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“Here he goes again,” I’m sure you’re thinking. Here’s yet *another* column or article written for accounting consumption about how to use social media. I’m sensing

you're kind of tired of these pieces, right?

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having a voice on Twitter, then that's fine, of course. But most accountants I talk with sort of value their personal time, so the ones that want that voice on Twitter without any expectations are going to find a way to have it regardless of whether they see any kind of bottom-line benefit.

This leads me to telling you that I recently attended the Ragan Social Media Conference in Las Vegas, held at the UNLV campus. While I felt very collegial because I mixed in among the Millennial generation on campus, I did come away with a sharper sense of social media ... and how tax and accounting professionals can better use social media tools to add to their bottom line. I wanted to concentrate on Twitter for this column because I think it's both misunderstood and misused; and it's probably the most fascinating of the Big 3: Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter.

Twitter has moved from a way to have a 140-character statement to actually having a conversation. About a year and a half ago, I wrote that Twitter was asynchronous, or one-way communications. Boy was I ever wrong! Twitter practically put the "S" in synchronous communications!

Did you know most people spend more time crafting a perfect Tweet than they do having one-on-one conversations? Okay, that's probably a stretch, but it's true that most Twitter users spend more time than they should just writing their Tweets, when they ought to, instead, be thinking about strategy.

Lady Gaga has 8.4 million Twitter followers, and Justin Bieber has 7.6 million followers. While we don't really know if they are writing their own Tweets or having someone ghost-write them (and we don't really care), why are these two, and countless other celebrities, writers, authors, politicians and influencers so popular?

They initiate conversations on Twitter, and they engage their followers. Remember what just I said above: Twitter is no longer about one-way communications; it's

about having a *conversation*. Why? To create “buzz” or awareness of what you have to

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with his followers over topics that are important to everyone.

Accountants can do the same. Instead of looking at Twitter as a 140-character declaration, you can use it to initiate a dialog, and make this dialog part of your business strategy. Here's an example: “Mr. Twitter,” an accountant in a medium-size practice, just wrote: “Knee-deep in tax season and working on returns.”

Hmm ... pretty short and to the point. And it was only 48 characters with spaces. Therefore, it *must* be good, right?

A Much Better Tweet: “First-time homebuyer's credit still available; find out if you qualify.”

Obviously, this is a really basic example and I'm not a tax guy, so bear with me. Why is option 2 better than option 1?

- Followers already know Mr. Twitter is in tax season. Unless the Aztecs created a brand new calendar, the January-April timeframe is and, most likely during my lifetime, will remain forever known as “tax season.” Therefore, this is a big “duh!”
- Option 2 shows Mr. Twitter's knowledge of one of the hot topics for the current tax season. He's prompting his followers to understand something factual, yet also initiating a conversation. Therefore, his strategy is to engage his followers by asking a leading question that would prompt a response or question back. If I were one of his followers, I might respond with something like, “@MrTwitter How do I know if I qualify?”
- Mr. Twitter wrote his Tweet with Search Engine Optimization (SEO) in mind. He doesn't really know the science behind SEO ... and really doesn't care. What he knows is that if he writes a Tweet with words that he thinks the public will be searching for, then it's more likely he'll be found. If the homebuyer's credit is a hot

topic, then chances are taxpayers will be searching for this on various Twitter

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on any of the aggregators above for results.

If you've not yet gotten started with Twitter, get an account and begin to follow others. You don't have to Tweet anything until you're ready, and there's nothing wrong with listening to what others are saying.

One last point: Follow me on @scyttron ... and The CPA Technology Advisor on @cpatechadvisor.

For more than 24 years, Scott H. Cytron, ABC, has worked with CPAs and accountants, providing public relations, marketing and communications services, and teaches firms how to use social media more effectively. Author of The CPA Technology Advisor's MarketingWorks column, he tweets, and is on Facebook and LinkedIn. Contact him at scottcytron@cpata.com.

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