

twittering your way to
tradeshow success

by tim patterson

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Inspiration from **David Meerman Scott**, whom I've had the pleasure of interviewing for a podcast and reading his books where I gleaned great ideas by the truckload....and I will repeat his mantra from his highly successful e-book "The New Rules of Viral Marketing"
http://www.davidmeermanscott.com/documents/Viral_Marketing.pdf

Please feel free to post this on your blog or email it to whomever you believe would benefit from it. Thank you.

Twittering Your Way to Tradeshow Success

How to Make Real Connections with Today's Hottest Social Networking Site

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WHAT IS twitter?

On the face of it, Twitter seems like a simple enough thing: a micro-blogging platform in which you can send out messages of 140 characters or less.

You are able to 'follow' other micro-blog posts on Twitter, known as 'tweets,' and other folks are able to follow you.

Over time, if you consistently follow other people, many will follow you back and it won't be long before you have a built-in readership for many of your posts.

I say 'many' because the more people that follow you, and the more you follow, by it's very nature the ongoing conversation becomes diluted.

Look at it this way: with around seven to eight million Tweepers at this point you must imagine yourself walking through a party. Let's say you have (in round numbers) a thousand followers. At the same time those followers are sending out tweets and following other people by the hundreds and thousands.

So your goal is to join the conversation and send out things that do two things:

1. Show off your personality – which will attract those kinds of people that you WANT to follow you.

2. Send out tweets on a measured basis that assist in bringing people into your world, whether that means growing your blog readership, building your e-mail list, or attracting potential customers or clients.

Why Use Twitter at All?

From Michael Stelzner's guest post on CopyBlogger titled "How To Use Twitter to Grow Your Business" - <http://www.copyblogger.com/grow-business-twitter/> - Duct Tape Marketing founder John Jantsch identified three big advantages of Twitter, "(1) I get great insight when I ask questions, (2) let's face it, I get traffic and (3) people on Twitter spread my thoughts to new places."

More later on how you can use Twitter for business (time-investing) vs. pleasure (time-wasting), how the two purposes mix, and how other people are using it around events, tradeshow and conferences. For now, if you haven't signed up for a Twitter account, do so here: <http://twitter.com>.

TIP: People are very emotional about online social networking sites – much more so than a typical 'static' website, or even a blog. They'll say things like "I love Twitter!" or "I can't stand MySpace – it's too cluttered!" When you are beginning your conversations online, keep in mind that there are people out there that will see your tweets, and some will love 'em and some won't. Don't worry about that – just do your best to be yourself, and you'll attract the kind of people that, well, like what you do.

How to Sign Up

If you've signed up for any online service, you'll find the steps familiar:

- Give them your name, e-mail address, username and create a password. Once your e-mail address has been verified you'll be able to fill in the rest of the profile.
- Your profile is one of the most important – and useful – items that Twitter offers. At first glance it may not seem so, but most Twitter users tend to briefly check out the BIO and perhaps even click through to your link before deciding whether or not to follow you. The more people that follow you because of your profile adds to the value of those followers.

So let's make sure that your profile is fleshed out.

You have options to add a picture, a background, a bio and a link to your website.

Name: Your real or assumed name. Does it have to 'real' such as required by Facebook, which requires your real name as terms of service? No.

Twitter Name: This is your unique Twitter handle. When you mention your Twitter name, you'll put the "@" sign in front of it, (such as on your business card or in your e-mail signature file): @tradeshows_guy. And as Twitter notes, "Change

your Twitter user name anytime without affecting your existing updates, @replies, direct messages, or other data. After changing it, make sure to let your followers know so you'll continue receiving all of your messages with your new user name.”

One Line BIO:

Again, this is very useful to let people know what kind of person you are. I've seen goofy, funny, bizarre, normal, useful – all sorts of styles which supposedly told you what you needed to know about that person. You're limited to about 140 characters (double-check), so you may take some time to finesse your BIO to tell what you want in just a few short spaces.

More Info URL:

This is probably the one element that most people do NOT take full advantage of. Sure, you are thinking that you should put in a link back to your blog or main website. And that's a typical, and often useful approach.

However, think about this: the ONLY people who will click that particular link will have found your profile. You're not going to be spreading that link around through any other sources except Twitter. So why not create a custom landing page just for Twitterers?

And think large on this: what can you put on that one page that shows who you are? Sure, you can add to your bio. Yup, you can tell a bit about your home life (that personalizes you). But here's my favorite approach: VIDEO.

Yes, put up a nice video intro that specifically greets those Twitter click-throughs. Make it short and pointed, and invite people to browse your site.

Here's an example of what I did on @tradeshowguy

IE's Twitter Profile



If you landed here it's most likely because you clicked through from our Twitter page at [Twitter.com/tradeshowguy](https://twitter.com/tradeshowguy).

So who is **TradeShowGuy**? It's **Tim Patterson**, the VP of Sales and Marketing for Interpretive Exhibits in Salem, Oregon. You're invited to explore our website and find out more about IE.



Tim is a long-time radio personality, grounded in the Top 40 music of the 70s in radio stations in northwest Oregon. After spending over 25 years on-air he moved to his current position mainly because of his interest in marketing, whether online, on the radio, or via vehicles such as tradeshow and events.

The video is between a minute and two minutes long – long enough to get some useful information in, yet not too long so that people while click away before it's done.

I've received more comments on the customized 'Twitter landing page' since I added the video – and most people say things like “this is the way to do it!” and send more people to view my landing page as a good example of how to do it.

Tip: One way to get someone's attention is to comment (positively of course) on someone's avatar photograph. About once a week I'll spot a new photo that I haven't seen before that shows someone off in a terrific way: a good smile, a great background, with laughing friends, etc. So I'll send off a note like “best avatar smile of the week so far, without a doubt!” In all occasions that I've done that, I've received favorable replies back. In fact, one comment was sent to other Twitter followers with the admonition to do what I was doing!

Location, Language, Email, etc.: just fill 'em in – or leave blank. If left blank, they won't show up on your Twitter home page.

Picture: this – your avatar – can be changed whenever you want by uploading another photo or graphic. I find that a headshot photograph is probably the best,

but there are no hard and fast rules. Many Twitterers who represent a company will often have a company logo, but as often as not they'll just put up a headshot.

Should your headshot be a professional shot, or a snapshot? Again, what works best for you? If you have a good looking professional photograph by all means, use it. But if you have a terrific snapshot, use that.

