How to Run a Twitter Chat that Benefits your Business

Twitter for Business Step-By-Step Guides – Advanced

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How to Run a Twitter Chat that Benefits your Business

One phenomenon that has sprung up since the advent of Twitter is the Twitter Chat. Based around a hashtag, Twitter Chats are most often used to promote an event as a one-time Chat; or to enjoy a group discussion around a niche topic or interest on a regular, recurring basis – for example, a weekly meeting of the South Dakota Bird Watching Society.

Here's how it works: A hashtag is created for the Twitter Chat. If it is for a particular event, the hashtag would be used extensively to promote it: If for a recurring event, the hashtag might be used every cycle. The recurring chat might be held weekly, monthly or at any other interval your group decides on; for example, every second Tuesday morning at 10 a.m. (There are also streaming, continuous Twitter Chats, but these are rare.)

If yours is a closed group and your Twitter Chat is open only to members, the hashtag would be circulated internally, from within a forum or in a monthly newsletter, perhaps.

On the other hand, if your hashtag is being used to promote a specific, one-time event (or a course, book launch, product launch or workshop series) you want to get it out there and spread it as far and wide as possible.

That's where Twitter Chats come into their own…

Why Hold a Twitter Chat?

Twitter Party, Tweet Chat, Twitter Chat…it doesn't matter what you call it, each of these terms means people getting together online at a specific time or on a specific day or week; and talking about your hashtag topic – in real-time.

It's the "real time" element that gives Twitter Chats their sparkle, bonding people together as a unique, exclusive group.

A great Twitter Chat leaves people feeling connected to each other, much as if you were to meet someone in person at a weekend conference in Toronto, Canada. The feeling is: "Oh, I know her. We were at that conference together – we sat together at dinner every night." Or if you went to boarding school together.

Your Twitter Chat also has the potential to generate a **trending hashtag** on Twitter.

Once you've participated in a great Twitter Chat, you're now forever part of the same "club". You start following the people you met at the Twitter Chat; and whenever you see a new tweet from that person, you read it and pay attention… because you *know* that person.

Real-time interaction on a common topic not only creates bonding, it can also generate two emotions vital to group event success:
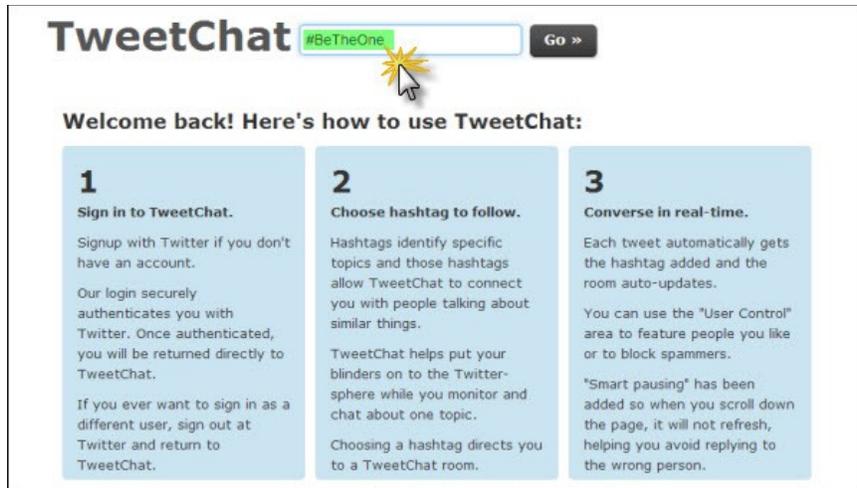
- Anticipation

