



Twitter Marketing

# How the Twitter Timeline Works (and 6 Simple Tactics to Increase Your Reach)



by Alfred Lua

Understanding the [social media algorithms](#) is important to social media marketers, especially since it can heavily impact a brand's reach on social media. We've talked

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## increase your reach on Twitter in 2018.

Update: It's now possible to "turn off" the timeline algorithm by turning off "Show the best Tweets first" in your settings so that tweets from people you follow are in reverse chronological order.

# Twitter Timeline Algorithm (and 6 Simple Tactics to Increase Your Reach)



## How does the Twitter timeline algorithm work?

Before we dive into the specifics, it might be helpful to know that the Twitter timeline algorithm is constantly changing.

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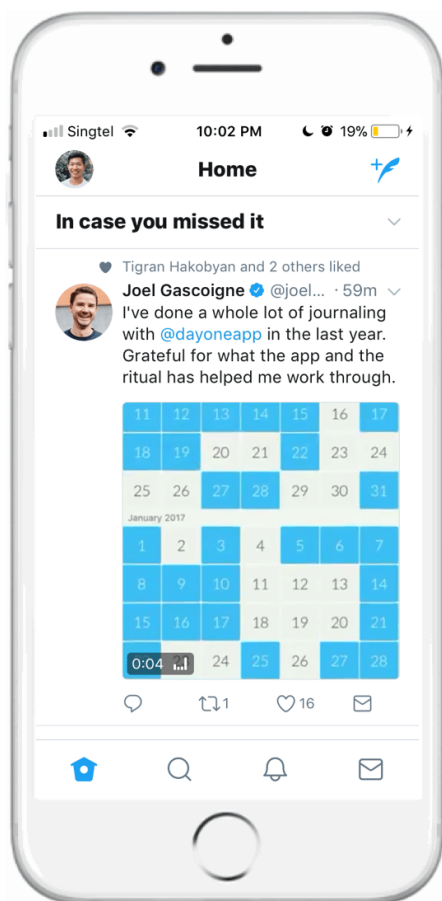
Got it



Dorsey, CEO of Twitter, had said that Twitter will remain live and real-time <sup>4</sup>.

Okay, let's get into the algorithm.

## The Twitter timeline algorithm



### THE TWITTER TIMELINE ALGORITHM

1. Ranked tweets
2. "In case you missed it"
3. Remaining tweets in reverse-chronological order

The Twitter timeline consists of three main sections:

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- **The tweet itself:** its recency, presence of media cards (image or video), and overall engagement (including retweets, clicks, favorites, and time spent reading it)
- **The tweet's author:** your past interactions with this author, the strength of your connection to them, and the origin of your relationship
- **You:** tweets you found engaging in the past, how often and how heavily you use Twitter

Then, Twitter will put the tweets that it thinks would be engaging to you in the first two sections — ranked tweets and “In case you missed it”.

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**The intent is to let you see the best Tweets  
at a glance first before delving into the  
lengthier time-ordered sections.**

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Nicolas Koumchatzky, Staff Software Engineer at Twitter

## Ranked tweets

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1 hour ago



3 hours ago

This section will appear at the top of your timeline and isn't distinctly different from the regular timeline on first glance. But **it contains only tweets that Twitter thinks are relevant to you**. According to Twitter, the selected tweets should still be ordered reverse-chronologically <sup>4</sup>. (But from my personal experience, they might not be.)

