

# 6 Deadly Marketing Myths BUSTED



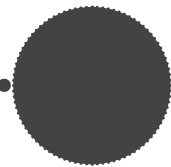
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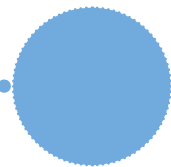
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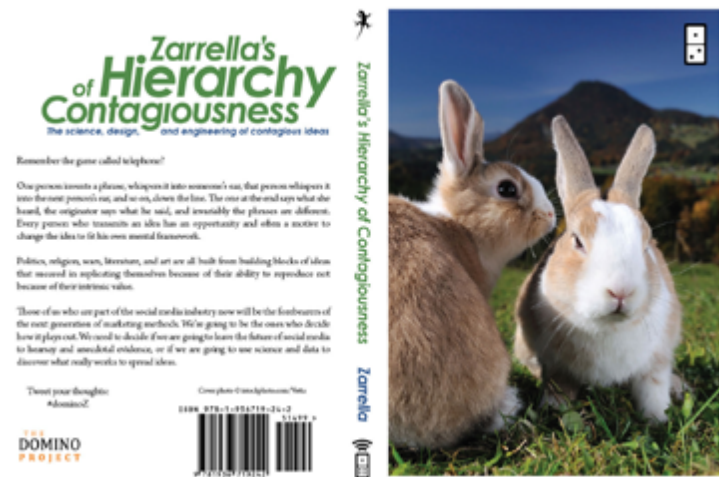




## BUSTING 7 MARKETING MYTHS

By Dan Zarrella

Dan Zarrella is HubSpot's award winning social media scientist and author of *Zarrella's Hierarchy of Contagiousness*.



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6 DEADLY MARKETING MYTHS BUSTED



6 DEADLY MARKETING MYTHS BUSTED .....

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“For too long, the world of online marketing has been clogged with myths and superstitions.”

For too long, the world of online marketing has been clogged with myths and superstitions. I read a lot of marketing blogs and books, and I've been to more marketing conferences than you can imagine. And in all of these places I've been shocked by the hegemony of a type of advice I call "unicorns-and-rainbows."

This "unicorns-and-rainbows" advice typically includes stuff like "engage in the conversation," "hug your followers," and "have a personality." These adages can be hard to disagree with because no one will argue that you should punch your customers in the face. Yet they're generally not based on anything more substantial than what "feels" right or "sounds" good.

I call myself a social media scientist not because I wear a lab coat and work with test tubes and Erlenmeyer flasks all day long, but because I use real data, statistics and science to get beyond those unicorns-and-rainbows superstitions. I seek to bust those myths and hunt the unicorns that are preventing you from being the best marketer you can be. This ebook is all about getting to the scientific core of marketing.



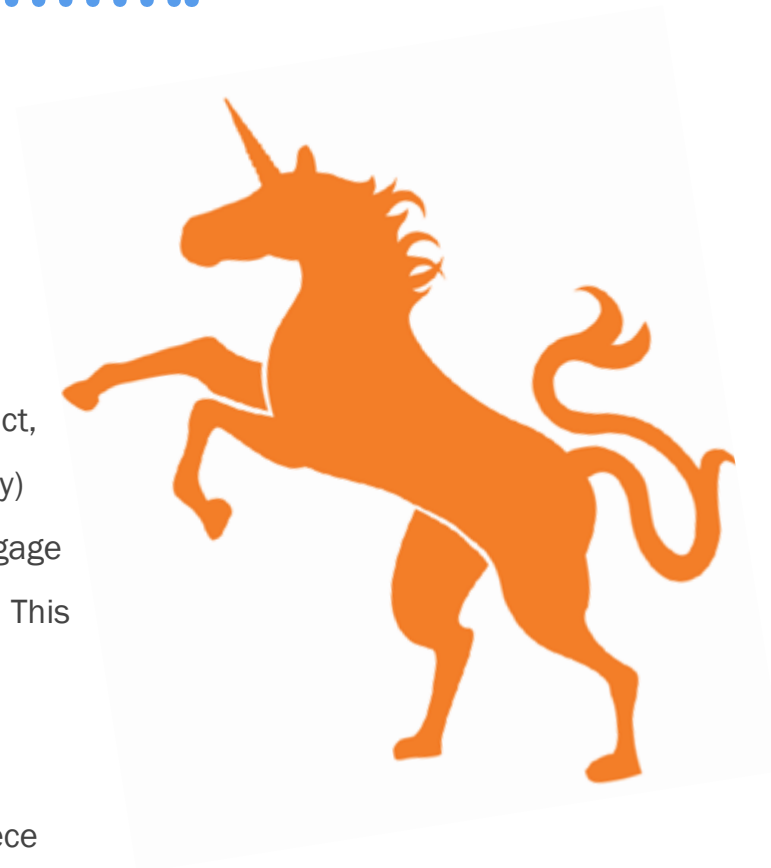
“The best hamburgers are made from sacred cows.”

## MYTH #1

# SOCIAL MEDIA IS FOR CONVERSATIONS, NOT BROADCASTING.

If I had a dollar for every time I heard some marketing expert espouse this most sacred of social media myths, I'd be a gazillionaire. In fact, many of those experts don't really know (or say) much else about social media marketing. "Engage in the conversation" and customers will come. This is wrong.

The best hamburgers are made from sacred cows, so I decided to actually look into this piece of advice with some real data and science. My findings are controversial to some and surprising to many.



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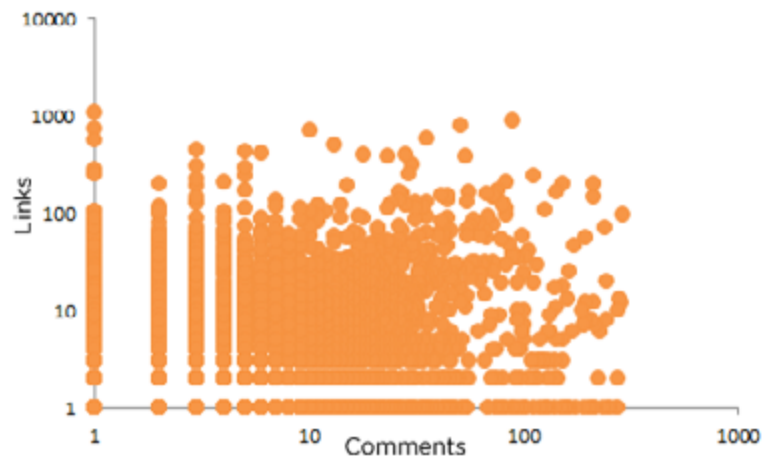


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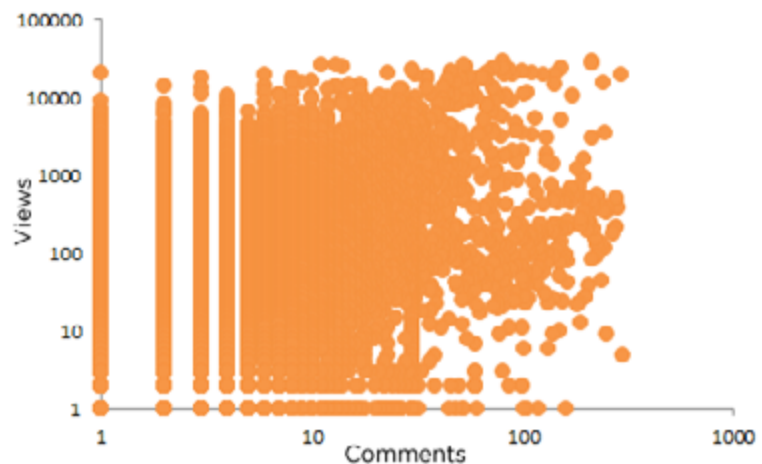


First, I looked at blogging. I found that there is no significant correlation between the number of comments a blog post received and the amount of traffic that blog post got. The conversation doesn't drive traffic. There's also no correlation between comments and links to a blog post. Having a very active dialogue doesn't seem to have much effect on two of the most important metrics (short of ROI) of blog success: readers and links.

