

*"Let Zarrella take you to social media marketing school. You'll learn more from reading this book than from a month of research on the Internet."*

**— Guy Kawasaki, cofounder of Alltop.com**

# the social media marketing book



O'REILLY®

Dan Zarrella



# the social media marketing book

Are you looking to take advantage of social media for your business or organization?

With easy-to-understand introductions to blogging, forums, opinion and review sites, and social networks such as Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn, this book will help you choose the best—and avoid the worst—of the social web’s unique marketing opportunities.

*“If I could be any other person for a day, it would be Dan Zarrella. Either him or Brad Pitt. But Dan’s smarter. This book is why I say that.”*

—Chris Brogan, president of New Marketing Labs

*“This book demonstrates a beginning to the endless possibilities of the social web.”*

—Brian Solis, publisher of leading marketing blog PR 2.0

**The Social Media Marketing Book** guides you through the maze of communities, platforms, and social media tools so you can decide which ones to use, and how to use them most effectively. With an objective approach and clear, straightforward language, Dan Zarrella, aka “The Social Media & Marketing Scientist,” shows you how to plan and implement campaigns intelligently, and then measure results and track return on investment. Whether you’re a seasoned pro or new to the social web, this book will take you beyond the jargon to social media marketing mastery.

- **Make sense of this complicated environment with the help of screenshots, graphs, and visual explanations**
- **Understand the history and culture of each social media type, including features, functionality, and protocols**
- **Get clear-cut explanations of the methods you need to trigger viral marketing successes**
- **Choose the technologies and marketing tactics most relevant to your campaign goals**
- **Learn how to set specific goals for your campaigns and evaluate them according to key performance indicators**

US \$19.99

CAN \$24.99

ISBN: 978-0-596-80660-6



**Safari**<sup>®</sup>  
Books Online

Free online edition  
for 45 days with  
purchase of this book.  
Details on last page.

**O'REILLY**<sup>®</sup>  
oreilly.com

the  
**social media  
marketing  
book**

Dan Zarrella

O'REILLY®

Beijing • Cambridge • Farnham • Köln • Sebastopol • Taipei • Tokyo

# The Social Media Marketing Book

by Dan Zarrella

Copyright © 2010 Dan Zarrella. Printed in Canada.

Published by O'Reilly Media, Inc., 1005 Gravenstein Highway North, Sebastopol, CA 95472.

O'Reilly books may be purchased for educational, business, or sales promotional use. Online editions are also available for most titles (<http://my.safaribooksonline.com>). For more information, contact our corporate/institutional sales department: (800) 998-9938 or [corporate@oreilly.com](mailto:corporate@oreilly.com).

**Editor:** Laurel R. T. Ruma

**Indexer:** Julie Hawks

**Production Editor:** Rachel Monaghan

**Interior Designer:** Ron Bilodeau

**Copyeditor:** Audrey Doyle

**Cover Designer:** Monica Kamsvaag

**Proofreader:** Sumita Mukherji

**Illustrator:** Robert Romano

## Printing History:

November 2009: First Edition.

While every precaution has been taken in the preparation of this book, the publisher and author assume no responsibility for errors or omissions, or for damages resulting from the use of the information contained herein.

This book presents general information about technology and services that are constantly changing, and therefore it may contain errors and/or information that, while accurate when it was written, is no longer accurate by the time you read it. Some of the activities discussed in this book, such as advertising, fund raising, and corporate communications, may be subject to legal restrictions. Your use of or reliance on the information in this book is at your own risk and the author and O'Reilly Media, Inc., disclaim responsibility for any resulting damage or expense. The content of this book represents the views of the author only, and does not represent the views of O'Reilly Media, Inc.

ISBN: 978-0-596-80660-6

[TM]

*Gramma and Grumpa,  
I am who I am today because of you guys.  
Thank you.*



# Contents

## 1. Introduction ..... 1



What Is Social Media Marketing?	1
Big Brands and Social Media	3
Small Business and Social Media	7
Social Media and You	8

## 2. Blogging ..... 9



Introduction	9
History	11
Protocol	13
Platforms	21
Content Strategies	27
Building an Audience	30
Takeaway Tips	30

## 3. Twitter and Microblogging ..... 31



Introduction	31
History	33
Protocol	35

Clients	51
---------	----

Takeaway Tips	52
---------------	----

## 4. Social Networking ..... 53



Introduction	53
History	53
Protocol	57
Facebook	67
LinkedIn	71
MySpace	73
Takeaway Tips	76

## 5. Media Sharing ..... 77



Introduction	77
History	79
Protocol	79
YouTube	83
Flickr	89
SlideShare	97
Takeaway Tips	102

## 6. Social News and Bookmarking . . . . . 103



Introduction	103
History	103
Protocol	105
Digg	117
Reddit	121
StumbleUpon	125
Delicious	127
Niche Sites	127
Takeaway Tips	130

## 7. Ratings and Reviews . . . . . 131



Introduction	131
History	133
Protocol	135
Yelp	139
Other Sites	145
Takeaway Tips	146

## 8. Forums . . . . . 147



Introduction	147
History	147
Protocol	149
Research	159
Engaging	161
Takeaway Tips	170

## 9. Virtual Worlds . . . . . 171



Introduction	171
History	173
Second Life	175
Takeaway Tips	184

## 10. Strategy, Tactics, and Practice . . . . . 185



Introduction	185
Monitoring	187
Research	195
Campaigns Versus Ongoing Strategy	197
Integration	199
Calls to Action	201
Takeaway Tips	204

## 11. Measurement . . . . . 205



Introduction	205
Metrics	207
Goal Setting	221
Software	223
Takeaway Tips	224

## Acknowledgments . . . . . 225

## Index . . . . . 227





Something strange is happening. Your advertising doesn't work anymore, at least not like it used to. You used to be able to buy some TV time or put an ad in a newspaper, but nowadays everyone has TiVo or a DVR and gets their news online. The conversations that took place under industrial broadcast media about your products happened in small groups, and their words disappeared as soon as they were spoken. Now the conversations happen in front of millions of people, and they're archived for years to come. Not only is your brand no longer the host, most of the time you're not even a welcome guest.

But it's not all doom and gloom. You don't have to try to outspend the biggest companies anymore; now you can outsmart them with viral videos. You don't have to spend thousands on sterile focus groups; you've got your market's pulse at your fingertips with quick Twitter searches. And you don't even have to do all the work yourself; the stuff that your fans create will blow you—and your competitors—away.

More than 250 million people are active Facebook users. More than 346 million people read blogs, and 184 million people are bloggers themselves. Twitter has more than 14 million registered users, and YouTube claims more than 100 million viewers per month. More consumers are connected than ever before, and every second your company is not engaging them in social media is a wasted opportunity. So, get on board.

## What Is Social Media Marketing?

*Social media* is best defined in the context of the previous industrial media paradigm. Traditional media, such as television, newspapers, radio, and magazines, are one-way, static broadcast technologies. For instance, the magazine publisher is a large organization that distributes expensive content to consumers, while advertisers pay for the privilege of inserting their ads into that content. Or you're sitting down, watching



*Figure 1-1. Burger King's Facebook application was so successful that it had to be shut down.*

your favorite sitcom, and suddenly you're interrupted by commercials (luckily, you have a DVR, so you can fast-forward through them). If you disagree with something you read in the newspaper, you can't send the editorial staff instant feedback. And good luck connecting with your morning radio on-air personality.