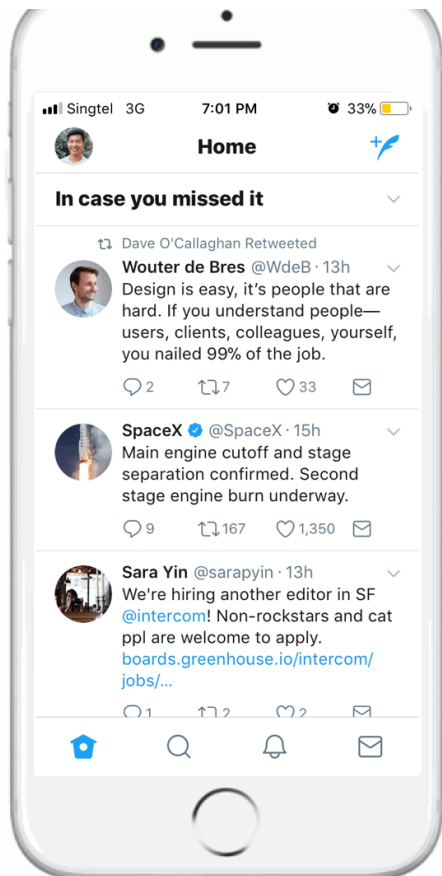
For example, in the screenshot above, the tweets were from several hours ago (when I took the screenshot). I believe this is what the algorithm did:

- It calculated that these are the tweets I might most likely be interested in,
- pulled them out from all the tweets on my timeline, and
- placed them at the top of my timeline.

Even though there were many tweets in between these tweets, the algorithm decided that these are more relevant to me than the rest. So it ranked them at the top of my timeline.

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## "IN CASE YOU MISSED IT"

← 13 hours ago

← 15 hours ago

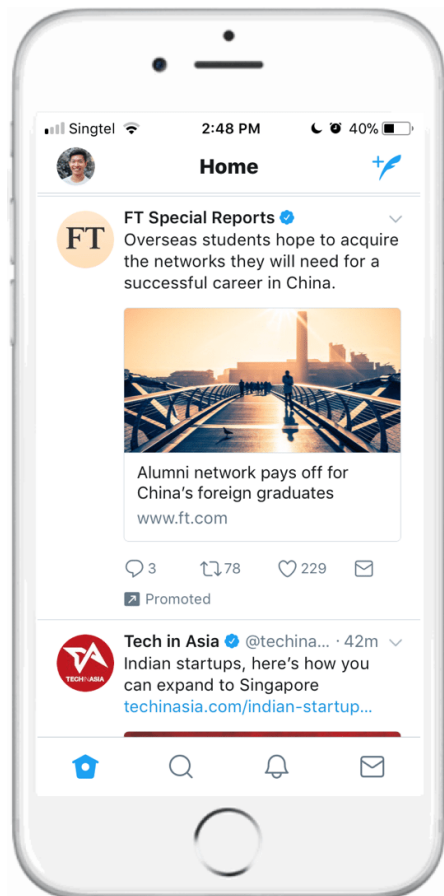
← 13 hours ago

This section does as its name suggests. It shows you tweets that you might be interested in but might not see in the old timeline as they were from quite some time ago.

This module seems to only appear in your timeline when you have been away from Twitter for several hours or days <sup>5</sup>. Similar to the ranked tweets section, **this section contains tweets that Twitter thinks are relevant to you**. But the selected tweets are ordered according to their relevance score and might be from many hours or days ago.

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## REMAINING TWEETS



Retweets



Promoted tweets



Suggested accounts



More

After the two sections, you'll see **the rest of the tweets from accounts you follow in the original reverse-chronological order**. Just like the old Twitter timeline.

In this section (and sometimes in the two above), you'll also find retweets, promoted tweets, and suggested accounts to follow. You might even see tweets from accounts you don't follow. These are often tweets that Twitter thinks will make your timeline more relevant and interesting.

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## How to increase your reach on Twitter in 2018

Just like the Facebook News Feed algorithm and Instagram feed algorithm, engagement seems to be a major factor in the Twitter timeline algorithm. When your tweets receive many interactions, they would be ranked at the top of your followers' timeline and, sometimes, even shown to people who aren't following you.

This is a great benefit of the Twitter timeline algorithm — **a ripple effect**.

