
BUSINESS SOCIAL MEDIA

6 Guaranteed Ways to Get More Followers on Facebook, Twitter, and Google+

Buffer / Kevan Lee | June 7, 2014

Follower count is often considered one of the vainest of vanity metrics. I can relate. I've had my fair share of ego tied to that golden number on Twitter, Facebook, Google+, and LinkedIn—pointing out my follower growth to a friend one day and archiving emails just as fast as I could when growth doesn't come.

Still, despite the vanity, [there is value in follower count](#). While it seems like a smug number to chase, followers have a proportional impact on how far and wide your message spreads and the volume of how you convert.

I think the best bit of [advice on followers](#) I've read is from our co-founder Leo:

“ Quality is key. Quantity can't be forgotten.

Follower count is one of the metrics we keep a close eye on with [our social media reports](#)

and [audits](#). There is a lot of great advice on [how to grow your followers on social media](#) (much of which I'll relay below), and at Buffer we've always been interested in [the research behind the advice](#). How, specifically, can you increase your followers? **Which actionable tactics can you take today to grow your follower numbers?**

I went looking for data—and I think I found a few good answers.

10 tried-and-true bits of advice on follower growth

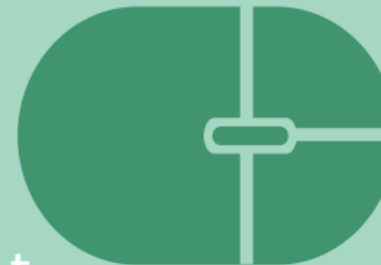
Before we get into the research-backed methods for growing your followers, I wanted to start off with some best practices for follower growth. You're likely to come across these ideas when you're searching for [social media tips](#) or reading up on [how someone got the followers they did](#).

Here are the Big 10:

1. Post great content
2. Write a [professional bio](#)
3. Use [hashtags](#)
4. Place a widget on your blog
5. Engage with others
6. Make sure your content is [shareable](#)
7. Reshare other people's content
8. Reach out to influencers
9. Stay active
10. Follow other users



Get More Followers



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There's lots of really good advice here on what works and what doesn't in terms of adding followers. These strategies are really good for consistent growth of your followers, and most of the advice you'll read—[How I Went From Zero to 380,000 Followers](#) and [Twitter Tips From a Marketer with 200K Followers](#)—will be variations on many of these bullet points.

You may have noticed that there is no single, simple hack to get more followers. I'm afraid **there's no switch to flip to get the followers flowing**. I've seen firsthand that the above tactics do work for building your follower count, so long as you can remain patient, determined, and consistent.

But while there's no magic bullet for getting more followers, there is at least a good deal of research that can take you down the right path and ensure that your efforts are not in vain. **Looking for a surefire way to gain more followers? There's a good blueprint in this data.**

Informers vs. Meformers: The key to getting 2x more followers

Are you an informer or a meformer?

[Researchers at Rutgers University](#) found that only 20 percent of us are informers on social media, while the other 80 percent are meformers. What exactly is a meformer?

- **Meformers** — Users who post social media updates mostly relating to themselves
- **Informers** — Users who post updates that are mostly information-sharing

The Rutgers team ended up creating the term “meformer” after analyzing data from a sampling of Twitter accounts. Their analysis, based on patterns of usage along with tweet and follower data, found a clear divide between those who share information and those who share about themselves.

And how does this relate to followers?

Informers had more than two times the followers of meformers.

It would seem that sharing information on social media is better for your follower count than sharing about yourself.

How can you tell which cluster you fall into—informer or meformer? The research study included an interesting breakdown of the classification of tweets. Researchers rated a sample of tweets and assigned a category to each. Overall, there were nine major categories that were used for classification. Do you recognize some of your tweets in the following examples?



