

The Science of Presentations

How to Give Contagious Talks



By Dan Zarrella



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The reason most speakers get up in front of groups of people is to share their message with a wider audience, and with the ubiquity of social media the potential reach contained in nearly every audience has grown incredibly. Because I've never been one to be content with guessing the best ways to get people to Tweet or blog about presentations, I decided to explore some hard data about it.

Survey Data

The first source of data I used was a survey that asked people about their behavior and motivations at the intersection of social media and presentations. The survey was promoted through email newsletters and in social media by myself and a variety of well-known industry figures. My intention was to get responses from as many presentation-attending social media users as possible.

I asked 11 questions including the age and gender of the survey taker, the type of content and frequency with which she shared presentations on social media, as well as an open ended question asking what makes the respondent Tweet or blog about a presentation.

The Case Study Webinar

After the survey was completed and initial analysis was performed, I hosted a large webinar about Facebook marketing that attracted over 13,000 registrants and around 5,000 attendees. The webinar's hashtag was, for some period of time, the eighth most discussed topic on Twitter and was therefore labeled a "trending topic."

I had a script running during the webinar that recorded over 3,000 Tweets that included the webinar's hashtag, #FBSci. The analysis of the case study webinar in this ebook was based on these Tweets.

During the webinar I experimented with some of the tactics I learned from the survey research. I included a number of "Tweetable Takeaway" slides that contained takeaway statements all under 140 characters and labeled with several implicit Twitter calls-to-action and references. I also used a slide on which I asked attendees to raise their hands as if they were participating in an in-person audience poll.

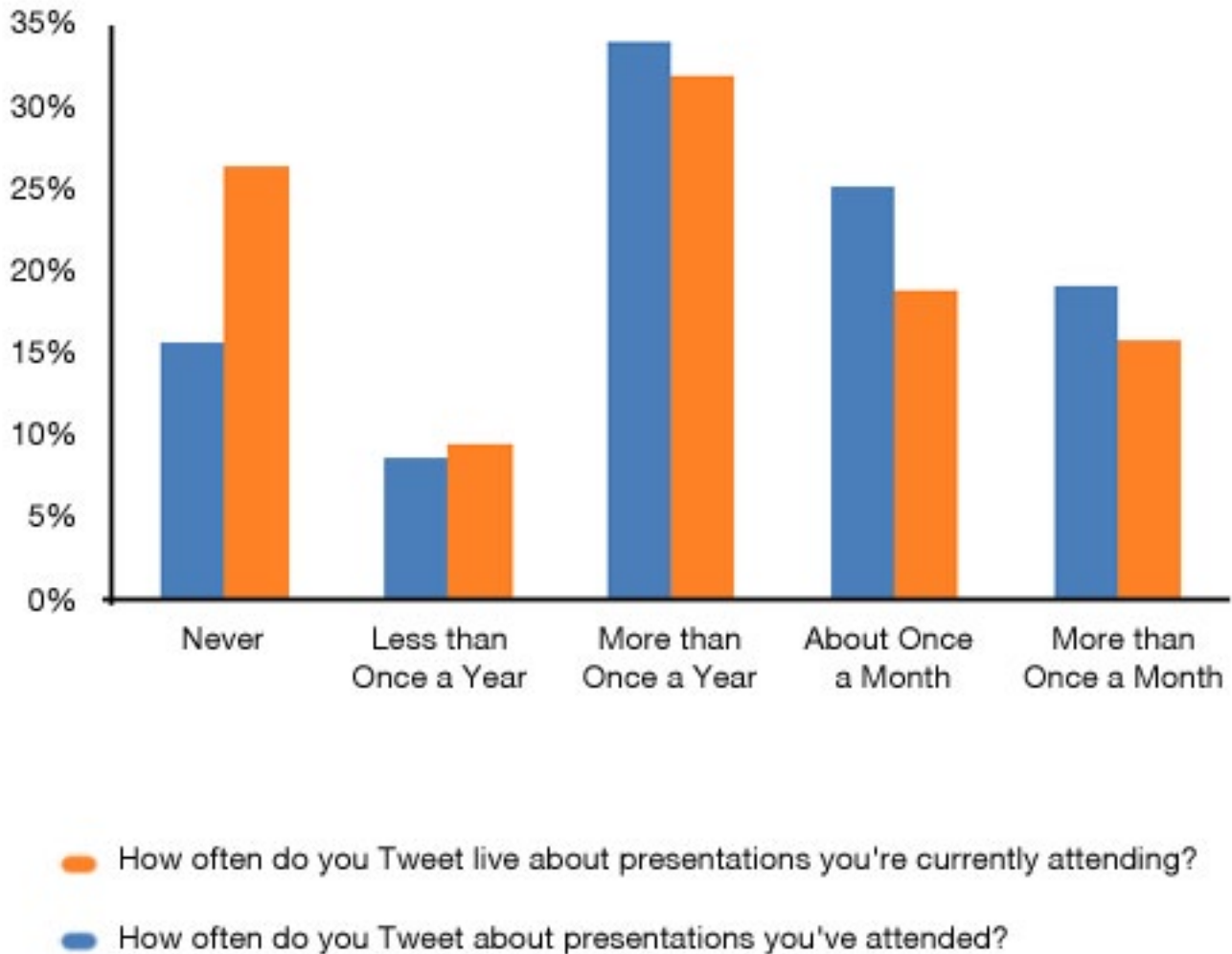
Learn More

If you want to learn more about the science of delivering contagious presentations, be sure to register for my [Science of Presentations Webinar](#) on August 19th.

The Survey Data

“The audience only pays attention as long as you know where you are going.”
- Philip Crosby

Tweeting about Presentations

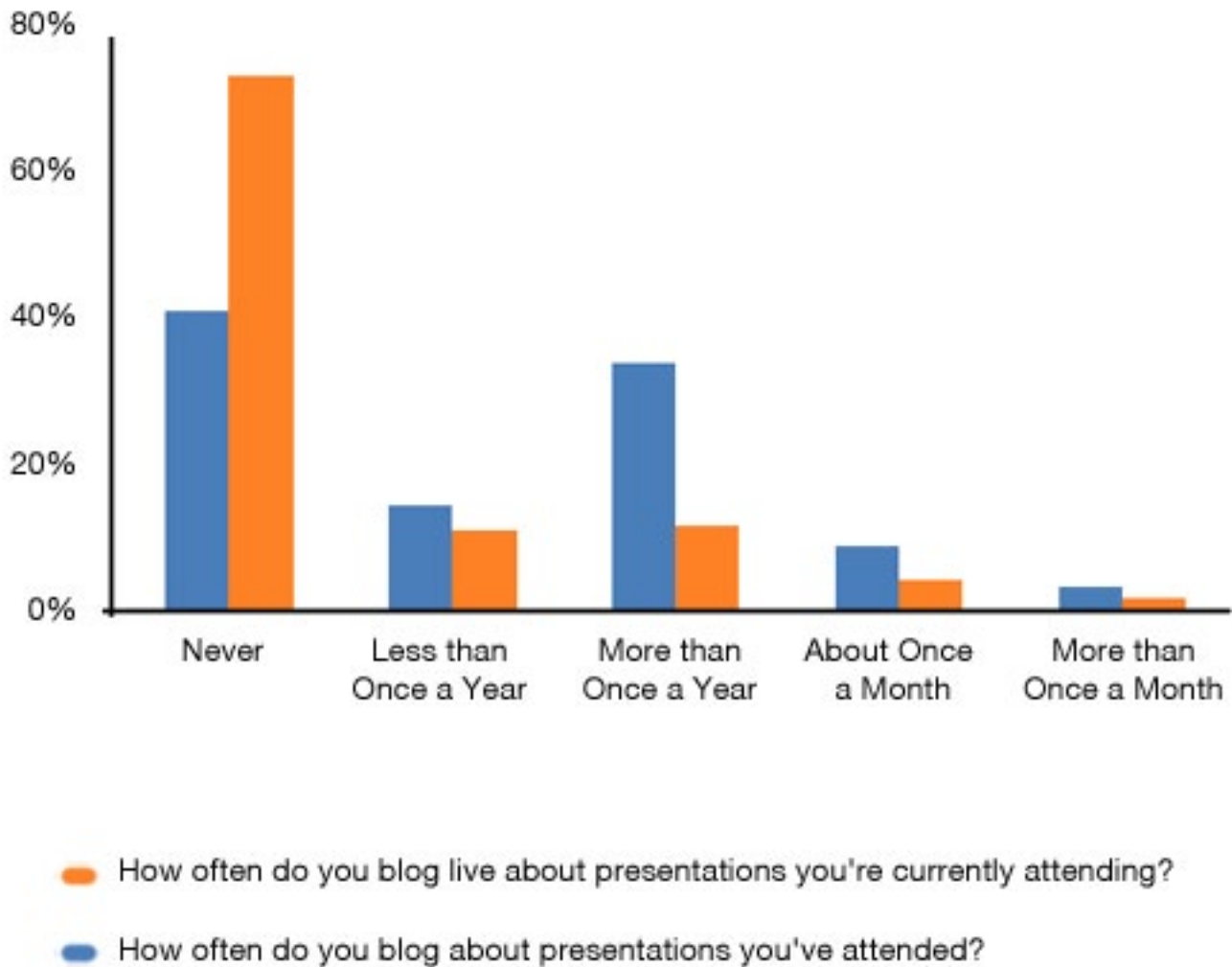


When asked about Tweeting about presentations, most survey respondents reported having Tweeted about a presentation in the past, and nearly 75% explicitly said they had live-Tweeted during a presentation.