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**“It has also ensured that the most popular tweets are far more widely seen than they used to be, enabling them to go viral on an unprecedented scale.” — Will Oremus, Slate**

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Here's a personal experience: Even though I only have about 2,000 Twitter followers, [one of my recent top tweets](#) has more than 11,000 impressions! That's more than five times the number of followers I have.



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So how do you increase your Twitter reach with the new timeline algorithm?

Here are some suggestions:

## 1. Re-use your top posts

It's generally accepted to tweet the same content often. Sometimes even a few times a day. **Instead of re-using any tweet, choose only your top tweets.** That's because, with the help of the new timeline algorithm, popular tweets can spread further and wider.

For example, here's a piece of content that we recently tweeted twice.

[The first tweet](#) received 162 retweets, 186 likes, and more than 51,000 impressions. [The second](#) did even better — 208 retweets, 252 likes, and more than 57,000 impressions.

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**@ValaAfshar**  
pic.twitter.com/q3uF1cuNqs

**Buffer @buffer**  
Didn't exist in 2006... 🤔

- iPhone
- iPad
- Kindle
- 4G
- Lyft
- Android
- Spotify
- Bitcoin
- Instagram
- Snapchat
- WhatsApp

**@ValaAfshar**  
pic.twitter.com/ViqOdBql3d

Impressions 57,492

Total engagements 3,929

Media engagements 2,932

Detail expands 422

Likes 252

Retweets 208

Profile clicks 62

Link clicks 42

Replies 11

With the [new Twitter rules](#), it'll be best to avoid tweeting the exact same content. I would recommend modifying the text or multimedia whenever you want to re-use your top content.


A way to re-use your top posts is through the analytics in your [Buffer dashboard](#). Under the "Posts" tab, select "Most Popular" and choose your preferred timeframe.


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What does your marketing stack look like? 🖥️👁️10 can't-live-without tools we use everyday!

[See all 60 here: <https://buff.ly/2xhNghM>]

12:02 PM (PDT) via Web  brian.p@bufferapp.com



37 Retweets	105 Likes	1 Mention	79 Clicks	2.0m Potential
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From there, simply hit “Re-Buffer” and modify the tweet. I would recommend also sharing [new content](#) so that your followers aren’t seeing only recycled content.

If you aren’t using Buffer, you can find your top tweets in your [Twitter analytics](#) and re-publish them manually.

## 2. Experiment with posting times

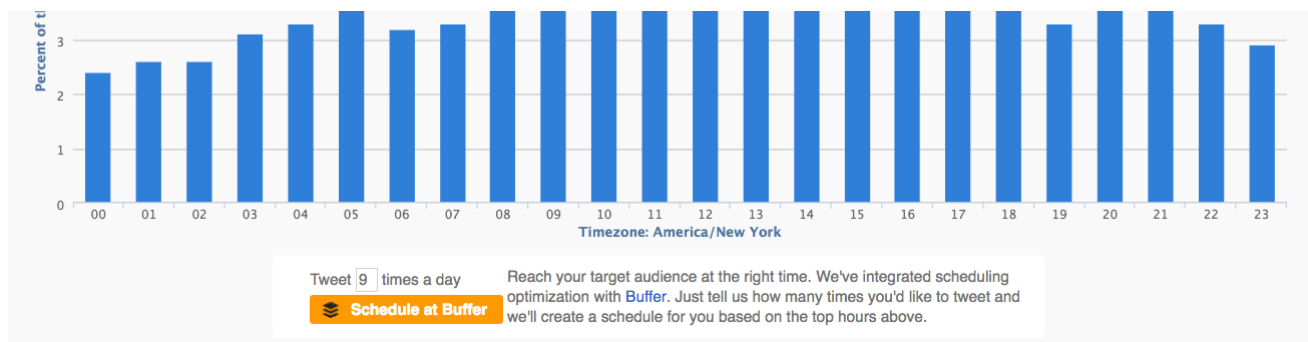
Even though some tweets will be ranked according to the new algorithm, most tweets will be shown in the reverse-chronological order. **This means that finding the best posting time is still relevant and important.** When you find posting times that increase your engagement, you are also increasing your chances of your tweets being featured at the top of your followers’ timeline.

