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HOW TO MAKE TWITTER WORK FOR YOUR MAGAZINE

WHETHER YOU'RE LAUNCHING a new Twitter account for your magazine or trying to make an existing one more effective, follow these strategies to get the most from your efforts.

WHY ARE YOU TWEETING?

Many magazines jump into tweeting without a clear sense of why they're online or what they hope to achieve with their efforts.

1. Listen: Listen in on experts and you'll pick up on the trends they're spotting, the stories they're watching and the ideas they're developing. How do you find them?

- Do keyword searches: If you attach a "hashtag" (the # sign) to the keyword you're searching, you'll find people who are deliberately tagging their posts as being about a particular subject area, as opposed to finding everyone who has used that word in their tweet.
- Look at lists: Once you've found a subject expert, check to see if they've been included on others' lists (click on the Listed or Lists link on their profile). Also check the "Similar to" recommendations from Twitter.
- Check wefollow.com: Enter a keyword and wefollow.com generates a list of the most influential and most followed Twitter accounts associated with that keyword.

2. Network: Take following a step further by networking using Twitter.

- Retweet strategically: Follow the folks you hope will follow you, and retweet their posts selectively. If they scan who is retweeting their content, you'll show up in the list.
- Post great stuff: Of course, once they notice you, you'd like them to see that you're adding value to the general Twitter conversation.
- Message them: Ask a question, point them to content they may have missed, comment on their tweets.

3. Promote: Remember that followers expect value from your tweets—and not an endless stream of self-promotion. That said, your magazine's content is valuable to readers, so do tweet with links to key stories. Make sure that you also link to news stories, blogs, videos or other online content related to your subject areas.

4. Engage: Twitter is a conversation, not a broadcast. Your followers expect you to listen and respond to them. Consider asking followers for specific input: story ideas, feedback on covers, answers to questions.

5. Sell: While endless self-promotion can be a Twitter turn-off, offering a special Twitter subscription promotion may be seen as a benefit rather than an irritant. Create urgency by making the offer time-limited to push followers to quick action. Some online media brands are also including advertiser messages in their Twitter feeds. If you go this route, clarity is key: add the bracketed word "ad" or "promo" at the end of the tweet.

WHAT SHOULD YOU TWEET?

We've covered some of the possibilities above, but what will get noticed, clicked on and retweeted by others?

1. Emotion=distribution. A number of studies of social media content have shown that emotional content—and especially positive emotional content—is more likely to get passed along to other users. Anatoliy Gruzd at Dalhousie University examined 46,000 tweets about the Vancouver Olympics and found that positive tweets were retweeted an average of 6.6 times, while negative ones were retweeted only 2.6 times and neutral ones 2.2 times. One clue that your content might be highly retweetable: if you're tempted to write "Wow!" or "Cool!" at the beginning of the tweet, odds are the content hits just the kind of emotional note you're aiming for.

2. Links increase the likelihood of getting retweeted. Want to promote your magazine content, even though you haven't posted the full article online? One strategy is to write a blog post about the article—highlighting its key points or providing behind the scenes info—and then tweet about the blog post. You'll drive traffic back to the blog, which in turn promotes the magazine article.

3. Insider info is appealing. Your followers want the inside scoop. Share some of the process of getting the magazine out the door. Build excitement about upcoming content by posting about interviews, shoots or features in the works.

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4. Routines and structure work. Best Health tweets a Tip of the Day. This Magazine does Tuesday Tracks. Other media set up regular “chats” where editors are available to answer followers’ questions. Sending out a particular type of content regularly at the same time or on the same day creates routines that your followers come to expect.

5. Time of day matters. Research by Dan Zarrella of HubSpot analyzed two years’ worth of Twitter data and concluded that tweeting later in the afternoon and on the weekends generates more click-throughs because there’s less competition for attention. Retweeting is highest between 2 p.m. and 5 p.m. And if you’re trying to drive traffic to your site, tweeting no more than once an hour shows better results than more frequent tweeting. Don’t want to be tied to your desk? Use a social media management tool (see below) to preschedule tweets.

HOW CAN YOU TWEET EFFICIENTLY?

Most of us already have more than enough work to fill our days, so how do you add Twitter to the mix?

1. Tap into a pool of content. Use a newsreader like Google Reader to review RSS feeds from sites and blogs related to your content area. That way, you can scan your feeds,

quickly pick out tweet-worthy articles and pass them on to your followers.

2. Use a social media management tool. Check out tools like HootSuite, Seesmic, Tweetdeck, Postling and others. All are geared to making it simple to post on Twitter and other social media such as Facebook from one screen. They also offer a variety of analytic tools that can help you monitor the effectiveness of your tweets.

3. Monitor your efforts. Use the analytic tools to see which of your tweets are driving traffic, which are most likely to get retweeted—and adjust your efforts accordingly. Use your website’s analytic tools to track Twitter referrals and keep an eye out for surges in page views related to your tweets.

WHERE CAN YOU FIND OUT MORE?

Check out social media training and content on:

- Magazines Canada webinars and PD programs
- Poynter.org
- Niemanlab.org
- Mindymcadams.com
- Mediabistro.com
- Mashable.com
- TechCrunch.com

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