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## Incorporating twitter within the sport management classroom: Rules and uses for effective practical application ☆



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### ABSTRACT

Using Twitter within the Sport Management classroom can provide a wealth of opportunities for learning, engagement, discovery, and creativity. Twitter boasts over 284 million active users, who are looking for opportunities to communicate with other professionals, stay abreast of current news, and market ideas. It has become a platform for marketing and communication for all involved, from coaches, athletes, leagues, teams, and consumers. The purpose of this article is to share rules and uses of Twitter within the Sport Management classroom. We believe Twitter provides both effectiveness and collaboration that stimulates learning within the sport management curriculum.

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## 1. Introduction

Using Twitter within the Sport Management classroom can provide a wealth of opportunities for learning, engagement, discovery, and creativity. Many institutions in higher education are making a push to implement technology as part of the classroom culture via “flipped classrooms” or hybrid courses. The use of social media in higher education is #trending (no pun intended). Based on a survey of 1920 faculty members in higher education, 90% reported using social media in courses or for professional use, with the majority using YouTube, Facebook, and LinkedIn. Only 13% reported using Twitter for professional use, and 2% reported using Twitter within the classroom environment (Moran, Seaman, & Tinti-Kane, 2011).

Twitter use can enhance the process of learning for students if planned and used effectively. Evans (2014) studied the effects of Twitter use within 252 undergraduate Business and Management students for communication purposes during a 12-week course. A positive correlation was found between Twitter usage and student engagement, and Twitter was not found to have a negative impact on classroom relationships or attendance. Other studies have found similar results (Junco et al., 2011; Junco, Elavsky, & Heiberger, 2012). This is congruent with support that students who use learning technologies report higher levels of student engagement within the university (Chen, Lamber, & Guidty, 2010).

Twitter appears to have unique benefits in the sport management classroom, as it allows faculty and students to engage with each other and the sport industry directly (O’Boyle, 2014). Twitter boasts over 284 million active users, who are looking for opportunities to communicate with other professionals, stay abreast of current news, and market ideas. It has become a

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platform for marketing and communication for all involved, from coaches, athletes, leagues, teams, and consumers. The aim of this article is to share rules and uses of Twitter within the Sport Management classroom.

## 2. Rules

1. *Do not use Twitter just for fun.* Technology in the classroom should never be used for “fun” or “because the students like it.” Any teaching tool should only be used because it either it solves a problem, or makes a cumbersome job more efficient. Use Twitter to engage the students in addition to traditional classroom methods. Baird & Fisher (2005) suggested that social media will increase the relevance of classroom learning with new generation by relating to younger and increasingly “electronic” centered users.
2. *Do not require Twitter unless everyone has ample access to it.* If it is an online class, or a hybrid, then requiring Twitter is not as much of a concern, since students must have access to internet for class anyway. If privacy is a concern for students, they can create a pseudo twitter name (handle) to use for class. If the class is a traditional lecture, Twitter use can be studied as a class, in teams, or even in pairs outside of the classroom. It is easy to assume that all students have tablets or smart phones, and most do, but alienating the one or two that does not is not best teaching practice.
3. *Understand Twitter terminology.* Understanding basic Twitter terminology is necessary for both the instructor and the student. There are several resources available online that will provide detail, but we summarize a few here (Axon, 2011):
  - a. *Tweet:* refers to each message you post on your account. All of your followers can see every tweet.
  - b. *Retweet:* refers to sharing someone else's post that you follow. Then all of your followers can see the original tweet (and they will be able to tell you shared it).
  - c. *@username:* a direct tweet to the user you are addressing.
  - d. *Feed:* refers to the most current list of tweets (or posts) from you and those you follow (home page), from you (your account page), or from the search that you perform on different topics using the hashtag, i.e. – #sportmanagement
  - e. *Trending:* refers to a very popular topic on Twitter at the time. The Twitter home page will rank a list of terms that are trending, and can be specified to a certain location.
  - f. *Hashtag:* refers to using the # sign in front of a term, without including spaces. This labels that tweet to those terms with the hashtag. For example, if you post a message and include the term #sportmanagement, anyone (even those that do not follow you) who searches for “sportmanagement” can see your tweet, along with any others with the same hashtag. You can use more than one hashtag within any tweet.
  - g. *Archive Tweets:* refers to a history of all of your tweets from the beginning. From your Twitter archive, you can search to find Tweets by month, or certain words, phrases, and hashtags, or @usernames (Vandor, 2012).
4. *Utilize Twitter training.* Take advantage of any professional development opportunities that include training for social media use, especially Twitter. Many institutions provide learning opportunities that cover technology in the classroom. Since not all students are avid Twitter users, this training should be shared with the students. Show students how to create an account, tweet, search for each other, and find what's trending. Make sure you educate the students on the language of Twitter and how to become familiar with Twitter terminology.
5. *Start slowly.* Talk about strategies to engage students. Build a foundation of interest by joining a group so they have people to follow and people to follow them. Have them connect with industry professionals, organizations, etc.
6. *Retweet your students.* Retweets and Favorites are the free currency of Twitter. Use them liberally with your students. We also see this as a use, and this idea will be discussed in detail within the next section.
7. *Do not ignore it.* Twitter is not going away. In fact, Twitter is one of the most popular tools for collaboration, marketing, education, AND it's fun. Twitter use has steadily increased over the last few years, and similar growth is expected in the future. Students will use it, and probably already are. Businesses use it, which is where the students will be once they graduate. In fact, Hamady, Ludy, Anderson, & El-Khechen, (2014) found that 62.3% of students surveyed believe Twitter will be important to their future occupational success. As educators, we owe our students opportunity for the best skills for their success, and that includes technology uses such as Twitter.
8. *Know the research.* The exponential growth of social media, and Twitter especially, has prompted scholars to examine the role of social media within the culture of professional fields, including medicine, education, business, and politics. Specifically, within the sports industry, social media has been studied from various views, including those from collegiate student-athletes, professional athletes, sport organizations, and sport consumers (Hanks, Clavio, & Sailes, 2014). Understanding the methods on how studies have been conducted and how the results relate to the sport management curriculum can create meaningful practical application.

## 3. Uses in Sport Management classroom

The landscape of Twitter use within sports and athletics is panoramic. Twitter already plays a large role within the sport industry. From athletes to sport franchises and even sports reporters, many of the top names in the industry are using

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