More engagement, more impressions. More impressions, more engagement.

The best way to find your optimal posting times is to experiment with various times. [Twitter tools](#) like [Followerwonk](#) and [Tweriod](#) can tell you when your followers are most active on a typical day. The most-active times are good starting points to test.

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Looking at the peaks, I might start by experimenting with the following times:

- 5 am
- 10 am
- 12 pm
- 4 pm
- 8 pm

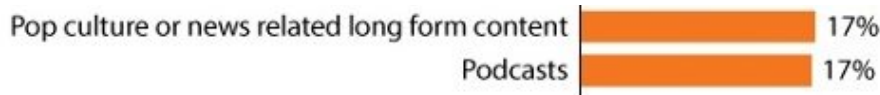
Tip: You can easily save posting times within Buffer and [schedule tweets](#) ahead of time in just a couple of clicks.

### 3. Try Twitter videos

Videos are slowly becoming the top content type. According to HubSpot's research, videos are one of the top content types that people want to see more of in the future <sup>7</sup>.

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Base: 1091 Global Consumers  
Source: HubSpot Consumer Behavior Survey, Q1 2016



And social media platforms have been responding to this new consumption trend.

Facebook has been pushing for videos in the last few years. LinkedIn has recently introduced [native LinkedIn videos](#). Furthermore, Twitter found that **videos are six times more likely to be retweeted than photos and three times more likely to be retweeted than GIFs** <sup>8</sup>.

Here are a few quick ways you can [get started with videos](#):





- **Videos with text:** If your brand has a blog, go through your Google Analytics to find your top evergreen blog posts. Then, use tools like [Animoto](#) or [Lumen5](#) to help you easily convert your blog posts into videos.
- **Recordings or interviews:** You can also record yourself sharing tips ([BIGVU Teleprompter](#) can be helpful for this) or interview someone on your team.
- **Live videos with Periscope:** If you're brave enough, try recording yourself live. As an example, we recently did [a live Q&A on Periscope](#).

## 4. Use hashtags strategically

The hashtag was created on Twitter and remains to be an effective tactic when used appropriately. One of the best ways to use hashtags is to create branded hashtags — hashtags that are tied to your brand.

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Impressions		
 <b>Buffer</b> @buffer · 21h Looking to up your marketing skills? 37 free social media & marketing courses that you can enroll in today 🚀 <a href="https://buff.ly/2IzHDG8">buff.ly/2IzHDG8</a> <a href="#">View Tweet activity</a>	13,569	← <a href="#">Regular tweet</a>
 <b>Buffer</b> @buffer · 16h Q7: Do you have any work culture resources or tools to share? <a href="#">#bufferchat</a> <a href="https://pic.twitter.com/a0ohzhJYTz">pic.twitter.com/a0ohzhJYTz</a> <a href="#">View Tweet activity</a>	20,180	← <a href="#">#bufferchat tweet</a>
 <b>Buffer</b> @buffer · 17h Q5: How do you prevent "false harmony" when developing this kind of culture? <a href="#">#bufferchat</a> <a href="https://pic.twitter.com/c82wJ7Y0Xw">pic.twitter.com/c82wJ7Y0Xw</a> <a href="#">View Tweet activity</a>	20,241	← <a href="#">#bufferchat tweet</a>
 <b>Buffer</b> @buffer · Oct 31 🎉 Our new Skillshare class is LIVE! An Introduction to Social Media Advertising - Everything you need to succeed. <a href="https://skl.sh/buffer_adverti...">skl.sh/buffer_adverti...</a> <a href="https://pic.twitter.com/il6L8kgwid">pic.twitter.com/il6L8kgwid</a> <a href="#">View Tweet activity</a>	23,817	← <a href="#">Regular tweet</a>

Here's more. When people join our Twitter chat and use the hashtag, they help to increase the reach of the hashtag (and, indirectly, our brand). With the help of our awesome community, the [#bufferchat](#) hashtag reaches millions of people every week!