Change Background Image:

A custom background is also easy to do – and something you plan to do shortly after you set up your account. If you have experience with a graphic program such as PhotoShop, it should be an easy thing to set up a custom graphic background that shows such things as a photo, a website address, perhaps phone number, e-mail etc. When you are looking at other Twitter accounts, make note of the background graphics you like the most. You might even right-click on them, 'view background photo' and then save that photo to your hard drive in a folder so that you can review it or use it for inspiration later.

Devices: If you have a mobile phone that's set up for texting, and you want to be able to sent Tweets while on the move, go ahead and use it. Be aware that your normal text-messaging fees apply.

Who uses Twitter?

If you see news stories about Twitter on the evening news, or in the mainstream media (MSM), often the stories take on a mocking tone. It seems to be good sport to denigrate the new communication tools, especially if the 'average' consumer isn't there yet. So you'll often find news anchors or writers give a condescending wink to Twitter users, implying that such people are wasting their time or lost in another of the endless online social media time-suckers.

Oh, yeah, I'm sure some people are like that. But YOU aren't, right? Because you've got business to take care of, things to do, appointments to set and meetings to attend.

But millions of people are on Twitter with tens of thousands jumping on every day to see what the fuss is.

In any industry you can find thought leaders that are on Twitter, and find that it is one of the most useful ways to keep in touch, be in the know and spread messages.

If you do a search for 'Twitter Power' you'll find some interesting things:

David Pogue from the NYT calls *Twitter*, "*powerful, useful, addictive and fascinating*" and even listed a set of rules – his rules that were formed after using

Twitter for awhile – and came to the conclusion that you can use Twitter however you want. Promote your blog, pass on jokes, research, bounce questions to your followers, track buddies and famous people, plug your products, find deals on cheap flights – but ultimately there comes a time when it makes sense to shut it down because it can be an Internet Time Drain.

David’s column on Twitter:

[http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/12/technology/personaltech/12pogue.html?
_r=1&ref=personaltech](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/12/technology/personaltech/12pogue.html?_r=1&ref=personaltech)

Using Twitter for Pleasure

Twitter can definitely be a fun time-waster. And under the right circumstances, there’s nothing wrong with that. Of course, you get to decide when you’re doing something useful or just wasting time! You can follow celebrities and read their sometimes clever posts; you can read the “everyone” stream which gives you the latest public streams from all of the uses.

Here’s what I’ve found while trolling Twitter for fun:

- Links to cool articles, photographs, songs, blog postings and fun videos that I would have never stumbled across on my own

- Links to stupid and inane videos, political rants and dumb postings
- Obscure short postings that make absolutely no sense
- Tweets in another language that of course make no sense to me

In other words, it's like being at a big international party where each person is tossing out short concentrated bursts of conversation.

The good thing is that you can choose who to follow and what to read.

Well, maybe that's the bad thing to. You have to choose!

Searching via Twitter

While Twitter's search function hasn't replaced Google, blog posts and online stories seem to show that more and more people are foregoing Google and searching through Twitter for things they might have previously searched for on Google.

Depending on what you're searching for, it might make sense to see what's going on in the Twitter conversation.

For instance, I just searched for "Obama AIG" to see what the chatter is about the President and the flap over the millions of dollars of bonuses being paid to AIG executives. As you might imagine, there are dozens of links to stories, articles, blog postings, cartoons and more. Chances are that by clicking through to a

handful of these links you'll get a good measure of what the public's reaction is to the situation.

If you're searching for hard data, or static websites it may make sense to use Google. But with the amount of posts going through Twitter, doing a search there may bring up stuff that Google simply won't find.

Search here at <http://search.twitter.com>.

What about Twitter's **Advanced Search** function?

This is a good way to find people, search for phrases, localize your search, search for tweets by dates, with positive or negative attitudes and more. To get to the advanced search function, just click on 'advanced search' from the main Twitter search page.

WHAT TO TWEET?

Now that you're set up to Tweet, what do you tweet? What content do you consider when posting?

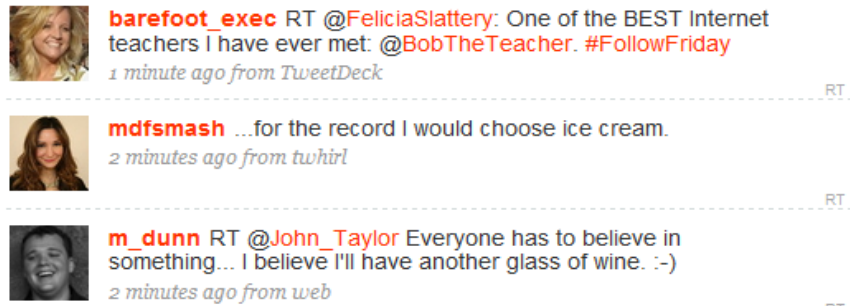
Before jumping in too deep or thinking too much, let's back up and get the 30-mile high view of Twitter.

Down below on the surface of the Twitter planet are millions of users. Some are heavy users, sending out hundreds of tweets in a short time. Others check in every few days and post a handful of tweets. Others still don't know what they're doing and could be considered as part of the sideline.

Imagine a giant party where hundreds of thousands of people are spouting out short, 140-character-or-less thoughts. At such a party, you could well imagine that a large percentage of what you see and hear is of no interest to you. Some might be of interest. Or, depending on your outlook and attitude, perhaps almost all of it is interesting to some point.

Some people will be heavily pushing products and affiliate links. Internet marketers typically do this – even the seasoned vets, probably because with enough followers they're going to get something out of it. But if you're not into what they're pushing, you'll probably end up either unfollowing them or not bothering to read what they post.

Others will bounce short personal notes back and forth. Witness these few snippets:



To add one more piece of information to our perspective, **barefoot_exec**, Carrie Wilkinson has over 35,000 followers; **mdfsmash**, Michelle DeForest has about 1400 followers and **m_dunn** – Matt Dunn - has about 1200 followers. So all have been active for some time but Carrie has obviously attracted thousands of followers through her business, blogs, tweets and connections.