The distributions of frequency of Tweeting and live-Tweeting were very similar, which seems to indicate that presentation-goers consider the two actions essentially identical.

In my case-study presentation, the vast majority of Tweets were posted during the presentation.

Blogging about Presentations



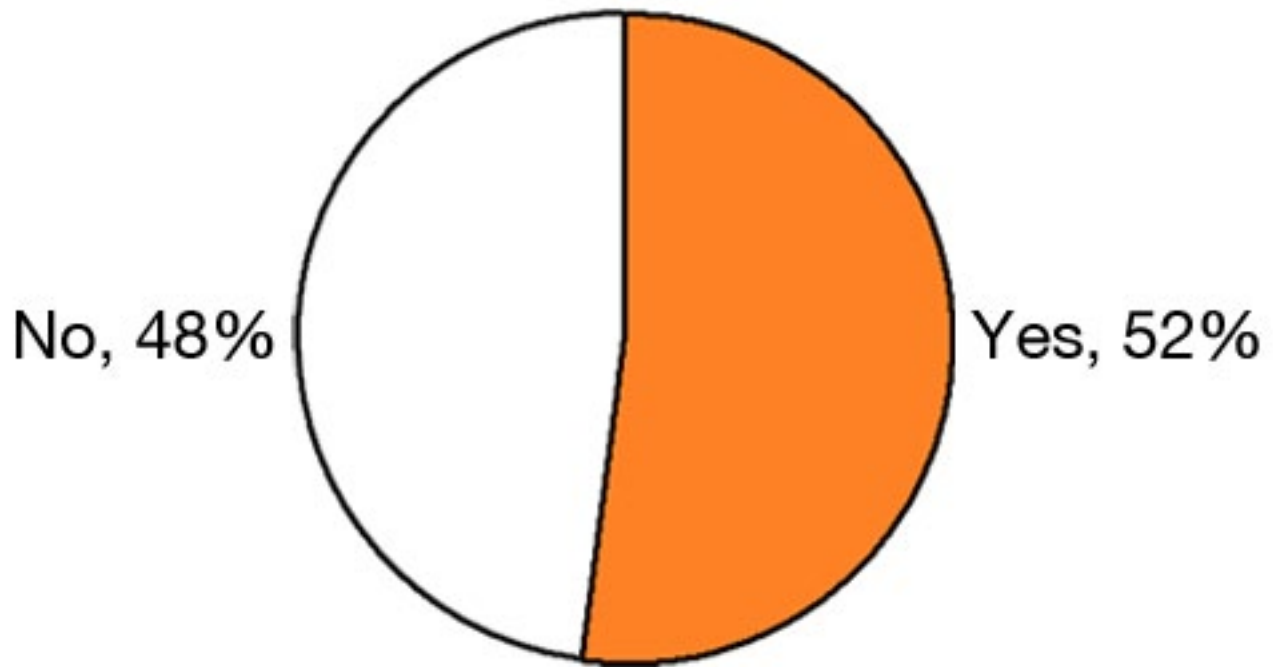
Nearly 80% of respondents said they had never live-blogged a presentation, whereas 60% had blogged about a presentation after the fact.

Blogging about presentations is far less popular than Tweeting, but it may be more worthwhile for marketers in the long term.

Frequency of post-blogging and live-blogging differed significantly, indicating that these are very different actions, and most users only engage in post-blogging.

Our case-study presentation once again supported this scenario as all of the blog posts written about the presentation were written after it concluded.

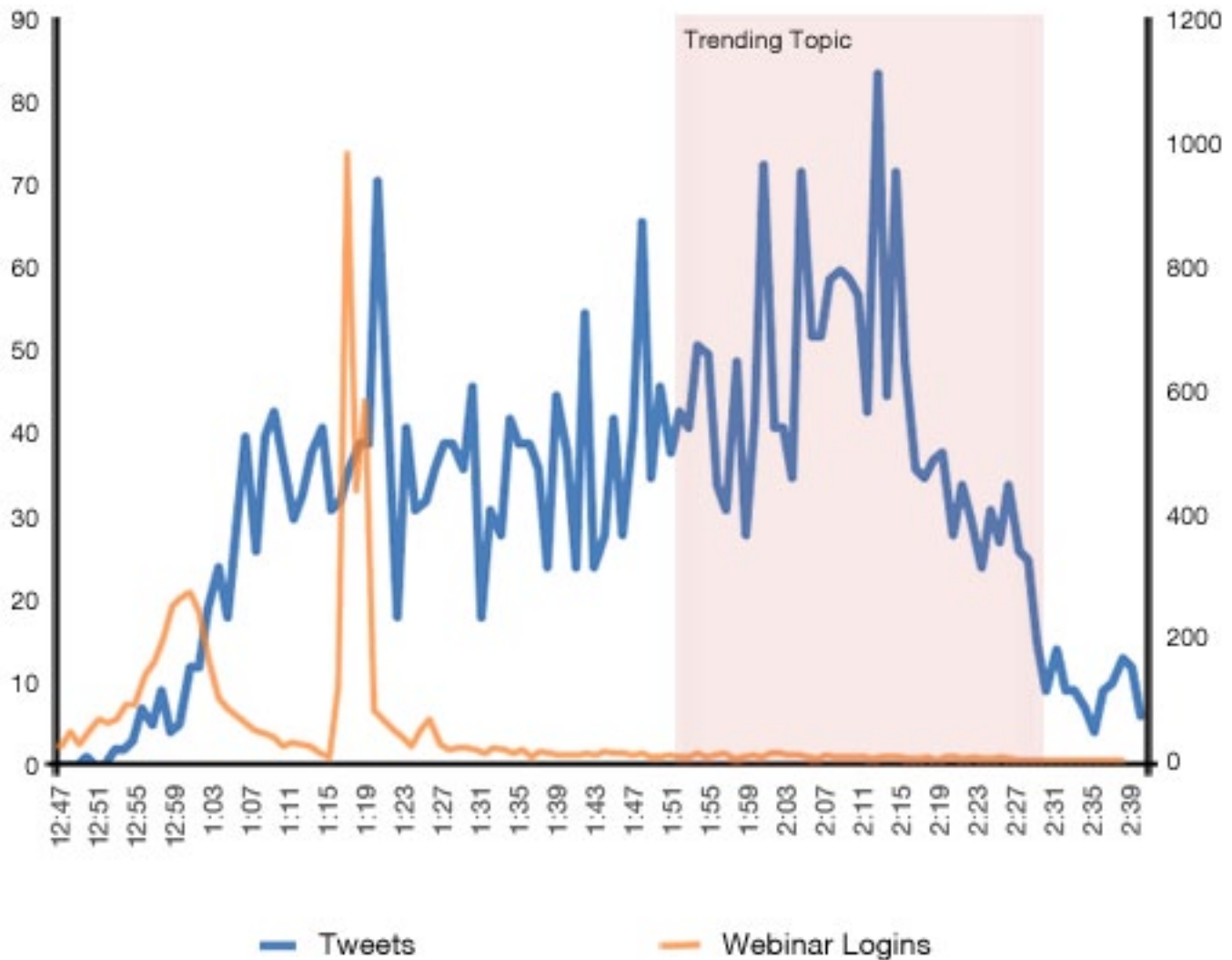
Have you ever seen a live tweet from a presentation and joined because of it?



When I asked survey-takers if they had ever seen a live Tweet about a presentation and joined that presentation because of it, 52% reported that they had. This indicates that as a speaker or conference organizer, live Tweeting should be encouraged as a potential audience builder.

Presenters at live events should keep this in mind, especially at events where there are multiple sessions occurring at one time. At the start of the presentation, try reminding audience members which room they're in and that the presentation may be of use to their followers who are also at the conference.

Presentation Activity Over Time



I plotted the volume of live-Tweeting that was occurring during my case-study webinar alongside the rate of incoming webinar attendees. The second peak in logins was due to technical issues we had with the webinar software.

The hashtag I used during the case-study webinar was highlighted by Twitter as a globally trending topic, meaning that at the time it was the eighth most-discussed subject on Twitter.

