

# BEYOND A FOLLOWING

Move beyond your following. The key to spreading your organization's message on Twitter is to use a smart strategy, engage and activate your influencers, and listen to your audiences.



## Strategize

Building a large Twitter following may seem like an obvious objective, but developing a large following with only a small portion of engaged users is not all that helpful. Be sure to focus on cultivating relationships and deeper audience engagement – not on just the raw numbers. Start by asking: Who are your target audiences, where are they found and what do you want them to do? The [Spitfire Smart Chart@](#) helps you think through these questions and incorporate Twitter into your overarching communication strategy.

## Research

Determine which of your target audiences has a valued opinion and large following in your subject area. These influencers could be issue experts, niche reporters or organizations with a following that look to them for insight. Follow these three steps to develop an outreach plan.



### Step 1: Discover the Most Popular Hashtags in Your Subject Area

Enter keywords about your issue in an advanced Twitter search and browse the tweets for usernames of organizations that you recognize from offline activities. Narrow your search by the city or state to find hashtags and users related to your issues. Enter the usernames individually into [MentionMapp](#) to view their most commonly used hashtags. Develop a comprehensive list of hashtags related to your issue and compare them with [TweetReach](#) to find out which ones have the most mentions. Use Hootsuite to create streams of tweets that include those keywords, hashtags and mentions in real time.

### Step 3: Find a Connection

Keep track of the reporters' articles and use a basic Twitter search to find their handles. For other influencers, checking their profiles for related tweets about your issue and looking for ways to tie their interests with your objectives may be beneficial. Gathering this kind of information will prove useful when you engage your connections on Twitter.

### Step 2: Identify the Top Influencers

Influencers lead conversations on Twitter by consistently using popular and relevant hashtags. To find your influencers, enter the hashtags from step 1 into a Twitter search and scroll through the "Top" posts, looking at the Twitter handles. Scan their tweets to identify the messaging they use. Check their Klout score to determine their influence. Group your findings into two categories: influencers with a large following and niche reporters.

### Step 4: Make a Twitter List

[Twitter lists are easy to create](#) and can help you monitor tweets from a group of Twitter users. For example, Twitter lists could be useful for tracking the tweets of niche reporters during an announcement or news event. Once you know who the relevant reporters are, conduct individual searches for them on Twitter, click the settings tab by the "follow" button on their profile and select "Add or remove from lists." You do not need to be following each user to add them to a list.

## Activate

Develop content that will inspire your target audience to take action by following these four principles.



### +Know Your Limits

In November 2017, Twitter expanded its character limit from 140 to 280. GIFs, photos, polls, quoted tweets and videos do not count toward a user's character limit which is good news, because now you have more characters to work with and people are more likely to engage with your tweets that contain videos and photos. Keep in mind that you don't have to use all the character space you are given. Twitter is a platform intended for brevity, so try a mix of shorter and longer tweets to see what your followers respond to best. If you want to share longer content or provide ongoing commentary about a particular issue, [Twitter's new Threads feature](#) could be useful.



### +Content is King

Above all, content should be relevant and timely to your issue. Include a mix of tweets, retweets, conversation, calls to action and links to compelling messages. Include relevant hashtags, but no more than two. Research shows that asking questions and sharing visuals and videos tend to boost engagement.



### +Be Present

Post two to eight times a day to establish your organization as an authority and a timely commentator on your issue or cause, but do not tweet more than once an hour, unless you are tweeting live, so as not to decrease engagement. Use Twitter Analytics to determine the right frequency for your organization. Know when your followers are online by using Tweriod, a tool that analyzes up to 1,000 of your followers to pinpoint the best time to tweet. Schedule your tweets in advance using a tool like Hootsuite if you have limited time to tweet during a particular week.



### +Spread the Word

Be sure to add the Twitter button to your website, email, blog and other social media sites.



## Engage

Once you have identified the top hashtags for your subject, influencers to reach and connections to mention, engage your audiences with these actions.

- Follow any new influencers to increase the chance that they will follow your organization and retweet your content.
- Build a relationship with your influencers by regularly retweeting and commenting on their content.
- Join the most popular hashtag conversations and spread your message to a broader audience by researching the hashtags used by other groups with similar interests. Use the hashtags to interest them in your cause.
- Live-tweet an event by notifying attendees of the hashtag and designating someone from your organization to tweet quotes and pictures.
- Twitter offers analytics on individual and organizational Twitter accounts. [Twitter analytics are available](#) to all users whose accounts have been open for at least two weeks. Analytics shed light on the impressions, engagement and your follower demographic. For more detailed and ready to use reports, use [TweetReach](#). When you enter your hashtag in the search box and click run, there will be an option at the top that says, "Get The Full Report" and it will take you to the billing.