New web technologies have made it easy for anyone to create—and, most importantly—distribute their own content. A blog post, tweet, or YouTube video can be produced and viewed by millions virtually for free. Advertisers don't have to pay publishers or distributors huge sums of money to embed their messages; now they can make their own interesting content that viewers will flock to.

Social media comes in many forms, but for our purposes, I'll focus on the eight most popular: blogs, microblogs (Twitter), social networks (Facebook, LinkedIn), media-sharing sites (YouTube, Flickr), social bookmarking and voting sites (Digg, Reddit), review sites (Yelp), forums, and virtual worlds (Second Life).

## **Big Brands and Social Media**

IBM owns more than 100 different blogs, a dozen islands in the virtual world of Second Life, several official Twitter accounts, and a popular forum called developerWorks. It publishes a *machinima* series (a cartoon video made in Second Life) on YouTube, and several employees upload presentations to the media-sharing site SlideShare.

Dell has tapped the power of social media with its hugely popular IdeaStorm website, where users add ideas for new product lines and enhancements, vote them up or down, and comment on submissions. Because of the site, Dell has started to ship computers with Linux installed, and has added community support. Starbucks has also started to use this model to some success with its My Starbucks Idea site.

Burger King has made headlines time and time again with its innovative viral and social marketing campaigns, most recently with the “Whopper Sacrifice.” The burger chain offered Facebook users a free Whopper coupon if they would “unfriend” 10 of their social network connections (see Figure 1-1).



*Figure 1-2. Viral videos demonstrated how to pick Kryptonite bike locks with only a Bic pen.*

Cable giant Comcast has begun to salvage its tarnished reputation with a customer service outpost on Twitter led by Frank Eliason, Comcast's "Director of Digital Care," and his @comcastcares account. Whenever someone tweets negatively about the company—and that happens a lot—Frank jumps in to offer whatever help he can. This has led to some of the only positive press the brand has gotten in a long time. The shoe retailer Zappos, which most people already love, also has an awesome customer service presence on Twitter.

U.S. President Barack Obama has been called the first social media president, and a strong argument could be made for the label. As a candidate, he had one of the most popular Twitter accounts and Facebook pages, and his website contained a social media section where his supporters could create profiles and connect with each other. The campaign was also present on YouTube, Flickr, LinkedIn, MySpace, and Second Life.

Big brands have also faced embarrassment on social media. One example is shown in Figure 1-2. In another example, two Domino's Pizza employees posted a video to YouTube showing them defiling food that was to be delivered to customers. That video was watched more than 1 million times in the first few days, and was the subject of thousands of tweets.

Motrin released a commercial that offered its product as a solution to the pain women experience when carrying babies in harnesses attached to their torsos. A day later, a small but vocal group of mommy bloggers had made the commercial the most discussed topic on Twitter, mostly expressing outrage. These moms made critical videos and blog posts and called for a boycott of Motrin. Eventually, the company apologized and withdrew the commercial.

The image shows a screenshot of a YouTube video player. At the top left is the YouTube logo with the tagline "Broadcast Yourself™" and "Worldwide | English". Below this is a navigation bar with links for "Home", "Subscriptions", "Videos", "Shows", and "Channels". A search bar contains the text "will it blend iphone" and a "Search" button. To the right is an "Upload" button. The video title is "Will It Blend? - iPhone". The video player shows a close-up of an iPhone being crushed inside a Blendtec blender jar. The text "Instant Replay" is overlaid on the video. Below the video player, there are 5 stars, "18,183 ratings", and "7,126,792 views". There are buttons for "Favorite", "Share", "Playlists", and "Flag". Below these are "Digg", "Send Video", and "Facebook" buttons, along with a link for "(more share options)". At the bottom left of the player area is a "Statistics & Data" link. To the right of the video player is a sidebar for the channel "Blendtec", which was created on "July 10, 2007". It includes a "Subscribe" button and a description: "Everybody knows that the iPhone can make phone calls, play movies & music, surf the web, and a lot more. But, Will It Blend? That is the question." Below the description are fields for "URL" and "Embed". A section titled "More From: Blendtec" lists several other videos with their view counts: "Will It Blend? - Glow Sticks" (4,821,482 views), "Will It Blend? - Diamonds...as far as you" (2,842,053 views), "Will It Blend? - iPhone3G" (3,564,789 views), "Will It Blend? - Mario Kart" (1,044,866 views), and "Will It Blend? - Bic Lighters".

Figure 1-3. Blendtec's "Will It Blend" series was a social media hit.

## **Small Business and Social Media**

As indicated previously, social media is a great equalizer: big brands can be outsmarted without making huge investments, and small brands can make big names for themselves.

Blendtec was a relatively unknown company selling \$400 high-performance blenders. After seeing CEO Tom Dickson testing the machines by blending two-by-fours, Marketing Director George Wright had a brilliant idea for a series of viral videos. He started to blend everyday objects—glow sticks, iPhones, Rubik’s Cubes, and television remote controls—and posted the videos to media-sharing sites such as YouTube (see Figure 1-3). The videos have now been watched more than 100 million times and have garnered the company a ton of press and buzz.

A small specialty baker in New Jersey, Pink Cake Box, leverages nearly every type of social media that exists to build a substantial brand. Employees write a blog that features images and videos of their unique cakes. They post the photos to Flickr and the videos to the company’s YouTube channel. Pink Cake Box has more than 1,300 followers on Twitter, and more than 1,400 fans on Facebook.

The software startup I work for, HubSpot, has invested a lot of energy in social media marketing with some success. Our blog has more than 19,000 subscribers (fueled by appearances on Digg, Reddit, and StumbleUpon), our company Twitter account has more than 16,000 followers, our LinkedIn group has more than 34,000 members, and our Facebook page has more than 6,000 fans. We’ve launched a marketing forum, and have a lot of fun making amusing (and sometimes serious) videos for YouTube.

## **Social Media and You**

Whether you are part of a small, medium, or giant business, or are an individual entrepreneur, your customers are using social media, and there's no reason you shouldn't be, too. It costs almost nothing, it's easy to get started, and it can have an enormous financial impact on your business.

This book will teach you everything you need to know to pick the right tools and get started. While writing this book, I spoke with some of the most brilliant social media pioneers, including people from Flickr, Yelp, Mashable, WebmasterWorld, Second Life, and Scout Labs. They shared their wisdom on how you can—and should—be working with social media.

Your customers and your competition are already involved in social media. Why aren't you?





## Introduction

*Microblogging* is a form of blogging that limits the size of each post; for instance, Twitter updates can contain only 140 characters. This limitation has spawned a set of features, protocols, and behavior that are entirely unique to the medium. Twitter started to take off in terms of popularity in the first half of 2009 as a result of high-profile celebrity members and a mention on *Oprah*, and now it has become more mainstream than other similar social media tools.

Most companies should be on Twitter; it's easy, requires very little investment of time, and can quickly prove worthwhile in increased buzz, sales, and consumer insight. You can use Twitter to announce offers or events, promote new blog posts, or keep your readers in the know with links to important news stories.