Comments-to-Links Correlation: 0.02



Comments-to-Views Correlation: 0.04

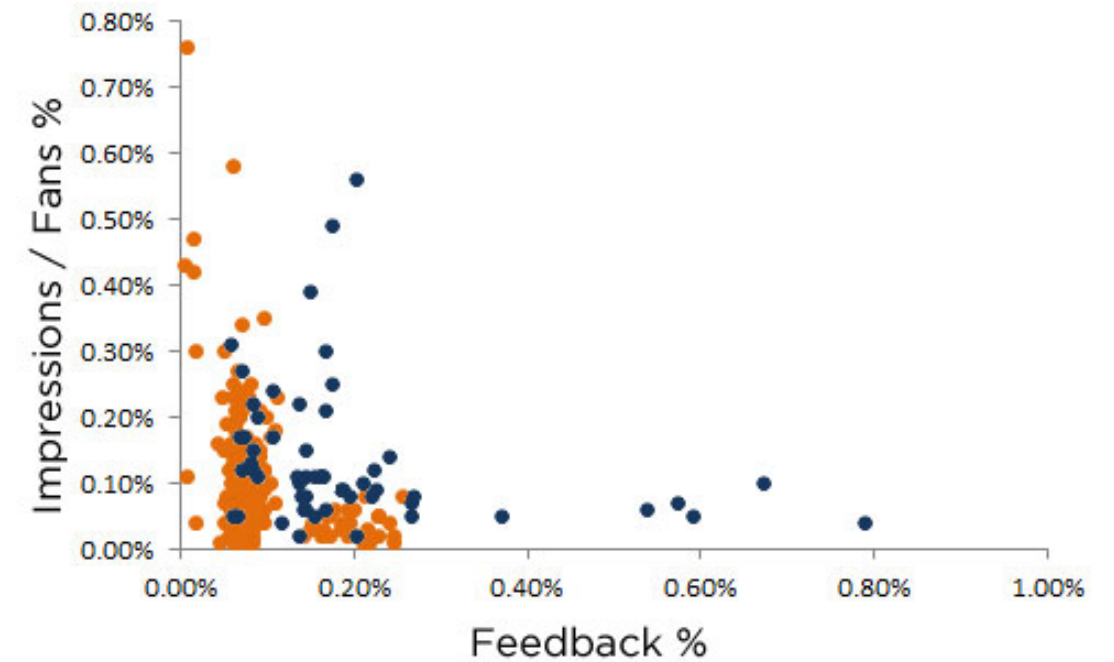


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Then, I looked at Facebook. In order to get the data I needed, you must be the administrator of a Facebook page. So I was only able to gather data from two popular pages, an admittedly small sample set. But what I did find suggests that there may be no useful relationship between the amount of feedback (comments and likes) on a wall post and the number of people that see that wall post.

### More Facebook Conversation Does Not Mean More Views



OnStartUps Posts  
Correlation: -0.23

HubSpot Posts  
Correlation: -0.32

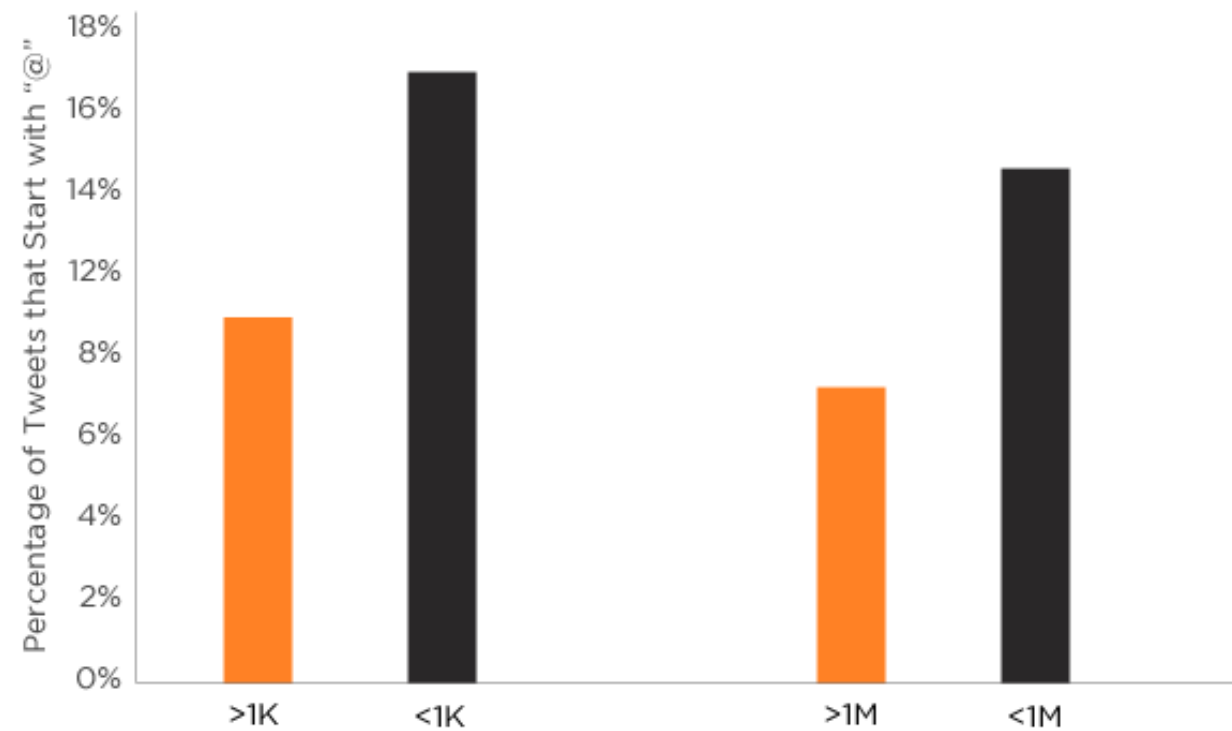
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Finally, I looked at Twitter. The holy grail of the “conversations-not-broadcasting” myth. When I broke down hundreds of thousands of Twitter users into two groups, those with more than 1,000 followers and those with fewer than 1,000, I found that highly followed accounts tend to have a lower percentage of their overall tweet stream starting with an “@” sign—they’re less conversational. When I did that same analysis but broke down the accounts into those with more than 1,000,000 followers and those with fewer, the pattern was the same.

