

Introduction to

Twitter

For Sales & Marketing

Venture Accelerator Partners



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Introduction: Why Use Twitter?

According to a report by Social Media Examiner (<http://www.socialmediaexaminer.com/social-media-marketing-industry-report-2014>), over half of marketers with at least one year of social media experience were generating leads with social platforms, and 3 in 5 small and medium businesses (SMBs) say they've gained new customers by using social media.

Benefits of using social media include:

1. **Building Awareness** – Customers are more likely to buy from familiar brands and 92% of all marketers indicate that social media efforts have generated more exposure for their businesses.
2. **Staying Top of Mind** – The average person spends 2.5 hours a day on social media; staying relevant means going where your customers spend their time and interacting with them there.
3. **Being Seen as Subject Matter Expert** – Become your prospects' go-to source for industry news and education by regularly sharing relevant articles and resources.

DID YOU KNOW?

Companies that use Twitter average 2x more leads per month than those that do not.

Source: How Social Affects Lead Generation, Marketo.

Although there's a range of social networks from Facebook to Pinterest, the two most essential social networks for B2B startups are LinkedIn and Twitter.

In this guide, we will discuss how to:

- Set up a good profile on Twitter
- Find and participate in relevant conversations
- Share engaging content to attract followers
- Generate leads for your business

1. Setting Up a Profile

Inbound marketing refers to marketing activities that bring in potential customers, rather than outbound marketing, which relies on marketers having to go out to get prospects' attention.

In both inbound and outbound marketing, each potential customer, whether it's a person or a company, is considered a "lead". Leads can be individuals who interact with the content on your website, sign-up for a newsletter, or someone who has been referred to you by others. Generally, anyone who provides you with his or her email address or phone number can be considered a lead.

COMPANY VS. PERSONAL PROFILES

Making the distinction between a company and personal profile on Twitter helps you implement the appropriate strategies to get the most out of your Twitter experience. This is especially important to consider for individuals who may be managing both types of accounts.

DID YOU KNOW?

8 out of 10 SMBs use social media for their business to drive growth.

Source: The Ultimate List of Marketing Statistics for 2015, freely.net

The main aim of a company profile is to represent a business. This encompasses the company's team, culture, values, and overall brand identity. A company Twitter profile is also a part of the overall marketing strategy to increase brand awareness, make connections and gain traction within an industry.

A personal Twitter account offers a lot more flexibility in term of personalization. A personal profile allows you to post and discuss topics of interest that don't necessarily coincide with a company's values, service or products.

HEADER IMAGE

The header image appears at the top of your Twitter profile, so it's likely to be the first thing an individual sees once arriving on your profile.

Take advantage of this space to explain visually what your business is all about. Display your team members, awards, achievements, products, services, upcoming events or information about ways to connect. Don't forget to add well-written copy to provide more information. The recommended dimension for the header image is 1500x500 pixels.



Salesforce, a CRM software company, uses their Twitter header image to promote a major upcoming event.

PROFILE PHOTO

Your profile picture is another important feature of your Twitter account. Not only does it appear on your Twitter page, it also accompanies every tweet your company sends out.

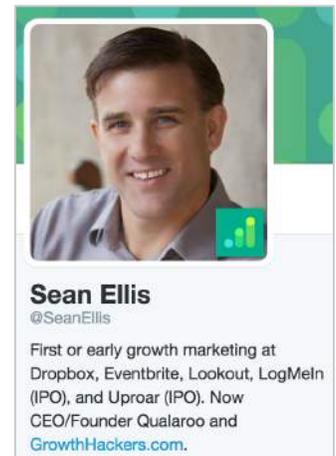
Consider how the image will look in both the larger and smaller version. Choose an image that represents your company well, such as a logo, graphic displaying your company name, or a character. The recommended dimensions for this image are 400x400 pixels.

When you're finished, make sure that your profile picture and header looks just as good on mobile.

BIO AND URL

When writing your Twitter bio, think about who's interested in your company and tailor your bio to them. You can mention what products or services your company provides and the topics you'll generally tweet about.

You can also include Twitter handles and hashtags (e.g. #startups) in your bio. Try adding other useful information such as business hours and location within the 160-character limit. Don't forget to include a URL for your website.