Code	Example(s)
Information Sharing (IS)	"15 Uses of WordPress <URL REMOVED>"
Self Promotion (SP)	"Check out my blog I updated 2day 2 learn abt tuna! <URL REMOVED>"
Opinions/Complaints (OC)	"Go Aussie \$ go!" "Illmatic = greatest rap album ever"
Statements and Random Thoughts (RT)	"The sky is blue in the winter here" "I miss New York but I love LA..."
Me now (ME)	"tired and upset" "just enjoyed speeding around my lawn on my John Deere. Hehe :)"
Question to followers (QF)	"what should my video be about?"
Presence Maintenance (PM)	"i'm backkkk!" "gudmorning twits"
Anecdote (me) (AM)	"oh yes, I won an electric steamboat machine and a steam iron at the block party lucky draw this morning!"
Anecdote (others) (AO)	"Most surprised <user> dragging himself up pre 7am to ride his bike!"

According to the study, 53 percent of the tweets from informers fell into the Information Sharing category, whereas 48 percent of the meformers' tweets were Me Now.

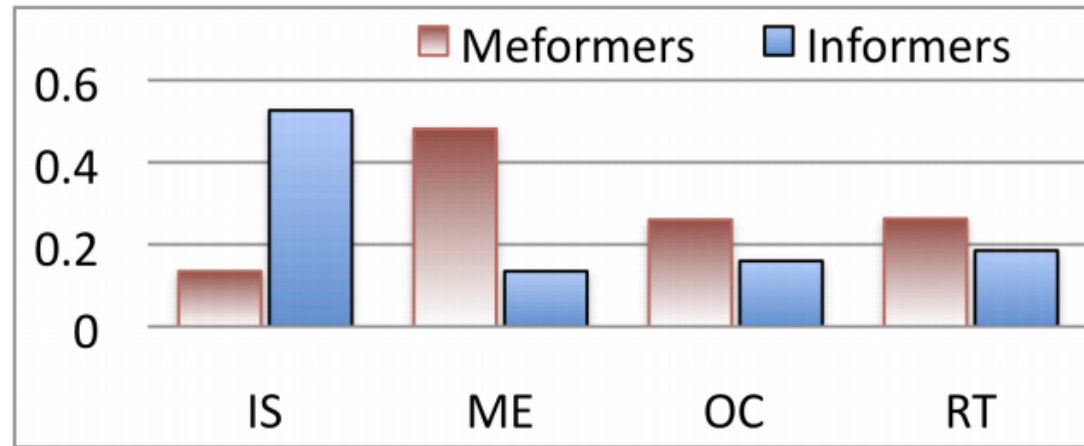


Figure 3. Mean user message proportions for the four main categories, breakdown by cluster.