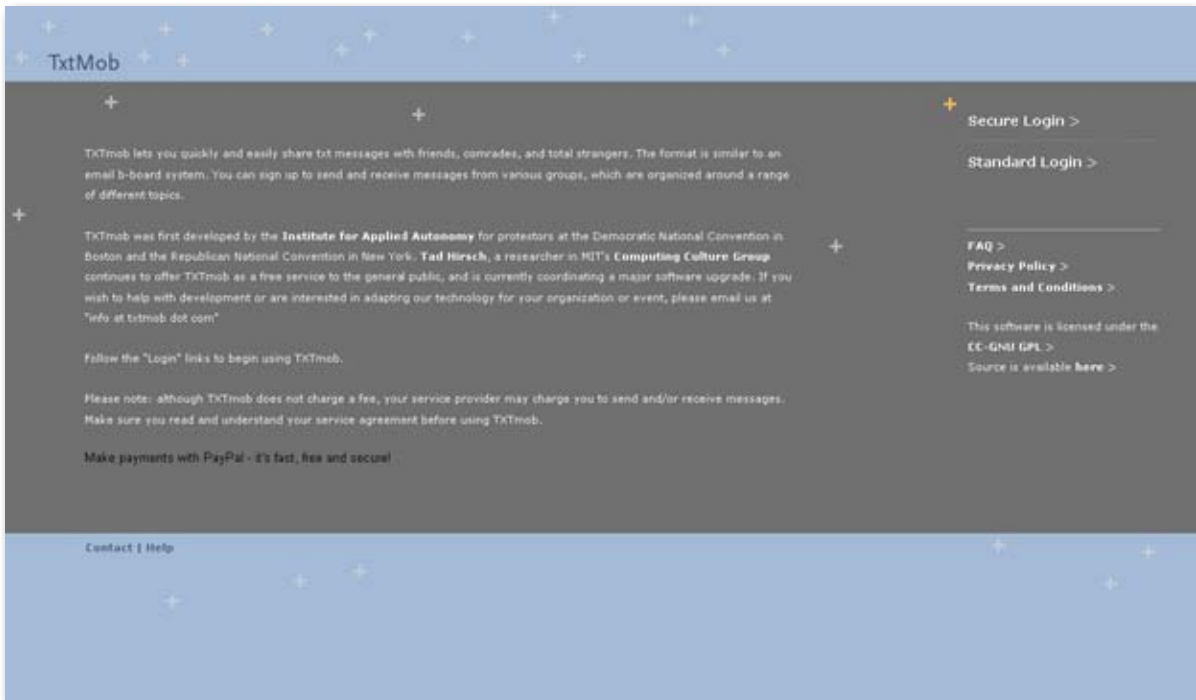


Figure 3-1. TXTmob was an early inspiration for Twitter.

## History

In 2004, a group of technologists and activists created an organizational tool called TXTmob that allowed protesters at the 2004 political conventions to communicate through short text messages that were widely broadcast through SMS to the cell phones of a group of people.

Two years later, web-based podcasting startup Odeo was failing, and its board members decided to spend a day in small groups brainstorming other ideas to “reboot” their business. One group met on a playground; sitting on top of a slide, group member Jack Dorsey proposed an SMS broadcast system similar to and inspired by TXTmob (see Figure 3-1).

And thus Twitter was built in March 2006. The following year, at the South by Southwest Interactive conference, the service reached its first tipping point when usage spiked from 20,000 messages per day to 60,000 messages per day; thousands of conference-goers used Twitter to find one another and to comment on panel sessions in real time. As of May 2007, 111 microblogging systems were in operation, but Twitter is by far the most popular today.

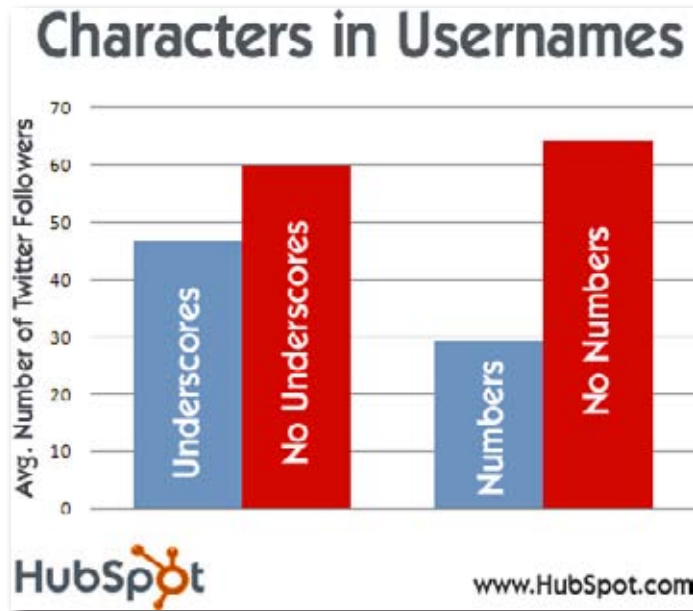


Figure 3-2. Numbers and underscores in your username typically lead to fewer followers.

## Protocol

The microblog is a type of social media site, and although Twitter is the dominant flavor currently, this may not always be true. I'll introduce you to the basic elements of the microblogging format in this section.

## Account

On Twitter, personal and company accounts exist alongside a wide range of fictional and inanimate accounts. Compared to other social media sites, Twitter corporate accounts enjoy greater acceptance. It's OK to set up an account for your company, as well as an account for yourself individually. In fact, my research has shown that "official brand" Twitter accounts are often highly followed.

Many successful Twitterers use their first and last names joined together into one long string as their *handles* (the Twitter term for usernames). Unfortunately, some people (especially those with common names) cannot do this because their first and last names have already been taken, so they resort to a name with underscores and numbers. This means that because I already use @danzarella as my Twitter handle, the next Dan Zarrella to join Twitter might end up picking @dan\_zarrella. This is a bad idea, particularly if you're trying to build an account with lots of followers, as my research has shown that users with underscores and numbers in their names have fewer followers on average (see Figure 3-2).

## Avatar

When people read your *tweets* (Twitter lingo for *posts*), the tweets will be shown next to a small image you have uploaded to Twitter. In most places, this image is a 48×48 pixel square. This picture is how most people will recognize tweets as being yours, so use something that stands out and don't change it frequently. For personal accounts, a good-quality head shot is the best option; for company accounts, your logo will work, as long as it is recognizable in a small size.



Figure 3-3. Certain titles in your bio tend to lead to more followers.

## Bio

When you're creating your account, you'll have 160 characters in a section called "Bio" to explain who you are. This takes very little time to write, and research has shown that accounts with bios have far more followers on average than accounts without bios.

I explored what relationship the content of a user's bio has on the number of followers the user has. Marketers and entrepreneurs tend to have more followers than the rest, as do accounts labeled *official*, *founder*, *expert*, and *author*. I also looked at the relationship between follower numbers and gender and family roles. I found that spouses and parents have more followers than the average, whereas people who refer to themselves by the somewhat diminutive terms *boy* and *girl* have fewer followers. While looking over the large list of commonly occurring words, I noticed that lots of people use emoticons in their bios and nearly all of them have a negative relationship with follower numbers. Figure 3-3 shows a chart of the results of my research on followers by occupation.

## Background

Twitter gives you the ability to design and upload a custom background image for your account page. Some users take advantage of this and add lots of extra information about themselves, including other social sites where they can be found. Since these background images are not clickable, they can be frustrating, especially to new users. The best custom background image to use is one that shows your company's colors or logo to reinforce your brand image.

The screenshot shows the Twitter interface for the user @danzarella. At the top, there are navigation links: Home, Profile, Find People, Settings, Help, and Sign out. The main content area is titled "What are you doing?" with a character count of 140. Below this is a text input field and an "update" button. A "Latest" tweet is shown: "@digg\_community actually it seems to have fixed itself, thanks for reaching out though! about 5 hours ago".