If you would like to start a Twitter chat, you might find these two blog posts useful:

- [Twitter Chats 101: A Step-by-Step Guide To Hosting or Joining a Twitter Chat](#)

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### Product Content

This customer support reply by Karinna was seen more than 3,000 times.

#### Tweet Activity

**Buffer** @buffer

@EricTTung Could you DM us a screenshot of your browser extensions? I'd love to avoid clearing your cookies unless we really need to. 🙌 2/2 -Karinna

Impressions

3,743

This #bufferchat reply by Arielle was seen nearly 3,000 times.

#### Tweet Activity

**Buffer** @buffer

@ExpWriters Thank you for being part of it! Have a wonderful rest of your day! #bufferchat - Arielle

Impressions

2,816

Total engagements

1

Likes

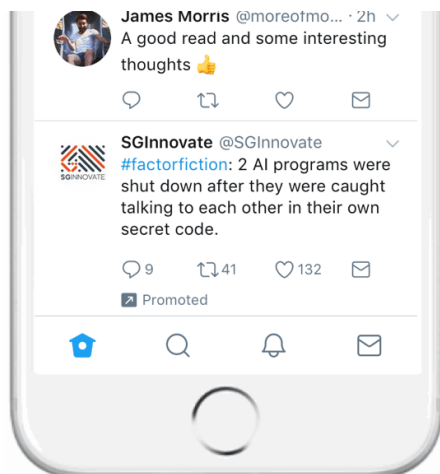
1

Most of our replies don't get many impressions — about 100 to 200 each. But considering that we sent hundreds of replies every day, that can add up very quickly!

Furthermore, the new timeline algorithm seems to feature replies more prominently on your followers' timeline if they are also following the other account.

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## REPLIES



Besides increasing your reach, it is a great Twitter practice and is beneficial to your business. In a study with more than 3,000 Twitter users, Twitter found several benefits to replying to questions from customers <sup>9</sup> :

- People are willing to spend three to 20 percent more when the business answers their tweets.
- They are 44 percent more likely to share their experiences.
- And they are also 30 percent more likely to recommend the business.

## 6. Promote your tweets

**As organic reach is falling, most social media platforms are becoming a pay-to-play channel.** If you have some budget to spare, you could perhaps experiment with some Twitter ads.

Twitter has made it easier to boost a single tweet (just like on Facebook). Here's how:



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Everything you need to succeed.

 [skl.sh/buffer\\_adverti...](https://skl.sh/buffer_adverti...)




Then, click on “Promote your tweet” in the lower-left corner of the popup. You’ll be prompted to fill in your personal information and credit card details if this is the first time you’re promoting a tweet.

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Promote your tweet

Your Tweet has **26,370** total impressions so far. Get more impressions on this Tweet!


**Promote your Tweet**

Profile clicks	14
Replies	2

Then, set your location and budget. The location and budget options are a little limited compared with Facebook’s “Boost post”, which makes it easier to choose. If you prefer more fine-tuning, you could head over to your Twitter ads manager to create a new campaign from scratch.

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Promote your tweet

Get more impressions on this Tweet!

26,370 total impressions · 289 total engagements

Targeting

Select the location you would like to target with this Tweet.

Location Singapore


Budget


Select how much you would like to spend.

\$50 \$500 \$5,000

Your estimated reach:

61.4K Impressions | 171 Engagements



 **Confirm spend of \$500**

For advanced options, visit [ads.twitter.com](https://ads.twitter.com)

Profile clicks 14

Replies 2

Finally, click “Confirm spend” to start your promotion. Yay!

