

M LOCAL BUSINESS MARKETING

The Marketing Guide for Local Business Owners

September 2016

5 *5 Ways to Effectively Manage Your Business Blog*

HOW TO MAKE CONVERSATIONAL MARKETING THE BASIS FOR BUSINESS SUCCESS

3 Key Elements of Email Marketing That Will **Improve Results**

Email Marketing Essentials: Stats, Myths, and Tips

Put Social Listening to Work for Your Business

Infographic:
2016 Twitter
Statistics

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Welcome to this month's edition!

Here we are in September; entering the homestretch for another year. If it hasn't happened in your local stores, it won't be long before you're seeing holiday decorations and promotions. As a local business owner, it isn't too soon to start planning your holiday marketing strategy.

As you start developing your strategy, please consider using some of today's leading marketing platforms, including Social Media and Online Marketing.

This articles and infographic in this month's issue cover many topics that we believe are important to local business owners, including Social Listening, E-Mail Marketing, Business Blogs, and many other timely topics.

If you find the magazine helpful, and know other local business owners that could benefit from receiving our magazine each month, please do us (and them) a favor by forwarding a copy to them.

Have a topic that you'd like to see us cover? We welcome any suggestions, comments or questions you might have. Of course, we always welcome the opportunity to explain how we've been able to help businesses just like yours increase their revenue by using our effective, yet affordable marketing solutions.

To Your Success!

David Akers
President / CEO
LMS Solutions, Inc.

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LMS Solutions was developed to give businesses of all sizes the ability to leverage the same cutting-edge marketing platforms that the Fortune 500 organizations use, at extremely affordable rates.

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Marketing Calendar

Plan your marketing messages around these upcoming holidays and proclamations.

September

National Guide Dog Month
Hispanic Heritage Month
Baby Safety Month
Little League Month
Self Improvement Month

Sep 5 - Labor Day (U.S.)
Sep 11 - Patriot Day (U.S.)
Sep 16 - Mexican Independence Day (Mexico)

3rd - International Bacon Day
4th - Hug Your Boss Day
5th - Cheese Pizza Day

6th - Read A Book Day
9th - Teddy Bear Day
9th - Stand Up To Cancer Day
10th - TV Dinner Day
11th - Grandparent's Day
11th - Hug Your Hound Day
12th - Video Games Day

12th - Chocolate Milkshake Day
15th - LGBT Center Awareness Day
17th - Big Whopper Liar Day
17th - Citizenship Day
17th - Puppy Mill Awareness Day
18th - Cheeseburger Day
18th - Wife Appreciation Day
19th - Talk Like A Pirate Day
19th - Thank a Police Officer Day
21st - World's Alzheimer's Day
21st - International Day of Peace
22nd - Autumnal Equinox
22nd - Ice Cream Cone Day
24th - Family Health and Fitness Day
25th - Comic Book Day
26th - Pancake Day
27th - Chocolate Milk Day
28th - Drink Beer Day
28th - Good Neighbor Day
29th - Coffee Day
29th - VFW Day

October

Adopt A Shelter Dog Month
Breast Cancer Awareness Month
Bullying Prevention Month
Blindness Awareness Month
Celiac Disease Awareness Month
Domestic Violence Awareness Month
Down Syndrome Awareness Month
Dyslexia Awareness Month
Emotional Wellness Month
National Dental Hygiene Month
National Pizza Month

Oct 10 - Columbus Day (U.S.)
Oct 31 - Halloween

1st - Homemade Cookies Day
2nd - Name Your Car Day
3rd - Techies Day
4th - Taco Day
4th - Vodka Day

5th - Do Something Nice Day
6th - Noodle Day
8th - Motorcycle Day
10th - Kick Butt Day
11th - Coming Out Day
12th - Stop Bullying Day
13th - Train Your Brain Day
14th - National Dessert Day
15th - Grouch Day
20th - Get to Know Your Customers Day
17th - Boss's Day
24th - Food Day
17th - Pasta Day
18th - National Chocolate Cupcake Day
18th - National No Beard Day
22nd - Make A Difference Day
23rd - Mother-in-Law Day
28th - Chocolate Day
29th - Cat Day
30th - Candy Corn Day
31st - Knock-Knock Jokes Day



5 Ways to Effectively Manage Your Business Blog

A blog isn't something you can do once and forget about it, at least not if you hope to get anything out of it -- namely increased traffic, solid leads, and a boost in revenue.