Don't draw too many conclusions from one post, though. But still, it's worth putting this in context:

Since I've been following Carrie Wilkerson for several months, I know she's active (about 20,000 posts as of this writing), successful and very conversational with her tweets. Let's take a look at a handful of her recent tweets – and the reason I pick her is because if she's got 35,000 followers, has a successful business and spends a lot of time on Twitter she's doing something right – which makes her a good Tweeter to model:

@craigballantyne OMGoodness...you know I do!! Thank you SO MUCH

about 2 hours ago from TweetDeck in reply to craigballantyne

@mikefilsaime hey! watched Burn after Reading...made me think of your newsletter!!

about 3 hours ago from mobile web

RT @micheledeville: RT @sandeepjain for every minute you are angry you lose 60 seconds of happiness!

about 4 hours ago from TweetDeck

Have you introduced people in your email list, twitter list or rolodex to each OTHER? #FollowFriday tip

about 4 hours ago from TweetDeck

Almost every post is either a reply (using the '@' symbol sends the reply but lets everyone see the post), a tip, or a RT (re-tweet of someone else's post).

She's consciously connecting with people in a regular way, talking to a lot of different people and offering useful tips. If you just dropped in and saw some of the posts, you probably wouldn't know the context, such as a quick 11-word reply. But Twitter gives you the ability to go back and follow the conversation (for the most part). By clicking on the "in reply to..." link you can go back to the post that she responded to.

Tip: Follow people that interest you. Send out tweets with links that are interesting to you, whether a blog post, news story, video or something out of left field. If it's of interest to you, chances are someone who also finds it

interesting will click through. Simply put: be yourself. Add to the conversation. Reply to interesting posts. Thank people for sending out something cool. Don't be heavy-handed with your marketing tactics, but don't be afraid to direct people to a new blog post or a terrific product that you're either representing or producing.

Re-Tweet Tip: If a post really interesting to someone, they may re-tweet it to their list of followers. While re-tweeting is generally seen as a good thing, some folks complain that the re-tweets are simply adding to the overall noise of Twitter and clogging it up. There are even tools in place to track re-tweets. One way of measuring the value of your tweets is to know how many times they're re-tweeted:

<http://www.twitip.com/4-retweet-tools-and-trackers/>

<http://www.techcrunch.com/2008/12/29/its-not-how-many-followers-you-have-that-counts-its-how-many-times-you-get-retweeted>

Replies and Direct Messages

We covered Tweets Re-tweets, so let's get into **Replies** and **Direct Messages**.

To **reply** to someone, simply put the "@" in front of their Twitter handle, like this:

@tradeshowguy

When you post a tweet as a reply – and you can do it to multiple people in one post – the tweets are on the public timeline, which means that anyone can see them.

A reply is NOT private! Don't send personal information, such as phone numbers, etc., that you don't want the whole world to see.

Direct Message: This is a private message, and can only be sent to someone who's following you. If you try to send a direct message to someone you're following, but they are NOT following you, the message won't be allowed.

To send a direct message, click on the "Direct Messages" link on the right hand column on your Twitter home page. At that point you'll be shown the following drop-down box, which will give you the option of choosing one of your followers:

Send a direct message. 140

Unfortunately, so many people have auto-direct messages to new followers, that the Direct Message inbox is usually stuffed with the 'bot' messages that mean nothing. Even though they're well-intentioned, the clutter and noise in your DM inbox can be annoying. Many people have complained about it - and say they're not even bothering to check their direct messages anymore.

Still, if your conversation partner responds to a direct message, it's still a way to get a private message through.

Using Twitter for Business

There is an enormous signal-to-noise ratio on Twitter. Which is to say that nonsense outweighs good stuff by a large margin. So to get past that it behooves you to be able to filter out what is important to you and your business goals.

Before diving in the deep end of the Twitter pond, let's figure out what is important to your business.

Are you:

- Looking for leads?
- Hoping to network?
- Looking to get more subscribers for a newsletter?
- Building your personal / business brand?
- All of the above?

Your objective should be clearly defined before you spend much time on Twitter, other than just getting to know how it works.

The event industry may be one of the easiest industries to use Twitter. You can track events by the use of a “hashtag.” If your objective is to find people that go to an event, just track the usage of the event, follow the conversation and follow people and make an initial contact.

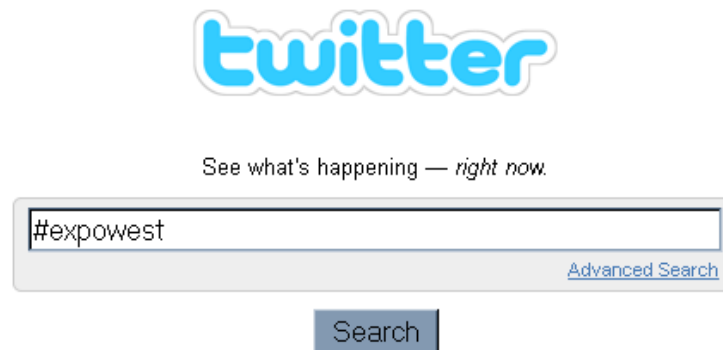
The first place would be Twitter’s own search engine, <http://search.twitter.com>. Here you can find conversations by searching for specific topics or words or hashtags.

Time out! What’s a hashtag?

All right, good point – let’s stop a moment and explain something. There is an entire language that’s quickly built up around Twitter. Some of it seems to be nonsense, but most of it is useful to know if you’re going to dive in and fully engage Twitter.

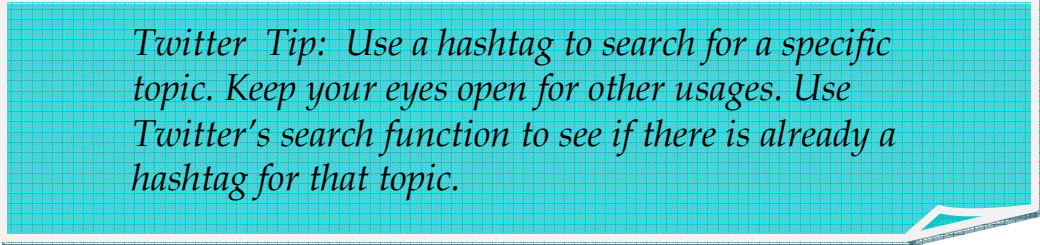
Check the glossary at the end of the book to get a sense of the terms that come up while interacting on Twitter. We'll explain many of the terms you'll see. For now, though, let's concentrate on the term *hashtag* because it's a key to tracking topical conversations.

A hashtag is simply a keyword with a “#” placed before it, such as “#expowest” - so if you wanted to search for anyone that's purposefully communicating about a specific topic, just plunk that term into the search box:



Where do hashtags come from? Basically, you either ask the Twitter community if there's a hashtag set up for a specific topic or event. If there isn't, go ahead and start one. There's no one person or organization that's in charge of determining what hashtag is going to apply to an event.

