# UTILIZING **TWITTER**

*for* **B2B PROMOTION & CONSUMER COMMUNICATION**

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Twitter is a streaming, real-time microblogging platform in which users can post an update or status within a 140 character limit (otherwise known as a tweet). Since it's launch in 2007, Twitter has grown into one the world's largest and most well known social networks, redefining mobile communication, news media and public relations. Twitter is a staple in social media marketing, and because of this, a strong comprehension of Twitter's available features and user experience is highly recommended in today's online marketplace.

First, the facts:

- 241 million monthly active users

- 500 million tweets tweeted per day

- More than 75% of users are on mobile

- 44% of the total 974 million existing Twitter accounts have never sent a tweet

- Peak lifetime of tweet: 18 min

- More followers = longer lifetime of a tweet

- 77% of users come from outside the U.S.

- Acquired Vine in 2012, 40 million users

- Most retweeted tweet ever: Ellen DeGeneres' Oscar selfie - 3 million retweets

Source: According to Twitter's "About" section (Dec. 2013)

Twitter is known to update its design and features several times a year to optimize its performance and user experience. In a constant effort to deliver and organize the wealth of content published every second, testing the look and feel of both mobile app and desktop versions is commonplace.

# TWITTER FEATURES

## User Profile

In order to interact on Twitter, all users must make a profile. Your user name, known as a handle, links to your profile and should accurately reflect the person or company behind it. Your profile bio, the wording under your profile picture, is restricted to 160 characters and essentially describes your mission. For the greatest effect, choose your wording wisely. Twitter bios are SEO sensitive and searchable within the social network. Your bio copy should be brief, original and informative. Make sure it aligns with your brand messaging (personal and professional). Always include a link to your website in the bio to drive visitor traffic. Additionally, your profile picture and background graphic should mimic your brand identity. Remember, **the twittersphere is in constant motion and first impressions can drastically affect your following.** Your effectiveness on Twitter starts with an optimized profile.

In April, 2014, Twitter rolled out a new redesign of the user profile. This update focuses on visual content, most notably by enlarging the profile background photo (now a 1500 pixel by 500 pixel image) into a dominate communicative factor for first time visitors (a strong, in-your-face marketing opportunity similar to Facebook's cover photo). Now, tweets that receive the best engagement appear larger on the profile timeline, visualizing your social impact tweet by tweet. Furthermore, users can now "pin" a tweet to the top of their timelines so it remains permanent instead a of disappearing over time—another opportunity to reinforce your profile messaging.

## Hashtag

Twitter is the first social network to have popularized the social hashtag(#) we know today. Originally conceived by Chris Messina in 2007, the hashtag is a component of social search that organizes related ideas under the pound sign preceded by a string of text. Originally confined only to twitter, hashtags now proliferate across most social networks. **Today, promoting and establishing a unique hashtag is a necessity for any marketing campaign looking to impact the social web.** Now that hashtags are available on most social media networks, one common, consistent hashtag can unite marketing efforts across all social platforms. Tweets with one or two hashtags have a higher chance of being retweeted than those with none or more than 3.

# TWITTER FEATURES

## Trends

Twitter was one of the first mobile apps to have a real-time pulse on what its users are talking about. Trends are easily accessible and monitored on Twitter, often through a hashtag or keyword, and have effectively disrupted traditional news media. Users can filter the trends they see by location (worldwide to city) or switch to tailored trends that draw data from who you follow.

## Follower Feed

Your Twitter Feed is the real-time subscription of the people you follow within the network. Like most social platforms, who you decide to follow determines the type of information you will see. **Therefore, it is important to strategically follow accounts that you, or your company, care about.** Following random accounts fills your feed with uninteresting "chatter" and hinders your accessibility to relevant information you could use. . Following the right accounts, those that share common interest or purposes, opens window into your target community, a perfect place to share and engage with user-generated content.

## Lists

Lists function as an alternative feed for a segmented topic or purpose. Any user can make a list, but not all can join. Some lists are private, invite-only forums for trusted users. Still, the list feature expands the resourcefulness of Twitter by narrowing a targeted community following.