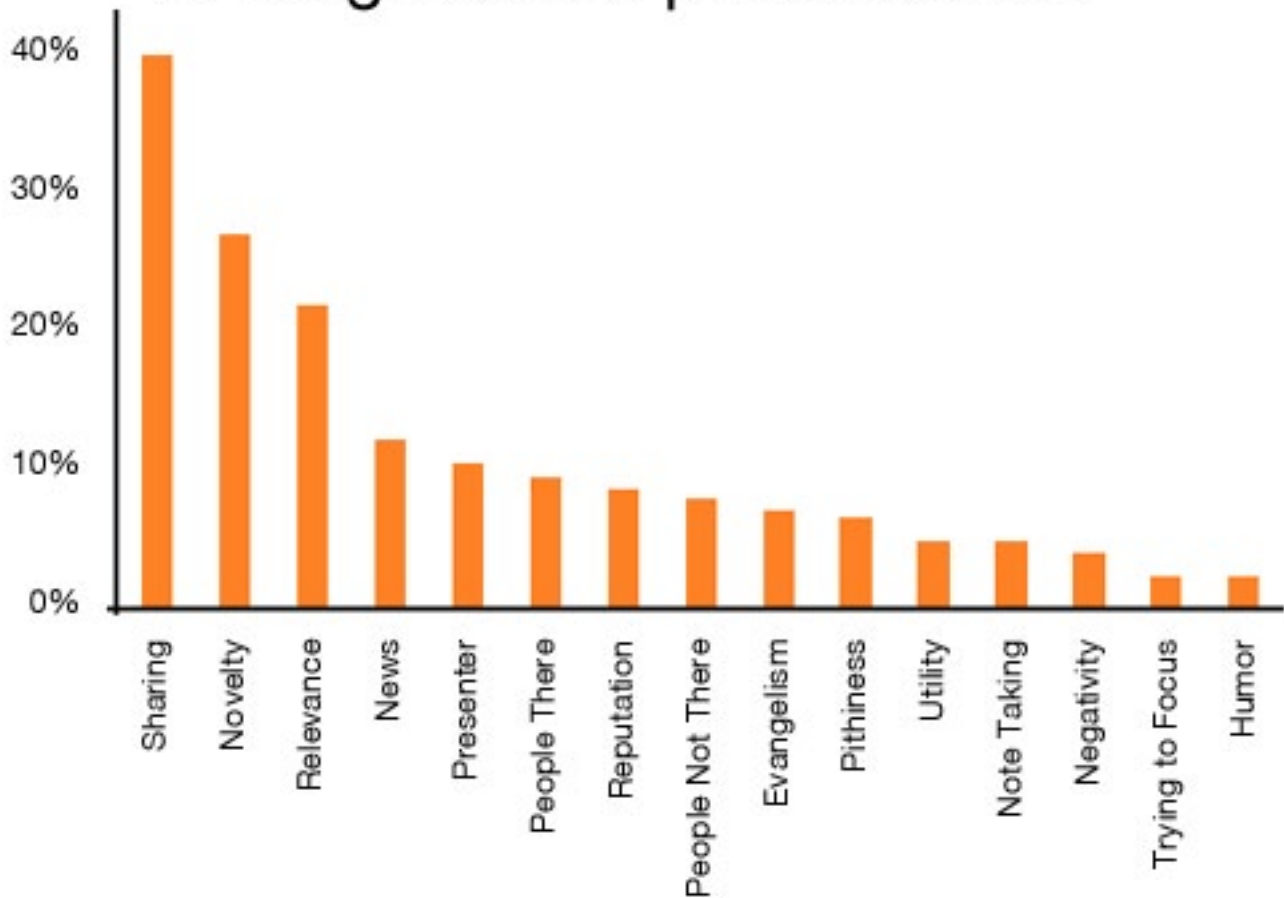
Determining the exact time when “trending” began and ended is a bit fuzzy, but the red area on the graph above represents my best estimation.

Note that in the graph above there does not seem to be any correlation between either live-Tweeting or “trending” and logins. This casts some doubt on how powerful live-Tweeting really is when trying to build an audience for a presentation in real-time.

The Motivations

“Let thy speech be better than silence, or be silent.”
- Dionysius the Elder

What makes you want to Tweet or blog about a presentation?



I asked survey-takers what made them want to Tweet or blog about a presentation and allowed them to enter an open ended text-based response. I then identified the most common themes.

Below are explanations of the themes I found. After each explanation there are tactical takeaways in italics that will explain how a presenter can leverage knowledge of these motivations to encourage the sharing of presentation content.

Sharing

Nearly 40% of respondents cited some form of “sharing” as what made them want to talk about a presentation in social media. Many responded with comments such as: “share with others,” “...worth sharing,” “share the knowledge,” and “share the opportunity.”

These respondents often mentioned that they wanted to “gift” valuable information to people who were listening to them. Many also mentioned reciprocal relationships, where their friends shared content they heard with them, so they did the same.

Remind users to “be kind and share.”

Novelty

27% of respondents identified “novelty” as one of their motivations for sharing content from a presentation. They listed things like: “insights you haven’t heard before,” “when the content is new and fresh,” “anything that’s original... It’s annoying when you get saturated with the same, unoriginal, repeated information,” and “thought provoking quotes.”

Many of these respondents specifically indicated they shared content and ideas they’d never heard before, but many also observed that they were likely to share new ways of looking at things. These also typically included mentions of interesting-ness and uniqueness.

Say something your audience hasn’t heard before.

Relevance

22% of survey takers told me that they thought about “relevance” when deciding whether or not to Tweet or blog about a presentation. They said things like: “applicability to my followers,” “something.. that I think would interest other people,” “If I think it might benefit my crowd,” and “relevance to my audience.”

In most of my research on this topic, I’ve found relevancy is a common theme. Users are drawn to sharing content that seems tailor-made for their audience.

Be laser-focused on the topic your audience came to learn about.

News

12% of respondents said they shared content from presentations when it was newsworthy. They said things like: “breaking news or figures,” “important announcements,” and “it’s very current news.”

Breaking news is one of the most popular types of content in almost all forms of social media and presentations are no different. Users typically indicated they were motivated by the real-time nature of Twitter to be able to quickly share news they’d heard.

Include breaking news and never-heard-before things in your presentations.

The Presenter

10% of respondents called out their feelings about the presenter as a major motivation to share presentation content. They said things like: “speaker’s stature,” “the speaker is really compelling,” “how well known the person is,” “energetic speaker with passion,” and “the speaker’s ability to convey the message.”

Survey takers who mentioned this motivation were very interested in who the speaker was (especially in terms of popularity) and how well and passionately they spoke.

Ingratiate yourself with your audience and let your passion and personality show.

People There

9% of survey respondents mentioned they were motivated by other people attending the presentation. They said things like: “good questions posed by fellow attendees,” “networking with new crowd,” “how crowds react,” “there’s already a community discussing the topic,” and “interaction with the audience.”

The people who mentioned being motivated by the rest of the audience in attendance typically referred to networking and becoming a part of the back-channel discussions about the presentation.

Remind your audience that by attending your presentation they’re part of a community.

Reputation

8.5% of respondents said they were motivated to share presentation content because they felt it could increase their reputation. They said things like: “I enjoy seeing my tweets being shown on the screens,” “provides credibility as an expert,” “be the first source to the news,” and “I want to impress my followers.”

Respondents in this bucket typically said they wanted to be seen as a credible expert who was in-the-know and among the first to learn new things.

Give your audience information to tweet about that will make them look cool.

People Not There

8% of respondents specifically mentioned being motivated to share presentation content with other people who could not attend the presentation. They said things like: “adding value for those not attending,” “I’m getting smarter while you are not,” “knowledge sharing to the audience that’s not in attendance,” and “to let people know where I am.”

People who mentioned being motivated by people not in attendance were typically concerned with providing valuable content to their network who either were not able to attend or who did not know about the presentation.

Remind the audience that they probably have friends who could not attend and would love to hear what you’re saying.

Evangelism

7% of respondents indicated they were interested in evangelizing the presentation. They said things like: “to spread awareness,” “drawing attention to the live event,” “extend reach for presenter,” and “helping publicize and promote the presentation.”

These respondents used the word “spread” often, saying they wanted to spread the word about the topic, event or presenter. A few mentioned they were motivated when the topic was something they felt passionate about already or when the presentation made them care about the topic.

Use Us-vs-Them and Victim-is-Wronging-the-Victim techniques (I’ll talk about them in the Key Findings section).

Pithiness

6.5% of respondents mentioned they were motivated to share succinct information. They said things like “when the content is tweetable,” “something quick, easy and understandable,” “nuggets of advice,” “really great sound bites,” “clever axioms,” “tidbits” and “great quotes.”

Pithiness typically included not only short content that could fit into a 140 character tweet, but also short content that could be understood out of the context of the presentation.

Craft tweetable sound bites for every slide.

Utility

5% of survey-takers said they shared content that was useful. They said things like: “practical tips,” “if I find the information to be useful,” and “usable information.”

These respondents were motivated by how useful the content was, not only to them but also to their audience.

Teach your audience how to do something.

Note Taking

5% of respondents said that tweeting or blogging content from presentations was a way for them to take notes for themselves and their audiences. They said things like: “note-taking for myself,” “something I want to make sure I document / remember,” and “my list of topics to research afterwards.”

These people were interested in remembering specific points for presentations and many indicated they wanted to be able to do further research on them later.

Point your audience to resources for further research.

Negativity

4% of respondents said they’d tweet or blog when they disagreed with the presenter or thought the information was badly presented. They said things like: “bad content or bad presentation style,” “if it’s just gawd awful,” “simple people saying stupid things,” and “if it’s something I disagree with.”

Survey takers that mentioned negativity as a possible motivation often said they wanted to voice their disagreements and that boring presentations sometimes provided more opportunities to tweet without missing important information.

Invite people who disagree with you to discuss it.

Trying to Focus

2% of respondents mentioned that trying to focus on the presentation played a role in whether or not they tweeted or blogged about it. They said things like: “have a pause or break... I want to be fully present and attentive to the presentation and other attendees,” “if I’m attending a presentation that is any good, then my attention is on the presenter,” “time is a factor,” “prefer to pay attention to the speaker,” and “I think live tweeting presentations is rude to the presenter and the audience. It’s like passing notes in class. It takes your attention off the presenter and creates cliques within your audience.”

Many respondents who mentioned “trying to focus” said they didn’t live tweet or blog about presentations at all while others said they did when there was a pause or break that allowed them to shift their focus.

Give the audience a moment to tweet your pithy sound bites.

