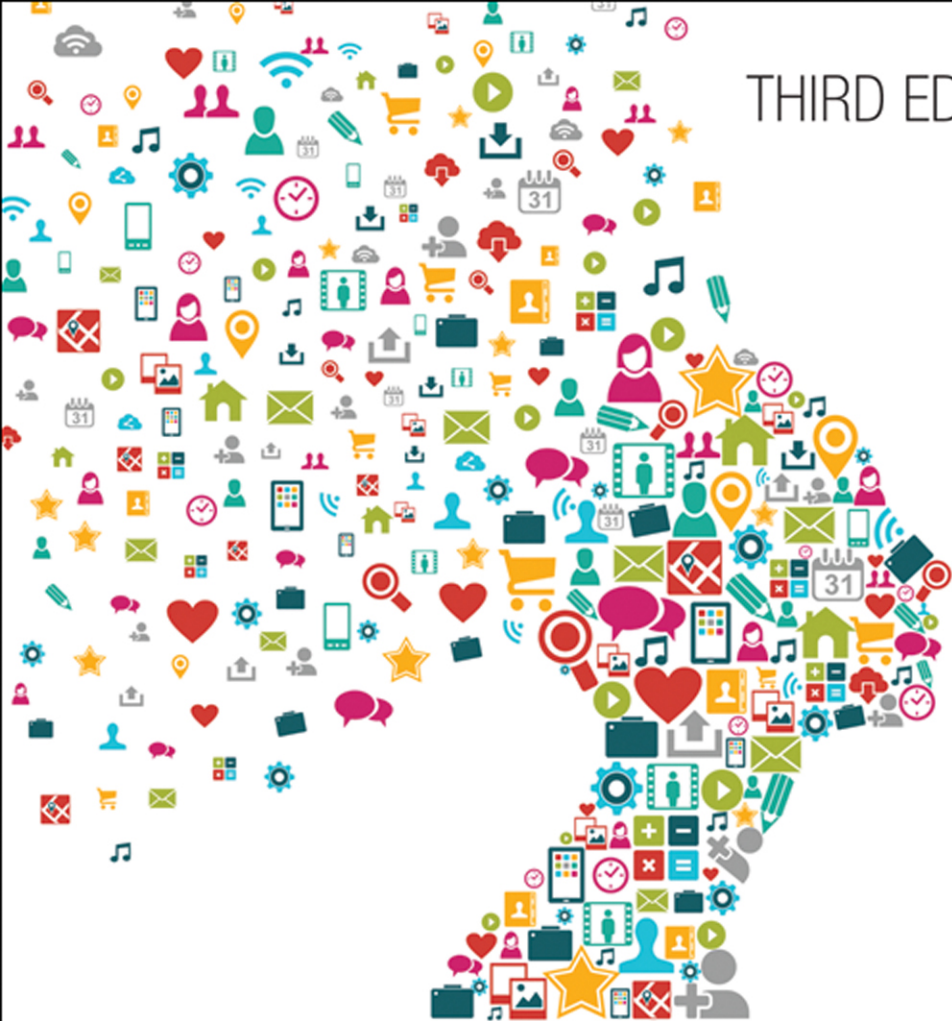


THIRD EDITION



# BRANDING YOURSELF

How to Use **Social Media** to Invent or Reinvent Yourself

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# **BRANDING YOURSELF**

**Third Edition**

food trend on Twitter. And people visiting your hometown may appreciate hearing about your favorite local restaurant. With so many different people on Twitter, 100 percent of your tweets will be relevant to someone, just not everyone.

In other words, tweets are changing the way we communicate to the masses—and they can change the way people perceive your personal brand.

It's just a matter of figuring out which tweets are important to your audience.

## What Can Twitter Do for You?

There are many reasons to use Twitter to share your content. For one thing, it's an established tool whose vernacular has entered the everyday language: hashtag, tweet, “find me at kyle p lacy” (@kyleplacy). Everyone uses these terms so much, even most non-Twitter users have a basic understanding of what they mean.

It's also worth repeating: Twitter is one of the premiere platforms to build your personal brand on. Remember when we discussed the goals of building your brand in Chapter 1, “Welcome to the Party,” and Chapter 2, “How Do You Fit in the Mix?” This is the place to do both of those things quickly and easily.

Finally, Twitter has a lot to offer you in regards to meeting your personal branding objectives and goals.

- **You can establish your expertise:** We talked about blogging and establishing your expertise in Chapter 3, “Blogging: Telling Your Story.” Blogging helps you share your story with anyone who comes to your site. To increase its reach, you need to share that story, and Twitter is the perfect place to do so. Remember your fellow 328 million Twitterers? (Twitterati? Tweeples?) You can share your story with as many of them as you can convince to listen to you.
- **You can market your personal brand:** Twitter lets you share your expertise with people around the world. It's possible to find people who work in your industry (or the industry you'd like to work in), follow them, and even create a list of those people. For example, if you wanted to work in a software startup company in your city, you could create a private list of the startup owners so you can pay attention specifically to what they're saying. Then just respond to the appropriate messages as you find them as a way to get on their radar.
- **You can communicate directly with potential clients and employers:** Essentially, Twitter is a communication medium. People use it to communicate with different people all over the globe. This is not only a medium to simply share content and ideas, but to discuss them as well.