### Reply Percentage and Follower Count



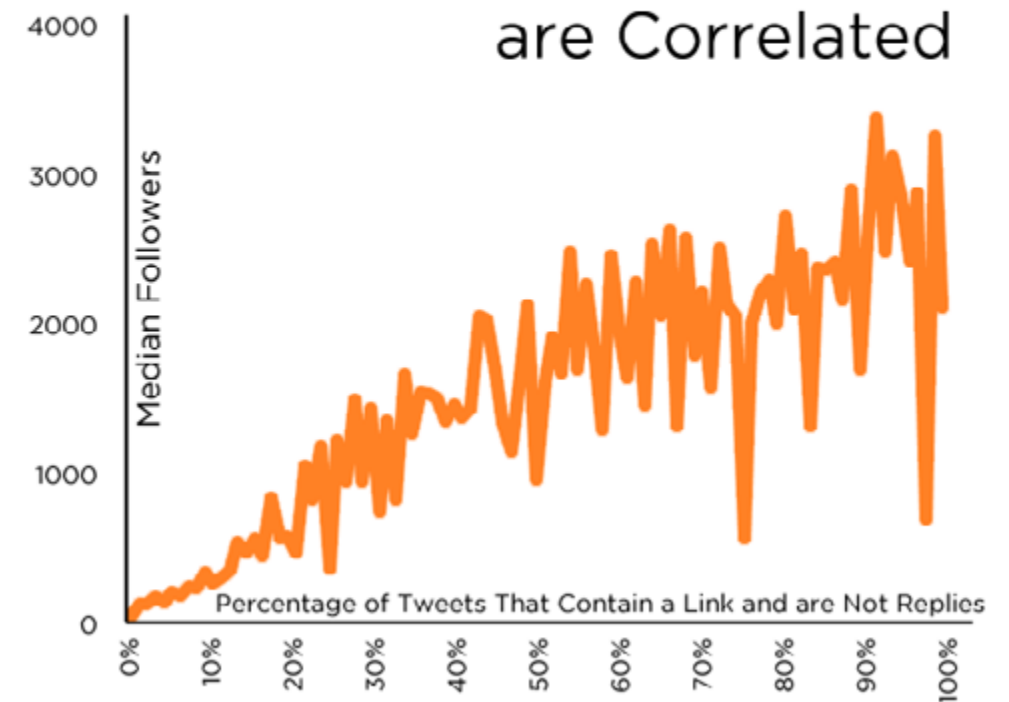
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So then you may ask me, if “engaging in the conversation” doesn’t work to increase my reach, what does? The answer is simple: broadcasting more interesting content.

When I analyzed those same Twitter accounts and looked at the percentage of their tweet streams that did not start with an “@” sign but did contain a link, I found that highly followed accounts tend to share more content. A simple linear regression showed that there’s a positive correlation between the amount of links tweeted and the number of followers.

### Tweeting Lots of Links and Having Many Followers are Correlated



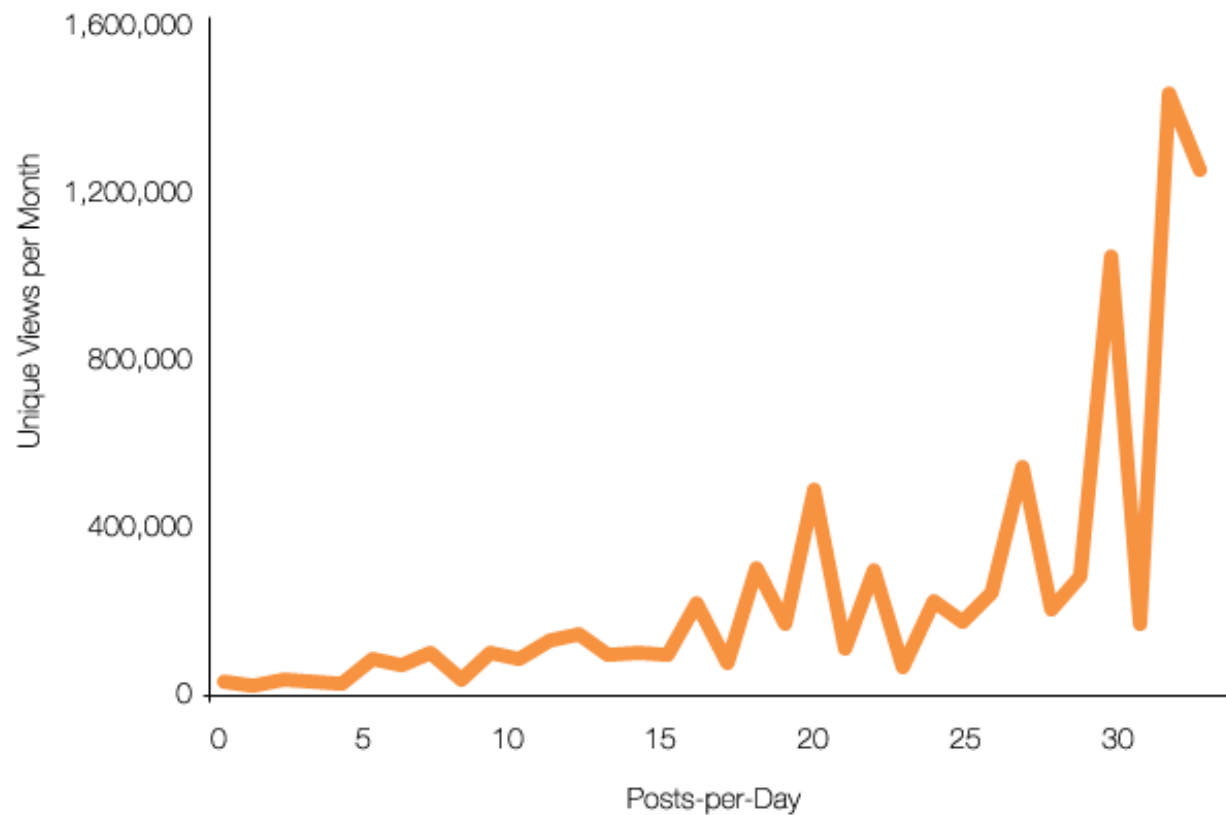
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When I looked at blogging frequency I found a similar pattern. There is a positive correlation between the number of posts per day a blog makes and the amount of traffic it gets.

Unique Views by Posts-per-Day



MYTH #2

**“PLEASE RETWEET” DOESN’T WORK.**

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“ There is no doubt. “Please retweet” does work. ”



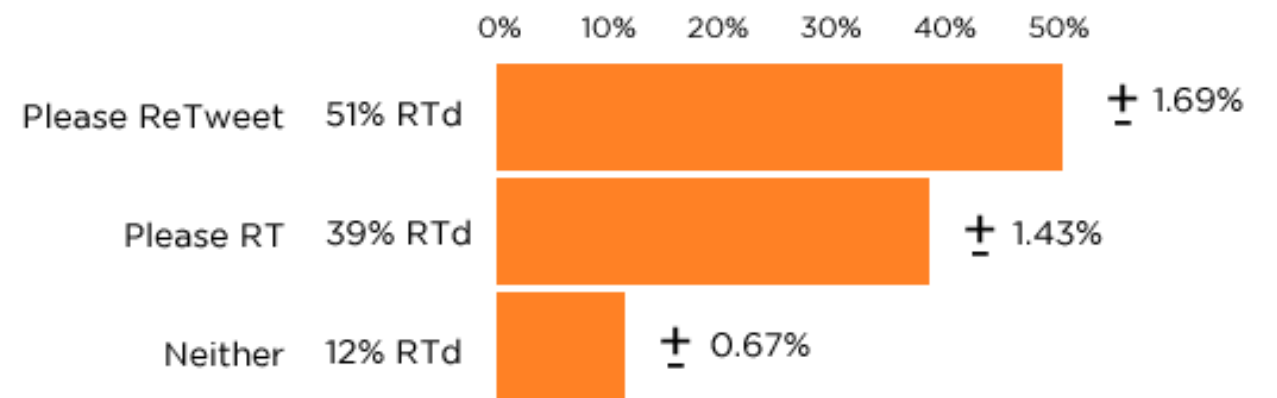
For years I've fought this myth with a bit of admittedly spurious data. I'd found that "please retweet" was amongst the most retweeted words and phrases and that retweets were more likely to contain "please" than normal, non-retweeted tweets. While these points provided great hints that "please retweet" was an effective call-to-action, they weren't as solid as I wanted them to be.