Humor

2% of survey-takers mentioned they tweeted funny things. They said things like: “anytime a presenter says something amusing I tend to tweet it,” “funny quotes,” and “relevant humor.”

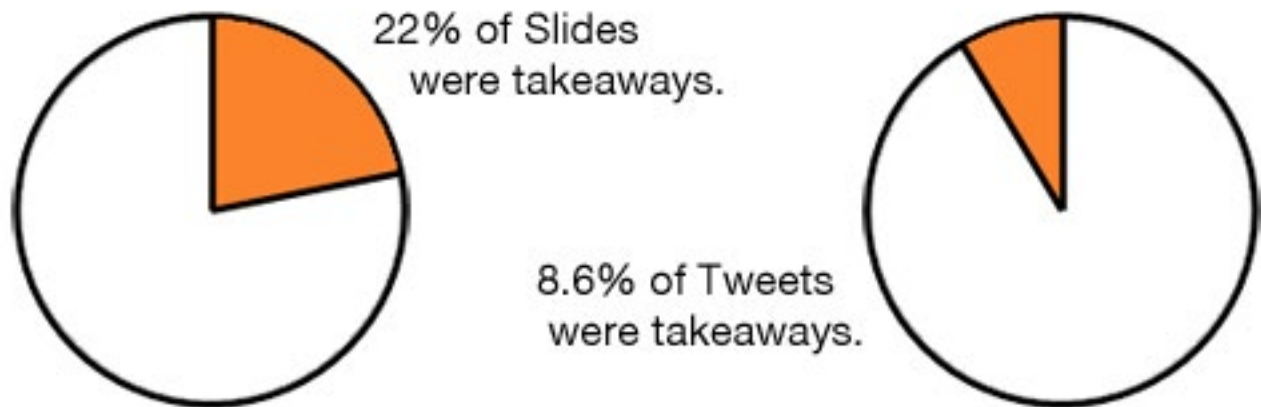
When marketers try to think of things that “go viral,” humor is often one of the first things that comes to mind, but in nearly every survey I’ve done about social media, it tends to rank far below other types of content, especially news.

Use humor, but don’t rely on it.

The Case Study Webinar

“They may forget what you said, but they will never forget how you made them feel.” - Carl W. Buechner

Tweetable Takeaways as Percentages of Slides and Tweets

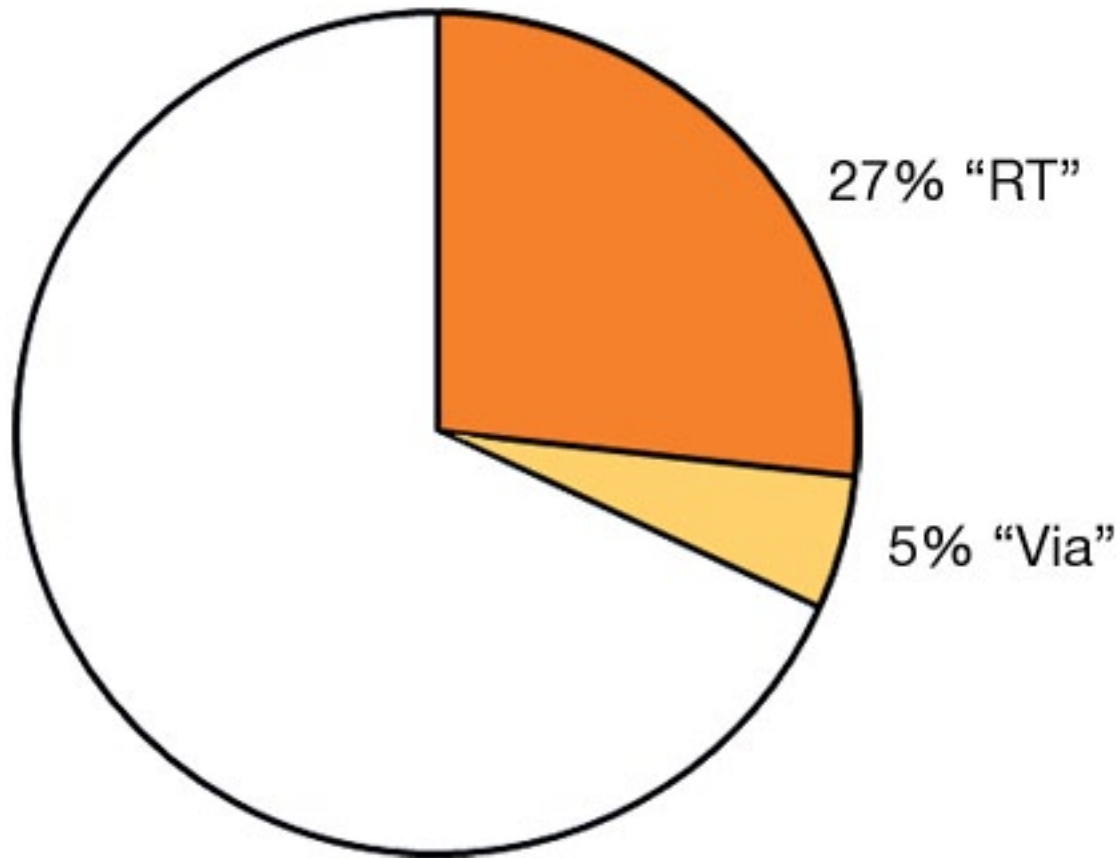


During the case-study webinar, I included slides labeled “Tweetable Takeaways.” These slides were introduced in the beginning of the webinar with a request to share them with attendees’ followers and included a hashtag, Twitter bird logo and my @ username on every takeaway slide.

While I devoted 22% of my overall slides to these takeaways, only 8.6% of the total Tweets posted about the presentation contained some verbatim part of the text that appeared on a takeaway slide.

Anecdotally, other presenters and myself have noticed that these type of highly direct Tweet calls-to-action were effective, but this data seems to challenge the notion that they are the best way to stimulate sharing.

ReTweets as a Percentage of Presentation Tweets



In contrast to the mere 8% of Tweets that used takeaway slide text, I noticed a great deal of presentation Tweets were ReTweets of other Twitter users using either the “RT” or “via” syntaxes.

The “RT” syntax was more popular, with 27% of all presentation Tweets containing it, while a full 5% (only 3.6% less than the takeaway tweets) used the via syntax.

As a presenter it may be more effective to focus on ReTweets as a way to stimulate tweets, perhaps by scheduled Tweets of takeaways by the

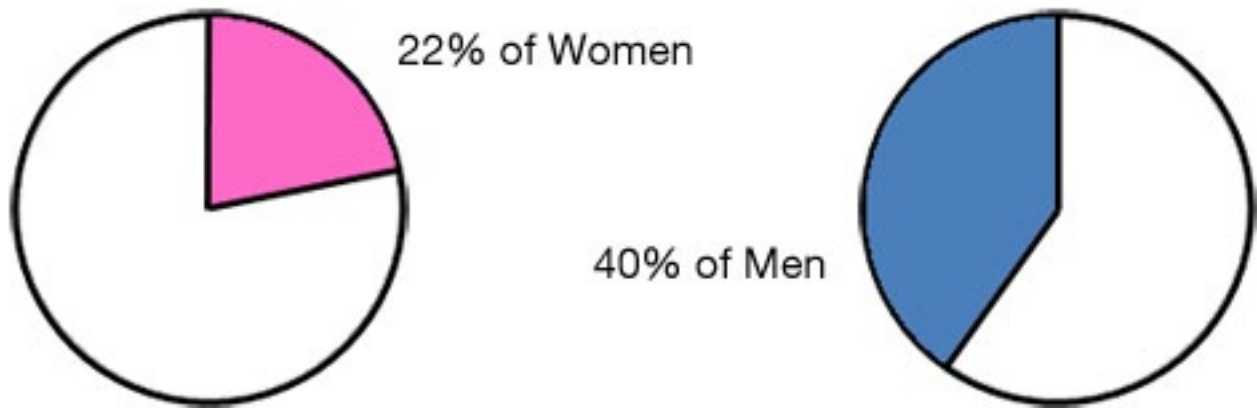
presenter during the presentation, or by post-presentation Tweeting.

If scheduled Tweets are being used, the presenter should tell the audience to follow his or her account because the content of the takeaway slides will be tweeted as it is presented. This may also help to address the concern mentioned by some survey-takers that they are often too busy trying to pay attention to the presentation to type out full Tweets.

Age & Sex Differences

“A good orator is pointed and impassioned.”
- Marcus T. Cicero

Would you Tweet or blog about a presentation because you disagree with it?