The section "Tweets mentioning @danzarella" displays several tweets:

- digg\_community** @danzarella: Hey Dan, sorry to hear you're having issues with uploading photos. Send us at email at Digg.com/contact & we'll try to help! (about 5 hours ago from web in reply to danzarrella)
- LimeSeed** @danzarella: Good news on Fedor, but the heavyweight talent in Strikeforce is lacking. (about 7 hours ago from HotSuite in reply to danzarrella)
- Matthew\_McGee** @danzarella: Rather not name companies. Webinars consisted of SEO, PPC, Web Analytics, etc. Burretes Luce has been the only helpful one. (about 7 hours ago from web in reply to danzarrella)
- RavenMatt** RT @danzarella: Zombie shooting targets: http://tinyurl.com/ngxa3p (about 8 hours ago from Tweetie)
- mgilreath** RT @danzarella: Zombie shooting targets: http://tinyurl.com/ngxa3p (about 8 hours ago from TweetDeck)
- Matthew\_McGee** @danzarella: Wasn't to be taken personally, I honestly meant it as a generalized response to most webinars. Love all the "grader" tools! (about 8 hours ago from web in reply to danzarrella)

The right sidebar shows the user's profile: danzarrella, with 2,380 following, 13,159 followers, and 6,973 tweets. It also includes a "See-mic" button for a desktop application, a "Home" link, a "Direct Messages" count of 1,010, a "Favorites" section with a search box, and a list of trending topics: #musicmonday, #sharkweek, Wal-Mart, Real Chance, #spread, #dirtymoney, Diddy, Jay-Z, and Bill Clinton.

Figure 3-4. Any tweet containing your username will be shown on your Replies page.



## Following

When you *follow* someone on Twitter, you'll see her tweets in her timeline, and if she follows you back, she'll see yours. The number of followers you have is the number of people who will potentially be exposed to your tweets, so to increase your reach, you should try to get more followers.

It's not a bad idea for those on corporate accounts to follow everyone who follows you; to do otherwise may make your brand appear aloof. Several web-based services will do this for you. Those on personal accounts, on the other hand, should not feel obligated to do this. In fact, my research shows that Twitterers who have more followers than people they are following tend to have larger audiences.

When you're first getting started, you can use Twitter's Find People feature to locate people you already communicate with via email to follow. You should also use Twitter search to find people talking about your company, industry, and interests, and make sure to follow them as well.

## Tweeting

The core of Twitter is the tweet: a 140-character or less text message posted to Twitter. The word *tweet* can be used as a noun, as in, "Have you seen this tweet?" and as a verb, as in, "Please tweet this."

Twitter was originally intended as a way for people to answer the question "What are you doing?" And although some people post real-time updates about their lives, it is far more useful for marketers to tweet about new content, offers, and news, as well as respond to questions from other users.

**twitter** Home Profile Find People Settings Help Sign out

**You follow 2,380 people** [add or invite more](#)

User / Name Actions

**Matthew\_McGee**  
 Matt McGee | Orlando  
 @danzarrella Rather not name companies. Webinars consisted of SEO, PPC, Web Analytics, etc. Burrellies Luce has been the only helpful one. about 7 hours ago

**bostonjess**  
 Jessica Richmond | Boston  
 T driver just told us he hoped we had a good ride on the T today. Why yes sir i did. I like nice T operators. about 6 hours ago

**BloggingTweets**  
 New @PremiumWP: ColorMatic Premium WordPress Theme <http://bit.ly/LEpIF> about 1 hour ago

**notsecretscoble**  
 Robert Second Scoble | Half Moon Bay, CA, USA  
 @preblogger more accurately I am unfollowing all the people I followed, not my followers. 11:02 PM Aug 2nd

**prsutherland**  
 Paul Sutherland | Cambridge, MA  
 Laundry -&gt; zipcar -&gt; drums -&gt; shit show at the indo, what a schedule 5:21 PM Aug 2nd

**Name** Dan Zarrella  
**Location** Boston  
**Web** <http://danzarrell.com>  
**Bio** Social and Viral Marketing Scientist. I work at HubSpot.

2,380 following 13,159 followers

Tweets 6,973

Favorites

Following

View All...

Figure 3-5. You see the tweets of people you follow in your friends timeline.

## Replies

Conversations on Twitter are conducted through “@” replies. When you include “@*username*” in a tweet, where *username* is the name of the person you’re talking to, it will show up in that person’s Replies tab. Likewise, you can see who has mentioned your name by clicking on the “@*username*” link when you’re logged in to Twitter (seen earlier in Figure 3-4). If a tweet starts with an @ sign, only people who are following both you and the person you tweeted will see it in their *friends timeline* (see Figure 3-5). Replies such as this are still public if someone views your Twitter stream specifically or uses Twitter search.

To seem approachable and genuinely interested in conversation, you should respond to as many messages as you can. A good way to keep an eye on this is to look at your stream and count the percentage of your tweets that are replies versus those that are not.

## Retweets

Retweets are the most powerful mechanisms for marketers on Twitter. If I tweet something, my followers will see it. If you are following me and you copy and paste what I’ve posted verbatim to your Twitter stream, your followers will see it, and one of them may also retweet it. This way, a message can spread virally through Twitter, reaching tens or hundreds of times as many people as it would if only a single person tweeted it (see Figure 3-6). It can be useful to ask your followers to retweet something you’ve posted (but do so in moderation).

The popular Twitter client TweetDeck has a retweet button, so it has defined a kind of de facto standard format for retweeting. Many people also add their own thoughts at the end of a retweet. The most commonly accepted retweet format is as follows:

RT @*username*: Original Tweet (Your Take)



*Figure 3-6. Asking for retweets works.*



*A Twitter client is a piece of software that makes it easier to use Twitter. I will discuss this in more detail in the Clients section on page 51.*

Retweeting was not invented by the Twitter creators; rather, it was popularized by Twitter users. As such, there is no single set of guidelines for how to retweet correctly, but here are a few points to get you started:

- Do not start the retweet with an @ sign.
- Try to credit at least the original user who posted the tweet. If you have room, also try to credit the person whose retweet you saw.
- The most common retweet format is *RT: @username*. Typically, this is reserved for the original poster.
- If the original tweet included a call to action (such as “please retweet”), try to keep that in your retweet.
- If the original tweet has a link in it, keep it there.
- Try to keep as much of the original tweet intact as possible, but it is acceptable to add your take on it (especially at the end, in parentheses).

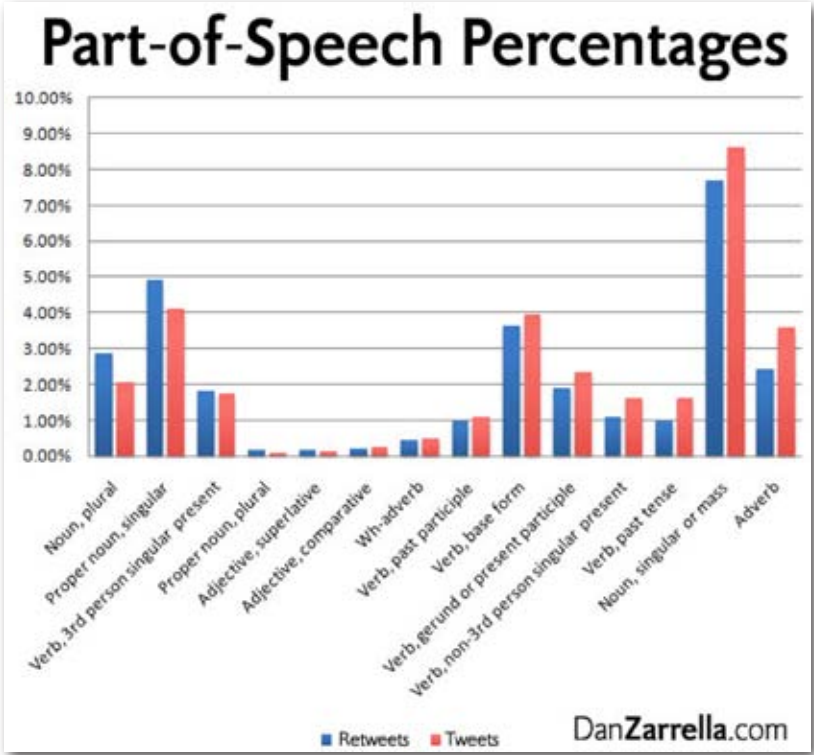


Figure 3-7. Retweets are noun heavy and use third-person verbs.