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I gathered a statistically significant data set of more than 10,000 random tweets. I found (with 99% confidence) that while 51% of tweets that contained the phrase "please retweet" had been retweeted at least once, only 12% of the tweets that did not contain either "please retweet" or "please RT" were retweeted.

### Please ReTweet Gets 4x More ReTweets



Confidence Interval: 90%

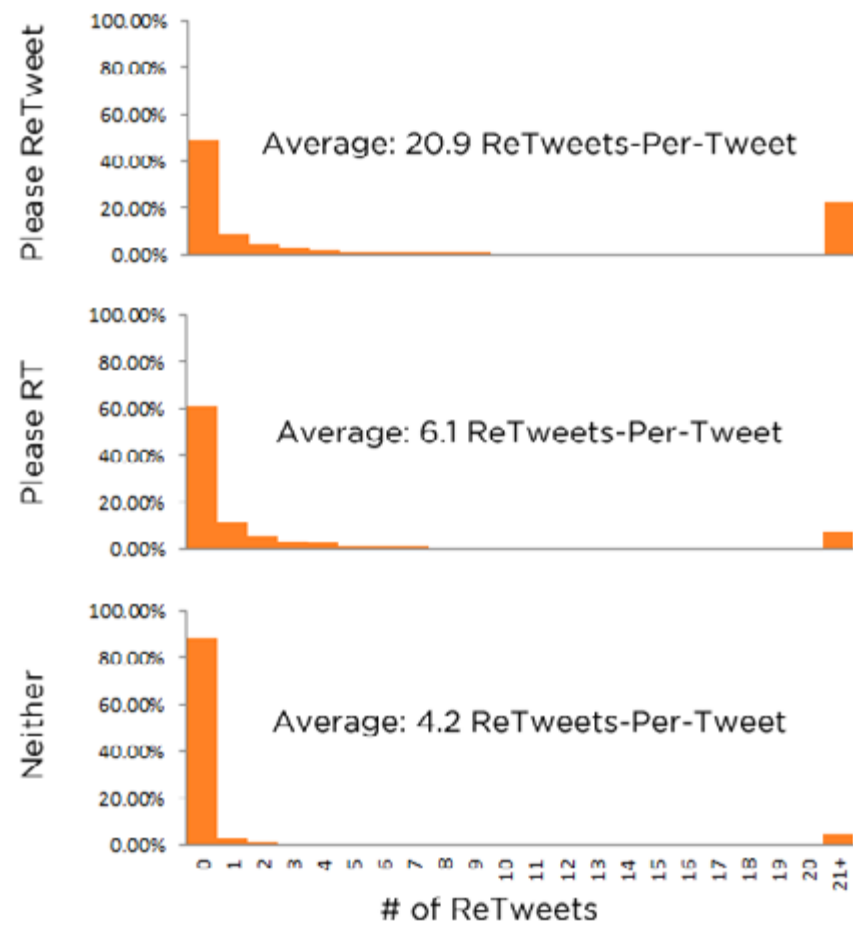
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Then I looked at the actual number of times the tweets in my sample were retweeted and found more of the same. Tweets that included “please retweet” were retweeted 20.9 times on average, those containing “please rt” were retweeted 6.1 times, and those without either call-to-action were retweeted only 4.2 times.

### “Please ReTweet” Gets 3x More ReTweets Than “Please RT”



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Marketers of all stripes and sizes know that calls-to-action are invaluable. If you want someone to take a specific action, you have to actually ask them to do it. For some reason we’ve forgotten that eternal marketing truth when we started working in social media.

Make sure that your tweets, and all social media updates, contain verbs that prompt your readers to take an action and learn more about your organization. Some examples of successful calls-to-action include “download our new whitepaper,” “subscribe to your blog” and “join your newsletter.” Make sure your CTAs convey clear messages that are specific and action-oriented. To learn more about calls-to-action, [check out our ebook “An Introduction to Effective Calls-to-Action.”](#)

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“Gut feeling has brought this myth online.”

## MYTH #3

# DON'T MARKET ON THE WEEKENDS.

This myth comes from the old publishing world. If you're a big company and you have some news that you have to release but you don't want anyone to read about, you published the press release on a Friday evening. That way no journalists will see it and, hopefully, it won't make weekday front page news.

“Gut feeling” has brought this myth to a range of online marketing arenas as well. Email marketers often aim to send emails Tuesday through Thursday. Bloggers often don't post on the weekends. Social media folks often don't tweet on Saturday and Sunday as much.



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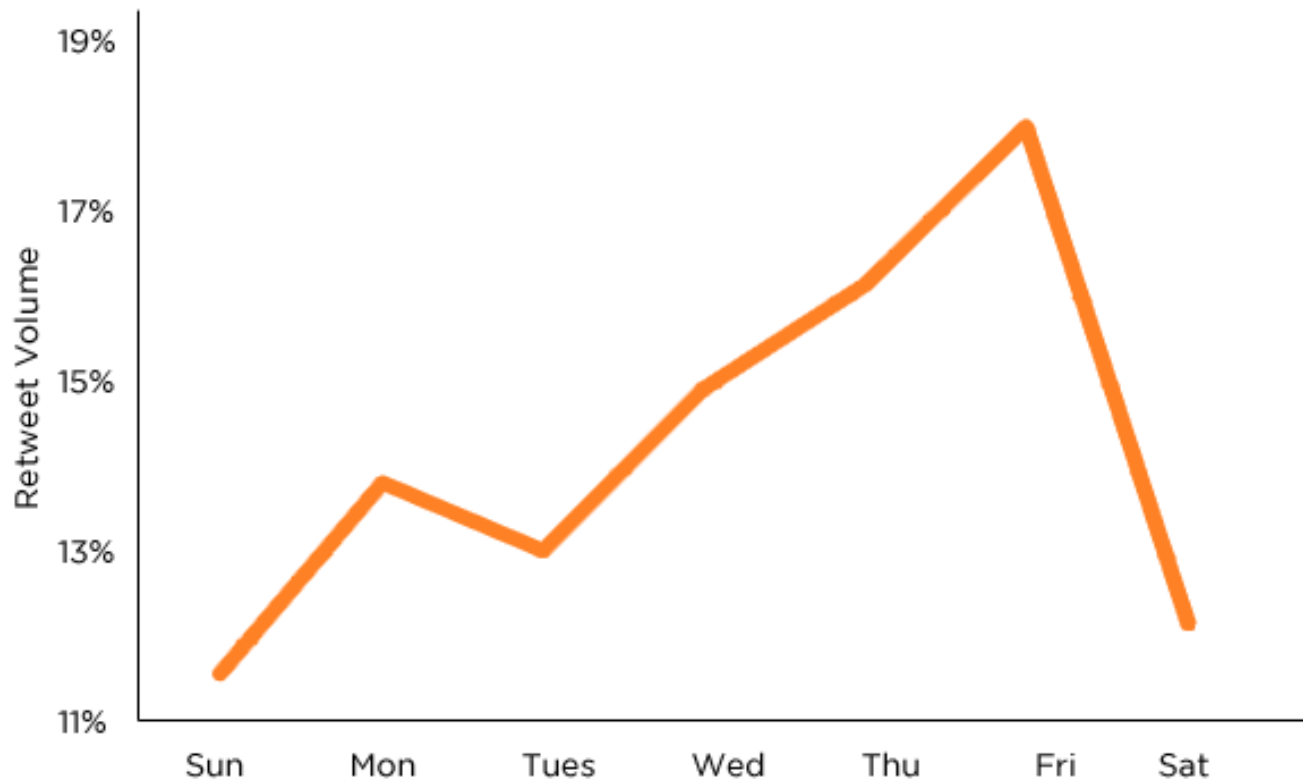


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In more than one place I've found that the conventional wisdom here may be worth questioning. When I looked at retweets, I found that retweet activity is the highest later in the day on Friday, as overall Twitter activity begins to slow down for the weekend.