- Excitement

It also firmly cements both the event and its date firmly in the forefront of people's minds, as well as **generating new followers** for your Twitter account.
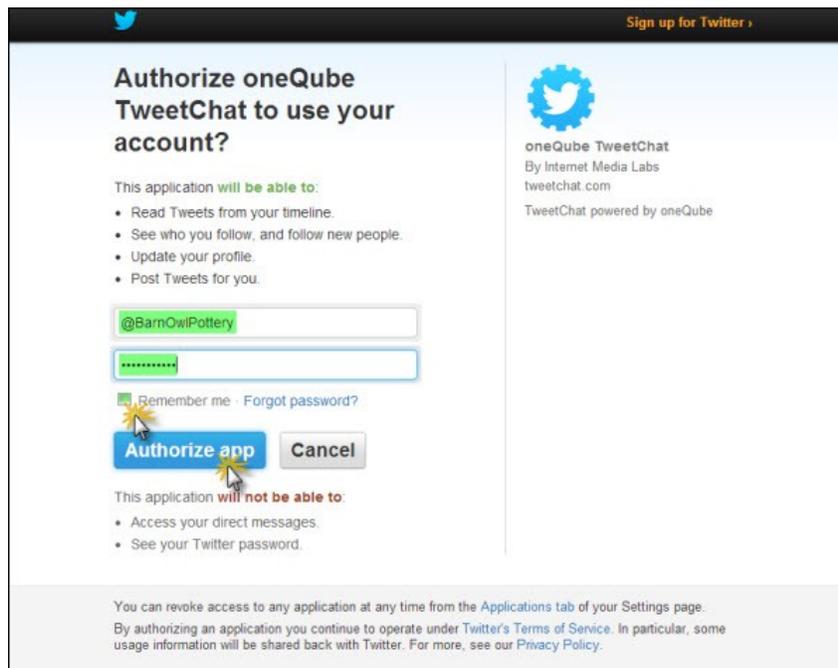
Step 1. Say Hello to TweetChat

Before we go any further: You don't need to think solely in terms of creating and running a Twitter Chat, however – you can also **join Twitter Chats** strictly as a networking tactic to gain visibility and strengthen your personal branding by finding and participating in multiple Twitter Chats around a single topic.

TweetChat provides a calendar of ongoing or upcoming, official Tweet Chats. You can select a topic and follow it, participating at the appointed time.

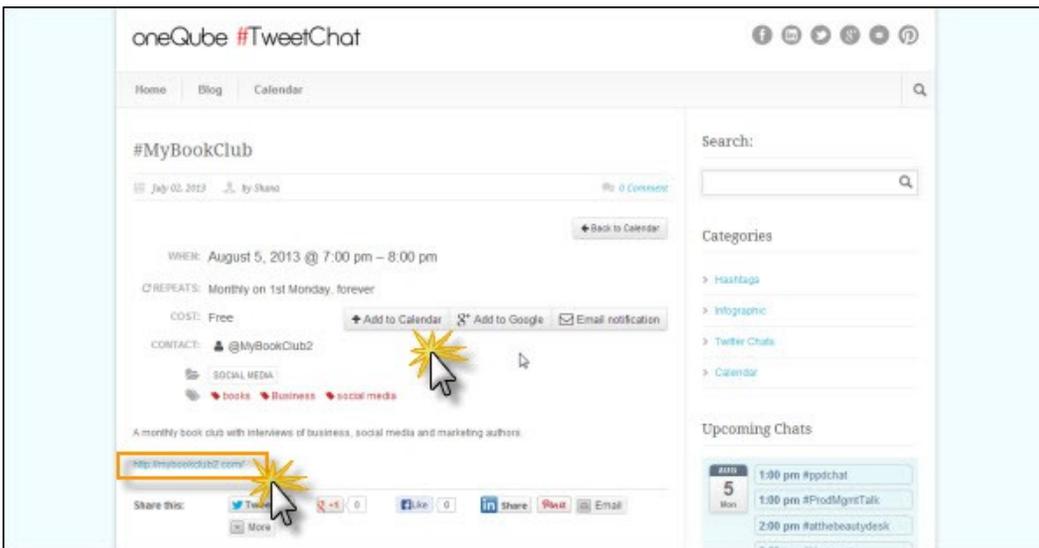You may or may not be asked to authorize the TweetChat app when you enter a hashtag and press "Go".

To join TweetChat:

1. Go to the TweetChat [calendar](#)

2. Select a topic and note the hashtag.

3. Click on it

4. Schedule and set notification to your preferences, and start tweeting and searching the hashtag.

   (Note: You can also check out the online "room" it will take place in, if it's a specific-time event.) This would be the website URL (where you can find out more about the event – before or after joining), webinar link or chat room.

You can also find Twitter Chats at:

- Twitterchat411
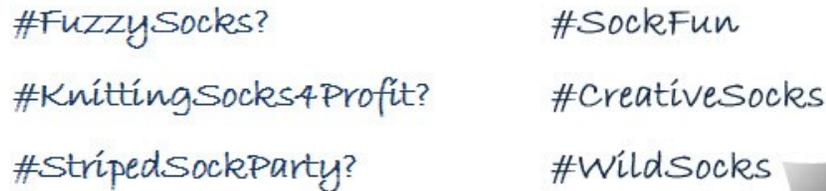
- Tweetreports.com

- Hashtags.org

And if you search, you'll also find that various interest groups, or government groups like the National Institute of Health, will often provide a schedule of Twitter Chats for the year, month or season.