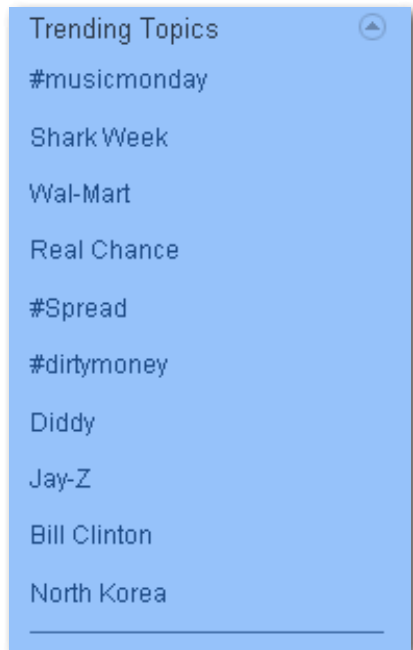
Because of the power of a retweet, I've done extensive research to understand what types of tweets get retweeted most often. At the time of this writing, it is impossible to predict what will definitely get retweeted, but I've found a few characteristics that can lead to more retweets:

- Between 11:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. EST is the most popular time for retweeting.
- Asking for the retweet—by explicitly saying “please retweet”—sounds cheesy, but it works. But don't ask every time.
- Most retweets contain a link, many more than nonretweet updates.
- Retweets tend to contain more nouns and third-person verbs than nonretweets (see Figure 3-7).
- Talking about yourself won't get you retweeted very much.
- Posting about social media, Twitter itself in particular, will get you retweets.

## Direct Messages

*Direct messages* (DMs) are the private messages of Twitter. If I'm following you, you can DM me, and only if you're following me back can I DM you in reply. Twitter's default behavior sends DM notifications to the recipient's email inbox, so treat DMs as you would treat normal email: no spamming.

Several web tools are available to set up what are called *auto-DMs*, where your account automatically sends a DM to everyone who follows you, typically with a greeting and a link to your site. Most Twitter users consider auto-DMs annoying, so avoid them.



*Figure 3-8. Trending topics are now displayed on the main Twitter interface.*



## Trending Topics

Twitter has developed an algorithm that tracks mentions of words and phrases up to three words long, and highlights those that are the most talked about at any given point in time. You'll find this as a top 10 list in the righthand column of your Twitter page. Popular events, news, and memes generally make up these trending topics (see Figure 3-8). If your company's name appears in this list, it can drive a significant amount of buzz and awareness, but the actual number of new followers or traffic produced is often surprisingly low. A better way to use trending topics is as a barometer for what the Twitter community is currently interested in and talking about.

## Hashtags

To connect ideas and conversations into a cohesive stream in Twitter's otherwise free-form landscape, people often use *hashtags*. Simply a word preceded by the pound or number sign (#), a hashtag is used to indicate that a certain tweet is about the same topic as every other tweet using the same tag. In many Twitter clients, clicking on a hashtag will bring you to a search for that term. In the Twitter search results, you can see the entire conversation that used that tag in real time.

Popular uses of hashtags include social media campaigns, news, political events and issues, and conferences. They help unify topics that might be discussed with a handful of different words. Tweets about the Boston Red Sox, for example, could include the words *Bo Sox*, *Sox*, or *Red Sox*; using *#RedSox* keeps it all organized.

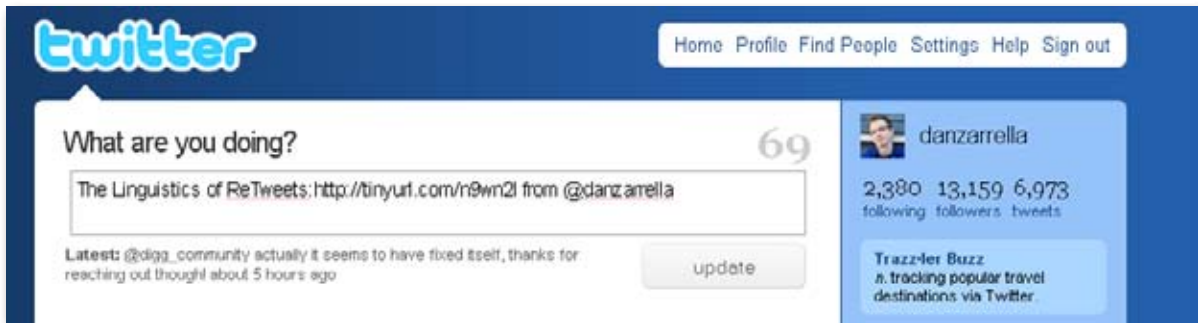


Figure 3-9. To share URLs, you should shorten them with a URL shortening service.

## Shortened URLs

Since each tweet has a 140-character limit, space is at a premium. URLs tend to be fairly long and take up too much space in a tweet, so a handful of services have been developed that allow you to shorten links. With these services, you enter a URL, and then the service returns a much shorter version that redirects visitors to the original address (see Figure 3-9).

These shorteners take one of two forms: pre-Twitter and post-Twitter. Pre-Twitter shorteners, such as Tinyurl.com, typically produce longer URLs than other services and do not allow you to count the number of times your link has been clicked. Most post-Twitter services, such as bit.ly, do track clicks. Here's a brief explanation of a handful of URL-shortening services:

### TinyURL (<http://TinyURL.com>)

One of the earliest URL shorteners, TinyURL is still the most popular. It does not offer click tracking, but it does have a bookmarklet for easy shortening.

### Bit.ly (<http://bit.ly>)

The default shortener for Twitter.com and TweetDeck, bit.ly allows you to create an account and analyze the number of clicks your short URLs are getting.

### Ow.ly (<http://ow.ly>)

Ow.ly is integrated into the HootSuite application, which allows click tracking as well as tweet scheduling.