- **You have access to all kinds of research:** You can use Twitter to research blog content or to find marketplace trends. What are your peers writing about? What are they reading? What's trending across the country or around the world? Check it out, and create your own responses. Twitter even has a trends feature that tells you the popular topics of the day. You can also listen to what other people are saying about your product, service, marketplace, or industry. Just set up a column with a particular search term or hashtag, then follow along with all the related tweets that appear in the column.
- **You can share breaking news:** We can't count the number of times we've seen breaking news on Twitter before we saw it on the mainstream news. People share news stories from their corner of the globe, and thanks to the power of retweets and sharing, any story can travel around the world several times in as many minutes. And then you can read the different reactions and analyses (some from professionals, many from enthusiastic amateurs), and find links to stories you might not have otherwise found.
- **You can also track your competitors:** You'll be amazed at how much content your competitors share on Twitter. Because Twitter is so widely used, it's extremely easy to gain valuable content from your competitors, including things like, "Had a great meeting with @ABC\_Widgets about possible marketing plan!" Use Twitter to make decisions on how to market yourself to clients just by watching what your competitors are sharing. Set up a private list—make sure it's private, because people are notified when they're added to a public list—and add your various competitors to keep an eye on them.
- **You can find people who share your passions:** Plenty of different personal passions are shared daily on Twitter. Millions of tweets are posted every day just about the things people like doing for fun; your interests are in there too. Just do a search for whatever inspires you and connect with the people talking about it.

You want to connect with passionate people because they share content. It helps when you find individuals who are passionate about the same things. Kyle and Erik share a passion for the city of Indianapolis (and now Erik is learning about Orlando), and they connect with people daily who live in their respective areas.

Erik also connects with other food lovers in his new city to find new restaurants to visit. And Kyle finds new music venues by following local musicians. Our passion for our cities helps us grow our personal brands because of the direct contact we make with other individuals.

## PERSONAL BRANDING CASE STUDY: @HAGGARDHAWKS

**Q: So what is Haggard Hawks exactly?**

**A:** Haggard Hawks is primarily a Twitter feed that posts about obscure words, language trivia, and etymology facts (see Figure 5.1)—so-called, I should point out, because the etymology of the word “haggard” lies in the world of falconry.

I’m Paul Anthony Jones, a writer and non-fiction author based in Newcastle in the UK, and I produce all the online material for Haggard Hawks.



**Figure 5.1** @HaggardHawks is a great place to learn about clever words that make you feel smarter for having read them.

**Q: How long have you been doing it?**

**A:** I set up the Haggard Hawks Twitter feed in December 2013 alongside the release of a book I had written about etymological connections, *Haggard Hawks & Paltry Poltroons*. The account has been running ever since.

**Q: What got you started on Twitter, and how did that build up your Haggard Hawks brand?**

**A:** After a lot of cajoling from friends who thought I’d enjoy it (they were right!), I set up a personal Twitter account about a year or two before I set up Haggard Hawks. I followed a few fact and trivia accounts myself so I knew that there was certainly an audience there to connect to. I had also briefly experimented with running a Twitter account alongside my first book back in 2012; that account had fared well, but nothing like Haggard Hawks, which seemed to find a niche very quickly.

I think two main things helped build the account in the early days. The first was interacting not only with my followers, but with other accounts providing similar language- or literature-orientated material. Just replying to other tweets and answering and asking questions was enough to make the account more visible and to keep those who were already on board engaged in what I was doing.

Secondly (and in retrospect, this one sounds somewhat daft!), realizing that the account had a potentially global audience through Twitter was key. At the very beginning, I would just post the Haggard Hawks tweets from my phone as and when I remembered—entirely unscheduled and irregular.

I would keep a dozen or so tweets in my drafts and post one while I was waiting for the kettle to boil, standing in a queue, or commuting to work. The problem with that (aside from the obvious) was that there was no point at all in posting something at 8:00–9:00 a.m. UK time, if half my followers were fast asleep in North America. After a bit of research online, I started using Tweetdeck, and then Hootsuite to schedule the tweets in advance so that the account stayed active even when I was not.

The next biggest developments followed from there: Blogging about the account on The Huffington Post was a lovely break, and off the back of that, Haggard Hawks was named by *Mental Floss* magazine as one of the best language accounts to follow in an article back in 2014. Setting up a tie-in blog and publishing online word quizzes and games helped enormously too. I always think providing sharable content and links to content outside of Twitter is just as important as posting material direct to Twitter itself.

**Q: What has been one of the coolest things you've managed to do?**

**A:** Live tweeting the 2016 presidential debates was a lot of fun (“An abysdomist is a liar who boasts about their lies” went particularly well), and judging by the feedback it received, it helped make watching them more tolerable!