Takeaway

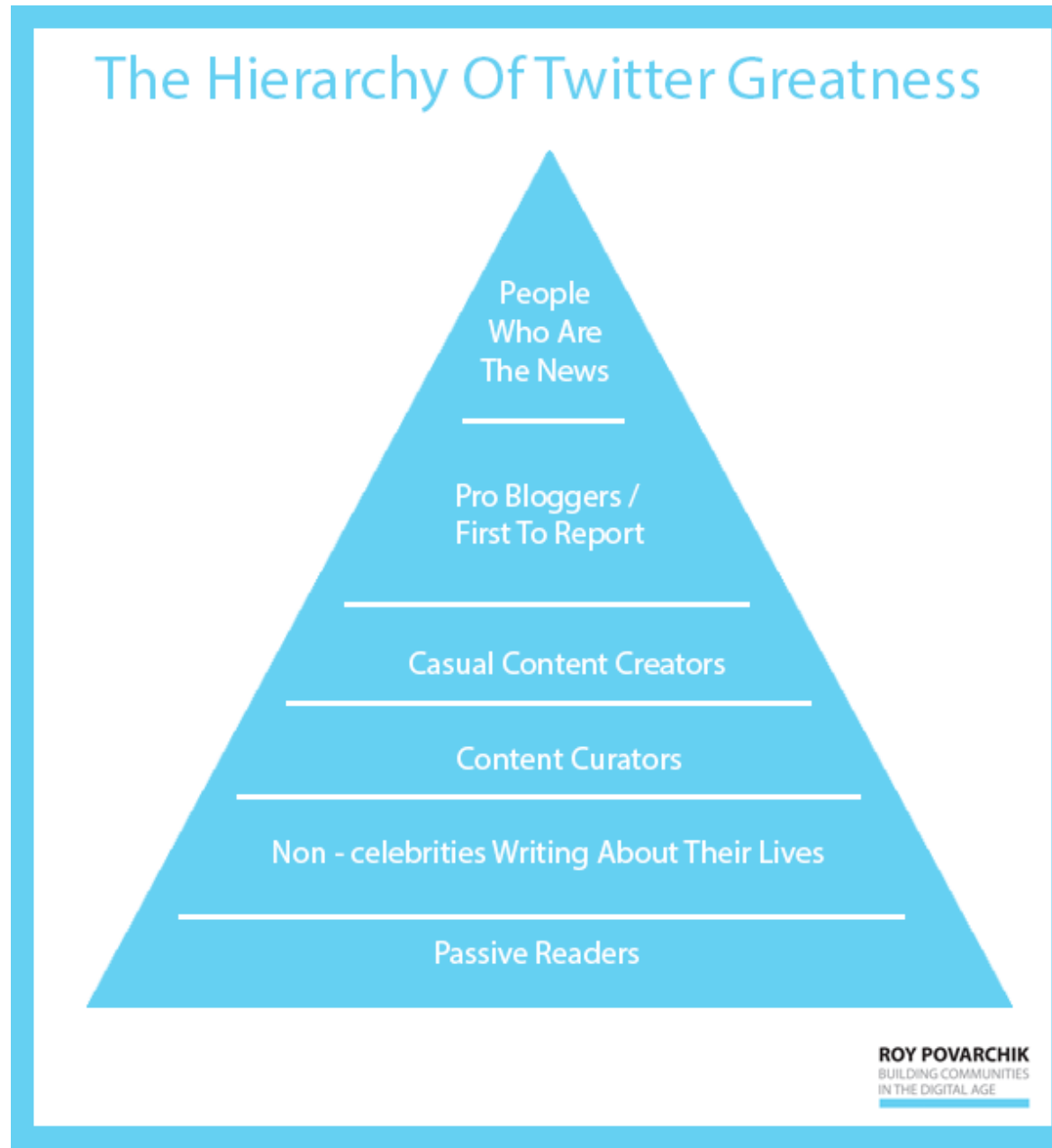
Aim to boost your information sharing on social media so that you more closely align with the informer cluster rather than the meformer cluster.

Be an authority: 100+ more followers for gurus, authors, and experts

Roy Povarchik has an interesting idea about follower growth. It's called [Twitter Greatness](#), and it goes something like this:

The real quick way to get a bunch of people following you: Be Barack Obama. Or Katy Perry. Or Joel Gascogne.