(Note: There are several social monitoring services (read below) that allow account admins to "surf" the twittersphere for nearly any keyword or hashtag. Using third-party social listening software is highly recommended in social media management.)

## Sponsored Content

Businesses that want to expand their visibility on Twitter can invest in paid advertisement through promoted tweets, promoted trends or a promoted account. Advertisers can target via keyword, device, interests, gender and location to attract potential followers or promote product or event. If your account is new on Twitter, promoted content is the fastest way to make an impression.

**Why do people follow brands? According to Twitter:**

Discounts and promotions - 94%

Free stuff - 88%

Fun and entertainment - 87%

Updates on upcoming sales - 79%

Access to exclusive content - 79%

**How Often Should I Post?** That depends. Due to the overwhelming flood of tweets every minute, any account that wants to gain followers should post at least eight to 10 times a day- some even say 30 times a day. But don't forget to consider your target audience. Age and location often determine optimal engagement times. Twitter is constant and real-time, so you want to maintain a balance between relevant and annoying. Remember, the peek engagement time after publishing a tweet is 18 minutes.

## Listening and Scheduling

Twitter is all about controlling the social conversation around your account or brand. Not only do you want to share valuable content with your followers, but you also want to address any questions or concerns regarding your product, service or area of interest. This is where **social listening** comes into play. Social admins must constantly scour Twitter to mold their presence, and there are several automated tools that can help you achieve this. Three popular applications are listed on the next page:

**Hootsuite** is a social media management platform (compatible with most today's most popular social networks) designed as a dashboard made up streams. These streams monitor the live usage of any keyword or hashtag posted within any given network. By connecting your account with Hootsuite, admins can filter for specific content to use how they like—content curation by sharing, sources for trending news, or engagement with advocates. Scheduling and analytics are among its other features.

**Buffer** is a social media application that schedules updates for Twitter, Facebook, Google+ and LinkedIn. Buffer integrates with your browser via plugin, and in doing so, allows the social admin to share and schedule valuable content with just a few clicks of the mouse. Buffer has an easy-to-read data layout for its social analytics, but does not offer any social monitoring feature.

**HubSpot,** a SaaS company known for inbound marketing, offers a "Social Media Inbox" tool that not only schedules automated social post, but also tracks the leads from a specific social update and how they impact an integrated HubSpot campaign. If you are a HubSpot user, this tool goes beyond "clicks" to show how your social media efforts affect your overall inbound strategy. HubSpot also comes with social monitoring and analytics.

As you monitor your keywords or hashtags, social admins should engage with profiles (no matter if they're followers) who share the same enthusiasm for your area of interest. **A favorite, a retweet or a friendly comment is valuable in B2C engagement because it builds a personalized relationship.** Social media management is very much a reciprocal arena.

# TWITTER STRATEGY

## Event / Product Promotion

**Flock to Unlock** is marketing strategy described by Twitter as "incentivizing your followers to share (retweet) your tweet in order to unlock exclusive content." This social tactic gets your followers excited for and help spread the word about your offer.

**Live Tweeting:** Twitter is the ideal medium for real-time coverage. Whether it's a company party, live event or breaking news, **social correspondence offers exclusive content to your followers. Reward them with a unique storytelling experience.** Quotes and pictures that capture action work best.
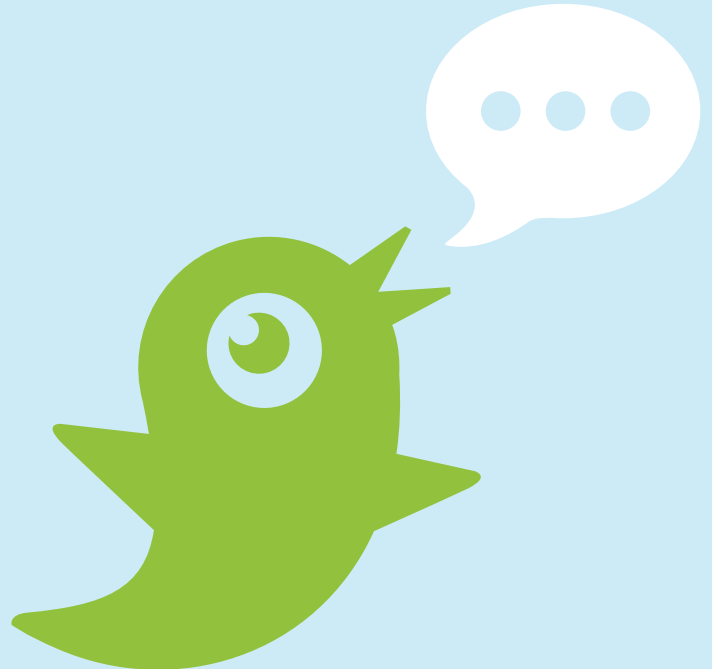
## *Phoenix Children's Hospital*