Profile photos for companies can be the company logo or of the CEO/founder if they are the face of the company.

2. Getting Familiar With Twitter

ACCOUNT HANDLES AND @ MENTIONS

A Twitter handle is the same thing as your Twitter username.

To connect with other Twitter users, use their Twitter handle in your tweet. Each time a twitter handle is used with a “@” in front of the username, it appears as a mention. Use mentions to connect with other users, give credit, and create conversations. All mentions are public, but putting a twitter handle at the beginning of your tweet results in only your common followers seeing it in their feed.



Mention another Twitter user by putting a “@” in front of their username. Your @ mention will show up on their notifications list to let them know they were mentioned.

HASHTAGS

There are many uses for hashtags on Twitter. The primary function of a hashtag is for a certain keyword or phrase to be searchable. Including a # in front of a keyword or phrase categorizes that tweet. The tweet will then be displayed when a user searches for that particular keyword or phrase. Remember not to include spaces if your hashtags are composed of multiple words.



Use a hashtag in your tweet to increase how likely your tweet will be seen or discovered by the Twitter community outside your group of followers.

Determine what kind of topics your audience is searching for and use this information to create your hashtag strategy. You can incorporate hashtags

within or at the end of a tweet. You don't want to overwhelm the reader with too many hashtags either.

Explore what hashtags are getting the most buzz and see how you can contribute. Keep an eye on trends, by searching hashtags to create more relevant content.

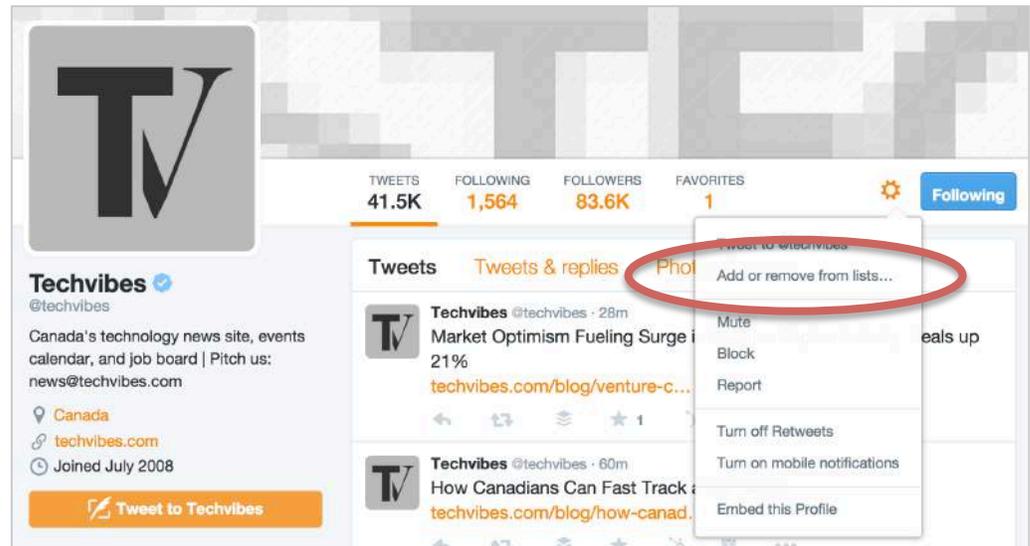
You can also create your own hashtags to leverage special offers, events, Twitter chats or company news. A personalized company hashtag is easy to keep track of, and can be used to connect with a very focused and interested group.

LISTS

Twitter is a fast-paced social media platform, so it's easy to feel overwhelmed by the amount of updates on your Twitter newsfeed.

Lists help organize your Twitter feed and provide you with a curated group of Twitter users. You can create lists or subscribe to ones made by others, and you can also choose to have your lists be public or private. Ideas of lists can include helpful resources, news publications, influential bloggers, competitors, and customers.

To add a Twitter account to a list, click on the gear icon on their profile page and then click on "Add or remove from lists..."



Create lists and add Twitter users to these lists to help you organize and monitor the users you follow.

RETWEETS (RT)

A retweet is categorized as re-posting of another user's tweet. Use retweeting as an easy way to share information that is relevant to your audience. It's a great way to give credit to the original content owner. Retweeting also allows you to add your commentary to a piece of content. In addition, a retweet can be a great way to introduce yourself to another Twitter user.