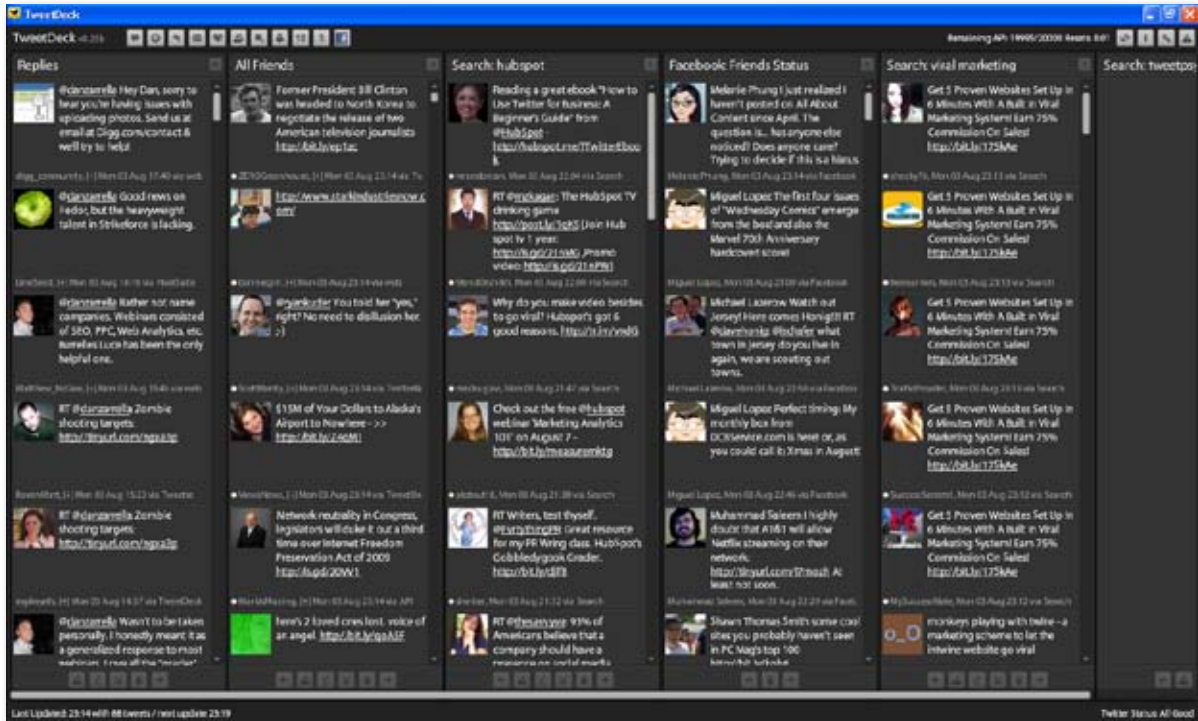


Figure 3-10. TweetDeck allows you to manage lots of followers and friends.

# Clients

Twitter was originally built for messaging from mobile phones via SMS, and although the website is the most popular Twitter interface right now, hundreds of third-party applications are available that add more features for tweeting. Some of these applications make it easier to manage lots of followers or to update your tweets from your phone. Here is a sampling of these applications:

## TweetDeck

My favorite Twitter client and the most popular application, TweetDeck (see Figure 3-10) offers features that simplify managing lots of followers, such as groups, searches, and Twitpic integration. TweetDeck is free and runs on Adobe Air, so you can use it on Mac, Windows, and many types of Linux machines.

## Tweetie

Tweetie is an application for Macs and iPhones. The Mac software has a free version that is ad supported, as well as a paid version. The iPhone software can be purchased through Apple's App Store. Both the Mac and iPhone versions can handle multiple accounts and support threaded reply and direct message conversations.

## Twhirl

Twhirl is another Adobe Air desktop application. It includes a spellchecker and is designed to be very simple and easy to use, making it a good client for new Twitter users. Power users may find it too limiting, however.

## HootSuite

HootSuite is my favorite web-based Twitter client. It allows teams to manage single (or multiple) accounts, and it includes functionality to schedule tweets to be posted in the future. It is integrated with the Ow.ly URL shortener, and offers extensive analytics regarding clicks and mentions of your brand.

## Takeaway Tips

- Microblogging is a quick and easy way to get into social media and promote your content.
- Set up your account for optimal following and tweeting, with a good avatar and an optimized bio.
- Follow people you already know, and search for people who tweet about your interests and follow them.
- Twitter is all about two-way conversations; engage with people, don't just broadcast.
- Ask for retweets (politely) to get them.
- Monitor the trending topics list to check the pulse of the Twittersphere.
- Use Twitter clients that help you manage your account on your desktop and mobile device.

# Acknowledgments

---

This book would not have been possible without the help of a lot of people, and I'm sure I'm going to forget some names.

First, I would like to thank Pete Cashmore, Brett Tabke, Luther Lowe, Tara Kirchner, and Jennifer Zesztu for their valuable insights and inside looks into their businesses. Sharing the experiences, opinions, challenges, and successes they have encountered over the years provided me with a unique perspective on how social media can, and should, be used—as well as how it shouldn't.

Thanks also to Laurel Ruma (@laurelatoireilly), Rick Burnes (@rickburnes), Alison Driscoll (@alisond), Matt Robinson (@mrobins), Samantha Strauss (@sfsam22), JD Lasica (@jdlasica), Tristan Walker (@tristanwalker), and Jordyne Wu (@jordyne) for their obsessive yet ultimately helpful edits, suggestions, criticisms, and comments. Everyone needs an editor, and I was lucky enough to have so many who excel in their specialties and never scrimp on feedback.

Last but not least, thanks to @bwhalley, @ellieeille, @mvolpe, @kylepaice, @dharmesh, @abdinoor, @karenrubin, @bsimi, @tedChris, @ed, @guykawasaki, @briansolis, @GabVaz, @eddiehebert, @webaddict, @yourfriendEVAN, @TheRealBenSmith, @YoavShapira, @SharonFeder, @adamhirsch, @tamar, @msaleem, @joselinmane, @repcor, and countless others who have helped me in one way or another. Every interaction went into this book, in some way.

And of course, thank you to my mother, sister, girlfriend, and BJ for putting up with me all these years.





# Index

## Numbers

2Channel, 149  
4Chan, 149

## A

Abrams, Jonathan, 55  
Alltop.com, 195  
Amazon, 133  
AOL, 55  
archives, 17–18  
AsianAvenue.com, 55  
avatars, 35  
    Second Life, 177

## B

BackType Blog, 187  
Ballet Pixelle theatre, 181  
Berners-Lee, Tim, 147  
Bic pen, 5  
big-boards.com, 159  
Bit.ly, 49  
BlackPlanet.com, 55  
Blendtec, 7  
    “Will It Blend” series, 7

Blogger, 11, 25  
BlogHer, 195  
blogrolls, 19  
Blog RSS Feed Reader, 69  
blogs, 3, 9–30  
    archives, 17–18  
    Blogger, 11, 25  
    breaking news, 27–28  
    building an audience, 30  
    CAPTCHA, 15  
    categories, 17–18  
    comments, 15–16  
    content strategies, 27–29  
    controversy, 29  
    history, 11  
    hosted versus self-hosted,  
        23  
    how-to’s, 29  
    HubSpot, 25  
    links, 19  
    list posts, 29–30  
    LiveJournal, 11  
    Mashable, 13  
    “God Lists”, 13

microblogging (see  
    microblogging)  
Movable Type, 25  
news, 27  
    permalinks, 15–16  
    pingbacks, 19  
    platforms, 21–25  
    posts, 13  
    protocol, 13–21  
    RSS, 21  
    subscribing to, 21–22  
    tags, 17  
    Takeaway Tips, 30  
    themes, 17–18  
    trackbacks, 19  
    TypePad, 25  
    WordPress, 23, 25  
BoardReader.com, 159, 187  
BoardTracker.com, 159, 187  
bookmarking (see social  
    news and bookmarking)  
bounce rates, 209  
brands and social media  
    marketing, 3–5

breaking news, 115  
bulletin board systems  
    (BBSs), 53  
Burger King, Facebook, 3