Twitter is even testing an automated tweet promotion service. For \$99 a month, Twitter will automatically amplify your tweets and profile to help you increase your reach, engagement, and following. This service is still in beta but might be opened up to brands if it goes well. ([We have tested it ourselves, and here are our results!](#))

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Here are six things you could try in 2018 to increase your Twitter reach:

1. Re-use your top posts
2. Experiment with posting times
3. Try videos
4. Use hashtags strategically
5. Reply to mentions
6. Promote your tweets

**What other Twitter tactics would you recommend us to try?** Share them below and we can chat about them. Thanks!

—

Topic: [Twitter marketing](#)

*The awesome featured image is by [William Bout](#), taken from [Unsplash](#).*

*Originally written Feb 7, 2018. Last updated Dec 12, 2018*



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## The Ideal Image Sizes for Your Social Media Posts: Guidelines for All 7 Major Social Networks

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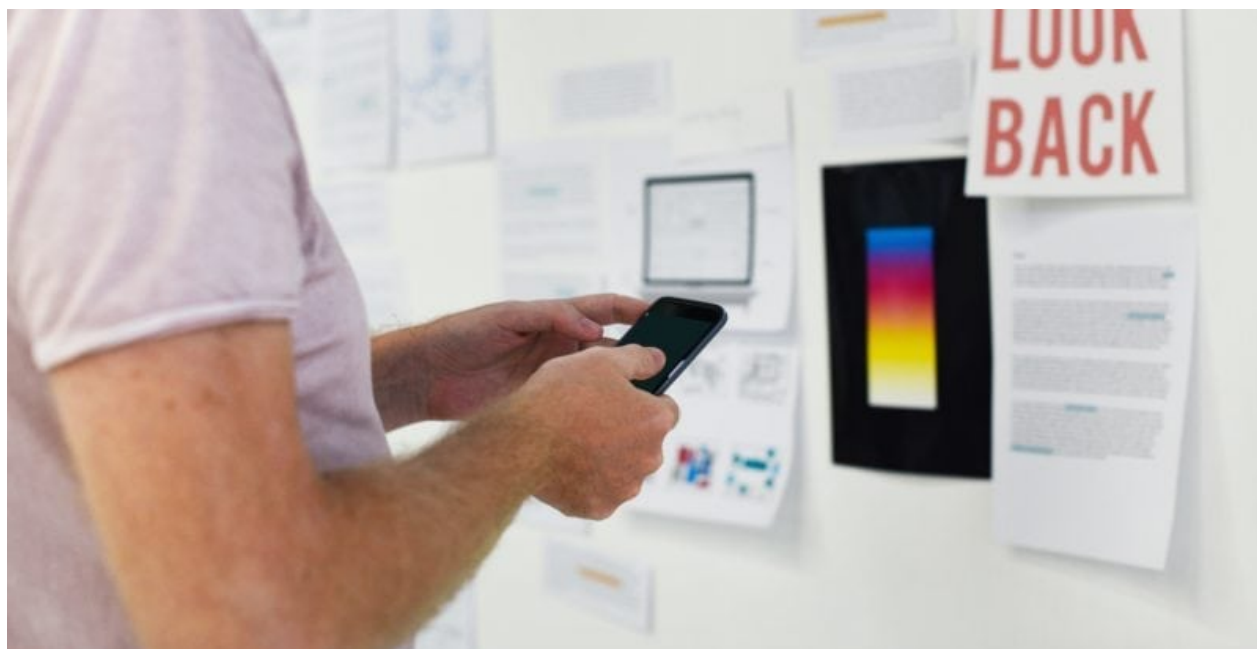
## The Ideal Cover Photo Size for Each of the Major Social Media Platforms

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## Get Over Your Creativity Block With These 20 Social Media Content Ideas

TWITTER MARKETING

80,000+ SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETERS TRUST BUFFER



The Seattle Times

.dash

BUSINESS  
INSIDER

FORTUNE



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