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Step 2. Deciding on Your Own Twitter Chat

Before you can plan a successful Twitter Chat for yourself, you need to decide on:

- The **topic**

- The **date**, **time** and **time zone**

- The Twitter Chat **frequency** (will this be recurring or will it be a one-time event?)

- The Twitter Chat's unique **hashtag**

- The **location**

Selecting the actual hashtag is the most vital part of this process. You don't want to choose a hashtag that anyone else is using – particularly if it is already associated with something negative.

Make sure you **search Twitter** for your proposed hashtag, to ensure it is unique.

Also search Hashtags.org to see if your hashtag already exists.

Your Role as Moderator:

But as the Twitter Chat host or moderator, you will have other responsibilities and tasks to perform:

- Deciding on and creating an agenda

- Deciding on the event format

- Booking an online chat room or webinar room, if you need to

- Promoting your event/Twitter Chat

- Asking others to promote your Twitter Chat

Twitter Chats can be highly flexible in format, so choose the type that best suits your target audience and your business branding.

Typical Twitter Chat event formats include:

- Open discussion Q & A

- Discussion with Q & A afterwards

- Webinar or teleseminar

- Weekly or monthly group meeting, with the moderator introducing the topic and others providing input

- Continuously streaming Chat (e.g. creating hashtags like "#AskMeAbout" and letting your target audience know you'll be available to answer questions; or using that hashtag to find topic material for your next fixed Twitter Chat)

The only hard and fixed rule is: "**Decide on the format your target audience would find most** comfortable.

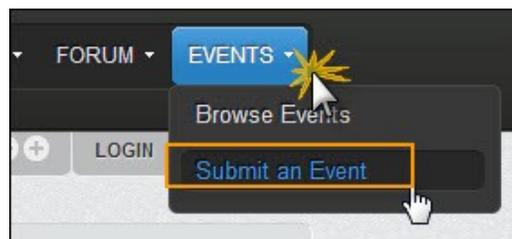And also decide whether you want your Twitter chat to be:

- A continuous Live Twitter stream

- A one-time event, with pre- and post- promotion and follow up

- A regular recurring event

That brings us to Rule # 2: Choose the Chat type that will best increase your business branding and keep you in touch with your target audience.
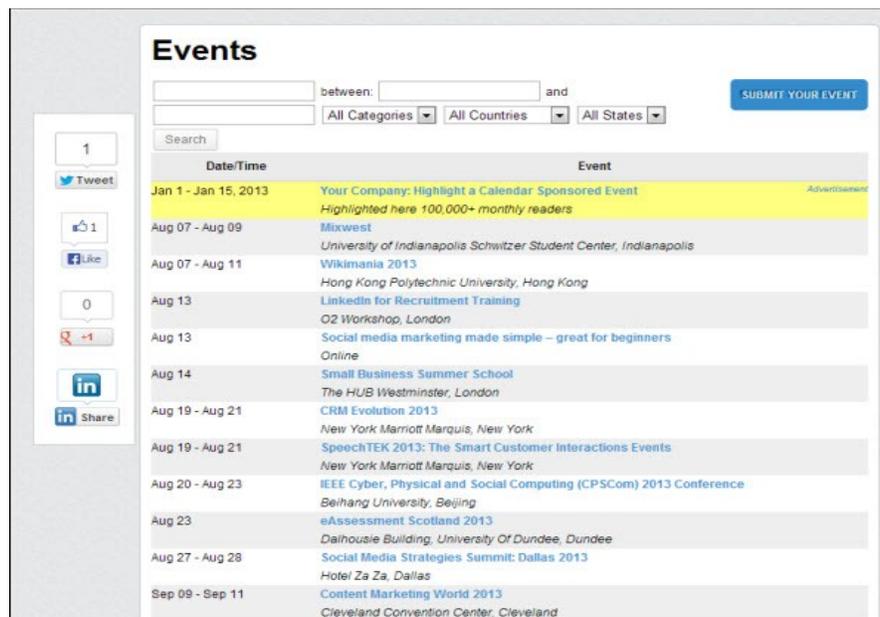
Step 3. Promoting Your Twitter Chat

After you have decided on your event type and hashtag, it's time to start promoting it.