The Phoenix Children's Hospital is a world-renown, free-standing medical facility known for its expertise in pediatric medicine and care. Children's is a great example of how a medical entity (with multiple locations) connects with its patients, and the community it belongs to, through social media. Its Twitter account is one of several social networks it uses to spread news and content to its large following consisting mostly of patients, family and the medical industry at large.

- **<17,000 followers**
- **Following 2,000**
- **Average of 1-2 tweets per day**
- **Integrated social channels (Vine and Instagram)**
- **Seldom use of hashtags EXCEPT during an event**
- **Healthy retweet and engagement rate**
- **Plenty of pictures**

Because Phoenix Children's is so large and influential, **active account engagement means a lot of other organizations want to spread its messaging.** That's why, upon visiting its Twitter profile, you can see several retweets of success stories, local news and patient satisfaction that align with Children's branding as a family-friendly, Arizona-based medical resource. Children's doesn't use Twitter as tool for pushing out native website content or blogs, but rather as a direct window into its impact on the community.

## Georg Fischer

Georg Fischer is a global corporation headquartered in Switzerland specializing in the manufacturing of piping, automotive and high-quality consumer goods. **Since starting its** Twitter account **in September 2013, GF has posted 70 tweets and gained 106 followers (April 2014).** GF is great example of how a specialized manufacturer can be organically successful on Twitter—it just takes time.



**Advice for improvement:** Tweet more often! GF is a company with global reach and has the potential to be an industry leader if it published more exclusive, informative content. It's good to see that the company has a Twitter presence, but with little to no community engagement, it seems this account was meant as a brand placeholder rather than a communicative tool. Increasing the posting rate with a better pulse on its respective social communities would likely boost GF's following over time. If short on time, investing in Twitter's promoted features, (accounts, tweets, trends) is another option to boost GF's presence on Twitter.

## *Snapchat*

Snapchat is a private mobile messaging application that ballooned into popularity with teens and college students in 2012 and 2013. Today, Snapchat has approximately 26 million users in the U.S. and has more than 300,000 followers on Twitter. It might seem ironic for a social application to use another social network to promote itself, but Snapchat is too well known not to have a Twitter account. **If it wasn't on Twitter, Snapchat would be compromising its brand integrity by allowing unofficial accounts and unhappy users to control the conversation around its name and its product.**

From first glance, Snapchat is all about community—and with good reason. It possess one of the most engaged, and socially active userbase: girls between the ages of 13 and 23. Although new, Snapchat already has several brand and celebrity users. This means Snapchat has a wealth of user-generated content to share and repurpose in its favor.

> Snapchat's Twitter strategy is simple: retweet anyone who is having fun using our product.

If you're a SaaS company just starting out on Twitter, be sure to:

- **Leverage your target community (competitors, news, users, advocates, influencers)**
- **Provide appealing content (how-to-videos, case studies, stats and trends)**
- **Pick out the right audience (potential users, hashtags, keywords)**
- **Update frequently (at least 10-15 times per day)**

# WHY USE **TWITTER?**

What separates Twitter from the rest of the large social networks is its ability to gauge the real-time ebb and flow of any event in the world. From the Olympics to Arab Spring, Twitter has changed how we communicate online. **Heed the information presented here to test your social strategy.**

Remember, one utility of Twitter is to harness the users and information around you to tell your narrative (sharing, engagement). The other, to open a real-time dialogue with followers to address any concerns. Both invariably lead to the management of the ever-present social conversation about YOU.

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