## C

campaigns versus ongoing  
    strategy, 197  
CAPTCHA, 15  
Care2, 129  
Cashmore, Pete, 13, 23, 27  
categories, 17–18  
Citysearch, 133, 135, 137,  
    145  
Classmates.com, 55  
Clicky, 223  
closed-loop marketing  
    analytics, 207  
Comcast, Twitter, 5  
comments, blogs, 15–16  
CompuServe, 55  
content management  
    system (CMS), 9  
controversy, 29, 117

copyright licenses, 93  
Creative Commons, 93  
CTA (call to action), 201  
conversion-based, 203

## D

Delicious, 127, 189  
strategy and tactics, 199  
Dell, 3  
demographic research, 205  
developerWorks, 3  
Dickson, Tom, 7  
Digg, 3, 105, 111, 117,  
117–119, 187  
HubSpot, 7  
digital asset optimization  
(DAO), 81  
direct messages (DMs), 45  
Domino's Pizza, 193  
YouTube, 5  
Dorsey, Jack, 33  
Drupal, 169

## E

earned media, off-site  
metrics, 221  
Edwards, Blake, 133  
Eliason, Frank, 5  
Elite Yelp Squads, 143

engagement metrics,  
209–210  
eyeball-based metrics, 211,  
213

## F

Facebook, 59, 67–69  
Blog RSS Feed Reader, 69  
Burger King, 3, 5  
Causes application, 65  
Coca-Cola page, 67  
group, 63  
HubSpot, 7  
inbox, 61  
Obama, Barack, 5  
off-site metrics, 215  
page metrics, 215  
Pink Cake Box, 7  
privacy settings, 69  
Static FBML, 69  
strategy and tactics, 199  
The Twitter App, 69  
Facemash, 55  
FeedBurner, 211  
Fishkin, Rand, 109  
flaming, 157, 165  
Flash MX, 79  
Flickr, 3, 81, 89–95  
Creative Commons  
license, 93

home page, 89  
Obama, Barack, 5  
other features, 95  
photos, 91  
Pink Cake Box, 7  
profile, 91  
forums, 3, 147–170  
2Channel, 149  
4Chan, 149  
big-boards.com, 159  
boardreader.com, 159  
boardtracker.com, 159  
engaging, 161–169  
flaming, 157, 165  
history, 147  
InboundMarketing.com,  
169  
inbox, 157  
Invision Power Board, 167  
lurking, 151  
metrics, 219  
moderators and  
administrators, 153  
off-site metrics, 219  
phpBB, 169  
post number metrics, 219  
posts, 151  
private messages (PMs),  
157  
profiles, 151

protocol, 149–157  
reputation, 155  
reputation metrics, 219  
research, 159  
rules, 161  
signatures, 155  
starting your own, 165–169  
Takeaway Tips, 170  
threads, 153  
trolls, 157, 165  
vBulletin, 167  
Friendster, 55

## G

games, 115  
Google Alerts, 189  
Google Analytics, 209, 223  
eyeball-based metrics, 213  
Google Blog Search, 19  
Google News, 187  
Google News search, 221  
Google Reader, 187  
Google Video, 187

## H

Hacker News, 129  
Hall, Justin, 11  
headlines, 109–110  
HootSuite, 51

HotOrNot, 133  
HubSpot, 7, 25, 223  
    closed-loop marketing  
    analytics, 207

## I

IBM, 3  
    Ballet Pixelle theatre, 181  
    Second Life, 181  
IceRocket Blog, 187  
IdeaStorm website, 3  
IFILM.net, 79  
InboundMarketing.com, 169  
Insider Pages, 145  
instant message (IM) away  
    messages, 66  
Intermix Media, 55  
Invision Power Board, 167

## J

Jay-Z, 75  
journals, 11  
Judy's Book, 145

## K

Kirchner, Tara, 89  
Kirtsy, 129, 195  
Kryptonite bike locks, 5

## L

Linden dollars, 175  
Linden Lab, 175  
LinkedIn, 3, 59, 71–73  
    Answers, 73, 189  
    HubSpot, 7  
    Introductions, 71  
    Obama, Barack, 5  
    off-site metrics, 215  
    Recommendations, 73  
    strategy and tactics, 199  
Linkerati, 109  
links, 19  
list posts, 29–30  
lists, 115, 135  
LiveJournal, 11  
LOLCats, 149  
Lowe, Luther, 139  
lurking, 151

## M

Mashable, 13, 23  
    “God Lists”, 13  
Match.com, 55  
media sharing, 3, 77–102  
    digital asset optimization  
    (DAO), 81  
Flickr  
    Creative Commons  
    license, 93

    other features, 95  
    photos, 91  
    profile, 91  
    history, 79  
off-site metrics, 217  
organic content, 83  
protocol, 79–83  
SlideShare, 97–99  
    home page, 100  
    other features, 101  
    presentations, 99  
    registration form, 97  
tags, 81  
Takeaway Tips, 102  
YouTube, 83–89  
    channels, 83  
    embedding videos, 87  
    honors lists, 87  
    videos, 85  
Metaverse, 173  
metrics, 207–221  
    bookmarking sites, 217  
    engagement, 209–210  
    forums, 219  
    goal setting, 221  
    off-site, 213–221  
    on-site, 207–213  
    review sites, 217  
    SlideShare, 217  
    social news sites, 217

    software, 223  
    subscriber, 211  
    Takeaway Tips, 224  
    YouTube, 217  
microblogging, 3, 31–52  
    protocol, 35–49  
    Takeaway Tips, 52  
    Twitter (see Twitter)  
MiGente.com, 55  
monitoring, 187–193  
Motrin, 5  
Movable Type, 25  
MySpace, 55, 59, 73–75  
    bands and music artists, 75  
    blogging feature, 75  
    bulletin, 75  
    group, 63  
    inbox, 61  
    Jay-Z, 75  
    Obama, Barack, 5  
My Starbucks Idea site, 3

## O

Obama, Barack, 5  
Odeo, 33  
off-site metrics, 213–221  
    earned media, 221  
    Facebook, 215  
    LinkedIn, 215

off-site metrics (*continued*)  
media-sharing sites, 217  
review sites, 217  
Second Life, 219  
social news and  
  bookmarking sites, 217  
Twitter, 213, 215  
Ofoto, 79  
on-site metrics, 207–213  
organic content, 83  
Ow.ly, 49

## P

page views per visit, 209  
permalinks, 15–16  
Photobucket, 79  
photos, 91, 117  
phpBB, 169  
pingbacks, 19  
Pink Cake Box, 7  
post number metrics, 219  
posts, 13  
  forums, 151  
presentations, 99  
privacy, 66  
private messages (PMs),  
  61, 157  
Prodigy, 55  
public messages, 61

## Q

Quantcast, 195

## R

Radian6, 191  
RateMyProfessors.com,  
  133, 137  
ratings and reviews,  
  131–146  
  Amazon, 133  
  Citysearch, 133, 135, 137,  
  145  
  history, 133  
  HotOrNot, 133  
  Insider Pages, 145  
  Judy's Book, 145  
  lists, 135  
  protocol, 135–137  
  RateMyProfessors.com,  
  137  
  responding, 137  
  search, 135  
  sock puppets, 135  
  Superpages, 137, 145  
  Takeaway Tips, 146  
  TripAdvisor, 137, 145  
  Yelp, 133, 137, 139,  
  139–143  
  badges and stickers, 141

Elite Yelp Squads, 143  
offers and  
  announcements, 139  
  unlocking pages, 139  
reciprocity, 115  
Reddit, 3, 121, 121–123,  
  187  
  HubSpot, 7  
reputation metrics, 219  
responding to negative  
  comments, 193  
return on investment (ROI),  
  205, 207  
retweets, 41–45  
review sites, 3  
  metrics, 217  
Rickrolling, 149  
Rosedale, Philip, 173, 175  
RSS, 21