1. Submit your event to Hashtags.org for their Events Directory

It will then appear in Hashtag.org's Event Calendar. (Note you can also instantly share your event from this location across several social networking platforms, once your event populates in the calendar.)

2. **Tell your Followers** about your event in your Twitter feed.

3. **Ask them to share your Hashtag** – either publicly, if all are welcome; or within a certain group, if it is a closed Twitter chat.

4. **Blog about it**. Talk about what people will learn or gain; create a contest around it; show why it's going to be priceless and unique.

5. **Create a buzz**. Share it across all your social platforms – not randomly: Create a Sharing Campaign!

What your Twitter Chat will do is indelibly stamp you as an authority figure in your niche… *if* your event is well-run and delivers on its promises.

And you can use Twitter Chats to promote paid as well as free events too.

The important thing is to get the conversation going. Don't spam – but don't be shy about asking others to use your hashtag.

Do your best to ensure it's a fun hashtag to use!

What Makes a Great Event Hashtag:

Creating successful hashtags can be absurdly simple so don't re-invent the wheel.

Good	Bad
Obvious keywords that everyone instantly thinks of for a product, business or event (e.g. **#HollandParkFestival, #RoyalBaby**)	Acronyms (e.g. **#FVwmsa**)
	Overly long hashtags (e.g. **#iwantedtowaitintheparkbutitgottoo)**
Keywords that only make sense to an elite group – providing your event IS for that elite group. Your hashtag should make them want to "prove" they know what it means. (e.g. **#BrassicaWorld**)	Obscure hashtags that only make sense to an elite group (e.g. **#BrassicaWorld**) when you're promoting an event to the general public
Fun keywords (e.g. **#WhenPushComesTo Shove**)	Boring hashtags (e.g. **#carboattraingoing**)
Hashtags that make people want to finish a line (e.g. **#YesterdayWe**)	Hashtags whose actual spelling causes visual confusion to the point of "hiding" the actual meaning (e.g. **#carrusttutorial**)
Short keywords (e.g. **#InkFest**)	
Keywords that invite engagement (e.g. **#AskObama**)	Hashtags in all lower case letters (particular if the hashtag is long: e.g. **#iwantedtowaitintheparkbutitgottoo**)
Keywords that act as reminders to recurring group events (e.g.	

#MondaysWithAbi)	

Going for the obvious keyword is often the best strategy, as the Twitter Development team succinctly states here:

Be #Obvious

Sometimes, **the best hashtag is the most obvious one**. Take the American version of *X-Factor* as an example. The producers wanted to differentiate their show from the original British version. They settled on #XFUSA—it was short and unique, different from the British version—perfect, right? A funny thing happened though. Fans were using the non-promoted #xfactor **five times more than #xfusa**. (See chart below)

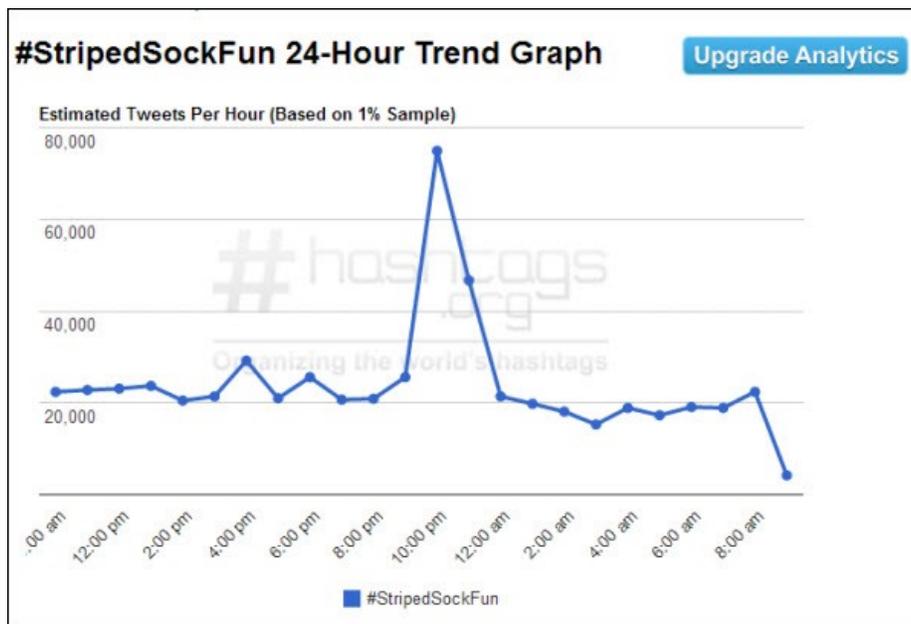The trouble is, obvious keywords (e.g. #love) are often already "taken".

