

Forbes CommunityVoice™ Connecting expert communities to the Forbes audience. [What is this?](#)

SEP 26, 2017 @ 09:00 AM 150

The Little Black Book of Billionaire Secrets

Live By The Tweet, Die By The Tweet: What You Can Learn From Trump's Twitter Feed



Forbes Legal Council

Successful chief legal execs & law firm partners share legal insights [FULL BIO](#) ✓

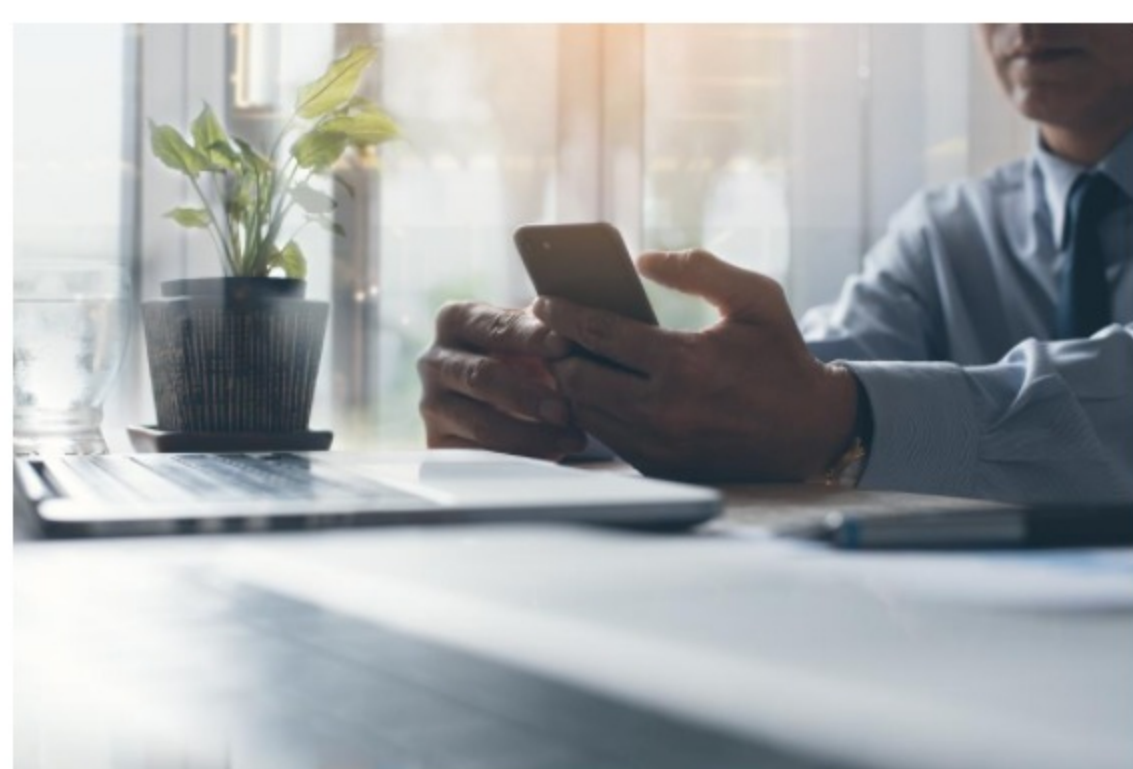
Opinions expressed by Forbes Contributors are their own.

POST WRITTEN BY

James Goodnow



Attorney James Goodnow, a Harvard Law graduate, is a shareholder at Fennemore Craig, P.C., and a member of the firm's management committee.



Shutterstock

Donald Trump could become the Icarus of the Twittersphere. His campaign soared on the wings of provocative tweets. Then he went too far: the [CNN smackdown](#), an insult about a journalist “bleeding badly from a face-lift,” attacks in the aftermath of Charlottesville – to name a few. So far he’s staying aloft. But his waxen wings are melting.

For business leaders looking to increase their social media presence, the president is both a shining example of success and a cautionary tale. He is simultaneously tempting them to become more vocal about political, social and environmental issues, and making them terrified of mis-tweeting.

Trump – and top business leaders – can teach us a lot about why socially conscious tweeting is necessary, and how to avoid crashing and burning.

Trump knows Twitter is a powerful connection tool.

Twitter allows Trump to speak directly to his base in a way that makes them feel connected to him and their shared causes. He could never achieve this through ads, press releases and prepackaged messages. The same holds true for business leaders. In today’s world, consumers – particularly millennials – want to know that the companies with which they do business are not soulless corporate machines. They associate a business with the personality of its top brass. They see execs as social thought leaders. They expect them to have opinions and be engaged citizens.