While it may seem like a monumental task at times, there are ways to effectively manage your blog and stay connected with subscribers craving fresh content while still retaining your sanity.

1. Set a Realistic Posting Schedule

Determine a realistic posting schedule that works around your other responsibilities. Once you figure out a routine that works for you, state it on your blog so readers will know when to check back for new content. As you add posts, send alerts via your social pages to attract the attention of both existing subscribers and new readers.

2. Schedule Automatic Posts

There are plenty of automatic scheduling tools you can use to set a specific time and date for a new post to be added to your blog. WordPress has an assortment of tools that can help with this task.

Automating some of your posts also allows for the better targeting of your audience at times when they're more likely to be actively browsing.

3. Welcome Guest Bloggers

There are plenty of like-minded bloggers who will be willing to contribute occasional posts to your blog. Solicit such assistance with a notice on your blog or on your related social pages.

Oftentimes, the only return favor guest bloggers want is a link back to their own blog. You can even coordinate with guest bloggers and ask them to post content on days when you're not posting -- your subscribers will appreciate the steady flow of fresh content.

4. Allow Your Employees to Contribute

Take advantage of your in-house source of fresh blog content and invite your employees to contribute posts.

Maintain consistency by establishing guidelines for posting, especially since anything stated on your blog will reflect on your business.

Set rules for things like language and tone to ensure that there is some consistency with the posts, even when you're not the one creating them.

After you find a group of employees who prove to be

reliable contributors, you can always expand your posting schedule.

5. Bank Posts for Future Use

Another option is to prepare posts in advance and release them on days when you don't have much time for your blog.

This can be especially helpful if you get ideas for upcoming seasons or holidays that are still months away. As your banked posts become relevant and timely, add them to your blog.

Finally, use real-time metrics to track what's going on with your blog. The way you manage your blog may be working well for a while, but it's likely that you'll need to make some adjustments here and there to keep your subscribers interested.

If you still find yourself having difficulty keeping up with the regular demands of blogging, there are plenty of marketing firms that can help with the task.

Outsourcing your blog management to a professional marketing agency can not only save you time, but can also improve the effectiveness of this segment of your marketing strategy.



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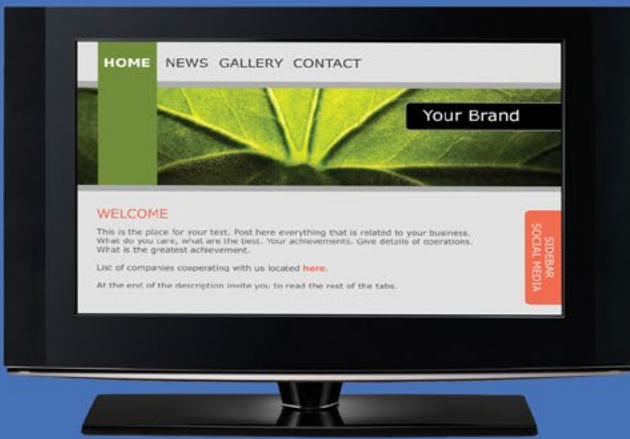


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Put Social Listening to Work for Your Business

Marketing isn't just about the messages you send out into the world. In fact, it's a two-way process. Without the ability to listen and absorb information about who your customers are and what they are saying, you won't be able to formulate advertising messages and create content that reaches them effectively.

Marketing professionals have a term for everything, and in this case the buzzword is "social listening." Social listening involves paying close attention to what is being said online about a company's products and those of their competitors. It requires the ability to sift through information on social media

and turn that information into a competitive advantage.

Here's how digital marketers can fine tune their social listening strategy and convert a keen ear into higher conversion rates.

Find Out About Your Community

Before you can start listening to your audience, you need to know who they are. Which social media platforms do they use? Are they clustered in a particular age group, gender or geographical location? The more you know about your audience, the easier it will be to keep tabs on what they are saying.

Think About Your Audience's Everyday Problems

One of the key principles of content marketing is the need to create content that addresses people's problems. Content that offers solutions and ties those solutions to specific products will always attract visits and generate conversions.

