

Five Ws and an H for social media

 By [Steve Whitford](#)

30 May 2011

I used to hate Twitter. What a monumental waste of time. Facebook was marginally better because I knew the people, but, gosh, people could share such rubbish. That's all started to change in recent times. Finally, people are cottoning on to the five Ws and H principle when using social media and it's really giving the Internet impetuous as a communications tool.

The five Ws and H are, of course, Who, What, When, Where, Why and How - pretty much a fundamental principle of journalism and communication in general.

The problem is that, in an Internet context and particularly with social media, these principles have often been ignored. It's what really got to me in the beginning with Twitter. Random people spewing out random nonsense to no one in particular and no one listening either. It was like 50 people standing in a circle all talking at once with no regard for what anyone else was saying - well, that's what it felt like to me at least.

Anyway, I've gotten actively into Twitter again in the last few weeks (with [@stevewhit](#) and [@intrinsicza](#)) and, I must say, I've been pleasantly surprised. I've started to see some really effective communication and it's made the whole experience a lot more worthwhile for me. Let me break it down:

- **Who**

The key with **Who** is to let people know who you are, which determines what kind of information you are likely to communicate. A detailed profile and web links are important in this regard.

Then there is the other side of **Who** - who you are talking to. If your communication is in line with who you are, then the people who find that interesting will interact with you, if you seek them out.

It's extremely important for Twitter accounts and Facebook fan pages because you will be followed and liked by people you don't even know. What you present to them is therefore critical in getting them to click the like or follow button.

- **What**

What you are saying is probably even more important and goes hand in hand with the **Who**. If you've got a good profile, then many people will start to follow you based on who you are and what you have to say.

I'm a writer and Internet strategist. If I just want to talk about rugby all day, then I should start by changing my profile, or have a separate account.

That's not to say that as [@stevewhit](#) I can't talk about the Sharks sometimes, but see the principle in what I am saying. In general, if content really is king (and, yes, it really is king) then what you say is pretty important. Certainly in a business context, social media can only be about sharing other people's YouTube links, blog posts and news items (in other words, syndication) for so long before it loses its spark.

Let me elaborate on that in the **Why**.

- **Why**

The power of social media is that it is viral. If you have something to say that is interesting and you share it with the right audience, then that message will go viral, spreading that information. The critical fact of the blogging revolution and social media is the ability to self-publish, to broadcast your own message.

SEO puts a twist on that because it's not only about having the right message, but how you ensure people find that message and that it spreads virally.

Why you say something and why you share it on a specific medium are important questions in planning the impact that you want that information to have.

This is the spark of social media and, indeed, the Internet. I'm going to elaborate on this in the *Where* and the *How*.

- **When**

When you say things is important, too, because if you say it at the wrong time, particularly on Twitter, then the chances of people reading it are less.

For example, I hopped on to Twitter on a Saturday morning around 8am from my mobile phone and it was abuzz with people tweeting. And then what I noticed is that as mid morning approached, the tweeting slowed. Presumably people had things to do on a Saturday and became less involved in Twitter.

It's important in a social media context to try and come to grips with when your audience is most likely to be active and share information at that time. However, don't use that opportunity to post a plethora of things at once on Twitter and Facebook - you'll just annoy people.

Take a measured approach and think about the type of content you are sharing. Hectically technical information on a Friday afternoon is probably not the best idea. Pick something more light-hearted and engaging.

- **Where**

Where you say things is important. You need a home base in cyberspace - somewhere where you will ultimately draw people back to. It might be a website or it might be your fan page on Facebook, but think of it as your home in cyber space.

What you're trying to achieve here is the establishment of a "place" **Where** you'll draw people back to. This is pretty important for SEO. One of the things Google prioritises the most is linking.

So where will your content be housed that people are going to share and what link will they be referencing? Because the more people you can get to use that link the better for you. A website, blog or Facebook Fan page are ideal

homes.

- **How**

If you have anything meaningful you want to say that is longer than 140 characters, say it on your blog. Use that link and post it on Twitter and then on your Facebook fan page (if you have one) and then share it via your personal Facebook page as well. And if you can get other people in your organisation or circle of friends to do the same, even better. Make sure your blog is feeding into (South African) blog aggregators such as [Amatomu](#), [MyScoop](#) and [Afrigator](#), too.

If there are forums you frequent on similar topics, post the link in there as well, and if you're an IM (instant messenger) user, put it in your Skype/Gtalk status, on Whatsapp etc.

What you're trying to do here is create a web of communication all leading back to a central point - your home in cyberspace. What you ideally want is for your home site to be the place most likely to show up on the front page of Google when people search for things you have been speaking about or they search for people like you.

How you say it is also of vital importance. Particularly in a blogging context, the right words need to be used and they need to be used regularly through the piece. You need to link where appropriate to other pieces of content you have generated to create follow-through and you always need to ask yourself the question, "Is this something which would be interesting to my audience?"

Rename your images to have a name in line with what you are saying. Use captions and tool tips along the same lines. This all helps with SEO.

We all have interesting things to say

As individuals or companies, we all have interesting things to say about who we are or what we know, and how and when we say that is critical to the spread of information in a social media context and ultimately for how people find you on the Internet.

For more:

- Cerebra.co.za: [Four top tips for brands on Twitter](#)

ABOUT STEVE WHITFORD

After completing a BA degree in English, Steve Whitford began working as a journalist. Having acquired a good understanding of technology Steve went freelance and began doing media relations for SMEs and writing retainers at several PR companies. He is now director of Intrinsic Media, which specialises in content generation, copy writing and Internet strategy. Email steve@intrinsicmedia.co.za and follow him on Twitter at [@stevewhit](#).
= Five Ws and an H for social media - 30 May 2011

[View my profile and articles...](#)

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>