### Retweet Activity by Day

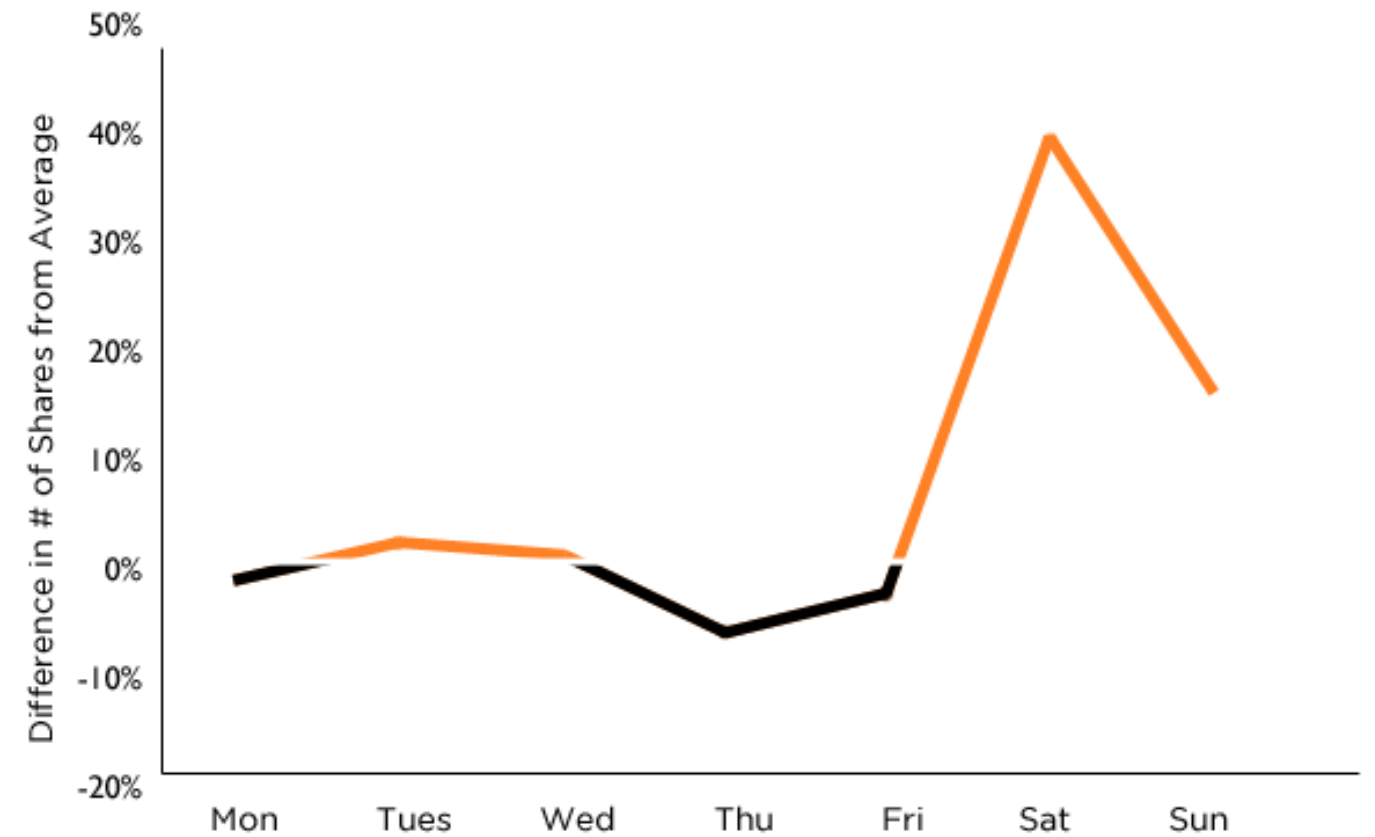


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When I analyzed the amount of new articles published to online news websites, I found that many more are posted during the business week than on the weekend. However, those articles that are published on Saturdays and Sundays tend to be shared far more on Facebook. Most people have much more time to Facebook with their friends and families when they're not at the office.

### Facebook Shares by Day



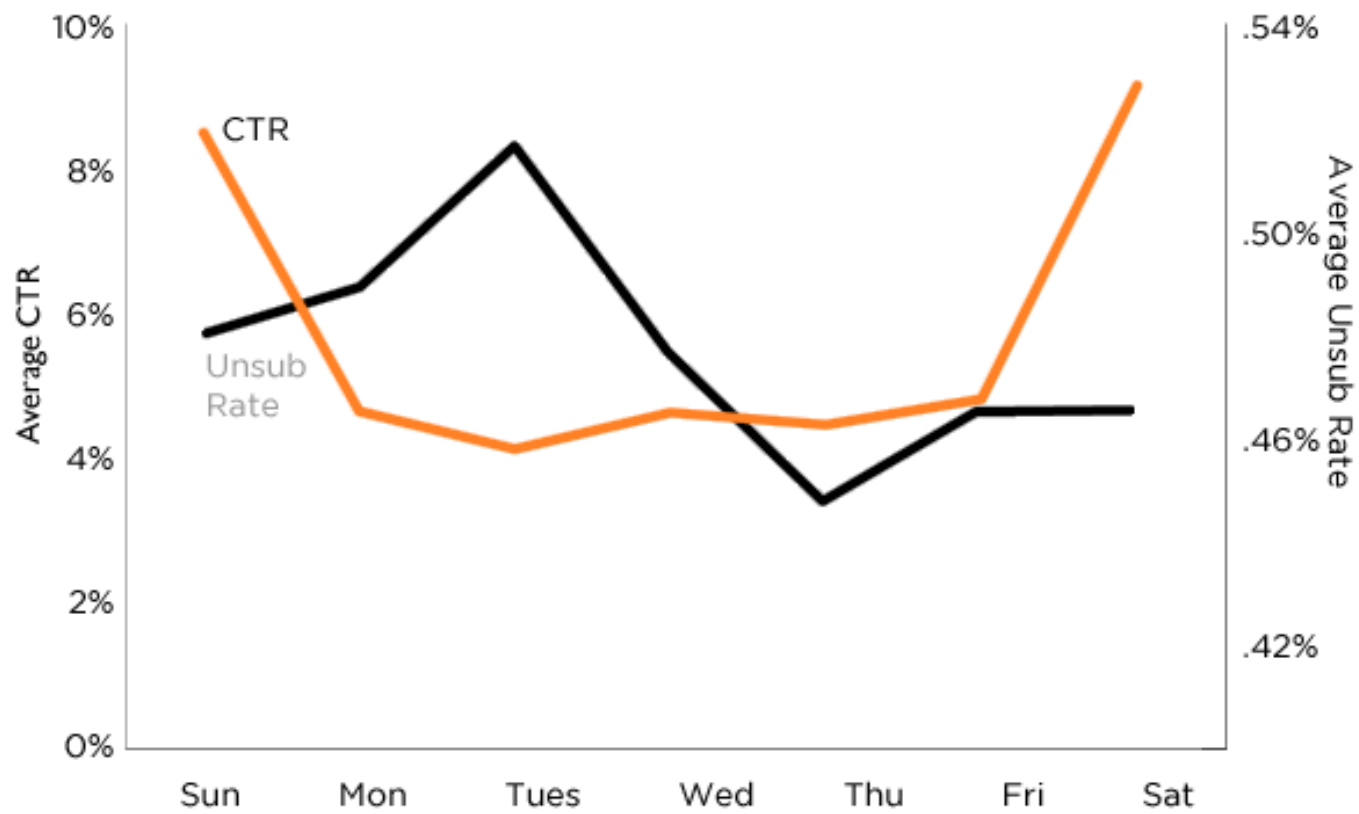
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When I dug into one of the largest datasets I've ever worked with—9.5 billion email sends from MailChimp—I found that emails sent on the weekend had a much higher click through rate (CTR). I get hundreds of emails during the business week and much less email on the weekends. So each one of the weekend emails in my inbox receives more of my attention.