DIRECT MESSAGES (DM)

Direct messages are private and can be sent to either an individual or a group. You can send a direct message to anyone who follows you. You also have the option to allow anyone to send you direct messages (even if they aren't following you) through the settings tab.

LIKES

"Liking" a tweet is the easiest way to let a Twitter user know that you like their tweet; a heart under the tweet indicates the "Like". The tweets you like are listed under the Like tab, making this feature great for archiving relevant content for a later time.



Like a tweet to show the user you like their update and/or to bookmark the tweet for reference later. To see all the tweets you've liked, click on the "Likes" link on your profile or go to twitter.com/favorites.

3. How to Post Updates

Twitter allows you to post tweets instantly, or schedule your tweets ahead of time. Scheduling your updates in advance is useful for upcoming promotions/campaigns or for allowing you to preschedule all your updates for the week in one sitting.

1. DIRECTLY FROM TWITTER

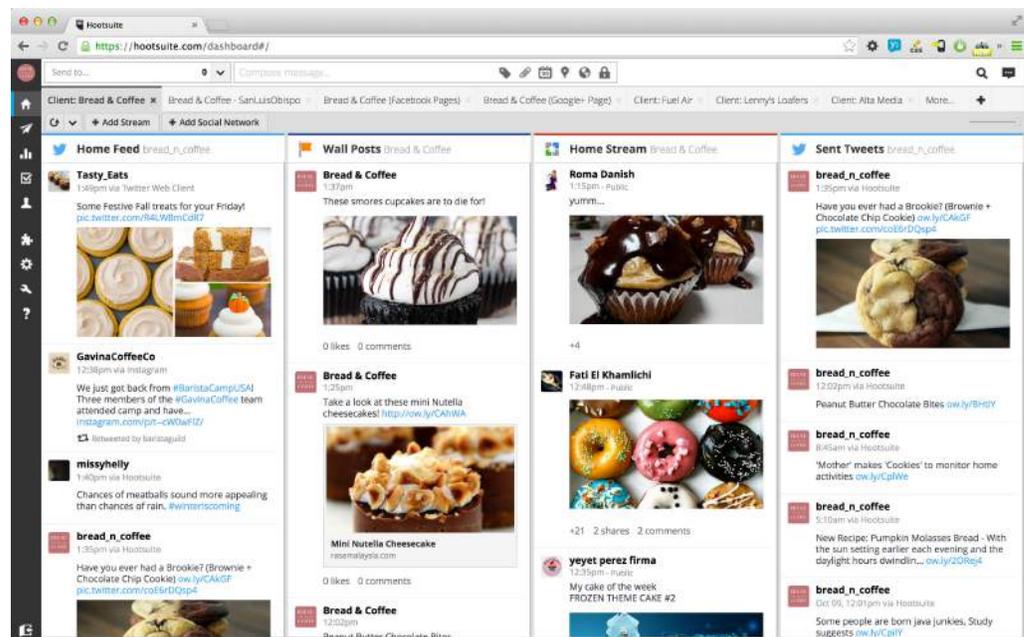
To post directly from Twitter, you can use the Twitter website (<http://twitter.com>), or download the Twitter app on your smartphone or tablet.

2. SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGEMENT TOOLS

HootSuite

HootSuite (<http://hootsuite.com>) is a great social media management tool that lets you post and manage your Twitter, Facebook, Google+, LinkedIn and Instagram accounts. HootSuite allows you to monitor your mentions, scheduled tweets, retweets and more. It also provides a platform for monitoring your Twitter lists, making it easy to retweet content that your followers would also enjoy.

The free Hootsuite account allows you to connect to up to three social media accounts at once. The “Pro” account is available for \$9.99/month, which supports up to 100 social accounts.



Hootsuite social media management web dashboard.

Buffer

Buffer (<http://buffer.com>), similar to Hootsuite, supports Twitter, Facebook, Google+, LinkedIn and Pinterest. Buffer also includes an analytics feature, which helps you monitor the success of your posts to look for patterns in the headlines, content or time of day of the tweets that get the most engagement. This is useful for planning future content.