That's what I did with **#expowest**. Once I figured out that it didn't matter whether there was one or not, if I included that hashtag in all of my tweets related to the Expo West show in Anaheim, others would follow. And they did.



Twitter Tip: Use a hashtag to search for a specific topic. Keep your eyes open for other usages. Use Twitter's search function to see if there is already a hashtag for that topic.

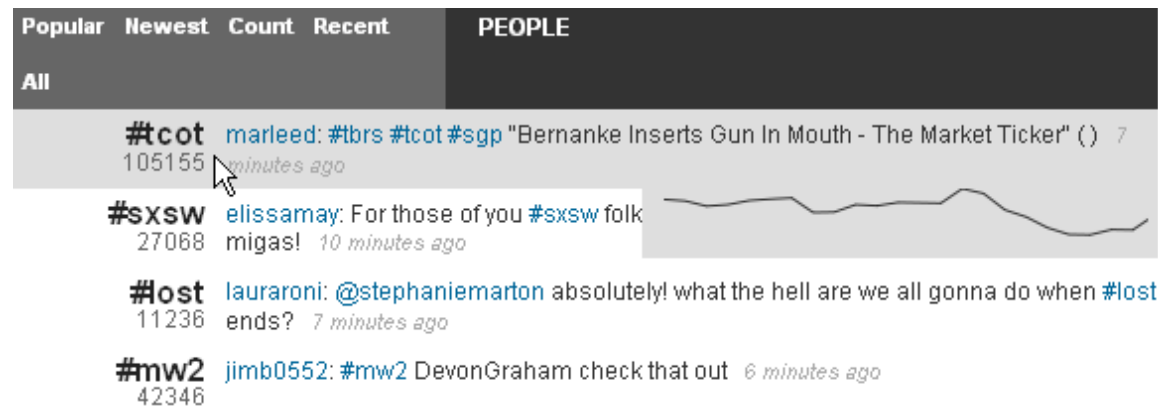
How do you determine what a hashtag means?

Good question. And there's not a simple answer to this. For weeks I couldn't figure out what **#tcot** meant. I searched for it on Twitter but there was no clear answer. I found a site called Hashtag.org that tracked usage of hashtags. But it didn't have definitions.

Finally I stumbled across a tweet that explained it. **#tcot** meant "top conservatives on Twitter" which I took to mean that the poster was either conservative, was drawing attention to something conservative, or was claiming to be one of the quote-unquote 'Top Conservatives on Twitter.'

At the time of this writing, #tcot is the number one most-used hashtag on Twitter, according to Hashtags.org:

<http://hashtags.org/>



In the above screen shot, @tcot is at the top of the trending list. The drop-down trend line below the listing shows how the usage is trending.

Below #tcot you'll see #sxs which is a music and film festival in Texas: South by Southwest. With lots of chatter leading up to and following the event, the hashtag #sxs helps folks track the conversation.

Often you'll find a tweet that offers you a chance to respond with a solid piece of information or an opinion on the matter. By all means, do it. Be yourself!

Twitter Tip: Once you find a hashtag related to your event, you can either follow the person who posted the tweet, or perhaps respond if it's something that you can chime in on. While it's easy to click through to a user and follow them once you know they're involved, it's up to you whether to randomly follow anyone who is conversing about the topic you're interested in. It's probably not a bad idea to read their recent TWEETS, glance at their BIO, click through to their MORE INFO URL and see if they really are someone worth following.

Many times this has happened to me and after a few back-and-forth tweets, one of us has picked up the phone and called to introduce ourselves. It's a great way of taking the next step.

For instance, **@KenNewman** is a tradeshow presenter in San Francisco who ran across some of my postings on Twitter late one night. From there he found a link to all of the newsletters we have posted on our website. He was duly impressed and tweeted about it, using the 'reply' function.

@tradeshowguy I've been at this biz for 25 years Learning I have lots to learn. his insights are blowing me away <http://tinyurl.com/8mnm2> 19 minutes ago from web in reply to tradeshowguy

Which meant that I'd see his tweet the next time I logged on, which happened to be the next morning. I thought the comment was so glowing that I tracked down his number and rang him up.

Turns out Ken and I have a lot in common: both have done radio, some performing (he spent time as an actor, I spent time in rock bands beating the skins) and have both been in the tradeshow industry for some time. It was a great conversation that lasted twenty minutes or so.

But that wasn't all. Ken sent out a blast to his e-mail list mentioning my website with the tradeshow newsletters. Several folks clicked through and subscribed to our newsletter. In our next newsletter I mentioned him and sent folks to check out his company, Magnet Productions.

So now we're patting each other on the back – in public. Nothing serious; we don't have any joint ventures or business arrangements, just one guy plugging another because we got to know each other a bit and liked what we saw.

Since then we've had more conversations; we keep in touch online via Twitter and e-mail, and at some point we'll probably quaff a beer or two face-to-face.

To me, that's the power of Twitter. Without Twitter we never would have met. But now we've got a nice friendly relationship that – who knows? – may lead to referrals, recommendations and new business at some point.

Bottom line: people will do business with people they like. They'll refer their friends and colleagues to people they like. If you're building relationships and giving value, your name will get passed on when the opportunity arises.

How to Get Followers In Your Area of Interest Expertise

Let's say you're in the tradeshow industry. How do you find people in the same industry that could turn into potential partners or clients?