Because of this, social listening strategies need to find out what pain points motivate their audience. Search for people who are complaining about the services provided by your competitors. Use terms like "[x] can't" or "terrible service from [x]" and target these people.

When you've come up with a list of pain points, create content that addresses them. Ask questions on platforms like Quora and use the answers to come up with content that addresses the concerns of your audience. Blog, create videos and write direct marketing emails linking your products to real-world solutions.

Trace a Path to Your Landing Pages

Social listening can also be used to find out how web users find their way to your pages. When you run marketing campaigns on Twitter, Facebook or Instagram, be sure to take advantage of ways to track how many users are attracted from each platform.

Ask for customer feedback when people make purchases and include a question asking where users heard about your pages. Include any sites that could be relevant, from discussion forums to media outlets (and don't forget to include search engine queries too).

When you know where people are coming from, it's much easier to create efficient, targeted marketing campaigns with a high ROI.

Research Influencers in Your Field

Social listening isn't just about listening to your own customers or potential customers. It's also about monitoring leading experts and influencers in your niche. Every market niche has social media users or journalists (or both) who dominate the conversation. These are the people who have enough social media influence to make or break reputations, and you need to know what they are saying.

You also need to monitor who mentions your company. When you send press releases to media outlets and bloggers, keep a record of who mentions your products. If they give you a mention, send them a message to show you are paying attention. In time these influencers could become effective brand ambassadors, so cultivate their loyalty as much as possible.

Discover New Talent in Your Area

Marketing isn't the only part of business operations that can benefit from a social listening strategy. It's also an excellent way to boost your recruitment efforts.

Finding talented, dynamic staff is one of the key determinants of business success.

Traditional recruitment methods carry high costs and aren't guaranteed to attract unconventional, creative applicants. That's why many elite companies go straight to potential employees. You can do the same.

Task your HR staff with tracking social media users or staff at competitors via LinkedIn. If they are producing great content or building an expert reputation, they could be a good fit for your company.

Track Product Launches in Minute Detail

Social listening is more relevant at certain times, and one of those occasions is during major product launches or the start of marketing campaigns. When you roll out new products, you need to know how they are being received. What are people saying about them? Are your messages getting across?

The only way to know for sure how your efforts are being received is to monitor Twitter conversations, check Facebook feeds, log into key discussion forums and set up Google

Alerts to track mentions of your company. If something is going wrong, it's vital to address it as quickly as possible. Sometimes, ads are poorly targeted or confusing. By listening closely, you can assess whether this is the case and take action promptly.

Manage Your Brand Reputation

Launches are peak times for social listening, but companies also need to track their brand reputation continuously. You probably won't have the time to scour Twitter for every mention of your products, staff or brand.

However, by setting up alerts and using social media automation products, you can

capture most mentions on a daily basis.

It's important to determine your "background level" of social mentions. That is, how often do people talk about your products in a positive or negative sense? When these metrics rise or fall, it's usually a good sign that action needs to be taken. The only way to find out that background level is by listening to your audience over a sustained period on social media platforms.

Marketing Intelligence Can Determine Business Success

Social listening isn't an optional extra. It's at the core of online marketing success.

You can choose to adopt "deep" or "shallow" listening processes, but to really know your audience, the more knowledge you collect, the better.

There are plenty of tools on the market to help you gather information, from Hootsuite and Klout to TweetReach. Many of them offer limited free packages and are simple enough for any company to adopt.

If you haven't implemented a listening strategy, do so immediately. It's time to take control of your brand reputation and really get to know your audience. What you learn could take your revenues to the next level.

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3 Key Elements of Email Marketing That Will Improve Results



Email marketing continues to provide positive results for marketers, helping to capture leads and develop customer relationships. Even in the face of competition from social media, email continues to offer better conversion rates and greater engagement levels. Email, like advertising and search engine optimization, can be tweaked and scrutinized at even the most minute detail. For most marketers, though, it will be more efficient to focus your attention on a few key elements that will provide the greatest returns. So what are the three core elements of email marketing?