In addition, if you don't have a lot of time to analyze when your followers are most active, create a list of posts you wish to share and Buffer will automatically schedule them accordingly. These times are generated by when your followers are most active so that your updates will have a larger reach.

4. What to Tweet

When posting to Twitter it's important not to be too self-promotional. Definitely share your own content, but also share great third party content. This will benefit you in a number of ways:

1. You are giving yourself credibility in your industry
2. Share awesome content that will help you gain followers
3. Entice people to visit your website
4. Get noticed by the right people/businesses

FINDING CONTENT

Lists

Using Twitter you can easily create lists to help you keep track of great content, your competitors, others in the industry etc. Lists can be set to public or private and monitored through Twitter or other platforms like HootSuite. Even if you don't follow an account, it can still be added to a list – this comes in handy when monitoring your competitors.

Bookmark third party sites

Ensure that you are bookmarking websites that are constantly putting out great content. This will help build your database of useful third party content to share, but also give you inspiration for future blog posts, or downloadable assets.

QUESTIONS, IMAGES, LINKS, VIDEOS

Posting content is the easy part, but getting people to interact with the content you post is difficult. Make sure to post content that you are proud of or that you genuinely feel will benefit your audience. How the Tweet is formatted is also important to grab the attention of your followers. Your tweets can come in a number of different formats.

Pose a Question

Need feedback or want to create dialogue? Then consider posing a question to your audience. People love to voice their opinion and this is a quick and easy way to get a response.

Share Links

Include a link to a web page that you want the viewer to visit. It can direct to a great blog post, video, or infographic.

Use Images or Videos

By including an image along with your Tweets people are more likely to interact with your content because people are generally attracted to visuals. Tweets with images also increase the size, and thus the presence, of the tweet in your followers' newsfeed.

DID YOU KNOW?

Tweets that include images receive 18% more click-throughs, 89% more favourites and 150% more retweets.

Source: 23 Epic Twitter Facts and Statistics That May Surprise You, jeffbullas.com, 2015

FINDING POPULAR CONTENT

BuzzSumo

BuzzSumo (<http://buzzsumo.com>) allows you to research topics to help curate content. The tool tracks content shared on social media and ranks them based on the number of shares on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google+ and Pinterest.

USING THE RIGHT HASHTAG

Ritetag

Using hashtags correctly can help your business get noticed and RiteTag (<http://ritetag.com>) is exactly the tool you need to use to achieve this. RiteTag can be integrated into Facebook, Google+, HootSuite, Buffer and Twitter, just to name a few. It allows you to plug in a hashtag and see the popularity of the hashtag. It's important that individuals are searching for the particular hashtag you are using, but it's also important that it's not so overused so that your content won't be found.

5. When to Tweet

Understanding your audience and their habits online is extremely important to the success of the content you share and increasing your following. By understanding when your audience is active online, when they are more likely to post or retweet as well as who their following is are all metrics you should be aware of. Try using any of the following tools and you will be on your way to gain a better understanding of how to curate your content.

SOCIALBRO

SocialBro (<http://www.socialbro.com>) is a tool that is linked to Twitter and is used to help you get to know your followers and who the influencers are amongst them. This is helpful when deciding what to share and when.

Use SocialBro to help you gain a better understanding of when your followers are most active on Twitter and which hashtags they are using; this is helpful when deciding when to schedule your posts and increase engagement. There is also the option to learn more about your competitor's followers to help you strategize your content plans. You can also create customized DM campaigns to help you communicate with your target audience.

CROWDBOOSTER

The team at Crowdbooster (<http://crowdbooster.com>) refer to themselves as the social media optimization solution. Instead of staring at a Dashboard watching for interactions, Crowdbooster notifies you when someone interacts with your social media channel. For example, when someone follows you on Twitter, you will be notified and given the option to take action, like follow back or send an @ mention.

TWERIOD

Like SocialBro and Crowdbooster, Tweriod (<http://www.tweriod.com>) is a tool that syncs with Twitter to help you analyze the best times to Tweet and which hastags are used most. Tweriod is a paid service, however, during the trial period you can request an analysis, which will report on up to 1000 followers.

