

Boosting Your Twitter Ratio (What's That?)

By Joshua Fruchter

There are many Twitter users who seek to maximize the number of “followers” tracking their Tweets. While this may be a useful strategy for boosting one’s ego, when it comes to nurturing relationships with the potential to evolve into new business, I’d argue that the quality of one’s followers is more important than the quantity. To put it bluntly, just because someone has thousands (or even tens of thousands) of followers doesn’t mean he is necessarily more intelligent, wise or witty than someone with only a few hundred followers.

In fact, more often than not, people are able to amass thousands of followers not because they regularly make particularly insightful comments, but because they spend an enormous amount of time clicking the “follow” button for as many people as possible. The hope is that the people they follow will reciprocate and “follow” them back — thereby boosting the number of their own followers. It’s almost like a Ponzi scheme — click “follow” as much as possible, which increases the number of your own followers, and so on.

Truth is, nobody can follow the tweets of thousands of people a day. You’d need an army of assistants to keep track — let alone to respond to — so many tweets each day (assuming this was even a worthwhile endeavor). This only reinforces the point that many people follow other people not because they are interested in what they have to say, but solely because they are seeking reciprocity to boost their own following.

Joshua Fruchter is the principal of eLawMarketing, a provider of online marketing services to law firms and individual attorneys. He can be reached at josh@elawmarketing.com or 866-833-6245.

A CASE IN POINT

What really drove home this point recently for me was when I decided to follow a particular individual with an interesting Twitter name, and the person decided to reciprocate and follow me back. But then I noticed something shocking that had earlier escaped me — this individual had 674 followers, yet had posted exactly zero updates. Yes, that’s right — zero updates — the person hadn’t contributed a single tweet, and still had 674 followers. How? You guessed it — because the individual was following 1729 people. In other words, all the followers were obtained due to reciprocity. Wow!

BEST METRICS

Of course, the reason that building up a large of quantity of followers is so enticing is that it’s an easy metric to measure — just look at an individual’s Twitter profile to quickly see the number of his followers. It stands out and looks impressive. But what’s the best metric to ascertain the quality of your following?

Services like Klout aim to measure an individual’s social media influence across multiple channels such as Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn. But how about a metric that focuses exclusively on Twitter? I’d like to make an argument for the Twitter ratio.

THE TWITTER RATIO

As explained on twitterratio.com, the Twitter ratio is calculated by dividing the number of your followers by the number of your “friends” (*i.e.*, the number of people you follow). So, for example, if 200 people are following you, and you are following 100 people, your Twitter ratio is 200/100, or 2.0.

I think the Twitter ratio (as opposed to the aggregate number of followers) is an excellent method of identifying thought leaders on Twitter — people worth following. Here’s the logic: If you can get a lot of people to follow you without having to first follow them, it proves people are attracted to the intelligence and insight of your tweets and choose to follow you because they want to hear what you have to say on a regular ba-

sis. That is, if you can continually attract more followers without a corresponding increase in the number of people you follow, the numerator in your ratio will rise much faster than the denominator. Which suggests that a high Twitter ratio signals high quality tweets worth following.

Indeed, what’s great about the Twitter ratio is that it can’t be manipulated. In contrast to the number of followers, you can’t just raise your Twitter ratio by clicking “follow” on a huge number of people. That will drive down your ratio. Rather, the only way to obtain and maintain a high Twitter ratio is to publish intelligent observations that attract followers. Only by attracting followers with great content can you boost your numerator, and hence your Twitter ratio.

But what’s a good Twitter ratio? Twitteration.com offers the following guidelines (in italics), supplemented by my own commentary:

1. A ratio of less than 1.0 indicates that you are seeking knowledge (and Twitter Friends), but not getting much Twitter Love in return. In other words, people are not so impressed with your Tweets. Exhibit A: The individual mentioned above following 1729 people but having only 674 followers. That’s a Twitter ratio of 0.38 (674/1729) — and even that’s overly generous, since this person has never contributed a single tweet.

2. A ratio of around 1.0 means you are respected among your peers. Many people think that a ratio of around 1.0 is the best — you’re listening and being listened to. Actually, I wouldn’t go so far. If someone has 8,645 followers, and is following 8,645 people, I wouldn’t call that person well-respected. She may have achieved her high number of followers primarily through reciprocity. But if someone is following 461 people and has 461 people following her, then there’s a good chance there’s some mutual respect going on.