List Management

List management is the process of ensuring your list does not have problems

with spam complaints, sends the right messages to the appropriate people, and reengages old leads. Firstly, high numbers of spam complaints could lead to your email account being shut down. To avoid any problems, you could use a double opt-in method, requesting subscribers confirm they wanted to join the list. Also, ensure the unsubscribe information is clear at the bottom of the email. If you are getting consistent soft bounces from accounts, check the email addresses and delete any suspicious subscribers.

The second part of list management involves segmenting your lists to create tailored emails for different groups. Buyers should be receiving, when appropriate,

different emails to your prospects as they have proven they are willing to spend money. You can also segment people according to actions taken, so if a subscriber clicked a link within the message, you could transfer them to an alternative list. You don't need to overdo it, but a certain amount of list segmentation can improve conversion rates.

Finally, reengaging old leads can both earn and save you money. A tempting offer, a controversial message, or an apology are a few of the ways to get an old lead to pay attention. Most inactive leads won't even open the reengagement emails, so you can remove them and potentially reduce your autoresponder costs. The people that do open and engage with the email,

though, can be moved back into another active list.

A/B Testing

A/B testing is more commonly associated with sales pages, but testing email will ensure you are running an optimized campaign. Some of the most common testing elements include subject line, body copy, anchor text, banners or videos in the message, and time of sending. The more subscribers you have, the easier it is to run accurate A/B tests, mainly because you need a large enough sample size to make accurate assessments. Nevertheless, smaller list owners can still run tests, but ensure you limit to one factor per split test.

A/B testing runs into problems when it is hard to discern what has made the difference to a tested factor. This problem normally occurs when there are too many significant changes going on at once. If you test different body copy and different anchor text at the same time, you cannot be sure what led to a change in click-through rate. Try to keep all other factors the same during a test, but alter a significant element to look for any difference in your analytics.

Engaging Subject Lines

Subject lines are a vital factor in email marketing, with two separate subjects often offering a wide disparity in open rates during tests. A good subject line could invoke curiosity by asking an open question, using a quirky idea, or using an ellipsis to end a thought early. Alternatively, you can stand out with digits, symbols, or odd punctuation. However, the subject line shouldn't suggest or offer something irrelevant to the body copy as this can lead to unhappy readers and more unsubscribes.

There are many elements that could improve your email marketing efforts, but focusing on these three areas will be the best use of your time. Email is still proving incredibly effective, with subscription and open rates even translating over to mobile devices. Marketing is still reliant on finding leads, building strong relationships, and improving conversion rates, with few options performing these tasks as well as email can. With a focus on the right areas, you can set up a smart funnel that transforms the way you connect with customers.



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Email Marketing Essentials: Stats, Myths, and Tips

Email marketing is still one of the most powerful ways to generate leads, engage customers, and grow your business. Here, we'll look at some revealing stats on email marketing, address some of the myths surrounding it, and provide tips you can use to improve your email marketing campaigns.

Stats on Email Marketing

These recent statistics show the continuing power of email marketing:

- 73% of marketers agree that email marketing is core to their business. (Salesforce State of Marketing report, 2015)
- 91% of consumers check their email at least once per day on their mobile. (ExactTarget Mobile Behavior report)

- 66% of consumers have made an online purchase as a result of an email marketing message. (DMA)
- 74% of consumers prefer to receive email marketing messages over other forms of communication. (Merkle)

What can we learn from these stats?

- Email marketing can give you the competitive edge.
- Email messages should be easy to read on mobile devices.
- Offering incentives through calls-to-action is key to driving conversions.
- Targeted email campaigns should play

a key role in your digital marketing strategy.

Six Myths About Email Marketing

1. Tuesday is the Best Day to Deliver Emails

The truth is, there's no perfect day to send emails. However, in a joint study by HubSpot and Litmus, emails sent on Saturdays and Sundays had higher click-through rates than those sent during the week.

Tip: Experiment with sending emails on different days and at different times, and monitor the results.

2. You Should Only Send an Email Once

If only 20 percent of receivers open a specific email, 80 percent never even see your message.

Tip: Take the same message

and change the subject line to something new, then send it out a week later just to your non-opens (check your email analytics).

3. Only Short Emails Work

Emails should be clearly written and get to the point, but that doesn't mean longer emails won't work. It depends on each specific message and what your readers care about.

Tip: Test different lengths in a series of emails, then check which ones resulted in more engagement.