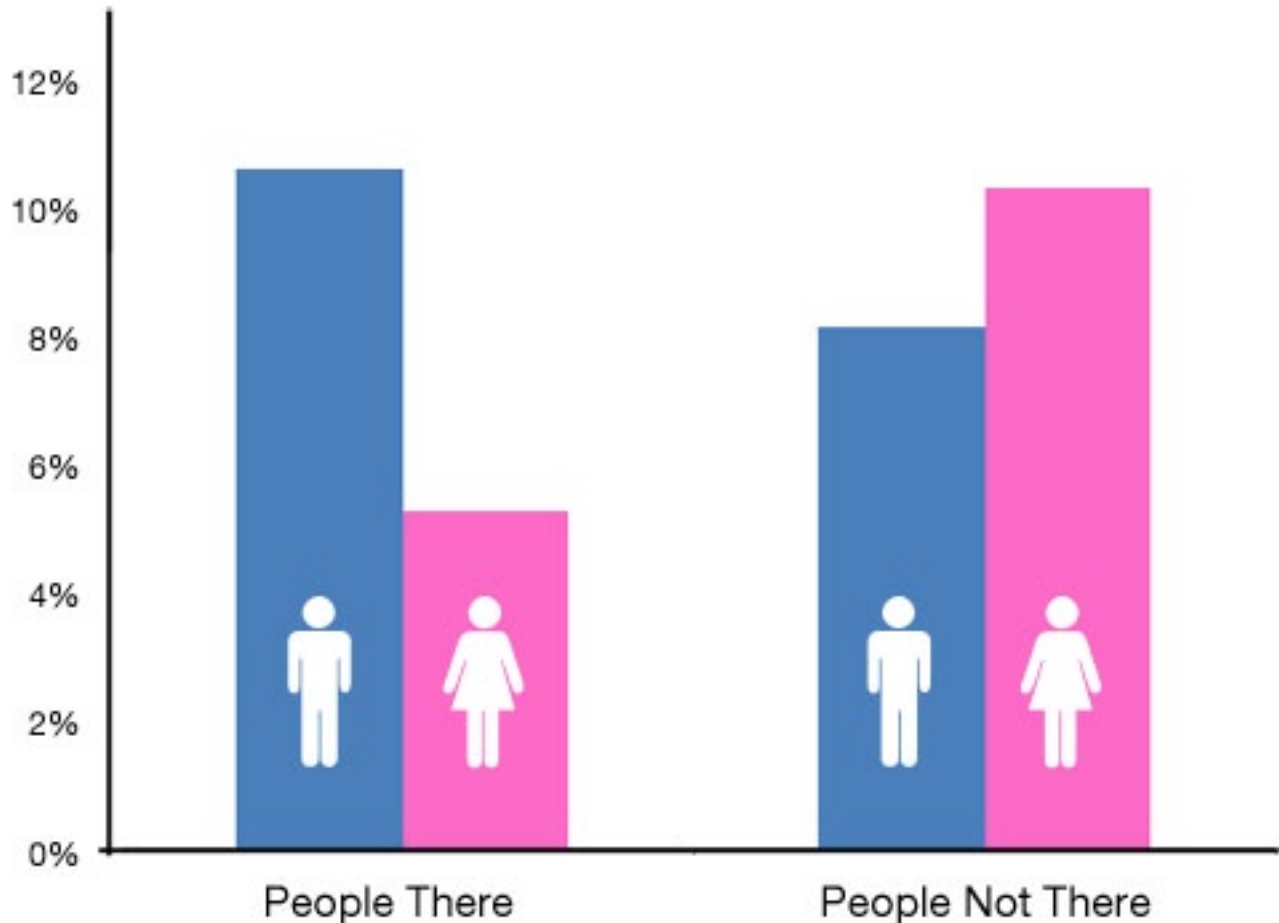


In the survey, I asked respondents if they consider Tweeting negative reactions to a presentation and found that overall, 31% of users would. When I broke down the results by gender (as provided by the survey takers), I found the most striking gender difference in all of my social media and presentations research.

Men are nearly twice as likely to blog or tweet a negative opinion about a presentation. Only 22% of women report doing so, as opposed to 40% of men.

A risky tactic for a presenter who notices a male-skewed audience may be to intentionally disagree with attendees in an attempt to stimulate them to tweet their disagreement.

Men vs Women: What Makes You Want to Share Presentation Content



Another significant area of gender difference was in survey-takers' responses to questions about motivation. *For sharing presentation content, men indicated that they're more motivated by people in attendance at a presentation than those who are not there, while women indicated the reverse preference.*

If presenters notice an audience that is skewed toward either gender they may want to modify their approach by asking the audience to share presentation content they find interesting.

A female audience may respond better to reminders that there are people who couldn't attend, whereas a male audience may respond better to reminders that all the attendees are part of a temporally and geographically limited community.

Hand Raising and Gender

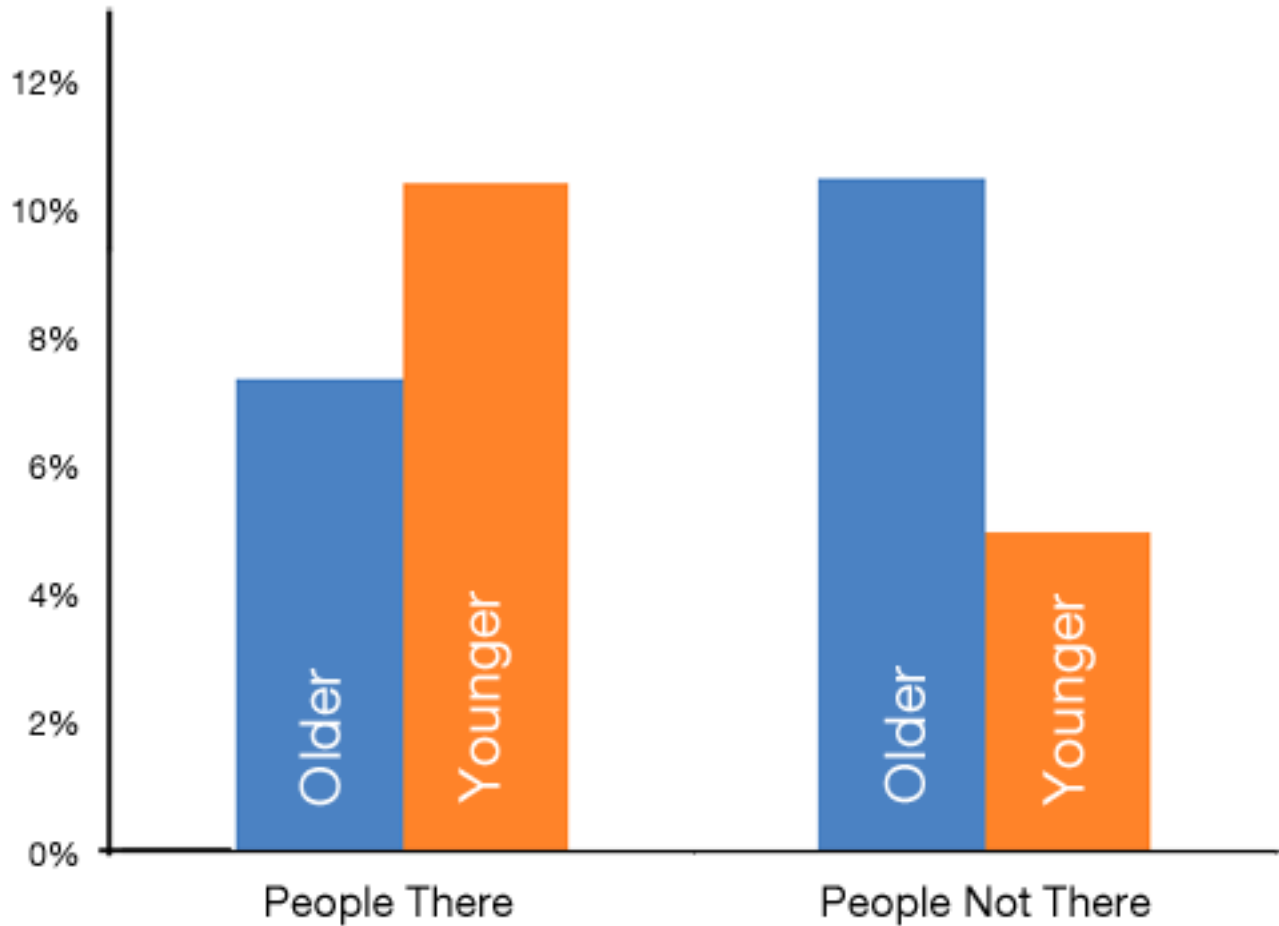


During the case study webinar, I simulated an in-person audience poll and asked attendees to raise their hands to answer a question. I then asked them to Tweet at me if they had actually raised their hands.

I identified individuals' genders by matching their first names against common male and female names and I found a surprising gender difference

in those users who indicated they had raised their hands. *While the overall webinar audience contained more women than men (61% women to 39% men), hand raisers were skewed male (only 38% women and 62% men).* This may indicate that male attendees are more likely to comply with presenter requests, but the data set here is small and further research is required.

Over 36 vs Under 36: What Makes You Want to Share Presentation Content



In the survey, I asked takers to provide their age. I found the median age in my data set was 36 so I divided respondents into two groups: those over 36 and those under 36.

