

5 Twitter Power Tips for Every Newsroom

Twitter can be a newsroom's most powerful weapon for information discovery and stronger reporting. With a billion messages sent on the social network every 2½ days, there's at least a tweet or two waiting for your next move. So, you want to improve your game in the Twittersphere?

Here are **5** rules to live by:

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Take advantage of the top hashtags currently being used—bridge the divide by going to where the conversations are already occurring. Spend some time getting to know the content that is being shared and consider whether hashtags would be appropriate for yours. For a timely snapshot of trending hashtags around topics of interest, visit [twXplorer](#).

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1. Hashtags—#usethem

Hashtags categorize topics and help journalists tap into large conversations, and they're the quickest way to cut through the clutter on Twitter. Not sure whether to create a new hashtag? Don't—one will likely surface organically, unless you're tweeting about something very specific and driven by your station.

CASE STUDY:

How has CNN used hashtags? For President Obama's 2013 State of the Union address, CNN launched a Tweet of the Union digital initiative that connected viewers watching the live broadcast and wishing to participate on a second screen and to engage via Twitter. As a result, #tweetoftheunion was one of the top trending topics on Twitter on a very active evening, driving traffic to CNN Mobile and CNN.com and complementing the broadcast programming.

<http://www.cnn.com/2013/02/13/us/irpt-tweet-of-the-union-story/>

<http://www.cnn.com/interactive/2013/02/politics/sotu-tweets/index.html>

2. Have messaging manners

Trying to reach a source through Twitter? It's critical to understand the difference between public and private messages. @username posts your message publicly, whether that person is following you or not. To send a private—direct message (DM)—you must be following each other. Don't send inappropriate content publicly. Do double check handles to ensure they're correct and still active. Send potential sources public messages welcoming them to direct message you their contact information. Use Twitter Search.

Check out an example of how HLN has used direct messaging to book guests:
<https://twitter.com/AllisonCNN/status/385550362305785856>

3. Search smarter

Want to know what news is breaking? What people are talking about? Zero in on location or themes by tapping into advanced search options that go beyond hashtags. Use [twXplorer](#) to search trending topics.

Take advantage of social search tools like Geofeedia and SnapTrends, which use geotagged social posts to surface content and people from interested areas. Place a lens over specific locations and uncover themes in tweets, YouTube videos, and Flickr and Instagram photos.

4. Make lists — they can be a journalist's best friend

Twitter lists are a collection of feeds that users manage to follow only relevant trends, topics, journalists and other newsrooms. Lists can be key for keeping up to date with sources and being prepared ahead of breaking stories—and they're one of the most valuable tools in newsrooms. Twitter allows you to create up to 1,000 lists per account. You can keep them private or share them with other followers. Set up lists directly on Twitter or TweetDeck.

CNN uses lists to quickly follow editorial sources, newsmakers, journalists and news partners to group and capture the most relevant bits of timely information. This is a tremendous service to our organizational reporting efforts, as well as a publicly available tool for our audiences.

CASE STUDY:

Check out how CNN International kept a Twitter list of updates of Super Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines during breaking news reporting:

<https://twitter.com/cnni/lists/typhoon-updates>

5. Do dashboards

Dashboards are a one-stop-shop for newsrooms to manage and measure their social media. While traditional Twitter interfaces are useful, newsrooms can get an edge in efficiency and a gain a broader view of communities and stories by setting up dashboards that let them quickly view their @messages, key lists and important hashtags using free or low cost tools like TweetDeck or HootSuite. At CNN, we routinely plug daily story topics in as new search terms, then tune and tweak as often as the news cycles change.

Share Your Power Tips:

Share your best newsroom Twitter tips using #5powertips. We'd all love to hear other ways to up our game!

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