4. Subject Lines Should Be Short

Recent studies show that shorter subject lines are not always more successful. In one study, subject lines of 61 to 70 characters had a 17% average read rate - higher than those with shorter subject lines.

Tip: Always test different lengths, but try to highlight the main benefit to the reader early on in the subject line.

5. Emails Should Be Highly Polished

Marketing emails don't always have to look sophisticated. In one HubSpot test, more simple designs performed

best.

Tip: Try simpler designs with no images to see if it improves click-through rates.

6. Unsubscribes Are a Bad Sign

Just because someone unsubscribes from your newsletter, it doesn't mean there was something wrong with the email. Focus on the people who are interested in your messages.

Tip: Make it easy to unsubscribe from your emails in order to build a list of more qualified prospects, and to avoid being flagged as spam.

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Email Marketing: Top Five Tips

Consider these five tips to boost your email marketing success:

1. Offer Incentives

To give your emails more value and to stand out from the competition, give readers a reason to remain on your list. Try offering a free ebook for signing up, or a discount with every first order.

2. Put a Sample on Your Site

This will give potential subscribers a chance to see what your newsletter is all about. Make sure you provide high-quality content targeted

at your ideal customer.

3. Encourage Sharing

Ask existing subscribers to share your newsletter with friends and colleagues. To make it easier, include a subscribe link at the bottom of each email.

4. Promote on Social Media

Mentioning your newsletter on social media channels will build brand awareness and drive more traffic to your subscription landing page.

5. Provide Consistently High-Quality Content

Take your time to create better content than your

competition and you're more likely to grow your list. Think about what your readers really care about and deliver content that makes you the go-to expert in your field.

Key Takeaways

Testing different email formats, offering incentives, delivering valuable content, and sharing information across your social channels is key to improving your email list.

Keep these tips in mind so you can gain the competitive advantage and enjoy long-term email success.

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How to Make Conversational Marketing the Basis for Business Success

According to the Victorian poet and playwright Oscar Wilde, there is "only one thing worse than being talked about."

Online marketers will already know the punchline: "Not being talked about."

These days, brands need to be part of conversations to succeed. Social media rankings are influenced across the board by how often your brand is referenced by users.

Your SEO ranking is influenced by how many people link to your content. Local marketing

is overwhelmingly driven by word of mouth.

The way people talk about businesses matters. That's why marketers should focus on building a conversation about their brand. Here are some ways to get people talking in a way that boosts

your revenues and brand reputation.

Try to Democratize Your Brand Identity

Democracy and marketing might seem like strange bedfellows, but not when you are talking about conversational marketing. People like to feel empowered and influential and they don't like being talked down to by elites.

There are plenty of effective ways to democratize your brand. Reddit and Twitter Q&As allow customers to offer their suggestions and get to know your brand on a down to earth level.

Using social media and craft marketplaces like Etsy can help faceless companies to create brand personas that connect.

Crowdfunding has also become big business, and it's a great way to add a participatory element to your marketing. A strategic Kickstarter or Indiegogo campaign shows that your company is in touch with customers and values their input.

The key thing to remember is that customers appreciate companies that treat them like equals. They are much more

likely to start complimentary conversations about that kind of company than distant ad-dependent corporations.

Cultivate Consumer Generated Content

People love to feel empowered, but they also like to show off their knowledge and creativity. And they also like to talk about things like video competitions, memes, humorous GIFs and competitions to invent a new sandwich for a fast food restaurant.

That's why companies that succeed tend to value participatory marketing over simple ads. It's also a labor saving device. By crowdsourcing your content, you can create a buzz and prompt social media conversations without having to do the heavy lifting yourself.

Leverage all of your social media platforms to engage users, whether they are on Instagram, Facebook, Twitter or Snapchat.

Launch competitions, give out free products and use hashtags to generate references to your products. It all adds up to a richer, more profitable conversation about your company.

Always Foreground Honesty and Transparency

Companies that come across as open and responsive to customers' needs also tend to spark beneficial conversations.

By responding to complaints, being honest about what your products can do and admitting to shortcomings in a sensitive way, companies can maintain a reputation for trust. When people trust businesses, they are much more likely to recommend them to friends and family.

Make your staff and yourself open to customers. Don't shy away from engaging with complaints (as long as you can do so calmly) and project a brand image that cares about how customers experience its products.