That's when you have to get creative.

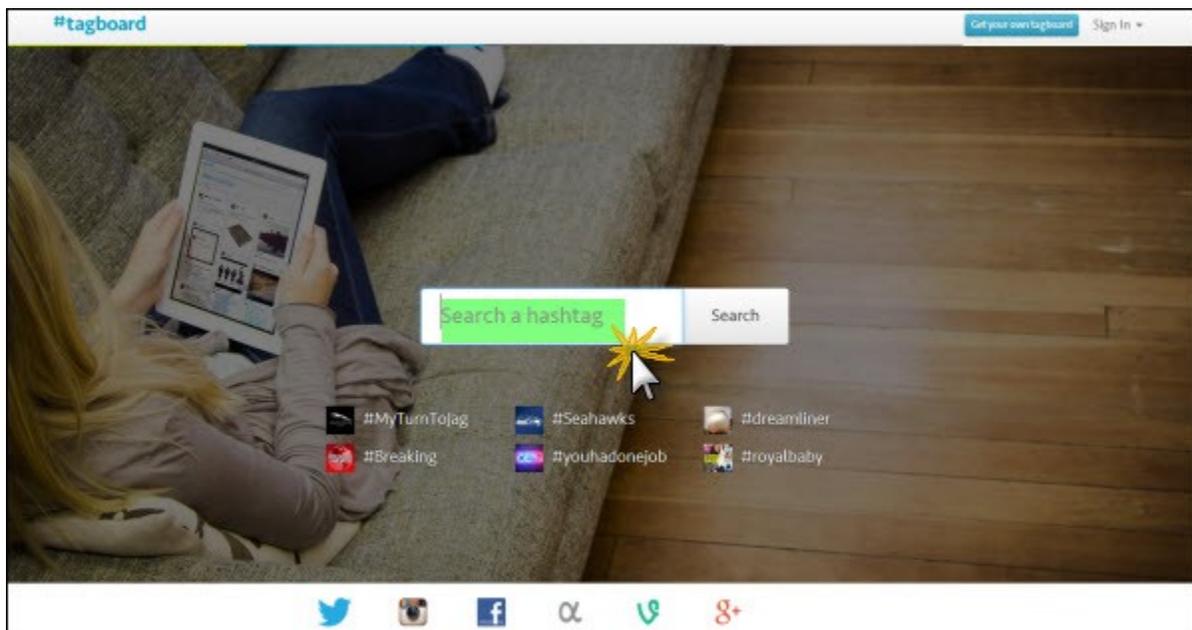## Step 4. Tracking Your Twitter Chat Hashtag

Once your own unique, custom hashtag has been created, you can search it in Hashtags.org also; this will show you:

- How it's behaving – or trending

- Who has tweeted it

- Your hashtag's most "Prolific Users"