### CTR and Unsubs by Day



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I call it contra-competitive timing. As the rest of the web is quiet, your voice is more easily heard. Rather than aiming to post your content at the same time everyone else on the web is publishing, experiment with sending during some “off peak” times.

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“ This is one of the original unicorns-and-rainbows superstitions. ”

## MYTH #4

# DON'T CALL YOURSELF A “GURU.”



This is one of the original unicorns-and-rainbows superstitions I took aim at way back when. I still hear people telling versions of it to this day though. “Don’t call yourself a guru, or an expert, or a rockstar, or ninja” they say. It makes you sound pretentious, they’ll tell you.

Maybe they’re right, maybe it does make you sound full of yourself to a certain ultra-hip and jaded social media cool-kid crowd. But I’m not particularly interested in that. I’m interested in what works.

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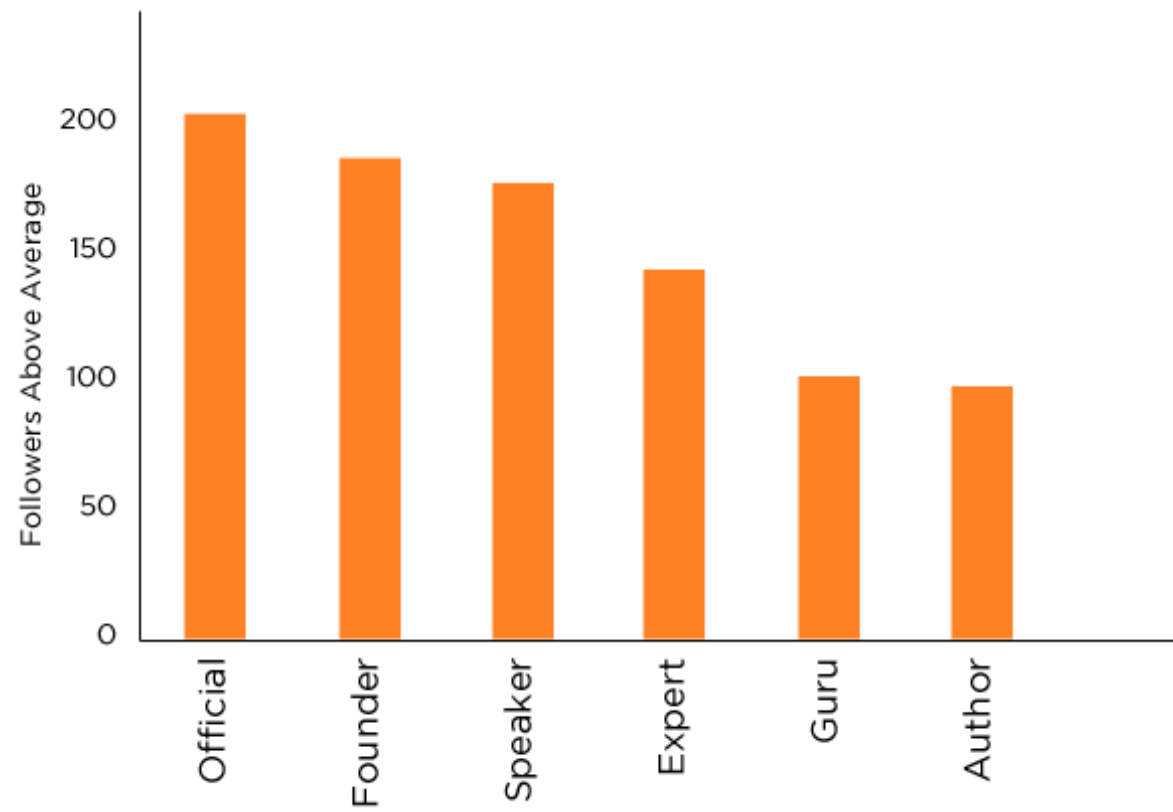


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When I analyzed more than five million Twitter accounts using data from [Twitter Grader](#), I found that accounts that had the word “guru” in their bios had 100 more followers than the average user. Of course, the takeaway here is not that if you go and put the word “guru” in your bio you’ll instantly gain 100 more followers. But if you look at the rest of the words on the graph you’ll notice that the takeaway is: don’t be afraid to identify yourself authoritatively.

### Effect of Bio Words on Followers



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Tell people why they should follow you. Your Twitter bio is probably the only place on Twitter where it’s OK to talk about yourself. Imagine yourself at a networking party, you’re much more likely to listen to someone if you know they’re an expert or an author or the official spokesperson of a given brand.



## Don’t be afraid to identify yourself authoritatively.

If they only talk about themselves all night long, you’ll get bored, but if they introduce themselves with their title and then talk about other, more interesting things, you’ll stick around. Not sure how you should go about optimizing your Twitter presence to sound more authoritatively? Borrow some ideas from our blog post, [“4 Simple Steps to an Optimized Twitter Presence.”](#)

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“Marketers without that “killer” instinct will tell you this myth.”

## MYTH #5

## SEND LESS EMAIL.

Many marketers, especially those without the “killer” instinct, will tell you that the worst thing you can do to your email list is send to it too frequently. You’ll burn your subscribers out and they’ll stop clicking and buying. You should only send once a week, or once a month or once a year.

Before actually analyzing real data about this advice, I’ll admit I didn’t have strong enough feelings about it. It “sounded” right so I never really railed against it. But when I got access to that giant, 9.5 billion row dataset from email service provider MailChimp, I found several numbers that told me less email isn’t the answer.