6. Getting Followers

Building an engaged audience on Twitter should be one of the main goals of your social media activities. Having a good following can directly help with your sales and marketing activities because your business has more reach. It takes time to grow your following, but it's possible with consistent effort.

RETWEET RELEVANT CONTENT

One of the best ways to gain followers is by sharing other people's Tweets. Every time you re-share (retweet) someone else's update, they get a notification that includes your username. Your act of re-sharing shows you're giving their update a vote of confidence by re-sharing to your followers. Consistently retweeting another user is a good way to get on their radar.

USE HASHTAGS

To help reach your target B2B audience you must know the keywords they use to look for relevant topics on social media. Choosing the right hashtags can help boost the visibility and engagement of your tweets. Intuitively, you may have an idea which keywords best relate to your topic, however, it pays to take that extra step and check which keywords are trending.



Hashtags.org is a good tool to evaluate which keywords are more commonly used. Simply input the keyword and it will provide you an analysis of the estimated number of times the keyword was used within a 24-hour period.

BUSINESS CARDS AND EMAIL SIGNATURES

Email signatures are often an overlooked piece of digital real estate. People spend an average of 19% of their time online reading and writing emails. Unlike social media updates, emails have a longer lifespan and are often re-opened. It's natural for people to want to know more about the person emailing them, which makes email signatures a great place to put links to your social media profiles.

7. Interacting With Users

Interacting with users is a key part of using Twitter effectively for sales. It is how you connect with new prospects or nurture existing relationships.

FINDING PEOPLE TO FOLLOW

Look Up Your Existing Contacts

One way to start is by following people you already know. You can search for specific friends, or you can also give Twitter permission to access to all your contacts and it will automatically show you Twitter profiles based on your contacts' email addresses or phone numbers. For detailed instructions, visit this Twitter help article: <http://support.twitter.com/articles/101002-find-friends-by-uploading-your-contacts>

Finding People to Follow

The updates from the accounts you follow are automatically shown in your newsfeed to let you easily keep up-to-date. Following accounts who share content, images or links you're interested in will also make your Twitter experience more engaging.

To find interesting people to follow, one tool you can use is Twitter's Advanced Search Tool (<http://twitter.com/search-advanced>) which lets you search for tweets mentioning specific keywords or account mentions, near a specific location and/or between a date range. Followerwonk (<http://followerwonk.com>) lets you find people with similar interests by searching bios, by the number of followers and number of people they follow and even by user location if you're looking to connect with people in your geographic region.

TWITTER CHATS

What Are Twitter Chats?

A Twitter chat is a live Twitter event on a topic. Each tweet usually includes a hashtag to identify that tweet as being part of the chat. A set time is also established so that the moderator, guest or host is available to engage in the conversation.

This is a great way to meet other people interested in the topic, gain followers, and practice interacting on Twitter.

Finding Chats to Participate In

Here are tools and websites that list Twitter chats and trending hashtags.

Chat Salad - <http://chatsalad.com>

Twubs - <http://twubs.com/twitter-chats>

Tweet Reports - <http://tweetreports.com/twitter-chat-schedule>

TYPES OF PEOPLE TO INTERACT WITH

Now that you know how to post great tweets and how to find people to follow, you should focus your energy on finding the most relevant people to interact with.

Here are the types of people, businesses, organizations and other accounts you should follow, reply to and try to build a relationship with:

- Industry influencers
- Industry peers
- Industry partners or people in complimentary fields/functions
- Influencers to your target customers

If your business or product is only available to a geographic region, then focus on accounts in that geographic area.

8. Measuring Results

TWITTER ANALYTICS

Checking Twitter's analytics dashboard at <http://analytics.twitter.com> is the easiest way to monitor and gauge the success of your Twitter activities.