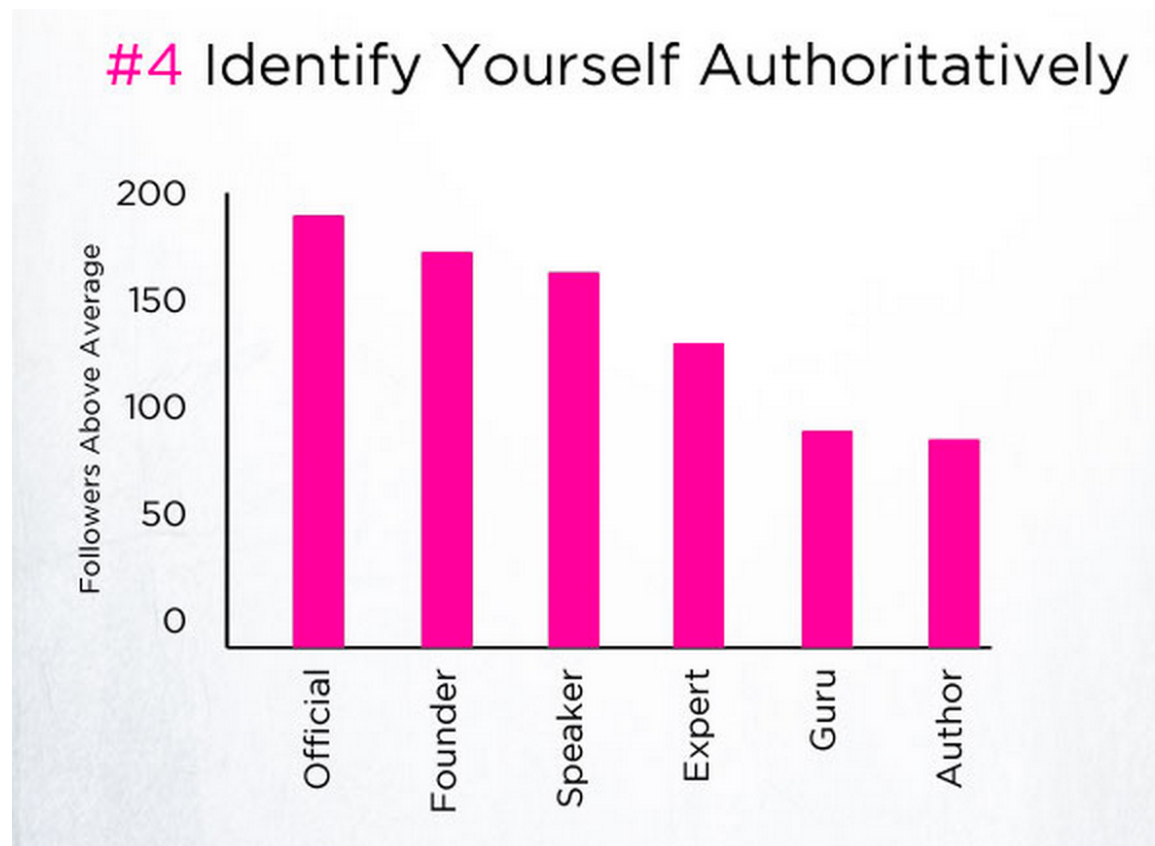
What do folks like these have in common? Fame, yes. But they are also creators and doers and leaders. **The act of creating is what sets them apart.** Povarchik went so far as to create a helpful pyramid to display the heirarchy of greatness on Twitter. You can apply this pyramid to most other social networks, too, with a few tweaks (e.g., reporting is greater on Twitter than other networks).



Do you see yourself somewhere on this pyramid?

Of course, this interesting idea of greatness is made all the more powerful with some stats to back it up. Hubspot data scientist Dan Zarella researched the [effect of authority in a Twitter bio](#). Have you heard variations on the theme of “don’t call yourself a guru”? Zarella found this to be false. Self-professed gurus have an average of 100 more followers than a typical Twitter user.

And it’s not just “guru.” Many different types of authoritative titles can help boost your follower count.



Takeaway

Create amazing things and be a leader in your industry. Then don’t forget to [mention](#)

[it in your bio](#). Terms like author, expert, founder, and official can be powerful assets to growing your followers.

Avoid bursts, and keep the followers you have

You could also approach the question of getting more followers from the other side: Part of having lots of followers is knowing how to keep them.

There was an interesting [study by a group of Korean researchers](#) into the how and why of unfollowing. They looked at 1.2 million Twitter accounts and analyzed 51 days' worth of tweets and interactions. Through analysis and interviews, they found that the following factors came into play with unfollowing:

- Leaving too many updates within a short time
- Posting about uninteresting topics
- Sharing the mundane details of one's life

The interview portion of the research study revealed the concept of “Bursts”—too many updates all at once. **More than half of unfollows come as a result of bursts.**

There are other factors at play here, too, and many of them are areas that could ring true for marketers or brands. Do any of these types of tweets hit home for you?