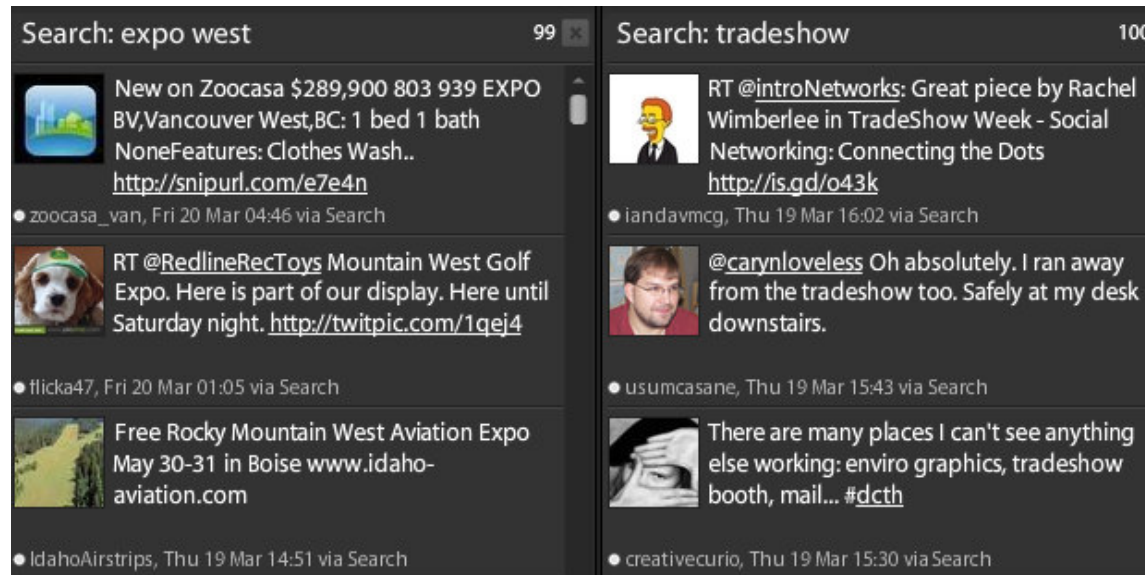
First, make a list of words that describe the industry in general terms. For the tradeshow industry, that might include the following:

- Tradeshow
- Convention
- Event
- Exhibit
- Display
- Booth

This would work for virtually any industry, of course. For example, in the real estate business, you could search for conversations with 'real estate,' 'building,' 'construction,' 'new home,' 'housing,' etc. Search for each term, see who's using

that term, do a little cursory examination of their posting and perhaps their bio. If it appears they're in the industry, click 'follow' so that you can read their tweets on your page. If you happen to follow someone who isn't in the industry, or sends out tweets that are way off-topic and no interest to you, it's easy to un-follow. No harm, no foul, no wrong answers when it comes to following and un-following people.

Twitter Tip: The easiest tool I've seen for this is Tweetdeck. It's an application specifically designed to interact with the Twitter conversation without having to log on to the website. Here's a screenshot of a search I did for both "expo west" and "tradeshaw". As you can see it gives you the latest posts that use the term, as well as who posted. With each posting you can learn more about the person and decide whether to follow them.



The goal is to follow people that you may be able to help, or that may be able to eventually help you. This is a rather wide-ranging question.

To find people going to specific events, search for that particular name, such as “All Things Organic” or “Aluminum 2009” or whatever the show name is. Chances are good you’ll run across a hashtag referring to that show, such as #LTNY for *LegalTech New York* or #expowest for *Natural Products Expo West*. If you don’t find one, I’d suggest you ask the question of your followers, and if that’s not satisfactory, start your own hashtag.

Setting Up a Tweetup at the Tradeshow or Conference

A common happening with event-goers that takes place is a 'Tweetup' or meet-up of Twitters. Or is that Tweeters? Twits? HmMMM.

Anyway you look at it, when you're going to an event and want to meet other Twitterers, either look for or suggest a Tweetup. It helps to know the lay of the land so to speak, so you can suggest a club, bar, coffee shop or other gather place. If not, you might suggest a Tweetup and then ask for someone local to suggest a location.

Next: suggest a time and date for the Tweetup, keep tweeting about it and see who comes!

Yes, Tweetups can be a great place to put a face to a name or Twitter handle. Nothing like person-to-person conversations to strengthen and solidify your online relationship.

No, it doesn't always go according to plan. There may be bumps in the road. At one scheduled Tweetup there were so many people in the hotel lobby where the Tweetup was supposed to be that no matter who I asked I couldn't find anyone who was actually there for it! If I'd have thought of it ahead of time, I might have brought a Twitter nametag or small sign or something to announce my presence to

the other folks there for the Tweetup. It doesn't hurt to have a back-up plan to identify the attendees.

Making it Personal: Meeting the Tweeters at the Tradeshow

Depending on your objectives for the event, it may make sense to meet as many of your fellow Twitterers at the show.

Most exhibitors at a major show will be glad to tweet the location of their booth if you ask, and if they haven't already sent out that information. Compile a list into a small database, arrange by booth numbers, and then spend a couple of hours walking the show.

If you just want to meet and shake hands, nothing wrong with that. It's cool. But if you have a higher motive – such as bringing people into your sales funnel for possible future business – it helps to have something of high perceived value to offer them. For instance, when I first did this I offered the folks I met a complimentary subscription to our company's monthly **Tradeshow Tip Sheet Newsletter** (<http://tradeshowguyblog.com/newsletter>). Now it may not sound like a lot, but to exhibitors it had a high perceived value and almost everyone I talked to wanted me to add them to the list.

You might offer a special report or a white paper that is directed at their industry. Ask for a business card and email address, and send them the document as soon as you can. In fact, if it's waiting for them in their email box when they next check, that shows them that you are on top of it!

Follow up is critical here. You've met them on Twitter. You made the effort to meet them face to face. You have determined that they may be a possible customer someday – or at least be in a position to refer someone to you. Now – make sure your follow up is planned and significant. This is basic customer relations. Your preferred follow up may be a telephone call a week later, an e-mail, a 'tweet' directed to them – whatever you feel is appropriate AND what makes you stand out a bit from the crowd.

My favorite follow up is a hand-written card. It makes an impact that an e-mail can't; means a lot if you follow up the card with a phone call. There are online card-sending tools that make sending out cards a snap – you can send out several cards in a matter of minutes without ever carrying around cards or stamps. My preference is SendOutCards.com (<http://sendoutcards.com/36447>) because it's so easy; they can add a personal signature, an uploaded photo, even a font that is created from your handwriting and more (see disclosure on p. 56).

Creating a Worthwhile Twitter Plan That Doesn't Consume Your Day

Now that you are looking seriously at Twitter as another arrow in your marketing quiver, how do you use it without it sucking your time away from what you should be doing?

First, Twitter CAN be very useful, so get it in your mind that it is something that you SHOULD be doing. But like any online social media marketing tool, it can be overused and yes, it can be a time-waster if you let it.

One of the best ways to learn something is to play with it, try different things, and see what other people are doing. So before diving in headfirst, look around and read up on how other are using Twitter.

One great source is **Mashable.com, the Social Media Guide.**

(<http://mashable.com>) Browse the site a bit and read up on Twitter. You'll gain a lot of useful knowledge in a short amount of time. In fact, if you read just a dozen articles on Twitter at Mashable you'll know more than most people about the micro-blogging service and how you can use it to better effect.