I only identified one area where age seemed to be significant: much like the gender differences above, age seemed to impact the “people there”

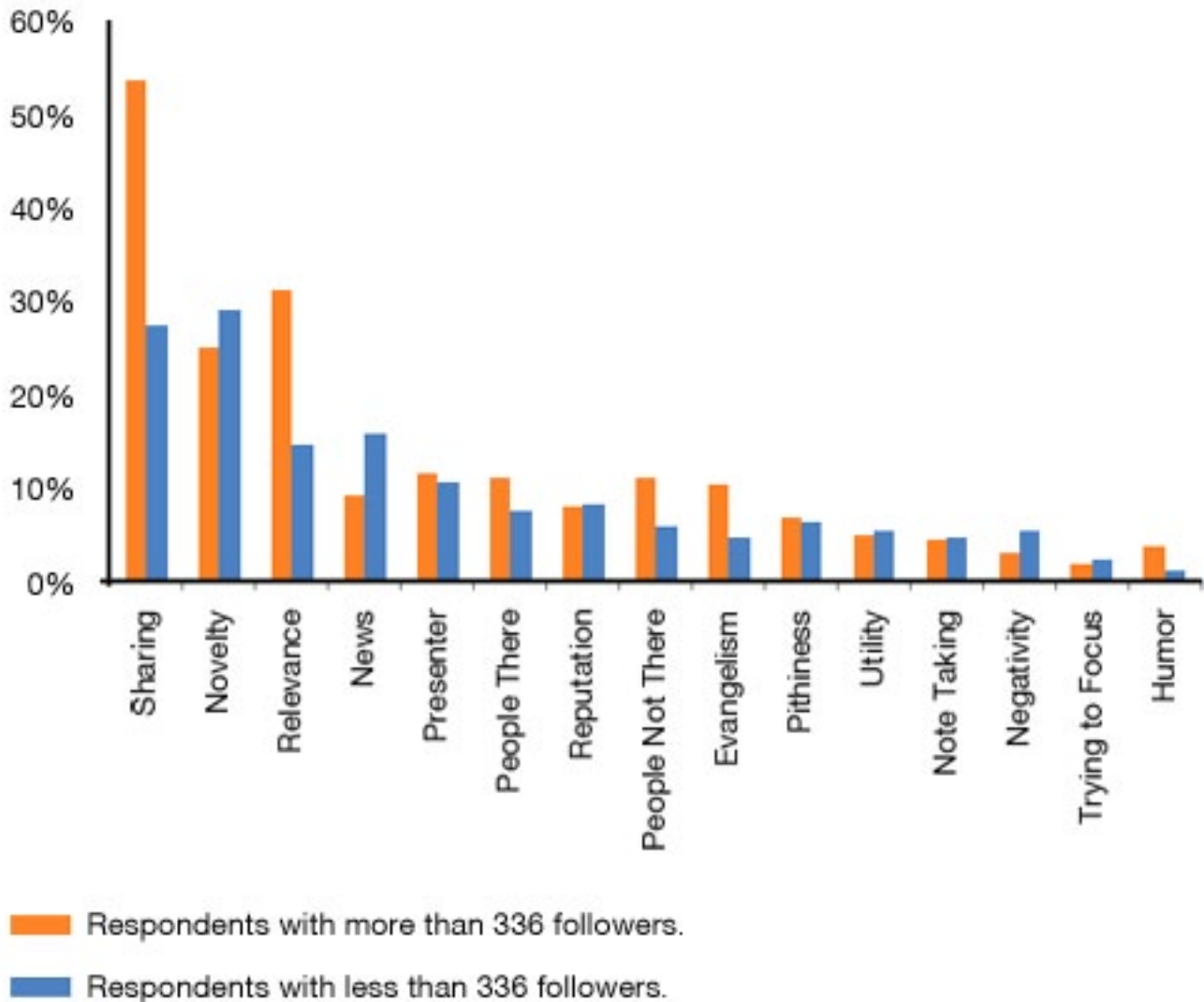
vs “people not there” motivations. *Older users were more motivated by people not in attendance while younger members were motivated by people in the same audience.*

If a presenter notices a younger or older crowd they may want to adjust their strategy in the same way they would if they noticed a gender skew.

Influential Attendees

“Oratory is the power to talk people out of their sober and natural opinions.”
- Joseph Chatfield

What makes you want to Tweet or blog about a presentation (by followers)?



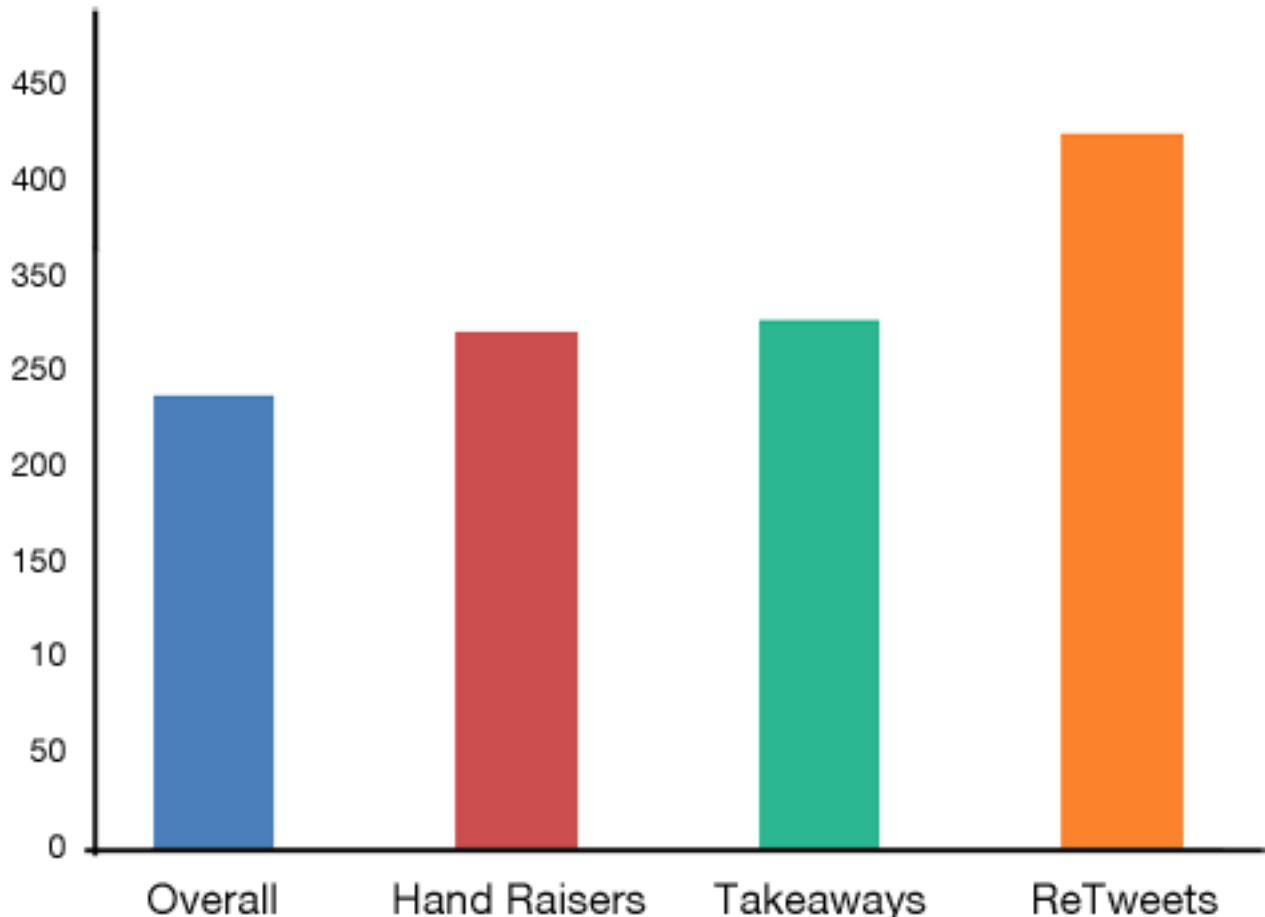
I asked survey takers for their Twitter usernames so I was able to retrieve the number of followers they had. There was a median of 336 followers in the survey set, so I broke out users above and below this average.

Respondents with more than 336 followers tend to highlight social and audience based motivation themes more than those with fewer. These included “sharing,” “relevance,” “people there,”

“people not there,” and “evangelism,” indicating they are more aware of their sizable audience.

Presenters trying to influence high-follower attendees to share their presentation content should focus on tactics that address social motivations, including reminding people they are part of a community, and should share content they find interesting with their friends who could not attend.

Median Number of Followers by Tweet Types



I identified three subsets of the users who Tweeted about the case study presentation who had more followers than the average: those who complied with my request to raise their hand, those who tweeted snippets of text from my “Tweetable Takeaways” slides and those who ReTweeted.

The hand raisers had an average of 303 followers, the takeaway tweeters had an average of 310, and ReTweeters had an average of 420. Compared to

the overall average of 266 followers, the fact that these segments all had more followers indicates that the most engaged attendees were the most followed.

Presenters should give their audiences opportunities to ReTweet presentation content. One way to do this would be by Tweeting your own takeaways at the end of the presentation or during it using Tweet-scheduling software.

Expert Presenters

“Be sincere; be brief; be seated.”
- Franklin D. Roosevelt

While conducting research, I emailed several of my favorite presenters and presentation experts and asked them the best way to get audience members to Tweet or blog about their presentations.

I used their answers to guide some of the directions my research took and found that they echoed a number of themes I discovered in the data.

These are their responses.

Lee Odden



For me, there are 3 pieces to getting audiences talking about your presentation on the social web.

1. Promote the presentation with a blog post before the event on the social channels where you're active, whether it's LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, Forum or Blog.
2. Include compelling and provocative quotes (Tweet friendly) in your presentation.
3. Show your Twitter handle and a hashtag clearly on the slides in your presentation.

Bonus! Aggregate some of the better responses to your presentation in a blog post and mention those people. Many will see this and mention your presentation again.

Jason Falls

There are lots of ways - starting the presentation off with a custom hashtag encourages Twitter conversations, and having a custom shortened URL and asking them to link/tweet/post it for their friends who couldn't be there and such. But the best way I've found to get people to talk about my presentations is to say something meaningful in them.