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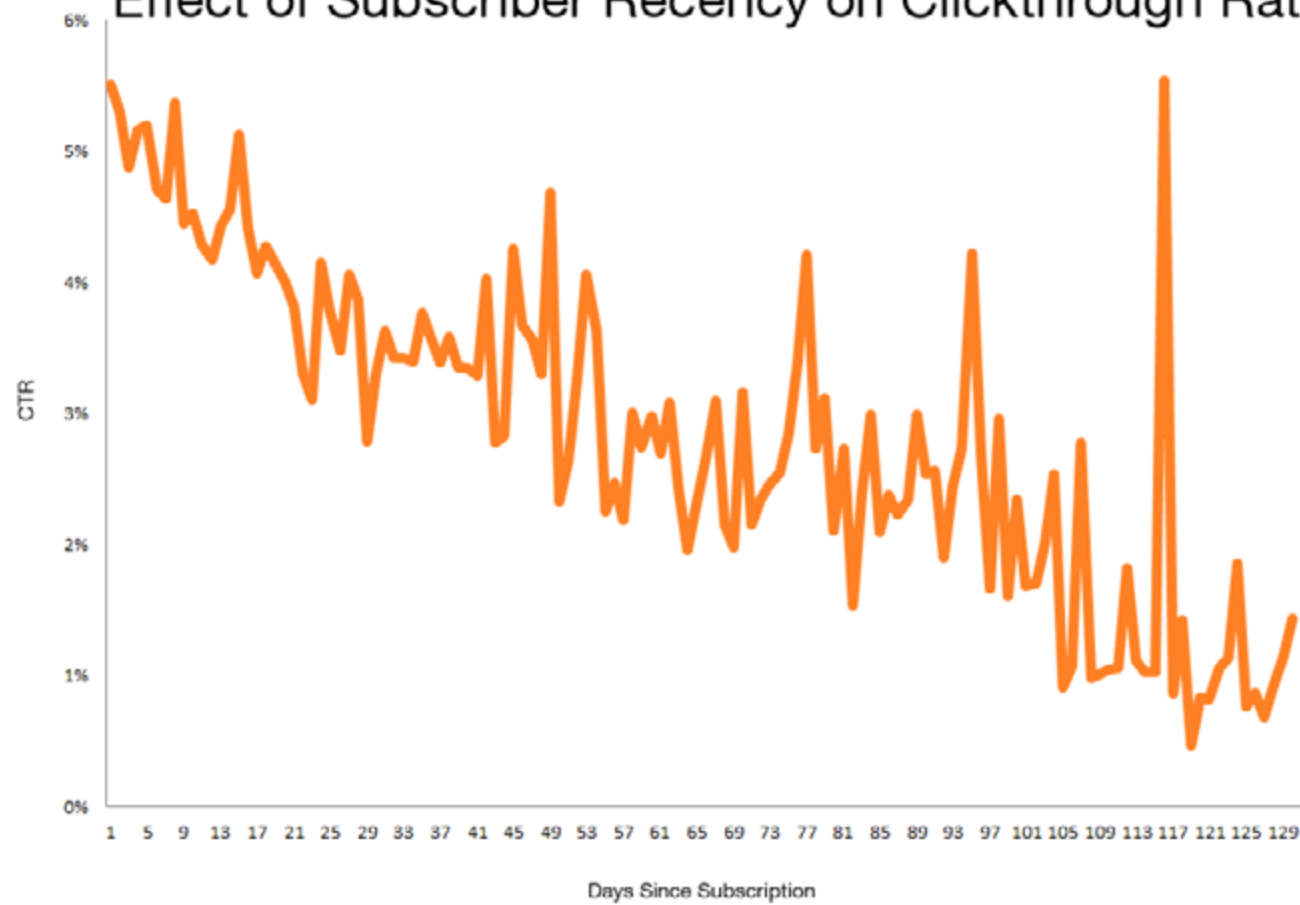
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First, I found that the older a subscriber is (the amount of time they've been on your email list), the lower their response rates are. Each email on your list will never be as hot as the first few days or weeks they're getting your emails. So you need to talk to them as much as you can in that sweet spot.

### Effect of Subscriber Recency on Clickthrough Rate

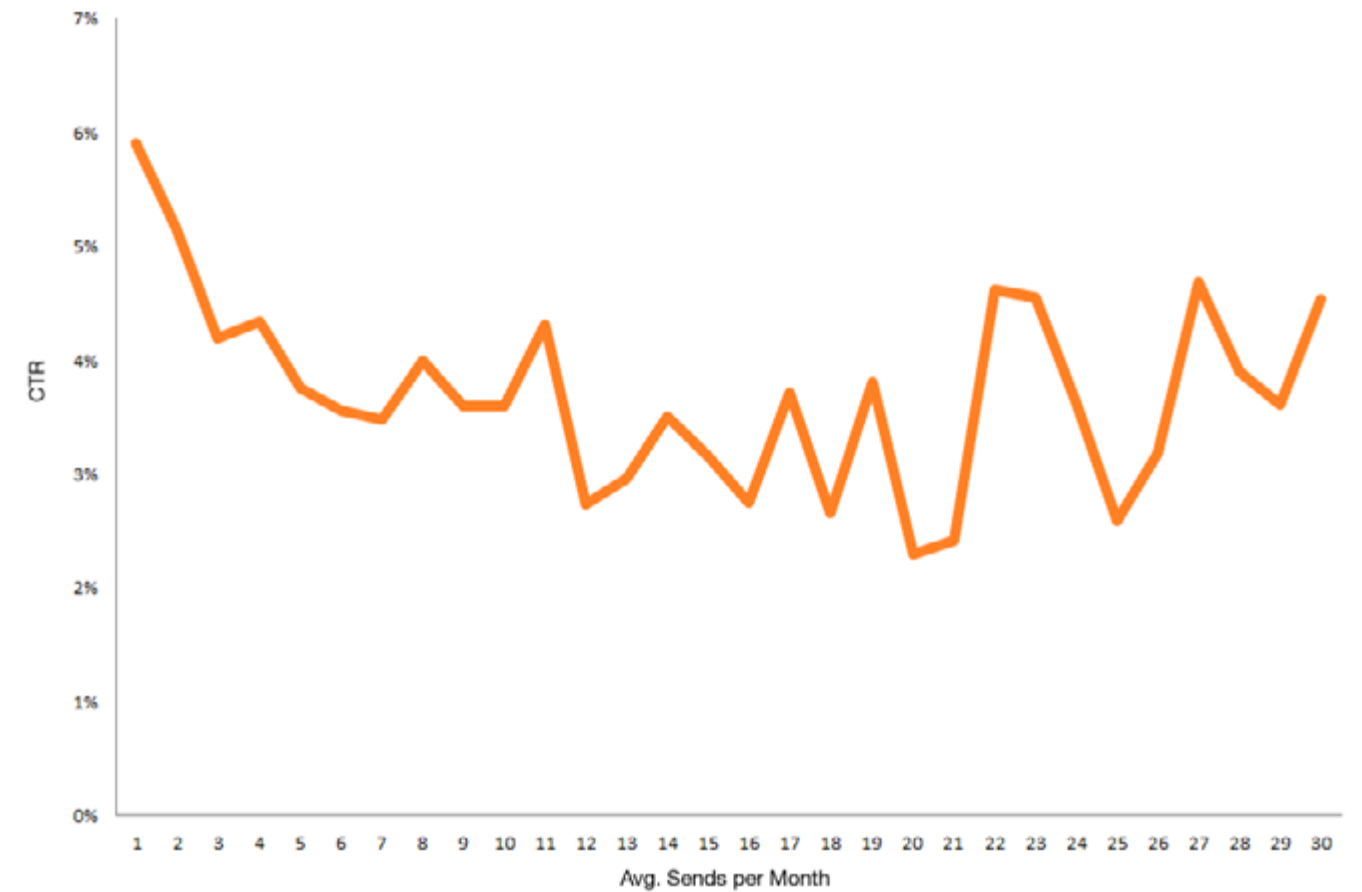


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Then, I found that there is no major drop off in clickthrough rates when sending more email messages. In fact, if you're sending more email and your CTRs (which is a percentage) aren't plummeting, you'll be getting more clicks.