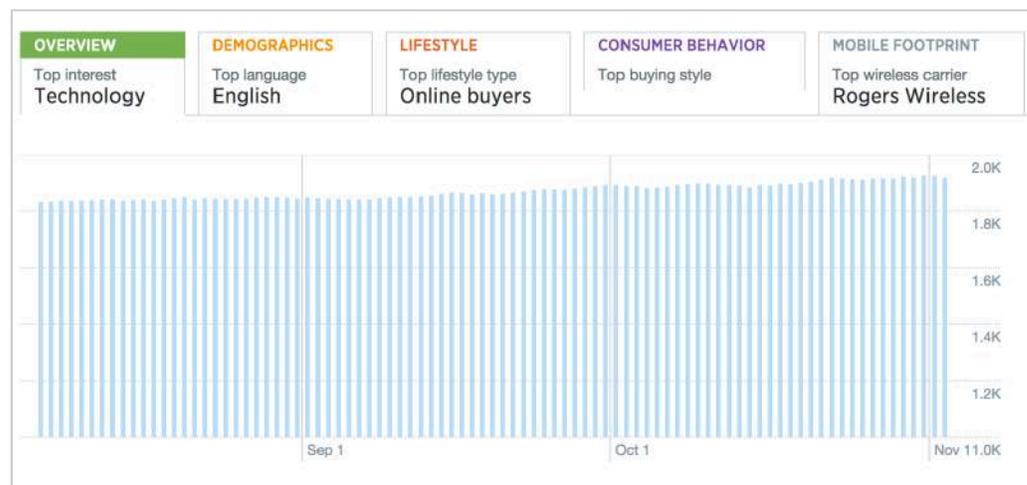
Tweets and engagement rate %

Use this to look for patterns on the titles of your tweets, the day of the week and time of day.

Track follower numbers

View your follower growth and aggregate demographics of your followers such as gender and interests. Twitter also tries to guess your followers' household incomes and education levels.

If you're running a campaign, keep track of how many new followers you have at the end of each major time period. You can also use follower numbers to see what kinds of tweets encourage people to follow you and analyze the type of followers you're attracting. Be sure to tweak your efforts to ensure you're attracting the followers that are likely to engage with your brand.



Use Twitter Analytics to track your follower growth and to view follower demographics, <http://analytics.twitter.com>.

RETWEETS AND MENTIONS

These metrics indicate the levels of engagement by other Twitter users with your brand. If you start to see a pattern of certain people consistently re-tweeting your content, consider reaching out to them with a direct message. This feature allows you to narrow down your focus to people who are genuinely interested in learning more about your brand.

REFERRALS FROM GOOGLE ANALYTICS

Ultimately, Twitter is a gateway and should be the opening act to your website's main attraction. Connect your Google Analytics tool with your Twitter stream to see how your activity on Twitter is influencing your website traffic. This should help you quickly determine whether your efforts are worthwhile.

NUMBER OF INBOUND LEADS

Analyze how and where your inbound leads are coming from. When you get an inbound lead ask them how they came to know about your services. If it originated from Twitter, you will know that your efforts are paying off. To ensure that Twitter is a contributing inbound marketing tool, be sure to consistently tweet links to your calls-to-action.

9. Generating Leads With Twitter

Twitter is an excellent tool for sales activities, from nurturing target clients, getting speaking opportunities, and even booking meetings with prospects.

Here are a few of the areas that Twitter can help sales teams.

BE SEEN AS A SUBJECT MATTER EXPERT

Twitter is an excellent tool for sharing your insights and content. This not only applies to your company's information, but also third party articles and information as well. Use a mix of interesting and pertinent content to reinforce your subject matter expertise.

DID YOU KNOW?

73% of people said they feel more confident in an SMB after following them and reading some of their Tweets.

Source: How SMBs Use Twitter: 15 Stats You Should Know, Hubspot.

STAY TOP OF MIND

Sometimes you have those prospects who aren't ready to buy at the moment. It isn't that your product or service is not a good fit; it is just that the customer isn't ready to make a purchase.

The traditional sales follow-up includes emails and calls, but now you can use Twitter and other social platforms like LinkedIn to follow up. If your prospect is on Twitter they will see your posts from time to time and that will help you stay top of mind with them.

GATHER INTELLIGENCE ON COMPETITORS, CUSTOMERS & PROSPECTS

One of the best features of the platform are Twitter Lists, which allow you organize Twitter users in groups and manage how you look at Tweets. Creating or subscribing to a list allows you to see only Tweets from users on that list, which is helpful if you follow a lot of accounts.