As for how you might plan on using Twitter, here's a suggestion that usually works for me: I log on the morning, spend ten minutes looking for interesting stuff

to re-tweet, send out a few comments, and usually have one or two planned tweets – either a mention of a blog post of mine, another of the 101 Rules of Tradeshow Marketing (an e-book of mine), a podcast promo or something that invites people back to our website.

Then I log off and get to the rest of my morning. At noon, or right before lunch, I'll log on again for ten minutes, read some tweets, send out a few replies or re-tweets – keep the conversation going with folks – and log off.

Finally, before the end of the day, I'll check in for a few minutes and do it all over again. If I feel like it, I'll do it at home for a few minutes at night or early in the morning – always at my schedule and choice.

Overall, it adds up to a few hours a week. Not a bad investment in time as it increases my online profile, brings people to our website and builds relationships with like-minded people.

No doubt a similar plan can do the same for you!

Planning your Tweets for Maximum Effect

So you've got a plan for the show. You're promoting your business, your booth, special features in your booth – but how do you find time to send out tweets while you're busy on the show floor?

It probably makes sense at this point to set up a series of pre-programmed tweets so that you don't have to worry about them during the show, while you're busy dealing with visitors.

One service which can send out pre-programmed posts to Twitter is Tweetlater.com (<http://tweetlater.com>). Create an account, set up your short posts, set the time for release, and from then on it's hands-off.

Why would you want to do this?

Let's imagine the following scenario: you have a number of special prizes or promotions that you're doing in your booth. Maybe a semi-celebrity or booth author is going to appear at a specific time of day.

By having a schedule of specific events in your booth, you can plan the tweets to promote the events. They might look something like this (be sure to include a hashtag so that anyone searching for the event can find your tweet):

#expowest #Johnspopsicles Come by our booth today at 10:15 and pick up a free kiwi-sicle, our newest invention! Cool! Booth 4534

The #expowest hashtag helps searchers find the show, the #johnspopsicles helps them find your company tweets. Set the tweet to go out an hour or so before your event to help drive traffic to your booth.

Part Two: Mini-Case Studies

What are people doing and experiencing in the real world at tradeshow, events and conferences?

Since Twitter is mainly a communications tool, it's no surprise that the main thrust of any event-related or tradeshow-related Twitter is to communicate with attendees and exhibitors. Still, each person contacted that used Twitter had a different agenda, objective or approach to using the tool - and came up with differing results.

In this short round-up, we had a chance to find out how Twitter is being used in the real world:

Name: **Chip Smith**

Company: **SOAR Communications**

Show or Event: **Interbike 2009 and Outdoor Retailer Winter 2009**

Plan or Strategy in Using Twitter: SOAR Communications works with several clients to help them gain publicity, drive traffic to booths and in general promote appearances at shows. President Chip Smith said that during Interbike 2009 they pre-planned tweets and posted them for later release via BrightKit. The online software has since evolved into HootSuite (<http://hootsuite.com/>). Typically

those bits of information are released in 'show dailies' either in printed form or via PDF download. Info contained in the show dailies included booth events, PR kits and other short little blurbs to alert media and show attendees about the show.

A special show Twitter account was set up (<http://twitter.com/orshowlive>) that was then promoted to clients and potential show attendees. Smith says that people were 'slowly catching on to Twitter, but some 300 followers came to the account.'

Hundreds of tweets were sent out during the show, helping to drive interest and steer people to events:

Stanly sends PC bottles to a U.S. recycler, gives Stanley recycled and recyclable mugs in exchange. #15011 or Stanley eCycle Exchange

8:15 AM Jan 25th from BrightKit

Stanley 15011 RuffWear 33061 BlackDiamond 6027 Camelbak 17026 GuyotDesigns 28017 sales benefit Conservation Alliance— donate, get great swag...

8:10 AM Jan 25th from BrightKit

Drop by the Ryders Eyewear Booth #38123 to enter for a trip for two to Vancouver, B.C. including a guided adventure of your choice.

8:05 AM Jan 25th from BrightKit

9:30 a.m.: The Great Verde PR Giveaway. Boulder for great gifts from Metolius, Sierra Designs, Rab and Nikwax. Climbers' Ranch.

7:40 AM Jan 25th from BrightKit

Results: Chip said it's hard to measure specific results, since the technology and awareness of it is so new. But he is convinced that it is a powerful way to foster connections, find people and broadcast information to interested people quickly. He said they've been able to find journalists and connect with them.

"We knew going into the Outdoor Retailer Winter Market show that social media tools, such as Twitter, were new to most attendees and exhibitors, so our expectations as to how many people would sign up to follow the show using Twitter were low. However, we wanted to be proactive and introduce the industry to the benefits of using social media tools. Even though a small percentage of show attendees followed the show using Twitter, we were very happy with the results and learned a lot about how to more effectively implement its use with future shows."

Follow Chip on Twitter: <http://twitter.com/chipatsoar>

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*Name: **Whitney Matthews***  
*Company: **Spiral16***  
*Show or Event: **CMSummit***

*Plan or Strategy in Using Twitter:* According to Whitney, “I use Twitter all the time to connect with new clients. At a recent summit in San Francisco my company monitored Twitter use and found it to be a huge resource for those attending the CMSummit. I often research topics like this as Social Media Manager for my company.

“I've found that if you have a Twitter presence at any trade show, conference or summit someone will be looking for that - and it will give businesses an advantage if they are Tweeting conversationally.

Whitney has also connected with many potential clients on Twitter, and also uses it in the Social Media Club of Kansas City as a primary method of communication.

*Follow Whitney on Twitter:* <http://twitter.com/whitneymathews>

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Name: **Lora Bodmer**

Company: **Deep Communications**

Show or Event: **Action Sports Retailer Expo**

Plan or Strategy in Using Twitter: Lora works with ASR, the Action Sports Retailer Expo, which happens twice a year in San Diego. About 17,000 attendees check out the latest, greatest in surf, skate, snow, swim, moto and youth culture.

“Our events are heavy on events – fashion shows, megaramp demos, seminars, skateboarding contests, surf demo day, premieres – so we use Twitter to keep attendees in touch with all the events as they happen so that they don’t miss a thing,” says Lora.