## S

Scout Labs, 189, 191  
search, 135  
Second Life, 3, 171, 173,  
  175–183  
  American Apparel store,  
  183  
  avatars, 177  
  Ballet Pixelle theatre, 181

groups, 177  
Linden dollars, 175  
metrics, 219  
Obama, Barack, 5  
real estate, 177  
search functionality, 179  
sign-on screen, 175  
SLurl (Second Life URL),  
  181  
  strategy and tactics, 199  
  Takeaway Tips, 184  
  teletouration, 179  
  XStreetSL.com, 183  
SEOmoz, 109  
Shutterfly, 79  
signatures, 155  
SlideShare, 3, 97–99  
  home page, 100  
  metrics, 217  
  other features, 101  
  presentations, 99  
  registration form, 97  
  strategy and tactics, 199  
SLurl (Second Life URL),  
  181  
small business, 7  
Snow Crash, 173  
social bookmarking and  
  voting sites, 3

- social media marketing
    - big brands and, 3–5
    - defined, 1–3
    - small business, 7
  - SocialMention.com, 187
  - social networking, 53–76
    - application programming interfaces (APIs), 65
    - connecting, 59
    - events, 65
    - groups, 63
    - history, 53
    - photos, 63
    - privacy, 66
    - private messaging, 61
    - profiles, 57
    - protocol, 57–66
    - public messages, 61
    - status updates, 66
    - Takeaway Tips, 76
  - social networks, 3
  - social news and
    - bookmarking, 103–130
    - breaking news, 115
    - Care2, 129
    - content formats, 115–116
    - controversy, 117
    - Delicious, 127
    - Digg, 105, 111, 117, 117–119
    - games, 115
    - Hacker News, 129
    - headlines, 109–110
    - history, 103–105
    - Kirtsy, 129
    - Linkerati, 109
    - lists, 115
    - metrics, 217
    - photos, 117
    - popularity, 111
    - power users, 113
    - profiles, 105
    - protocol, 105–117
    - reciprocity, 115
    - Reddit, 121, 121–123
    - Sphinn, 129
    - StumbleUpon, 125
    - submitting content, 107, 113
    - Takeaway Tips, 130
    - timing, 113
    - Tip'd, 129
    - videos, 117
    - voting, 107
    - voting badges, 107
  - sock puppets, 135
  - software, metrics, 223
  - Sphinn, 105, 129
  - Spitzer, Elliot, 55
  - Starbucks, 3
  - Static FBML, 69
  - Stephenson, Neal, 173
  - sticky CTAs, 201
  - strategy and tactics, 185–204
    - call to action (CTA), 201
    - campaigns versus ongoing strategy, 197
    - conversion-based CTAs, 203
    - Delicious, 199
    - Facebook, 199
    - Google Reader, 187
    - integration, 199
    - LinkedIn, 199
    - monitoring, 187–193
    - paid monitoring tools, 191–193
    - Quantcast, 195
    - research, 195
    - responding to negative comments, 193
    - Second Life, 199
    - SlideShare, 199
    - sticky CTAs, 201
    - Takeaway Tips, 204
    - Twitter, 199
    - Yahoo! Pipes, 187
    - YouTube, 199
  - StumbleUpon, 125, 189, 195
    - HubSpot, 7
  - submitting content, 107, 113
  - subscriber count, 211
  - subscriber metrics, 211
  - subscribing to blogs, 21–22
  - Sugarloving, 195
  - Superpages, 137, 145
- ## T
- Tabke, Brett, 163
  - tags, 17, 79
    - media sharing, 81
  - Takeaway Tips
    - blogs, 30
    - forums, 170
    - media sharing, 102
    - metrics, 224
    - ratings and reviews, 146
    - Second Life, 184
    - social networking, 76
    - social news and
      - bookmarking, 130
    - strategy and tactics, 204
    - Twitter, 52
    - virtual worlds, 184
  - Technorati, 13, 19, 187

- terms of service (ToS), 115
- themes, 17–18
- The Twitter App, 69
- time on site, 209
- TinyURL, 49
- Tip'd, 129
- trackbacks, 19
- Trackur, 191
- TripAdvisor, 137, 145
- trolls, 157, 165
- TweetDeck, 41, 51
- Tweetie, 51
- tweeting, 39
- TweetMeme, 21, 199
- Twhirl, 51
- Twitter, 187
  - accounts, 35
  - avatars, 35
  - bios, 37
  - clients, 51
  - Comcast, 5
  - custom background image, 37
  - direct messages (DMs), 45
  - Find People feature, 39
  - following, 39
  - history, 33
  - HubSpot, 7

- IBM, 3
- microblogging, 31–52
- Motrin, 5
- Obama, Barack, 5
- off-site metrics, 213, 215
- Pink Cake Box, 7
- replies, 41
- Replies page, 39
- retweets, 41–45
- strategy and tactics, 199
- Takeaway Tips, 52
- titles in your bio, 37
- trending topics, 47–48
- tweeting, 39
- tweets, 41
- URLs, 49
- usernames, 35
- Williams, Evan, 11
- Zappos, 5
- TwitterCounter.com, 215
- TXMob, 33
- TypePad, 25

**U**

- URLs, shortened, 49
- user-generated content (UGC), 77
- usernames, 35

**V**

- vBulletin, 167
- videos, 85, 117
- virtual worlds, 3, 171–184
  - history, 173
  - Second Life (see Second Life)
  - Takeaway Tips, 184
- voting badges, 107

**W**

- WebmasterWorld, 163
- Webshots, 79
- Whopper Sacrifice, 3
- Williams, Evan, 11
- WordPress, 23, 25
  - themes, 17
- Wright, George, 7

**X**

- XStreetSL.com, 183

**Y**

- Yahoo! Pipes, 187
  - strategy and tactics, 187
- Yelp, 3, 133, 137, 139, 139–143

- badges and stickers, 141
- Elite Yelp Squads, 143
- offers and
  - announcements, 139
  - unlocking pages, 139
- YouTube, 3, 83, 83–89
- Blendtec's "Will It Blend" series, 7
- channels, 83
- Domino's Pizza, 5, 193
- embedding videos, 87
- honors lists, 87
- HubSpot, 7
- IBM, 3
- metrics, 217
- Obama, Barack, 5
- Pink Cake Box, 7
- strategy and tactics, 199
- videos, 85

**Z**

- Zappos, Twitter, 5
- Zeszut, Jennifer, 189
- Zuckerberg, Mark, 55

## Colophon

The cover, heading, and text font is Helvetica Neue.

## About the Author

**Dan Zarrella** has written extensively about the science of viral marketing, memetics, and social media on his own blog and for a variety of popular industry blogs, including Mashable, CopyBlogger, ReadWriteWeb, Plagiarism Today, ProBlogger, Social Desire, CenterNetworks, Nowsourcing, and SEOScoop.

He has been featured in *The Twitter Book* (O'Reilly), the *Financial Times*, the *New York Post*, the *Boston Globe*, *Forbes*, *Wired*, the *Wall Street Journal*, Mashable, and TechCrunch. He was recently awarded Shorty and Semmy awards for social media and viral marketing.

Dan has spoken at PubCon, Search Engine Strategies, Convergence '09, 140: The Twitter Conference, WordCamp Mid Atlantic, Social Media Camp, Inbound Marketing Bootcamp, and the Texas Domains and Developers Conference. He currently works as an inbound marketing manager at HubSpot.