An example is all the social media gurus, experts, prophets and such for years saying, "Join the conversation." In my talk on moving the needle in social media I say, "Conversations don't ring the cash register." You might get called a lot of names, but people sure do talk about it.

And things that the audience actually came for: if your presentation is on how to mine data from Twitter, then dammit, you'd better give them ways to mine data on Twitter. Don't just sit there and do Twitter searches for different words and play hashtag bingo.

Seth Godin



I think the best way is to give them something worth repeating, no? Most people who present intentionally avoid saying anything worth repeating. Just stop avoiding it.

Nancy Duarte

It's funny you'd ask this 'cause I think that the BEST presentations actually are so engrossing that people forget to Twitter while the presentation is happening. Almost ironic. I think if the presentation is really great, people will Twitter about it (or if it's really bad).



We coach our clients to plant sound bites into their presentations that are 140 characters or fewer and to even project the single phrases on the slides. You wouldn't call attention to it as a twitterable moment. Hopefully it's profound

enough that they'll pick up on it themselves. You can also twitter your own sound bite when the presentation is done. For @ev's keynote, we had him twitter the 3 take-aways right when he got off the stage. They got retweeted a TON.

Blogging during presentations happen a ton too. It's as if the blogger is the journalist and photo journalist. They take pics and capture sound bites so you have to have interesting content that spikes and then dips so that the blogger has time to post before you pick up on your next big nugget. Pace the nuggets so they have time to send it out before you state the next big nugget.

As for after the presentation, we are encouraging our clients to create after-market versions of their presentations as video or slides+audio that can be embedded into blogs and picked up in various media formats. Arm the blogosphere with good media.

Brett Tabke

One thing I have always wanted was a way to influence the tweeting while I present. I have found a piece of software to do that! AutoTweet: any text between the tags [twitter] and [/twitter] in your PowerPoint (PPT) notes will automatically be tweeted as you give your presentation.



Now – getting people to tweet during your PPT:

- Ask them to do so. “If you see something you like, feel free tweet about it. I'd love the feedback and discussion.”
- Try to put a “tweetable” quote on as many slides as possible. I have seen people actually mark their “tweetable” with a little twitter logo bird next to it (instead of a bullet point).
- Stop for a second and look at twitter during your PPT. Tell people – “What are people saying on twitter? Do I need to shift gears? Give me a sec”. It is a pause to give the audience time to check twitter as well and tweet about it.

Guy Kawasaki



The best way is to focus your presentation on social media because social media addicts cannot resist discussing social media.

Chris Brogan



Make this worth it for the audience. They talk when they see that the results of such conversation will benefit them as a group.

Laura Fitton

Some ideas...

- Make it really good -- funny, memorable, and in particular: quotable. Sound bites and snappy quotes tend to get tweeted.
- Frame everything you say and show in terms of your audience's point of view and needs.
- Make them look smart with the information they can pass on by tweeting.
- Tell them what hashtag to use and lead by example. Before your talk, tweet links to your resources* beforehand and use the hashtag that you're going to tell them.
- You can even pre-schedule tweets with your main points to go up during your talk, or tweet your main points right before you speak.



Your resources*:

- Your slide deck should be on slideshare.net before you start so people can pass it along with their tweet.
- If you're being live streamed, share the link they can find you at. Again, this may get passed along for context when they quote you.
- Since I talk about Twitter tools (and want to promote my startup when I speak) I build a toolkit (see <http://oneforty.com/pistachio/>) so it's easy for them to check stuff out while I am talking or get back to it later.

Jan Schultink

I have no right answer for that. I guess it is not so much "talking about your presentation" but more "talking about your idea."



Good ideas will catch on and spread. The community that gets excited about a well-designed presentation just because of its design is relatively small.

Key Findings

“Grasp the subject, the words will follow.”
- Cato The Elder

Takeaways

Lee Odden and Nancy Duarte both mentioned using soundbites during your presentation that have been specifically crafted to be Tweetable. Survey respondents indicated that not only do these soundbites need to be under 140 characters (and they should be even shorter to allow ReTweets) but they also need to function outside of the context of your presentation. These takeaway lines should be self-contained and should not rely on the reader being present at the presentation to make sense.

In the case study webinar I included lots of slides with exactly these kinds of lines on them, I introduced them at the beginning of the presentation as Tweetable (along with an exhortation to share them with friends who could not attend), and on each takeaway slide I included a Twitter logo, a hashtag and my Twitter username. I was very clear that I wanted attendees to Tweet them. I found that the number of Tweets generated by these slides was significantly lower than the number of slides I dedicated to them.

Nancy cautioned against making it too obvious that they're meant to be Tweeted and perhaps that's why they didn't perform as well as I'd hoped. In future research I'll pull back on the overtness of the calls-to-action.

The other interesting possibility that emerged from this element of the research is that many more Tweets than I expected were in fact ReTweets, and users who were ReTweeting had more followers on average than the rest of the group.

It may be useful to use an automatic PowerPoint-to-Twitter application like the SAP PowerPoint Twitter Tools that will post messages to a Twitter account when specific slides are loaded. To get

the most from this tactic, I would recommend telling attendees that you're planning to do this ahead of time, and if they follow you it may be easier (and quicker) for them to just ReTweet you rather than typing out your Takeaways by hand. This should also address the "trying to focus" concerns voiced by some survey respondents and Nancy.

Expectations

Lee Odden pointed out a very interesting tactic of writing wrap-up blog posts that include the best Tweets and blog posts about your presentation, in hopes that your attendees will see it and be motivated by the exposure to Tweet and blog about your future presentations. A significant percentage of survey respondents indicated they were motivated to share presentation content by the potential benefit to their personal reputation.

Over the past few decades, psychological researchers have been successfully experimenting with a behavior modification technique called expectancy manipulation. In some experiments, subjects were given false experiences that convinced them they were more susceptible to hypnosis than they really were, and subsequently, they scored higher on suggestibility tests than they did before the experiences. Similar experiments have been conducted with chemotherapy and blood pressure patients.

Without tricking your audience, if you can establish in their minds the expectation that sharing your content will benefit them somehow, you may be able to increase the amount of sharing that occurs. This is a longer term strategy than the others investigated in this ebook, but potentially more powerful.

As an example alongside Lee's suggestion, I noticed during the case study webinar that several attendees Tweeted they gained upwards of 30 or 40 new followers as a result of participating in the conversation. In future webinars, I'll do well to mention this fact.

Novelty

One of the most popularly cited motivations for sharing presentation content, both by survey respondents and the experts I asked, was novelty. People tend to share things they've never heard before, and they tire quickly of things they've heard a million times before.

A key element of novelty in this context is that it is subjective novelty. You don't need to be the first human in all of history to say something, you merely have to be the first person your audience has heard say it. Therefore consider your audience's experiences and context.

An easy tactic to use when trying to "novel up" your content is to apply a "new-old" lens to it. That is, take old content and put it in a new structure (the newest *Romeo and Juliet* movie is an example of this) or take new content and put it in a new structure (any time a song is rewritten with new lyrics, this is occurring). Research published in the *Management Science* journal in 2002 showed that advertisements that contain both new and familiar elements are best at capturing attention and memory retention.

Compliance

In my case study webinar, I asked people to raise their hands, which was a very simple act without much positive or negative impact for the individual. I found that 5.6% of people Tweeting about the webinar said they had raised their hands, demonstrating that some percentage of attendees are open to requests made by a presenter.

Irving Kirsh, a researcher at University of Connecticut, recently completed research showing that non-hypnotic imaginative suggestions work just as well as suggestions given to subjects under hypnosis. An imaginative suggestion is a request that a subject imagine a hypothetical scenario is true. These suggestions can then affect the subjective behavior.

A useful tactic for a presenter may be to frame requests in an imaginative structure, or ask attendees to imagine that Tweeting about a presentation got them more followers. More research needs to be done here to identify more subtle and appropriate ways to leverage this.

Ingratiation

Many survey respondents specifically indicated they were more likely to Tweet or blog about a presentation if they liked the person giving it. They also stated that the excitement and passion of the speaker had an effect on their sharing behaviors.

Ingratiating yourself is a strategy to persuade a person based on their positive feelings towards you. In the 2008 edition of *Introduction to Social Psychology* the authors highlighted two types of ingratiation that may be useful to presenters: flattery and self-presentation.

By flattering your audience you may be able to positively influence their feelings about you and encourage them to share your content. An especially useful form of this tactic may be to tell attendees that you know they are smart. Thus the points of your presentation they like enough to Tweet or blog about will be the points you know are good.

Self-presentation is the process of presenting the audience the version of yourself they most want to see. In a 1966 book on ingratiation, Edward Jones observed that for persons of perceived high stature (such as those on stage giving a presentation), modesty and humility work best.

Evangelism

7% of survey takers said they were motivated to share presentation content to help spread the word about a cause or idea they believed in and cared about. In my research about other types of social media, I've found two related tactics that I believe can be helpful here: us-vs.-them, and the-villain-is-wronging-the-victim.

Us-vs-them is one of the oldest marketing tricks in history, and one of the most powerful. Apple is the quintessential modern example. They've always defined their brand and their products as the enemy of some large, heartless corporation. In the 80s it was IBM, and more recently, it has been Microsoft. By picking a common enemy or threat (it doesn't have to be a person or company, it can simply be an idea), you can unify the audience.

Taking the us-vs.-them idea a step further, we have a viral idea structure in the form of the *villain-is-wronging-the-victim*. To create your own version, you merely have to replace the *villain*, *wronging*, and *victim*.