Focus on Your Key Values in Branding Materials

Companies that successfully spark conversations don't usually do so by accident. They know the way customers think, and they inject their values into branding materials in a way that burrows deep into customers' minds.

For example, Chipotle place great emphasis on their "values." You don't eat compassion and Chipotle can't sell it. What this emphasis

does is implant an association in the minds of customers, and it's a positive association between Mexican food and social responsibility.

All of your branding needs to take a leaf out of Chipotle's book. Choose a focus that encapsulates what you stand for and build your image around it. It could be as simple as "creativity" and "carpentry" or "adventurous" and "designer umbrellas." When people start making associations between the two, it will feed into conversations and, eventually, revenues.

Use the Power of Influencers to Spark Conversation

Companies themselves aren't great conversationalists. In fact, they can easily come across as a mixture of a schoolyard nasty bully and a shy, withdrawn kid at the back of the classroom. That's why marketers like to reach out to influencers to get their message across.

Individuals are much more effective messengers than branded social media accounts or even staff members. Thanks to their independence, they are an excellent way to propagate your key talking points.

Influencers are also a handy way to reach hard-to-

target demographics. Many companies want millennials or teens to talk about their products, but struggle to communicate with them.

This is less of a problem for Snapchat or Instagram influencers of the same age.

Be More Than Your Brand

Sometimes, companies force themselves into conversations through the charisma of their founders and staff. Think about Elon Musk or Richard Branson. These moguls have a wider mission than just managing Tesla or Virgin, or at least that's the image they promote.

They work hard to be seen as innovators, pioneers and adventurers and all of the attention they attract flows back to their core brands as customer engagement.

You might not be an Elon Musk, but you can be more than just the CEO of Steve's Marketing Inc. Build an expert reputation by blogging, guest posting, giving talks, Q&As and making videos. Become associated with community projects and activism (if it fits your brand profile).

People like to talk about personalities, even on a local level. Portraying your company as something more than a money-making machine is a cast iron way to kickstart

beneficial conversations.

Talk is Not Cheap, It's Strategic

Conversational marketing takes strategy. The things you say and the way you promote the speech of others has consequences that can be both good and bad.

In a sense, there is no conversation without provocation. To get people talking, you need to take some risks. You need to create interest, surprise people and sometimes even make them uncomfortable. So be prepared to court controversy. You may alienate some people, but others will come on board.

It's important to keep the perspective of customers in mind. People like to talk, but they hate being "talked at." If you can engineer ways to create two-way conversations between your brand and your target audience, you will be halfway to success.

The rest of the journey involves putting into practice ideas like contacting influencers, and others discussed here, and being open and honest. If you do, you will be talked about in a way that generates goodwill, engagement and steadily rising revenues.

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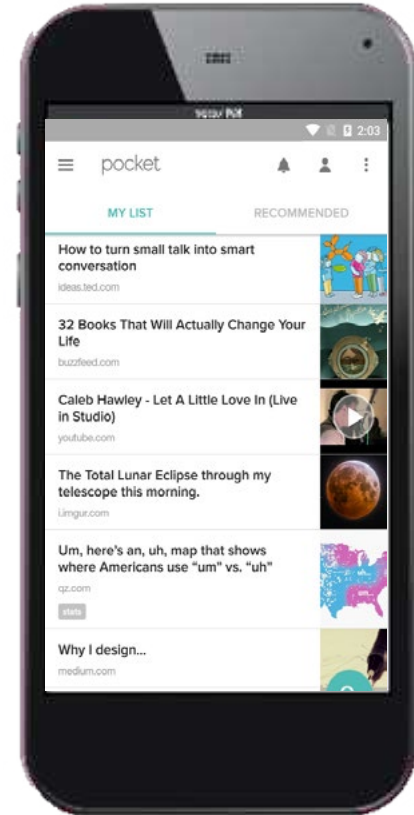
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310 million
monthly users

Tweets with images
received 150% more
retweets than those
without images



.....

80% of users
access Twitter on a
mobile device

.....

77% of users feel more
positive about a brand
when their tweet has
been replied to



The average Twitter
user follows five
businesses



Tweets including 1-2 hashtags receive 21%
higher average engagement

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