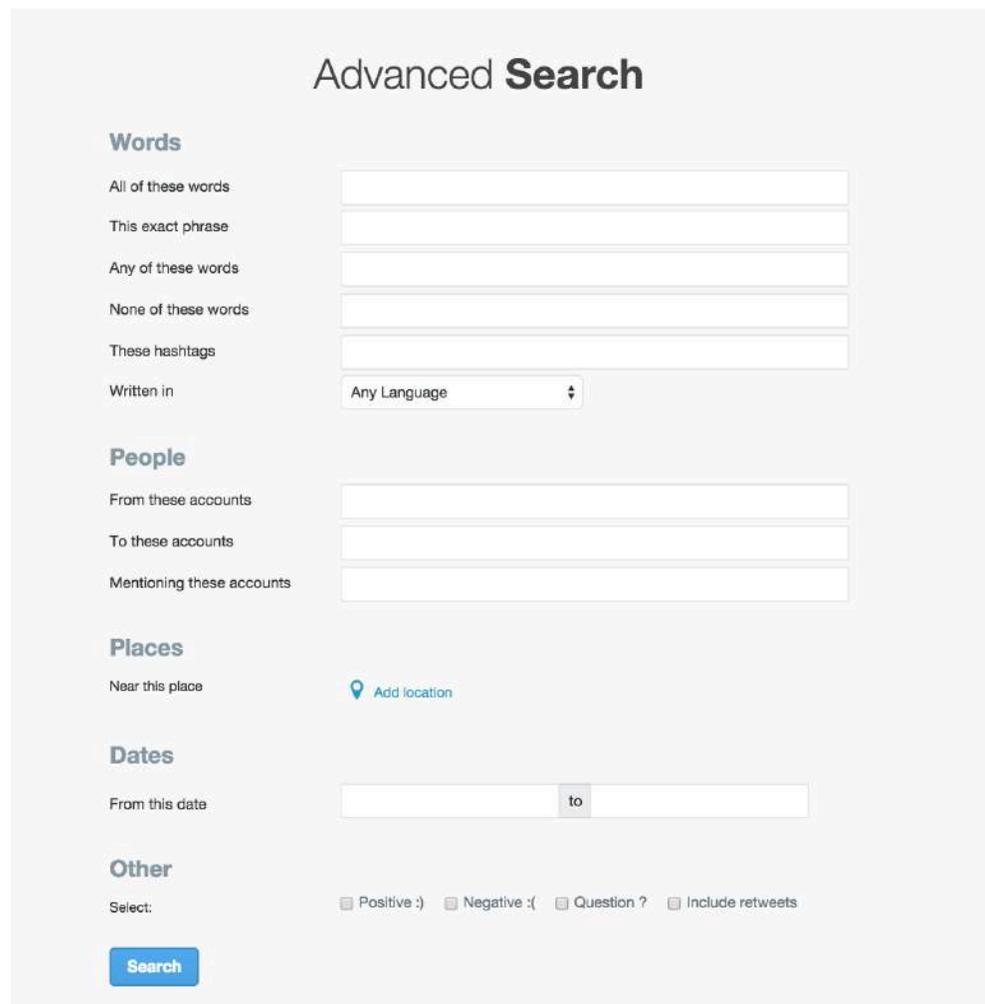
To organize your own Twitter account, create different lists for your customers, partners, and even competitors. You can use these lists to easily monitor users in these categories and these lists can be public or private. This can help make you very efficient in your social media use.

LOOK FOR SALES TRIGGERS

A sales trigger is an event that creates an opening for a sales opportunity. For example, if your company sells promotional products and a prospect announces that they'll be attending a tradeshow that could be a sales trigger for your company.

One way to look for sales triggers on Twitter is by browsing your newsfeed and lists, and by using Twitter's advanced search (<http://twitter.com/search-advanced>) to search for keywords that may indicate a sales trigger for your company; you can also narrow down your search by geographic region and date.

In one instance, we spotted the trigger on Twitter and replied back. We moved the conversation to email and then to the telephone. A month later, they became a customer.



The image shows the 'Advanced Search' interface on Twitter. It is organized into several sections:

- Words:** Includes radio buttons for 'All of these words', 'This exact phrase', 'Any of these words', and 'None of these words'. Below these are four text input fields. There is also a 'Written in' dropdown menu currently set to 'Any Language'.
- People:** Includes radio buttons for 'From these accounts', 'To these accounts', and 'Mentioning these accounts'. Below these are three text input fields.
- Places:** Includes a radio button for 'Near this place' and a link with a location pin icon that says 'Add location'.
- Dates:** Includes a radio button for 'From this date' and a date range selector with a 'to' button.
- Other:** Includes a 'Select:' label and four checkboxes: 'Positive :)', 'Negative :(', 'Question ? ', and 'Include retweets'.