### Effect of Sending Frequency on Clickthrough Rate



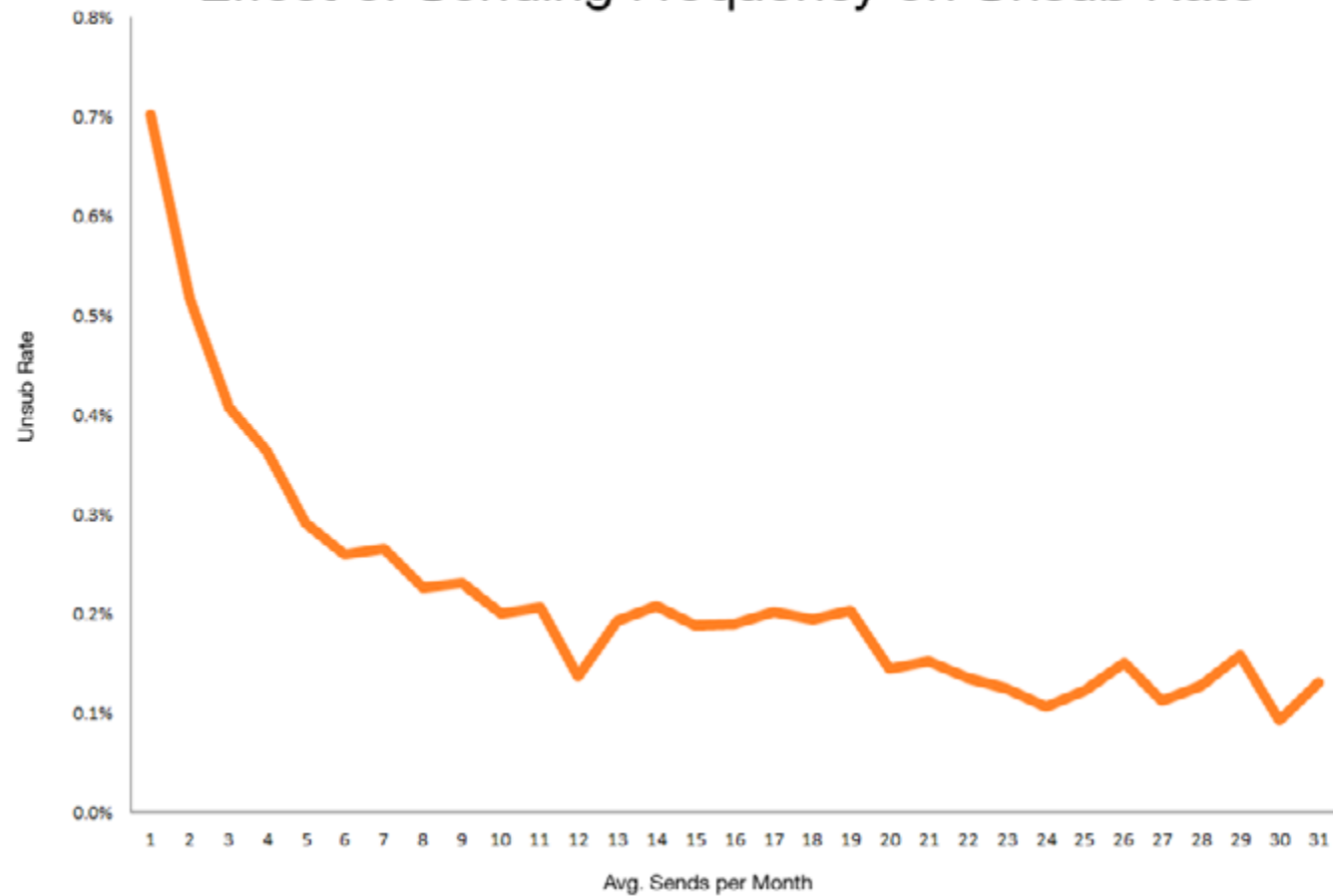
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Finally, I found that there is actually a sharp decline in unsubscribe rates associated with sending more email. The more emails that were sent to the lists in my dataset, the fewer people unsubscribed. This is probably because if you're sending very infrequently, it can be easy to forget why I joined your list in the first place, but if you're sending regularly, I remember your newsletter.

Effect of Sending Frequency on Unsub Rate



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MYTH #6

KLOUT IS WORTHLESS.



“This is one of the newest pervasive social media marketing myths.”

This is one of the newest pervasive social media marketing myths I've heard. It takes a variety of forms ranging from "what counts can't be counted" to "it doesn't count well." The basic argument is that Klout isn't a useful measure of marketing effectiveness or influence. While I agree that it's not the end-all, be-all metric and you should not rely on it to measure how well you're doing with your inbound marketing efforts, the data I've found suggests that a good Klout score reflects a deeper marketing success.

Klout is a measure of the "influence" wielded by brands and individuals in social media. It measures social media exclusively, so you wouldn't expect it to have much of a relationship with other kinds of inbound marketing. Or would you?



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HubSpot recently launched a new, free, marketing tool called Marketing Grader. You can use the tool and in a few seconds get an analysis of your web presence with prescriptive advice on how to improve it. While that in itself is a great tool, I find Marketing Grader fascinating because it collects large amounts of data I can analyze. One piece of that data is Klout score.

What I found when I compared Klout score to two other, unrelated, measurements of marketing effectiveness (inbound links to a website and website traffic) was surprising. I found a relationship between high Klout scores and incoming links and traffic. Those brands who were doing well on social media according to Klout were also doing well on their website according to the two more traditional measurements.



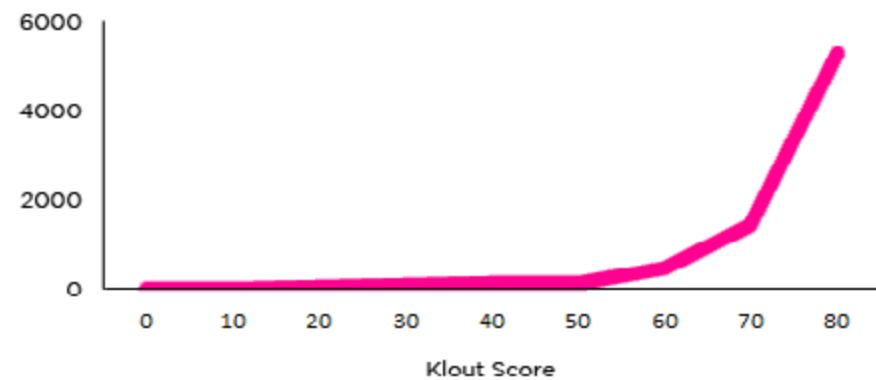
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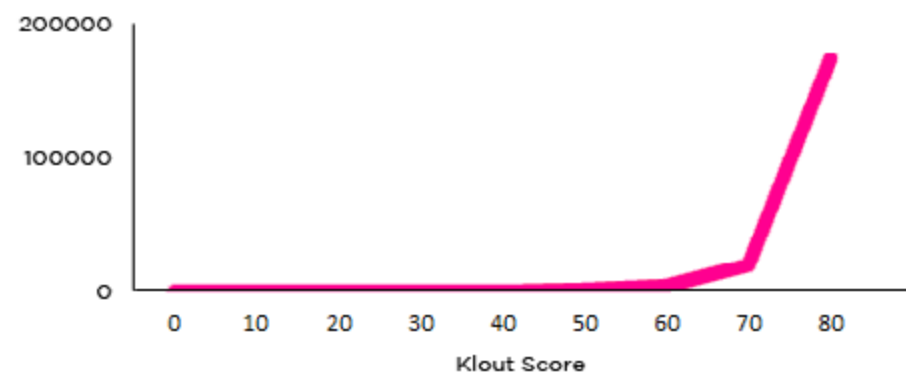


## Correlation Between Klout Score and Website Successfulness

### Inbound Links (from SEOmoz)



### Unique Visitors (from Compete.com)



By Dan Zarrella of HubSpot

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Beyond a simple relationship, I found that the data showed a very winner-takes-it-all kind of web. Brands with very high Klout scores did astronomically better in terms of inbound links and traffic when compared to brands with mediocre scores.

It seems that on the web, you either do very, very well, or not much at all. And social media success is related to success in the rest of your inbound marketing efforts in ways we couldn't have predicted.



Social media **success** is related to success in the rest of your inbound marketing efforts in ways we couldn't have predicted.

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“Now you should be able to smell a marketing myth a mile away.”



Now you know better. Now you should be able to smell a marketing myth a mile away. Because you can, it's your duty to protect your fellow marketers who haven't developed this sense yet. The next time you hear a piece of seemingly sage marketing wisdom, question it. Demand real data and real science. Don't just accept the unicorns-and-rainbows superstitions anymore. You're better than that.



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