	Motivation Category	Case
Burst (39)	Burst-only	13
	Uninteresting topics	10
	Mundane details of daily life	6
	Automatically generated	4
	Conversation	2

	Politics	2
	Different views	1
	Complains	1
Uninteresting topics (14)	Burst	10
	Uninteresting topics-only	4
Mundane details of daily life (11)	Burst	6
	Mundane details of daily life-only	5
Politics (8)	Different views	3
	Burst	2
	Strong opinion	2
	Politics-only	1
RT with no personality (4)	RT with no personality-only	4
Advertisement (4)	Advertisement-only	4
Automatically generated (4)	Burst	4
Different views (4)	Politics	2
	Different views-only	1
	Burst	1
Conversation (2)	Conversation-only	1
	Burst	1
Complains (2)	Complains-only	1
	Burst	1
Slang (1)	Slang-only	1
Dead account (1)	Dead account-only	1
Self-presentation (1)	Self-presentation-only	1
Language gap (1)	Language gap-only	1

Figure 9. Motivation behind unfollow for 73 unfollowees. Respondents answered multiple reasons for each unfollowee

Takeaway

To get a lot of followers, **minimize the number of those who unfollow you**. Avoid bursts by sending your updates with a scheduler like [Buffer](#). And keep in mind other types of updates to avoid—politics, mundane topics, lack of personality, etc.

Give the people what they want: 52% of followers want special offers

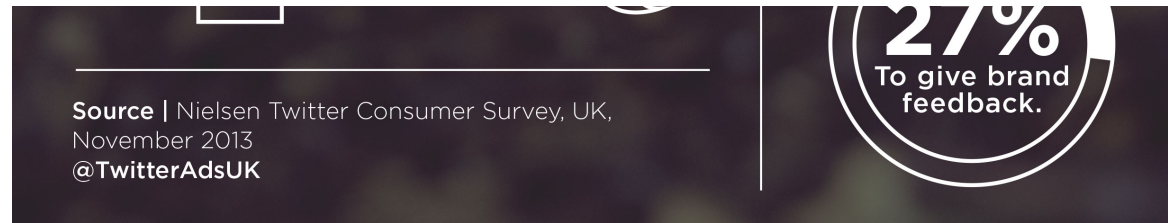
If you are a brand looking for more followers on social media, it'll help to know what your followers are after. [Nielsen research conducted a study](#) for Twitter UK back in March, revealing the top ten reasons why people follow brands.

- 55% follow because they like the brand.
- 52% follow for special offers or promotions.
- 51% follow to stay up to date with news from the brand.

Among the top 10 reasons, one of the biggest themes was discounts. Reasons for following included special offers or promotions, freebies, and exclusive content. Interesting, the fact that a brand posts entertaining and useful content the seventh-most popular reason for following a brand. This would seem to indicate that there's more to being followed than good content marketing.







Takeaway

Give things away. Twitter users love discounts and freebies, and they are likely to follow a brand to get some goods. If you can add value in this way—along with your content strategy and branding—you might see your followers grow.