A blue 'Search' button is located at the bottom left of the form.

User Twitter advanced search (<http://twitter.com/search-advanced>) to look for potential sales triggers by searching for keywords that would indicate a sales opportunity for your business.

CONNECT AND BUILD A RELATIONSHIP

One of the great things about Twitter is the openness. You can follow or mention users without requiring a commitment, compared to LinkedIn where you have to make/accept a LinkedIn connection.

You can follow hundreds or even thousands of prospects and customers and many will reciprocate by following you back. You can share their content, when it is interesting and applicable to your followers. You can also answer questions that people Tweet. All these activities can help to build an on-line relationship with them.

REACH OUT ON TWITTER

You can @reply a potential prospect asking for a call or meeting. You can then move the conversation to a direct message, email, or call. Often, potential customers or business partners don't reply back to your email because of the volume they receive; however if you send them a message on Twitter they reply back right away.

Twitter will continue to be an excellent channel to stay in contact with customers and prospects and make new relationships.

Further Reading & Resources

GETTING STARTED WITH TWITTER

- Twitter Tips for Beginners: Everything I Wish I Knew About Twitter When I Started
<https://blog.bufferapp.com/twitter-tips-for-beginners>
- How to Tweet on Twitter: 12 Templates to Get You Started
<http://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/tweet-formulas-to-get-you-started-on-twitter>
- How to Get Your First 100 Twitter Followers
<https://www.quicksprout.com/2014/10/17/how-to-get-your-first-100-twitter-followers>

TWITTER TOOLS

- Big List of Twitter Tools: 91 Free Twitter Tools and Apps to Fit Any Need
<https://blog.bufferapp.com/free-twitter-tools>
- 14 Apps + Tools To Transform Your Twitter Engagement
<http://isocialfanz.com/14-apps-tools-to-transform-your-twitter-engagement>
- 80 Twitter Tools for Almost Everything
<http://www.hongkiat.com/blog/twitter-tools>

List of Twitter Tools

SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGEMENT

- Hootsuite - <https://hootsuite.com>
- Buffer - <https://buffer.com>

TWITTER ANALYTICS

- Twitter Analytics - <https://analytics.twitter.com>

BEST TIME TO TWEET

- Tweriod - <http://www.tweriod.com>
- Social Bro - <http://www.socialbro.com>

HASHTAGS

- RiteTag - <http://ritetag.com>
- Hashtagify - <http://hashtagify.me>

FINDING PEOPLE TO FOLLOW/UNFOLLOW

- Followerwonk - <http://followerwonk.com>
- Just Unfollow - <http://www.justunfollow.com>

About Venture Accelerator Partners



Venture Accelerator Partners provides B2B sales, marketing and inbound lead generation services to startups and fast-growing organizations. Our clients range from mobile start-ups, large industrial companies, to major financial services companies.

Since being in business in 2008, VA Partners has helped drive millions of website visitors, hundreds of qualified meetings, and millions of dollars in revenue for clients.

Our team is passionately committed to growing revenue for growing companies. Some of our recent accomplishments include:

- Generated \$500,000 in new revenue for an oil and gas provider in the first year of the engagement
- Helped create a \$2 million annuity stream for a financial services company
- Closed \$300,000 in incremental revenue working six days per month for a client
- Boosted website traffic and inbound leads by 300% over 6 months for a growing enterprise sales training company
- Secured partnership meetings with Fortune 500 companies like RIM, Microsoft, ADP and more

Companies work with us to establish sales processes, revamp marketing, build and optimize websites for lead generation, leverage social media, build a sales funnel of qualified leads, close deals faster, and save money with experienced resources.

To learn more about our sales and marketing services for growing B2B businesses, contact us at info@vapartners.ca or (647) 401-7156.

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LinkedIn: <http://www.linkedin.com/company/venture-accelerator-partners-inc.>