An example is "Pollution is killing the dolphins." The required elements are a victim your audience will identify with or believe is worth saving and a villain that is bigger and more powerful than any individual listener. If someone wants to help save the victim, they're not powerful enough alone to defeat the villain, so they need to recruit others to their cause, thereby spreading your message for you.

Pauses

When survey takers told me they didn't Tweet or blog about a presentation, the reason they gave was that they were too busy trying to pay attention. Both Nancy Duarte and Brett Tabke mentioned this issue as well.

When you're giving a presentation and delivering a Tweetable soundbite, be aware of this and give the audience a few moments to process what they've heard and Tweet it. It can also be helpful to let your listeners know that you'll be doing this.

Presentation Design

“Good design is a lot like clear thinking made visual.”
- Edward Tufte

The central prescription for presentation design from my data is simplicity, and from that I can recommend 5 specific guidelines: 1 thought per slide, no bullets, the 30pt rule, noise elimination and strong imagery.

1 Thought Per Slide

The most logical extension of simplicity in presentation design is the idea that each slide should only have one thought or takeaway point. You don't have to spell that thought out in words on the slide, you can represent your idea with an image.

This guideline allows your audience to fully digest each point of your presentation, decide if they want to Tweet it and gives them time to do it. Lumping lots of ideas into a single slide doesn't do any of them justice, let your ideas breathe.

No Bullets

Many a painful presentation consists of slide after slide of bullet points. As described by Duarte, this is a document, not a presentation. If you're looking for a file you can email to your colleagues, go ahead and use bullets, otherwise avoid them.

Bullet points make it far too easy to shoot your presentation in the foot. Your audience can read your slides faster than you can say them, and they won't have enough time to Tweet about each point.

The 30 Point Rule

Guy Kawasaki tells us of a 10-20-30 rule for giving presentations to VCs. The last part is that you shouldn't use any font size lower than 30 points and it is this one that I find useful for presentations beyond VC situations.

By enforcing a big text guideline on yourself, you can force yourself to make simple slides, without a ton of text. In fact, it's pretty hard to write over 140 characters on a single slide in 30 point text.

Noise Elimination

If you've followed all of the above rules you'll probably find yourself with slides containing minimal text. Many great presentations like this include striking imagery to accompany the ideas. Ensure that your slide isn't noise, glance at it for a quick moment and ask yourself if you could figure out what it's about in a few seconds.

Without excess noise, your slides will allow your soundbites to stand out. Don't make your audience spend time trying to decode your presentation to find the Tweetable bits.

Strong Imagery

Presentations that follow these rules are typically made up of short text overlaid on top of large images. The images should reflect and not upstage the point you're making when the slide is displayed. Charts and graphs work well, so add them where ever you can (especially given that many survey-takers said they often shared bits of data).

Photography for your presentations can be found from a variety of sources, my two favorite are Flickr and iStockPhoto. Click "advanced search" on the Flickr homepage and scroll to the bottom of the page. Select the checkboxes to search only Creative Commons photos. These will be photos you're allowed to use with attribution (I recommend the photo's Flickr username in small letters at the bottom of the slides). You have to pay for photos on iStockPhoto.com, but they're of very high quality and don't require attribution.

Using SlideShare

“Say not always what you know, but always know what you say.”
- Claudius

SlideShare.net is the YouTube of presentations, speakers can upload their slides to the site, which then allows users to view them and embed them on their own sites. Viewers can also post links to the presentations to Facebook or Twitter, turning the slides themselves into potentially viral content.

Upload Before You Speak

Many expert speakers recommend uploading your slides to SlideShare before the presentation and then including the link in your slides when you give your talk. Especially if you present dense information that makes your audience want to follow up later (remember the “note taking” motivation), people will often ask if you can send them your slides. Giving them a SlideShare URL makes it easy for them to share your presentation right after hearing it, when they are most excited about it.

Titles and Tags

When uploading your slides, you should take the time to fill out the descriptive fields SlideShare allows. Clearly title your presentation to effectively explain what it is about and why it may be relevant to someone seeing only its title. Write a detailed

description, and include as many tags as are appropriate. Don't forget to use whatever keywords your target audience may be using to search for your content.

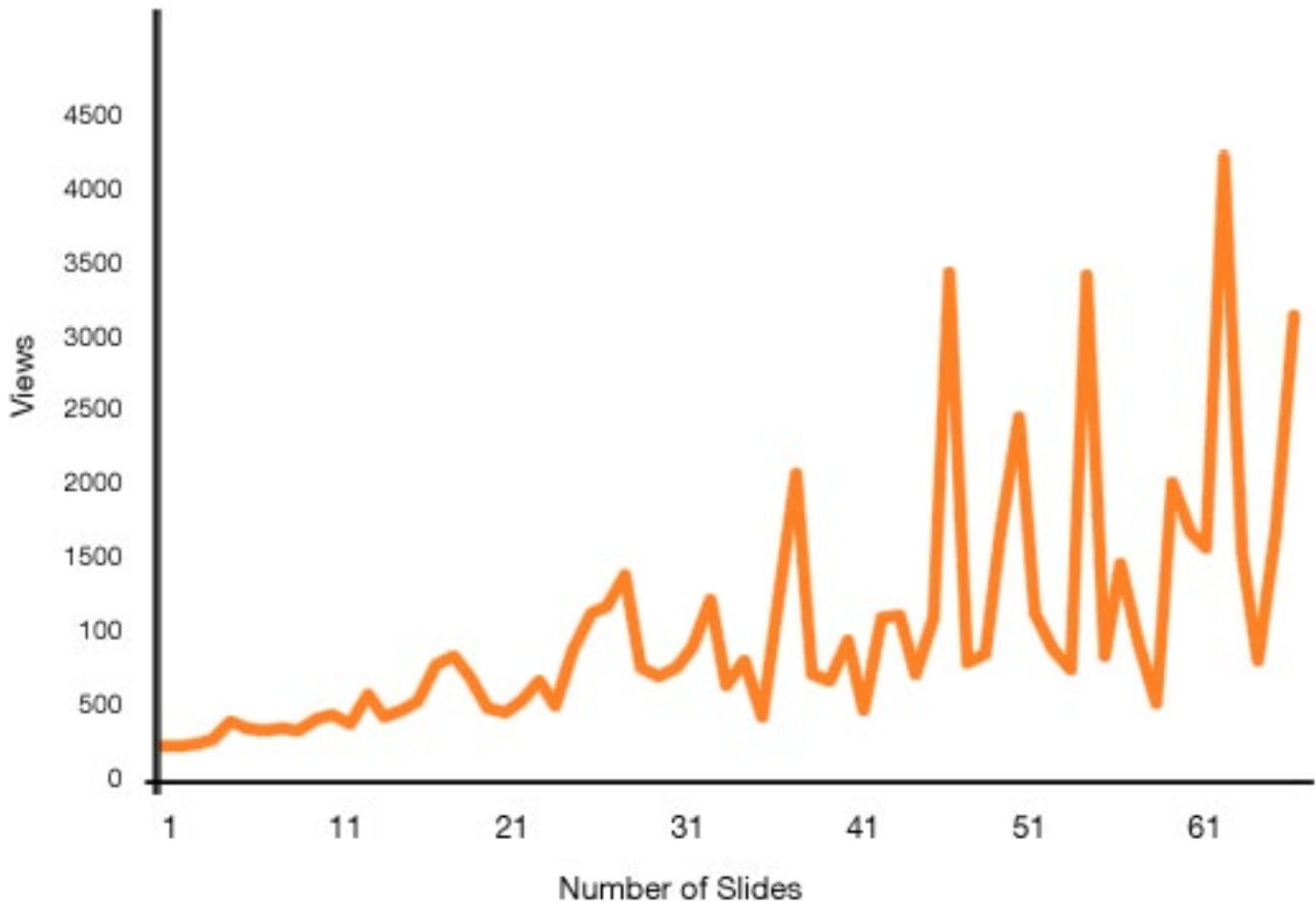
Permissions

SlideShare asks if you want to allow viewers to embed or download your slides. Unless there is some extraordinary reason to do otherwise, you should allow this. Let your viewers spread your content for you.

Social Networks

There are LinkedIn and Facebook applications that allow you to include your presentations on your pages on those social networks. Take advantage of these. The people you're already connected with on LinkedIn and Facebook are likely to be your biggest evangelists, so arm them with every one of your presentations.

SlideShare Views by Slide Count



Using the SlideShare API, I was able to gather information about over 5,000 presentations tagged with marketing or social media. Analyzing these slide shows, I found one major pattern: there is a correlation between number of slides and number of views. Longer presentations tend to be viewed more.

If we use the above mentioned presentation design tips, we'll have slides with one Tweetable and pithy thought on each. Presentations of this type

generally have many more slides than presentations full of text and bullets, and the SlideShare data seems to support this type of design.

We should also remember that each of our points needs to be understandable when taken out of context. Attendees don't Tweet soundbites that won't make sense to their followers who aren't in the audience, and slides on SlideShare are standing on their own, without you explaining them.

About HubSpot

HubSpot is an inbound marketing software package that:

- helps you get found online by more qualified visitors,
- shows you how to convert more visitors into leads,
- gives you tools to close those leads efficiently,
- and provides analytics to help make smart marketing investments.

Based in Cambridge, MA, HubSpot can be found at <http://www.HubSpot.com>

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