3. A ratio of 2.0 or above shows that you are a popular person and people want to hear what you have to say. You might be a thought leader in your community. This sounds accurate. Believe it or not, it’s not easy to keep your Twitter ratio above 2.0 without quality tweets. Thus, if you

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can manage to keep your Twitter ratio above 2.0, then that's a good sign your contributions are being valued by others. As an example, take Larry Bodine, a thought leader in the legal marketing community. He is following 842 people while 2,590 people are following him for a Twitter ratio of 3.1. That makes sense — Larry always has great legal marketing insights to share.

4. A ratio of 10 or higher indicates that you're either a rock star in your

field or you are an elitist and you cannot be bothered by Twitter's mindless chatter. Not surprisingly, President Barack Obama makes the cut with a following of 9,210,740 while he is only following 692,649 people. That's a Twitter ratio of 13.3. Clearly, many people want to hear what the President has to say (whether they like it or not).

But even more impressive? Ashton Kutcher is following only 657 people while 7,193,791 people are following him. That's a Twitter ratio of 10,949! (Although what does it say about America when an actor has a higher

Twitter ratio than the leader of the country?)

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I think the point is clear. The Twitter ratio is a good metric to consider if you are seeking to identify thought leaders worth following. It helps to identify bright people with smart things to say; it separates the wheat from the chaff. In fact, I'd argue that Twitter should start displaying Twitter ratios in people's profiles so we don't have to do these calculations in our heads.



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MOBILE-FRIENDLY VS. MOBILE WEBSITE

What is the difference between a mobile-friendly website vs. mobile website? A mobile-friendly website is one that is HTML-based and that doesn't contain flash. This type of website is viewable on a smartphone, but it is not necessarily optimized for that type of use. The user is required to pinch to zoom, scroll left and right, etc., to get to a comfortable viewing size.

A mobile-"optimized" website is one that is designed specifically for a smartphone, not a desktop, laptop or even a tablet. A mobile website is optimized for a much smaller screen and doesn't require that someone pinch to zoom or scroll left and right. It is built to be efficient and effective.

Remember, if your website is flash-based or has any flash elements, it falls into neither of these categories. Instead, it is in the "non-viewable, non-user-friendly" category.

CREATING AN EFFECTIVE MOBILE WEBSITE

Creating a mobile website that can accomplish the same goals as your main website can be tricky. First, you need to realize that the user's objective is most likely different on a smartphone than on a desktop computer. In order for your mobile website to achieve Web success, your mobile marketing strategy might need some re-thinking:

Start with Architecture

Before you create a mobile version of your website, you need to

look at the site's architecture. This will help you decide what information is important to your audience's needs. Look at the navigation. Are all menu items vital to the user? Shorten the copy by putting yourself in their shoes. Would you read someone's entire bio from your smartphone? It may mean eliminating some of the fluff so that it's easier for users to digest. Remember, viewers have short attention spans, so you need to decrease the number of pages. Make sure to include mobile-specific links like a "contact" page. One of the main reasons users visit your site via their mobile devices is to either e-mail you, look for your phone number, or to find your office address.

Short, Sweet and Simple

Keep the navigation simple and built for efficiency, because speed is everything to smartphone users. The design should stay within your branding style, images should be optimized for quick loading, and the content scaled to provide an even more effective user experience.

Social Media, Yes

Even though you may incorporate social media feeds into your mobile website, your audience still needs to be able to find links on your website as well. Be sure to put links such as LinkedIn on each person's bio page or your firm's Facebook or Twitter page icons on the contact page. These buttons should be there, but not on the home page. You don't want the viewer to leave your mobi so quickly.

Test on Multiple Smartphones

Test the mobile website on a variety of smartphones. What looks good on an Android phone may not display

well on an iPhone or BlackBerry — just as some websites don't translate well on all desktop browsers. Even though technology is improving every day, it is important to note that some older mobile devices do not support downloading content in certain formats. What might appear on the iPhone is the mobi version, while on an older BlackBerry, the "full site" may show up. Browser compatibility is still the main issue limiting mobi viewing capability. In developing the mobile site, it is key to have it tested on multiple browsers and mobile devices to ensure optimum performance. In some cases, it may make sense to develop more than one mobile website to reach your audience with different smartphones.

Measure Results

Just like your main website, make sure you have the ability to track analytics. This way you can quickly figure out how much traffic you're getting from smartphones. Measuring your mobile audience is extremely important and vital to your online marketing success. Being informed about what devices your target audience use will affect your mobile website design decisions. For example, if your mobile audience is 90% Android and iPhone, you shouldn't worry too much about compatibility for the old BlackBerry.

CONCLUSION

Transitioning a full website to a mobile website is one of the most important and strategic moves that firms are making. According to

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