you'll be able to figure out what tools you need.

For example, if your goal is to get visitors to your website and to sell a product, you'll want to know how many visitors are coming to the site from Twitter, how many of those visitors buy your product and how your conversion rate compares to visitors from other sources. Web analytics tools from Yahoo, Google and others (see Resources below) can get this information for you. Obviously this is simplified. You'll likely have multiple goals and more KPIs for each goal, but it's important to understand what metrics you really need and why they are important – what do they tell you and how can you use that information? You'll need to track your KPIs on a regular basis and use them to make adjustments to your strategy as needed.

Outside of your KPIs, there are many 'nice to have' data and information available regarding Twitter. Twitter streams are generally public so you can find out about yourself, your followers and your competition. Of course, they can do the same about you! For example, if Whole Foods is a competitor of yours, you can find out when they tweet, how frequently, about what, to whom and more: (tweetstats.com)



Resources

- ❖ web.analytics.yahoo.com, google.com/analytics or other web analytics to track Twitter referrals
- ❖ tweetstats.com
- ❖ useqwitter.com – monitor un-follows
- ❖ twittersheep.com – tag cloud of your followers

Checklist

- Map your goals to KPIs and implement tools needed to track your KPIs
- Use tools for competitive intelligence
- Track users that un-follow you (and why?)
- Use tools to find topics that your users are interested in and similar users that might be good to follow – including your competitors



Responsible Twitter Marketing

Founded by two senior Silicon Valley technology marketing and engineering managers, Tweamr's mission is to help organizations of any size harness the massive potential of Twitter to achieve their goals through research and by delivering information and tools.

We recognized the disruptive impact that Twitter was having on communications and we know that it will become a standard component of marketing plans for companies of any size in every industry, globally.

Twitter is changing the way people communicate and search for information and it hasn't even scratched the surface in terms of its potential reach and influence.

Twitter can be used for fast, effective and inexpensive research, customer support, public relations, lead generation and more - but your efforts will almost certainly backfire if you don't follow the explicit and unspoken policies in this vibrant and rapidly growing community.

Whether you are self-employed, a small business owner, a multi-national corporation or a government agency – a high-tech company, a manufacturer or a coffee shop, Twitter provides huge opportunities and risks. Tweamr provides the research and tools to help maximize the opportunities and minimize the risks.

