



BY KAT TANCOCK, CO-FOUNDER OF CUSTOM CONTENT AGENCY TAVANBERG

TWITTER SUCCESS: A Q&A WITH *THE WALRUS*

ACCORDING TO A 2013 STUDY by the [Pew Research Center](#), 18 percent of American adults are using Twitter—and 31 percent of those are ages 18 to 29. Clearly, what was once a fringe medium has become a major communications player, especially when it comes to marketing and customer service. So how can magazines perform well on the platform? Stacey May Fowles, circulation and marketing director and resident tweeter at *The Walrus*, shares her approach.

Q: HOW DID THE WALRUS GET STARTED ON TWITTER?

A: When I started at *The Walrus*, just over five years ago, I noticed we had a Twitter account with less than a hundred followers. It wasn't really in anyone's job description at the time to man it—this was in the early days of the platform, before it became a publishing promotional necessity. I adopted it into my day-to-day tasks, casually at first, and then with increasing strategy.

Because it was in the early days of Twitter, and no one was really talking that much about strict rules for branding or monetizing, I had a lot of freedom to experiment with the medium and see how best it could work for us. Ultimately we ended up having a lot of fun with it, while still using it as a valuable tool for our business. I feel like it was to our benefit that we didn't take it or ourselves too seriously in the early stages.

Q: WHAT HAVE BEEN THE GOALS FOR TWITTER?

A: Twitter has been a hugely important source of web traffic for us over the years. We've also had success with it when it comes to soft offers and deeply discounted, time-limited offers and premiums. You really have to make an offer worth a Twitter follower's time for it to have any success—we learned that pretty early on. Campaign-based offers work much better, with clear goals and numbers you can update your followers on.

Q: DO YOU HAVE TIPS ON BALANCING THE NEED FOR PERSONALITY WITH PROFESSIONALISM?

A: *The Walrus* tweeter definitely has a "tone," for sure. I think the fact that we've had one consistent tweeter since the account started to gain popularity really helps with that. For us, it's helped to be irreverent and fun, but I think the tone you present would be entirely dependent on your publication and its readership.

Q: HOW DO YOU FIND THE TIME FOR TWITTER WHEN YOU'RE SO BUSY WITH YOUR JOB? DO YOU HAVE TIPS FOR TIME MANAGEMENT?

I have [Twitter application] [TweetDeck](#) open all day and as things come in that need to be promoted I put them out right away. It's become so much a part of what I do and how I manage my day, I don't even think about it anymore.

Because I'm responsible for marketing, I'm invested in the monetary success of the things we put out, so I don't think of Twitter as this "extra" task I need to complete, but as something that helps me meet my targets and goals. And I really enjoy it—I think that makes a big difference. Because I'm in circ, it's important for me to get a real sense of who our readers are and what they enjoy, and Twitter helps me do that in real time.

Q: WHAT ARE SOME TWITTER SUCCESSES?

A: Our 24-hour sales tend to work really well. If we're doing a special offer at an event or fair, we'll often put it on Twitter as well, which has the dual purpose of promoting the event and gaining more customers.

Q: WHAT IS YOUR NUMBER-ONE TIP FOR BEING AN AWESOME MAGAZINE TWEETER?

A: I've always said that it helps to relax and not take it too seriously. It's still a very experimental medium, and when you adhere too much to rigid rules and expectations you'll get nowhere. Having fun with it will go a long way to getting you the results you want. We're still learning a lot about what works and what doesn't, and we continue to be surprised. Being flexible is probably the best approach, and not being too hung up on industry rules and guidelines.

Twitter is, to a certain degree, "free," so you can try a number of different offers and techniques in a way you can't with traditional circ marketing. It may not give you the same sort of return as, say, a direct mailing, but it's a great way to learn what people respond to and what they don't.

▶ DOWNLOAD MORE HOTSHEETS AT magazinescanada.ca/cultural/hotsheets