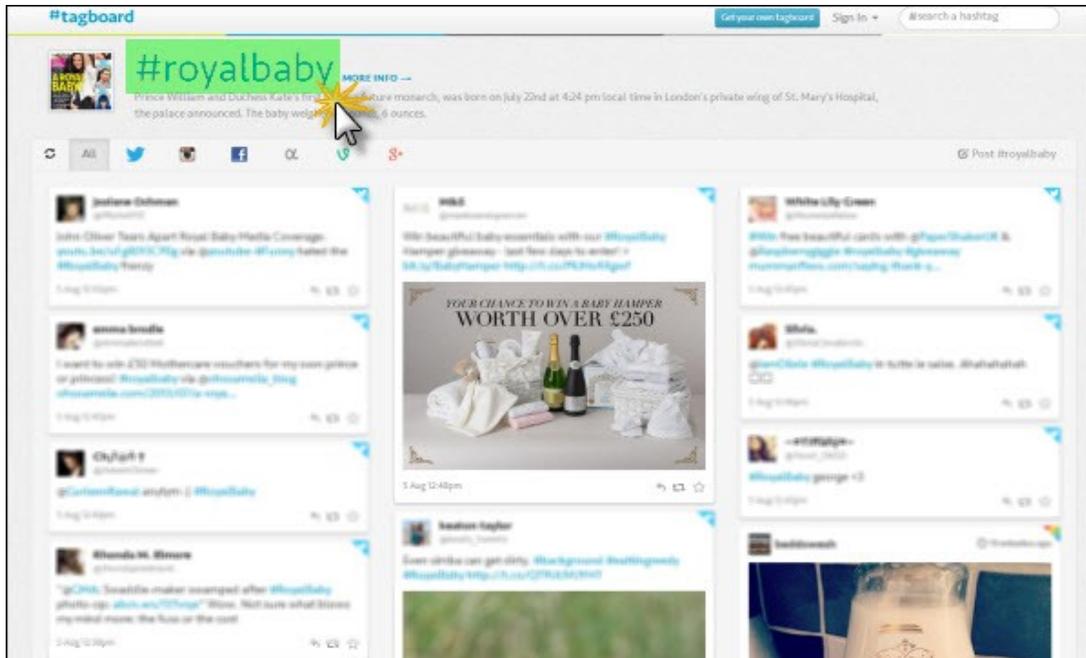- Estimated tweets per hour

- Related hashtags

In particular, checking its usage over a 24-hour period can tell you which times are best to promote it. Seeing actual usage also tells you not just the times, but when your target audience is online.
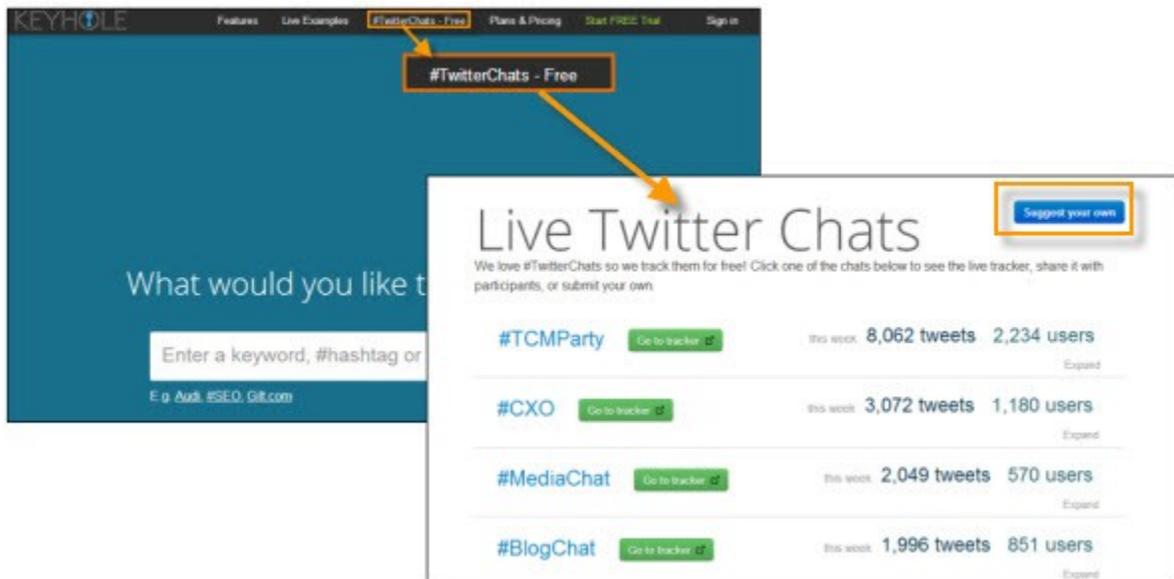

You can also use other apps and tracking sites, such as Tagboard.

On the down side, Tagboard has no analytics, but it is a fast, simple interface that instantly shows you a Pinterest-type display of search results, if you type in your hashtag.

[Keyhole](#) is definitely another tracking choice you should explore further: For one thing, it provides a special tab for promoting and finding Twitter Chats!

Tracking is important – but it's only helpful if you learn from it and apply what you learned to your next Twitter Chat.

Conclusion:

The really important take-aways to note are:

1. Choose your hashtag and event to suit your audience

2. Check to make sure it is not related to an offensive hashtag or already being used

3. Actively promote your hashtag and event (and ask others to do so too)

4. Don't spam (no multiple tweets from one person, five times an hour)

5. Track your hashtag and learn from its peaks, lows and performance

But there's **one more** important step to take…

- **Create your next Twitter Chat**!