The more you post, the more followers you'll have

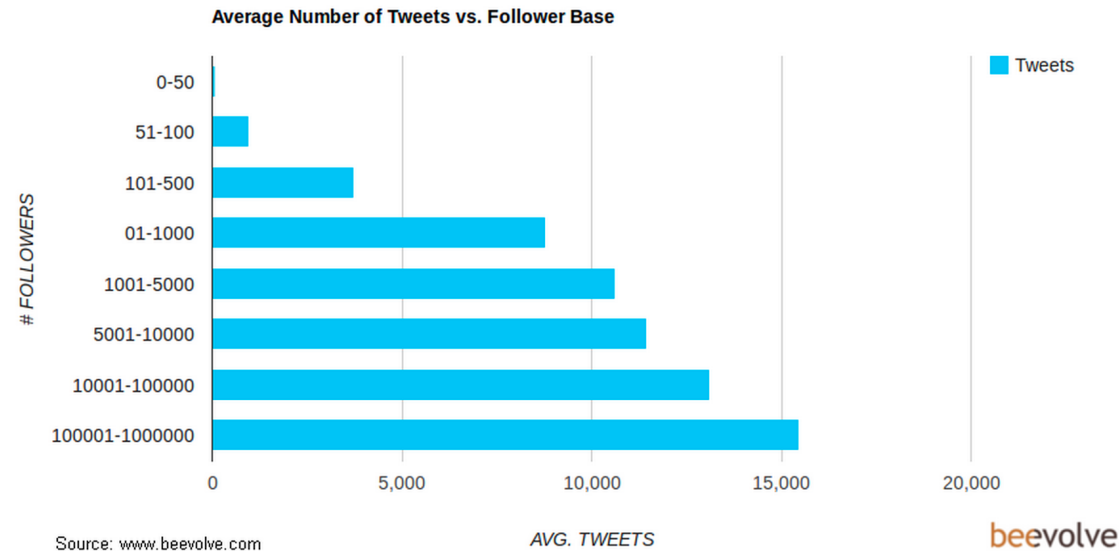
This one might fall under the title of “common sense” for many of you, so it’s great to see that there’s data to back up the claim. Social media analytics company Beevolve analyzed 36 million Twitter profiles and 28 billion tweets to find [the correlation between tweet frequency and twitter followers](#).

The results (as you might have guessed): **Those who tweet more have the most followers.**

Specifically:

- A Twitter user who has sent 1 to 1,000 tweets has an average of 51 to 100 followers
- Users who have tweeted more than 10,000 times are followed on average by 1,000 to 5000 users
- It’s estimated that a person with more than 15,000 tweets has between 100,001 to

1 million followers.



The big question with data like this is whether the correlation equals causation. In other words, *why* do people with a lot of tweets have a lot of followers? Could it really be true that tweeting 10,000 times next week will be a free pass to gaining 5,000 new followers?

I think it's important to keep a few things in mind with this data:

Lots of tweets equals lots of activity. And the more active you are on social media (see the tried-and-true tips at the top of this article), the more likely you are to gain followers, make connections, and build relationships.

Lots of tweets equals lots of experience. As you tweet more, you [get better at tweeting](#). This could play into your becoming a better Informer or simply iterating on tweeting formulas that work.

Lots of tweets equals longevity. It makes sense to think that the longer you're around on social media, the more time and opportunity you'll have to grow your

followers. Posting 10,000 updates would mean a year's worth of 27 posts daily. You'd deserve all the followers you get at that awesome pace!