But speaking personally—and considering I started Haggard Hawks by tweeting random words from my phone—one of the coolest things has been seeing the account grow to the point where it's now attracting some high-profile followers. I can remember a friend of mine asking if I could pick one person in the world to follow the account who would it be. I said J.K. Rowling. Two days later, there she was.

**Q: Do you now use Twitter differently than you used to?**

**A:** Although there's a full Haggard Hawks network now—a website and blog, a Facebook page, a YouTube channel, an Instagram account, and an email newsletter—the vast majority of my time is still spent on Twitter. It plays a

huge part in Haggard Hawks' identity online, and I imagine it will continue to in the future.

I'm always looking at new ideas and looking for new material to post or blog about, but the core of it all is continuing to post tweets daily and keeping the Twitter account as active as possible.

**Q: Do you get more traffic from Twitter or from other channels?**

**A:** Despite all those different channels, I still get most of my traffic via Twitter; and yes, I do feel how I use Twitter has changed—but I feel like it's only recently that I've noticed it!

Because the Haggard Hawks tweets are always scheduled a good few days in advance (and have been for so long now) I feel like I lost sight of the fact that Twitter is a live stream of information. When events happen or major stories break in the news, Twitter is always abuzz with the most up-to-date developments, and it's only in the last year or so that I've started more overtly live tweeting or subtweeting what's in the news.

The scheduled tweets are all still posted throughout the day, of course, but I find myself dropping in on the account more often these days to post more apposite words, and the response to that has by and large been superb.

Although the words that take a swipe at politics or politicians are understandably dividing (I can still remember a tweet calling Haggard Hawks "an ignorant non-voter from the new world order across the pond" when I happened to post a word that wasn't too complimentary about President Trump), it seems most people appreciate having an armory of words to describe what is going on around them. Relevancy is key.

**Q: Any interesting language feuds with someone like @OEWordHord, the Old English word of the day Twitter account?**

**A:** One of my favorite good-natured Twitter spats was the ongoing rivalry between the libraries on Orkney and Shetland in the far north of Scotland, and so I would love to say that Haggard Hawks has a nemesis of its own, but, alas, no! Although a friend of mine keeps threatening to start an account called Furious Falcons and tweet entirely made-up words just to wind me up, so watch this space....

**Q: Has using Twitter led to interesting opportunities for you personally?**

**A:** Haggard Hawks has definitely opened doors for me as a writer. I've lost track of the number of times I've been approached through Twitter or through the website to write articles, provide quotes or comments, review books, give interviews, or the like. And, again, as a writer, there's not a doubt in my mind that having the account there alongside all of my other work helps make me a more salable prospect in the eyes of publishers.

**Q: Are people seeing you as more of a language “expert” just by virtue of tweet-ing old words?**

**A:** It’s curious, because my background is in language—I have a Master’s degree in linguistics—but the disciplines I have ended up dealing with through Haggard Hawks are very different than what my academic interests were.

At university, I was involved in a mixture of toponymy (place name origins) and psycholinguistics (how the brain stores and deals with language, and how to fix or rebuild that when things go wrong). Philology, lexicography, grammar, and just generally digging up old words aren’t necessarily involved in either of those, and I’m certainly nowhere near as well versed in those subjects as others are who deal with them as their stock-in-trade and always have done.

Nevertheless, I’m often approached to write or comment on them simply because of my involvement with Haggard Hawks, but that can be advantageous: It encourages me to improve that more academic side of what I do online. If I really don’t feel confident or experienced enough to do the work required, I will pass the opportunity over to a fellow blogger or Twitterer I’m in touch with who will doubtless do a better job than I could and will benefit from the new contact or the wider exposure.

**Q: You’re based in the UK, but you have fans from around the world. Are there any surprises or unusual trends?**

**A:** The problem with running HaggardHawks single-handedly is that I have to make judgment calls—often essentially blind!—about how well known or obscure these words are in all the regional varieties and dialects of English of all those who follow the account. I and every other British speaker might think a word odd or obscure, but a Canadian English speaker or a New Zealand English speaker might think very differently.

But then of course there’s the problem of slang: I can remember stumbling across the word “diddle” in the Oxford English Dictionary, where it has a variety of lovely meanings like “to walk unsteadily like a child,” or “to sing without distinct words”—the kind of thing you do when you’re singing along to a song and it reaches a part you don’t know the lyrics for. Thinking nothing of it, I posted it to Twitter. Only to find out that in American slang it means “to masturbate.” Lesson learned.

**Q: Do you know any rhymes for “purple” or “orange?”**

Good question! There’s an old myth that says “silver,” “orange,” and “purple” have no rhymes, but unfortunately it’s not true. “Silver” rhymes with “chilver,” an old dialect word for a ewe lamb, and “purple” rhymes with “hurple,” meaning “to draw your arms and legs together” or “to crouch