Not having a Twitter or social presence could mean losing consumers, weakening brand loyalty and fading into irrelevance. Why? If you are silent, you are sending one of three messages: (1) you don’t care, (2) you are with the other side, or (3) you don’t have a clue. All are bad. Stone-cold political amorality doesn’t work for businesses anymore. If you try that, you are signaling to the world that your business is stuck in a bygone era – hardly where people want to invest.

Tweeting about international events raises awareness, communicates your business values and demonstrates you are interconnected with a globalized world. Even if your followers disagree, if you make solid, thoughtfully worded points, many will respect your courage and reward you with business.

Twitter works for Trump – and others – only when they’re authentic.

Trump’s off-the-cuff tweets (no one can accuse “covfefe” of being canned) give him the reputation for being real. The stark contrast between his brash, misspelled missives and Hillary Clinton’s fastidious phraseology was a major factor in the election. And it’s a lesson for businesspeople. Letting your guard down on social media might seem risky. To an extent, that can be true. But tweeting careful corporate communiques that could offend no one is possibly more dangerous. Save yourself the time and simply buy a billboard saying you’re a timid follower – not a bold leader. It’s so boring no one will tune in.

Being authentic doesn’t mean being generically casual. It’s a unique voice that emerges from your personality. [Richard Branson’s Twitter persona](#) is “Tie-loathing adventurer, philanthropist & troublemaker.” Elon Musk exudes a tech-centric cool, warmed by enthusiasm and wit. Bill Gates’ Twitter feed is a modern Library of Alexandria, with an emphasis on saving the world.

There’s a catch to authenticity, though: You have to stay married to it in good times and in bad. You shouldn’t, as Trump has done, tweet “No WH chaos!” and “A great day at the White House!” just after your communications director and your chief of staff were fired, your press secretary resigned, your party failed to repeal Obamacare and you announced a controversial military policy without briefing staff.

Instead, when the fan is flinging you-know-what, take your cue from Richard Branson’s vulnerability. The Virgin Group founder [recently tweeted](#) an old photo of himself with his hand over his face next to the quote “Nobody gets everything right the first time – it’s how we learn from our mistakes that defines us,” and the question “When have you turned failure into success?” Or emulate [Elon Musk’s self-deprecating tweet](#): “Must remember that irony and social media are not friends. Keep forgetting. Dammit.”

Comment on this story

Page 1 / 2

Continue >

Print Website Feedback News Tip Report Corrections Reprints & Permissions

RELATED TOPICS

- 01. 6% INTEREST SAVINGS ACCOUNTS >
- 02. BEST MORTGAGE LENDERS >
- 03. WHERE TO INVEST YOUR MONEY >

From the Web



7 Time Lottery Winner Says "You're All Playing the Lottery Wrong!"
LOTTO DAILY



Ever Googled Yourself? Do a "Deep Search" Instead!
TRUTHFINDER



Alzheimer's May Only Be Temporary This is Leaving Doctors Speechless (This)
MEDICAL HEALTH ADVISOR



Diabetes Breakthrough Leaves Doctors Speechless (Try It Tonight)
LIFE ADVICE DAILY



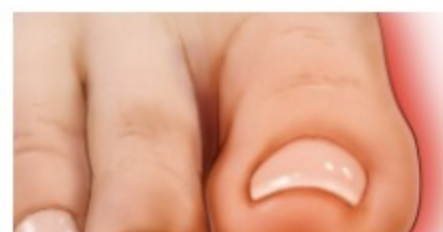
Could This Be the Least Risky Way to Profit from Marijuana Stocks?
WALL STREET NEWS