Follow Lora on Twitter: <http://twitter.com/ASRLive>

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*Name:* **Andrea Cannavina**

*Company:* **Legal Typist, Inc.**

*Show or Event:* **Legal Tech New York**

*Plan or Strategy in Using Twitter:* As a Digital Assistant and ‘Master VA (Virtual Assistant)’ Andrea Cannavina spent a couple of days at Legal Tech New York this year. The communication among attendees at this conference was heavily fortified by the use of Twitter. Andrea said there was even a panel discussion on Twitter. All the tweets on that discussion show up with the hashtag #LTNY.



As Andrea put it, “I met up with one client through Twitter on Monday night and had drinks/dinner; and while at the event, networked with several other service professionals and a few attorney/prospects. I also helped out a legal practice management CEO by meeting up by the coffee display so I could loan him my spare Treo charger (he was very appreciative). I also read what was being twittered live whenever I wanted, just by going to that URL from my desk or Treo.”

Follow Andrea on Twitter: <http://twitter.com/legaltypist>

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Name: **Lori Crabtree**

Company: **Carmichael Lynch Spong**

Show or Event: **SnowSports Industries America**

Plan or Strategy in Using Twitter: Lori handled the public relations for the SnowSports Industries America (SIA - www.snowsports.org). “...we just hosted our annual trade show in Las Vegas where we had a twitter account and we've been communicating to members and snowsports enthusiasts with Facebook for about a year.

“Our challenge as an association for over 800 brands was giving everyone equal attention and not calling out specific brands that we thought were "cool" -- so, our tweets during the show were geared toward general information (don't miss this seminar, industry party at 8PM, etc.).”

Follow SIA-insiders on Twitter: <http://twitter.com/siasnowsportspr> (note: updates are protected so you'll have to request access)

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*Name: **Michael Buechele***

*Company or Event: **11 | 15 Media, Founder, [www.1115media.com](http://www.1115media.com)***

*Plan or strategy in using Twitter: Michael says he's used Twitter at Affiliate Summit, SMX, and Blogworld conferences. He adds, “We use a hash tag (#) and a conference code in the tweets. I've set appointments, asked questions to presenters, entered contests, and got breaking news at the events. Many presenters display the live Twitter feed on a large screen.”*

*Follow Michael and 11 | 15 Media on Twitter: <http://twitter.com/mikebuechele>*

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Name: **Rick Grant**

Company: **Rick Grant and Associates**

Event: **Mortgage Bankers Association's Technology in Mortgage Banking Expo**

Plan or strategy on using Twitter: Rick runs a small consultancy that serves the U.S. mortgage lending industry.

As he put it, "this business is in a free fall right now and has been for some time. It started impacting trade show attendance early last year. I knew that attendance would be way down at the Mortgage Bankers Association's annual Technology in Mortgage Banking Show and Expo," the biggest show of the year for his prospects.

Challenged with helping tech firms sell to lenders, Rich said, "I needed a way to touch the prospects that would be at the show in a meaningful way and reach out to those that couldn't make it due to budget cuts.

"My solution was to set up an account on Utterz (<http://www.utterz.com>) that would automatically feed my Twitter account. I also created a widget that would display my utterz on my website home page. As I worked the floor, I would put

CEOs of my prospect companies to the side and ask if I could snap their photo with my smart phone (Motorola Q). I told them it would show up on my home page and let folks who couldn't come to the show know that they were still doing well enough to exhibit. No one turned me down. I then walked with them over to the Internet kiosk and pulled up my site. They were shocked to see themselves on my page. I also had Utterz send them to my Flickr account where they later became part of a special set."

Before the show, Rick sent out an e-mail asking his prospects to follow him on Twitter. Each time he spoke to someone at the show, a post was sent to Twitter, which alerted folks in his prospect database.

Result: Rick added three new clients at the show and gained a bunch of followers on Twitter.

Says Rick: "This worked in part because the people who couldn't afford to get the show (which is an increasingly large part of your readership) still desperately want to know what is going on there. If you're attending a show and report back via Twitter, you'll quickly become the go-to source of information for that select group of prospects."

Follow Rick on Twitter: <http://twitter.com/nyrickgrant>

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*Name:* **Ken Newman**  
*Company:* **Magnet Productions**  
*Event:* **MacWorld**

*Plan or strategy on using Twitter:* Ken's company has been making tradeshow presentations for over two decades. He's plugged into social media in a variety of ways, including Twitter.

Ken tells this story, which will probably become more common in the next year or two: "I had a twitter tradeshow experience at MacWorld. It was small scale, but it gave me a sense of what may well happen down the road. I was tweeting about the presentation I was about to do for my client. It happened to be about turning a MacBook into a tablet computer. REALLY cool, btw.

"A guy walked up to me and said, "Are you the presenter here at the OWC booth? I said, 'yeah.' He asked me if I'd just tweeted about it.

"WEIRD.

"Made me realize that with enough followers, I (or my client) could easily update trade show attendees on what was going on at the show. Promotions, Giveaways,

Demos, etc. The show management could offer twitterfeeds as part of the show package. The mind reels at the possibilities.”

Follow Ken on Twitter: <http://www.twitter.com/kennewman>

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Name: **Nicole Ravlin**

Company: **PMG Creative** (www.peoplemakinggood.com)

Plan or strategy on using Twitter: Nicole looked to connect to new people through Twitter by sending out tweets weeks before an upcoming tradeshow.

She also set up a ‘Tweetup’ – a meetup for people who have connected on Twitter: “I use Twitter a ton for business. When getting ready to attend the Fancy Foods Show in San Francisco, I started tweeting using the #NASFT (NASFT is the association that produces the show). It quickly caught on, and soon attendees and exhibitors were using it – even the NASFT staff started to use it.

“I set a Tweetup for the second evening of the show at one of the hotel bars and we had more than 20 Tweeple attend. It was great!! We have service providers, exhibitors, buyers and media there! I think it was a valuable experience for all

parties. We also had a long list of people who wished they could have attended... The buzz about the Tweetup for the July show in NYC has already started (guess I need to go to the show now!!).”

Follow Nicole on Twitter: <http://twitter.com/PMGNicole>

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*Name:* **Alec Rosen**

*Company:* **AJR & Partners**

*Event:* **CES 2009**

*Plan or strategy on using Twitter:* Alec’s Public Relations Company looks to serve small and medium sized companies. They focused on getting media attention and visitors to clients’ booths as the Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas:

“CES 2009 was a SM experiment on twitter for us, it was an overall success and we are incorporating this in future PR with other client. We focused on a core group that was going to CES 2009 in Las Vegas, and targeted all the Tweets to that group using the group name #CES09 and @ces09, we also found reporters via twitter search and communicated with them directly.”

