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## SfP Pointers

### #17: Promoting your choir on social media - Part 2

In this second, shorter piece on using social media to raise awareness about your choir - and concerts - the focus shifts to Twitter. The platform has slowed down somewhat in terms of new users coming on board in the last couple of years, but obviously it's still incredibly popular due to its real-time nature. And relatively transient as a result... according to recent studies, the average lifespan of a tweet is just 18 minutes! If your tweet is retweeted, that lifespan is a little longer; for reference, most retweets happen in the first 7 minutes.

A couple of the key principles for tweeting follow those I outlined in the first article about Facebook, for example:

- visual material (photos, video) are more engaging than stand-alone text
- try and follow the 80% social/20% self-promotional rule (if not paying to promote tweets)
- keep it regular if you can - most experts recommend tweeting 3-5 times a day at least

However, there are other things to consider which fall - if not exclusively, then predominantly - within the realms of Twitter protocol and activity. The following checklist of suggestions isn't exhaustive by any means, but it does cover some of the most essential points worth thinking about. It also assumes that you've created a dedicated Twitter profile for your choir (which ideally is manned by a team, rather than just one person...)

#### **Set a dedicated Twitter catch-up timeslot**

Try to allow at least 30 minutes - say, first thing in the morning - to look for new profiles to follow who will likely follow you back, thank new followers (don't set an automatic routine for this, it's now frowned upon), retweet anything of interest which catches your eye and seek out material to tweet for the day. Not easy if you're pushed for time, but worthwhile if you can manage it, and if you're working as a team, you can share this task.

##### **Related free tool/s:**

In addition to Twitter's own search tools, have a look at [www.twellow.com](http://www.twellow.com) where you can search for followers by categories (which makes results more targeted).

#### **Use your cover image as a promotional vehicle**

Featuring upcoming concert info on your profile this way is an added bonus - but do remember to update the cover image once the event has been and gone!

##### **Related free tool/s:**

[www.canva.com](http://www.canva.com) or [www.desygner.com](http://www.desygner.com) - user-friendly web-based creative design packages with Twitter-specific templates in correct dimensions for cover images (also handy for creating any other marketing material you may need).

#### **Pin event tweets to the top of your profile**

A simple way to ensure maximum visibility of a future concert, for anyone visiting your profile (particularly potential new followers). Again, don't forget to unpin these when your event has passed.

❑ **Add images to your tweets with URL links**

Unlike Facebook, Twitter doesn't provide a preview image for any links you share (and by the way I thoroughly recommend shortening links, using <https://bitly.com> or similar to save eating into the 140 character limit for tweets). It's a good idea, then, to add an appropriate image to such tweets - if it's a link to online ticket booking for a concert, for example, include a pic of your concert flyer, or the choir in action, to make them more visible.

❑ **Grow your follower base through regular tweeting**

If you tweet regularly throughout the day, you'll naturally accrue more followers (albeit at a slower rate than if you actively seek out followers who reciprocate). Sadly, there's no scheduling facility in Twitter itself - unlike Facebook Pages - so you'll either have to be disciplined, and work out a timetable with others who tweet from your choir's profile to spread the load... or you could try one of the free social media management tools available.

**Related free tool/s:**

There are several free-to-use versions of professional tools of this type; the most popular are Hootsuite - [www.hootsuite.com](http://www.hootsuite.com), Buffer - <https://buffer.com> and also Twitter's own version, Tweetdeck - <https://tweetdeck.twitter.com/> and all of them offer the opportunity to schedule tweets, either automatically or at custom times. (Hootsuite has just reduced the number of daily scheduled posts to 30, but that should be plenty for the average choir!) They're also really useful for searches, retweet notifications and basic analytics - and you can manage other social media accounts through Hootsuite and Buffer, although the inherent differences between Twitter and Facebook in particular will probably entail differing content approaches to your various posts (and I prefer to operate the SfP FB page independently).

❑ **Don't go mad on #hashtags**

One to two hashtags per tweet is regarded as plenty. Using generic hashtags each time you tweet to promote an event - eg #choir, #concert, #(composer name/piece) - will help you reach the widest audience. If you're creating your own unique hashtag for an event, there's a simple rule: #Whateveryoudontmakeyourownhashtagtoolong (!). And do be careful out there: Britain's Got Talent finalist Susan Boyle was famously caught out with #susanalbumparty... although this went viral, albeit for the wrong reasons.

**Related free tool/s:**

<http://hashtagify.me> is a really handy site for exploring trending hashtags and variations on what you might use. Including bizarre ones.

❑ **Keep the conversations going**

I'm sure you do this anyway if you're on Twitter - but it's important to acknowledge any replies to your tweets, as it upholds one of the key etiquette precepts of the platform!

❑ **Don't be afraid to ask for retweets**

You can do this in a couple of ways: either by direct messaging key followers - or new ones - with a polite request or via a tweeted plea and a link to the relevant tweet. Two things of note here...

a) Mentioning a particular user (or users) at the start of your tweet will mean that only they and their followers will see your request, eg **@singforpleasure this is worth retweeting ...** if you want a wider audience, either include your mention mid-tweet, eg **This is worth retweeting @singforpleasure ...** or insert a character at the very start of your tweet, eg **\_@singforpleasure this is worth...** Easier to remember the first option, I find.

b) If the character limit allows it, opt for **Please retweet** rather than **Pls RT**. Research in the social media marketing industry has shown that When "Retweet" is spelled out, the retweet rate is 23 times higher than the average. When using the shortened version, the letters "RT," instead, the retweet rate is 10 times higher.

This is really just a drop in the ocean in terms of what you can do, especially for free, but covers some of the fundamentals; I've stayed away from paid tweets in this Pointers piece, but if anyone would like advice on this or other aspects of Twitter, please get in touch with me at: [fundraising@singforpleasure.org.uk](mailto:fundraising@singforpleasure.org.uk) and I'll happily advise.

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