Takeaway

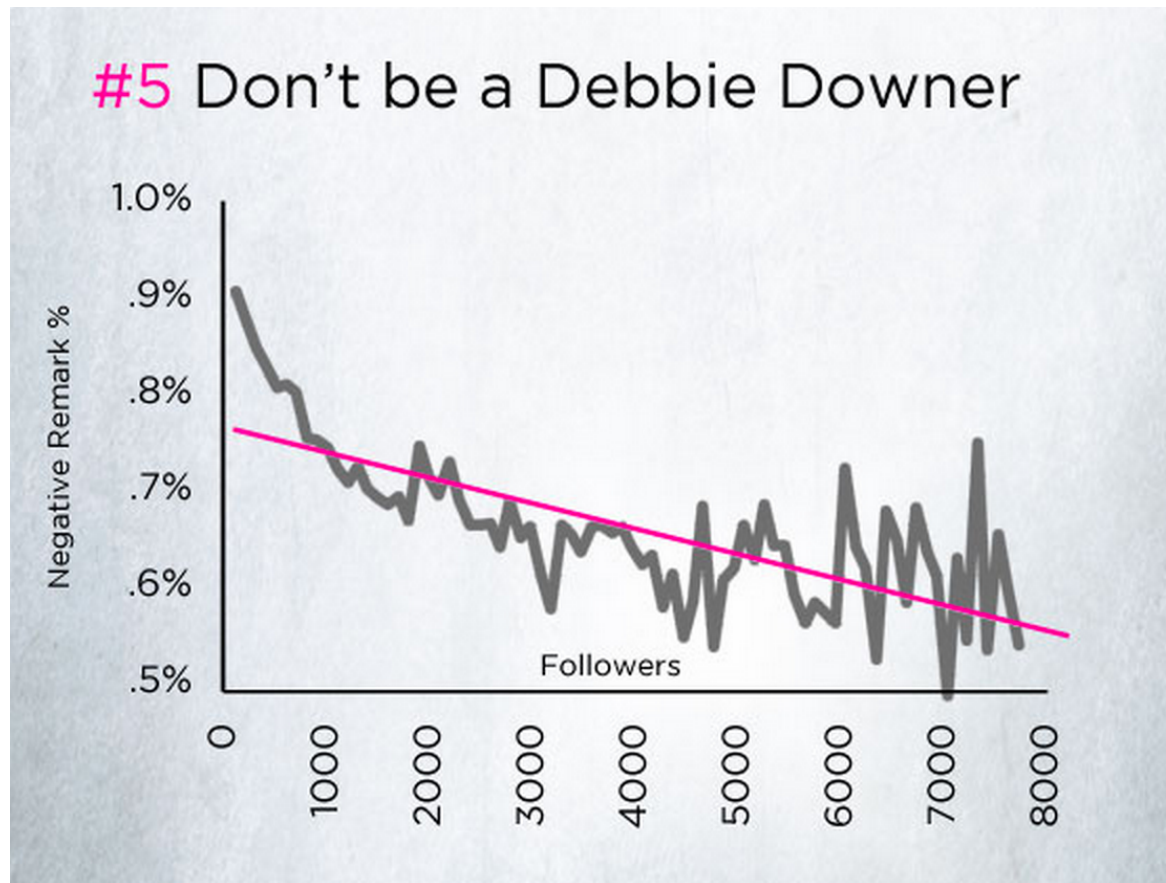
Post to social media often, as part of a consistent, dependable strategy.

You're bound to get better as you go, and people are going to notice and appreciate that you're sticking around to stay connected.

(Note: One of my favorite nuggets from the Beevolve study was that **the average Twitter user is an English-speaking, 28-year-old woman with about 208 followers**. So if you happen to have more than 208 followers, you can feel good about being above average!)

Share positively: Happy updates correlate to more followers

[The tone and voice you have on social media](#) really does make a difference. Dan Zarrella's research into followers—how [factors like conversations, self-reference, and avatars affect follow count](#)—touched on the topic of tone. He found that negative remarks are tied to lower follower counts.



Takeaway

Share happily. Take care to avoid coming across as sad, aggressive, angry, cynical, or morbid with your social media updates. Users notice. They're more likely to follow a **positive** account than a Debbie Downer.

What strategies do you have for growing your followers?

We've touched on a lot of tips here for growing followers: Informers vs. Meformers, authority, bursts, freebies, frequency, and [happiness](#). Hopefully one (or more) will be key to getting your follower count growing!

I'd love to hear from you about what has worked in the past for growing your follower base. Any tips you'd like to share? Any tactics you're itching to try out?

P.S. If you liked this post, you might also like [10 Surprising New Stats to Help You Reach Your Followers](#) and [7 Ways I Accidentally Got More Twitter Followers](#).

*Kevan is a content crafter at [Buffer](#), the super simple social media management tool. His social media and productivity tips have appeared in *Fast Company* and *Lifehacker*, and he's always on the lookout for a good headline pun. Connect with him on [Twitter](#) .*