They started the process several weeks before the show, send out daily tweet updates. As the show grew closer, they sent out more frequent tweets. During the show, they tweeted several times a day using the hashtag #CES09. Tweets included contest giveaways, product launches, call to action for client to book interviews, kudos to media folks they met on Twitter and more.

And the results?

“We successfully booked several interviews via twitter and had a higher PR response rate than traditional; “e-mail;” pitching. We also generated more PR and a different caliber of reporter than we had originally targeted – including a lot more bloggers. Twitter resonated with the online community more so than with ‘traditional’ media outlets.

“Overall it was a great success and we will do it again.”

Follow Alec on Twitter: <http://twitter.com/alecjr>

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Name: **Michael McCamish, e-Commerce Marketing Manager**
Company: **Gaylord Hotels**

Plan or strategy on using Twitter: Michael has watched meeting attendees, vendors and planners create a code so that people can follow the event on Twitter. He feels that the use of Twitter at conferences is helpful in a number of ways:

1. Keep more organized meeting notes. Michael tells me that it helps attendees pay more attention to what is going on and allows them to come back later and get the notes from Twitter.
2. If you are stuck in a panel/track that is not what you wanted, you can see what is going on in the other tracks and be able to choose the next one wisely, as well as catch up to what was previously addressed.
3. If you are not able to attend a conference, you can still get valuable information from the attendees who post on Twitter.
4. If you are looking to network with people similar to yourself, "tweet ups" are the way to go.
5. Before heading to a conference, you can identify similar people by searching who has tweeted about it in advance.
6. Some presenters use Twitter live and their team helps to answer questions about what is being presented.

7. Allows participants to know about other industry meetings which are happening at the same time, as well as ones which have been cancelled.

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*Names:* **Jack Newton and Rian Gauvreau**

*Company:* **Themis Solutions, North Vancouver, BC**

*Product:* **Clio, a web-based practice management software**

*Show:* **Legal Tech New York**

Armed with nothing more than a laptop and a Twitter account, the folks from Themis attended the Legal Tech New York and as they put it in their blog post, “we opted to run a bit of an experiment: using Twitter as the primary vehicle for meeting people and getting the word out about Clio.”

And it worked great. At one point they tweeted that they were going to offer on-one demos of their new software and invited Twitterers to book a demo.

“The result? We received such an overwhelming response we wished we had more time,” according to the post. Suffice it to say that their expectations were more than met, thanks to a very responsive Twitter audience.

Read their original blog post here:

<http://budurl.com/slgr>

And a follow up post a week or so later:

<http://budurl.com/cjkz>

## Twitter Mini-Glossary and Resources

There are numerous Twitter glossaries and resources that are online, and this particular section doesn't pretend to be able to keep up with the living, breathing entity known as Twitter.com. As always online, the best way to find out the latest is to search your favorite resources, or send out a tweet. But here are a few of the more common terms you might run across:

@ = Used when you want to reply to someone; the tweet will be seen by anyone who follows you. @nuts2u; used when you want to direct a tweet at a specific person or when you reference a specific person in a tweet. Can also be used to refer to another Twitter user, for example, "had drinks with @joecool today" says "I had drinks with Joe Cool today"

# = aka “hashtag”; used when you want to associate a tweet with a specific topic; for example “had a tweetup with @oakie at #expowest”

\$ = stock ticker symbol; for example \$goog is represents Google’s stock ticker symbol

RT = “retweet” as in “I am retweeting someone else’s tweet”. Similar to forwarding an e-mail

## Online Resources

Of course in a quickly changing world some sites, ideas and recommendations can quickly lose favor or disappear from site. If you learn that one of the following links is broken, do me a favor and drop a line to me and I’ll update the book: Tim (at) tradeshowguyblog.com

### **Twitips.com - Twitter Tips in 140 Characters or more**

From @probblogger Darren Rowse, Twitips.com is an active, useful blog with tons of post from Darren and guest bloggers. <http://www.twitip.com/>

**Mashable.com: The Social Media Guide.** Lively, entertaining, extraordinarily useful. Even though I know I’m really up on social media, reading this site shows me that some people are, well, way more into it than me: <http://mashable.com>

**Sitemasher's Twitter Terminology Listing:**

My Twittonary: Every Twitter Term and Tool I could Find

<http://www.sitemasher.com/seed-the-web-blog/my-twittonary--every-twitter-term-and-tool-i-can-find>

**Twitter Glossary from Help Via Twitter:**

<http://helpviatwitter.com/twitter/twitter-glossary.html>

Tracking your links: With just 140 characters to play with on Twitter, no doubt you'll want to shorten your links. Why not track them, too? Try

<http://budurl.com> which offers free and professional levels of tracking links. See what links are clicked the most!

## Acknowledgments

In a sense this e-book came together much faster than it was intended. The idea had germinated before I attended Natural Products Expo West, and had grown out of an article I proposed to Exhibitor Magazine. During the conversation with Editor Travis Stanton, I kept compiling information and case studies and saw that what I was interested in writing was probably more than a typical magazine article.

Cover designed by Margaret James.

Thanks to all the people who responded to my request for Twitter and Tradeshow Success stories via HARO and willingly shared them: <http://helpareporter.com> and of course to Peter Shankman for creating HARO.

Thanks to Charles Pappas, senior writer with Exhibitor Magazine, whose interest in the subject helped me to clarify issues regarding Twittering and tradeshow. Charles eventually interviewed me for a piece in Exhibitor Magazine (unpublished as of this writing).

Thanks to Ed Austin, owner at Interpretive Exhibits, whose willingness to allow me to explore nontraditional marketing methods and build our company's online presence using a variety of methods, including podcasting, blogging and social media helped bring about the platform to write this book.

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Monthly 2-page PDF printable Tradeshow Marketing Tips Newsletter:  
[www.tradeshowguyblog.com/newsletter](http://www.tradeshowguyblog.com/newsletter)

**Disclosure:** the SendOutCards.com link listed on page 32 is an affiliate link. While I use their service to send out many cards to friends and clients and prospects and acquaintances, I don't actively market the product as a business - but I think it's one of the coolest 'staying-in-touch' tools around. And certainly worth checking out:

<http://sendoutcards.com/36447>

If you wish to reach SendOutCards.com without the affiliate link please click here:

<http://sendoutcards.com>

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Interpretive Exhibits is a full-service custom tradeshow design and fabrication house, located in Salem, Oregon.