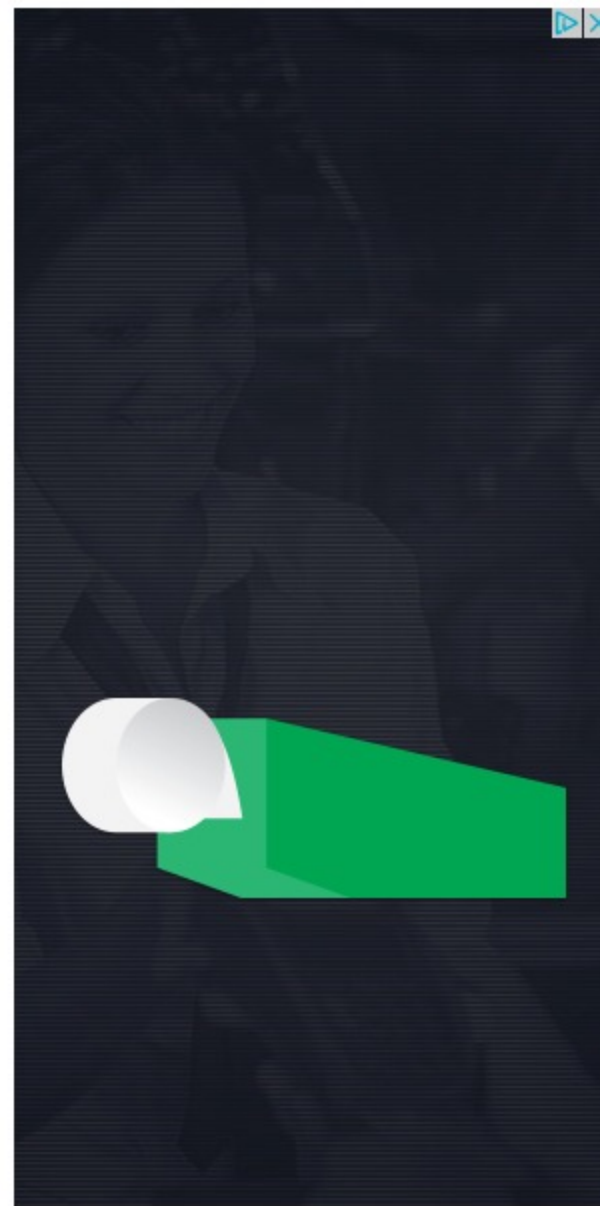
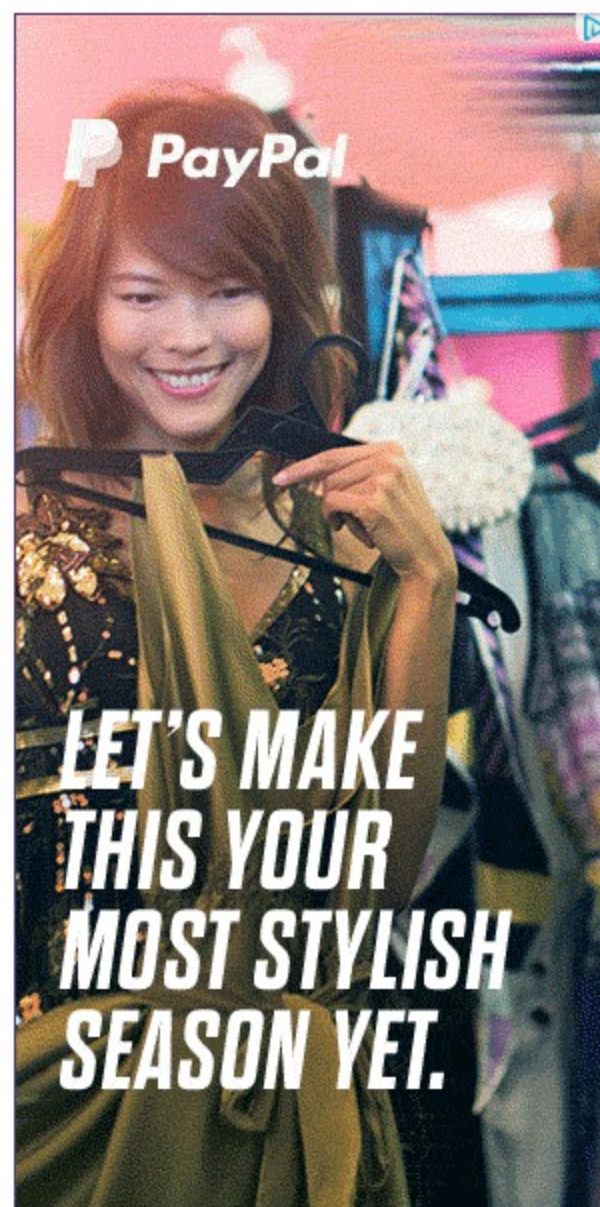
Justin Bieber Openly Offers His Support to All NFL Protesters
POWR



Harrison Ford Has Pretty Much Given Up on His Son. Here's Why
TECHOWIZ



1 Cup of This (Before Bed) Will "Destroy" Your Nail Fungus
NUTRAPURE USA



Ads by Revcontent