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How to Win at Content Marketing

Note: This workshop will be recorded. By joining this workshop, your personal information - such as name - may be visible to other participants.

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How to Win at Content Marketing

Powerful tips for content creation, distribution, and amplification to help boost your content's ROI

Rand Fishkin (Cofounder & CEO)

SparkToro

How to Design Better-Performing Content

SparkToro

Tip #1: Tie Content Goals to Business Goals

Business Goals		Content Goals
Increase buyer conversion rate	Not a match.	Earn lots of traffic to our blog
Get more people in our core audience aware of our brand	Almost there.	Get lots of views, likes, & shares on social platforms
Get more people in our core audience aware of our brand	That's the ticket!	Earn high social engagement from people who match our ideal customer profiles

Influence Map

A visual framework of how audiences interact with the problem your business solves, and what influences their behavior

Problem Discovery → **Brand Awareness** → **Further Education** → **Solution Seeking**

The journey from problem discovery to conversion varies, but the steps above are typically found in B2B and B2C purchases

Problem Discovery	Brand Awareness	Further Education	Solution Seeking
Where, when, & how your potential customers learn that they might have a need for what you do.	Where, when, & how your potential customers are first exposed to products/services in the space.	What potential customers pay attention to as they deepen their knowledge of your sector.	Where and how your potential customers make their purchase decision.

At each step of the journey, the opportunities to impact behavior change.

Problem Discovery	Brand Awareness	Further Education	Solution Seeking
Friends	Google	Newsletters	Trusted Publisher
Family	Twitter	Reddit	Reviews
News Articles	Website	Discord	Webinars
Email	Billboard	Google News	
Podcast	Radio		
	YouTube		

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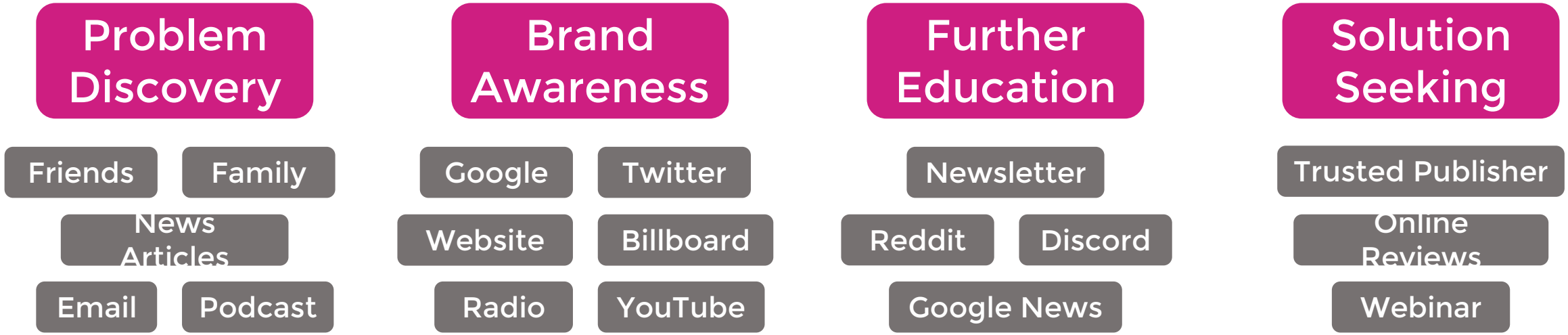
Tip #2: Target the Right Audience in the Right Places



If what you really need to succeed are these ones

Don’t create content for these channels

Personal Finance Influence Map

Phase:	Problem Discovery	Brand Awareness	Further Education	Solution Seeking
Thought Process example:	"I probably shouldn't keep all my money in a checking account. I need to learn about investing."	"A lot of the articles and videos I'm finding seem to recommend Fidelity and Vanguard."	"I need to take this seriously. I'm subscribing to NerdWallet, some Twitter accounts, and Personal-Finance Subreddit"	"USNews' rankings convinced me. I'm gonna buy the Russell 3000. Just need to find the right online trading account."
Sources of Influence:	Friends, Family, News Articles, Email from Bank	Search, Twitter, Fool.com, Bankrate, Forbes, Google News	NerdWallet, Reddit, Twitter, Google News	Fidelity, Vanguard, Ameritrade, Schwab

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Ad Agency Selection Influence Map

Phase:	Problem Discovery	Brand Awareness	Further Education	Solution Seeking
Thought Process example:	"We need professionals to craft and place our brand advertising campaigns"	"We received a few recommendations for agencies and are putting together a formal RFP."	"Before we take the plunge, we need to learn more about what makes for a great agency / brand relationship."	"The pitches, approaches, & portfolios from Shepherd and Animalz were really strong."
Sources of Influence:	CEO CMO New Brand Director Industry Conference	LinkedIn Twitter Award Show Winners Google Search	AdAge AdWeek Twitter Digiday Podcast	In-Person Pitch Webinars Blogs Work Portfolio

Tip #3: Position for the Kind of Amplification You Need

We need _____ to amplify this content or it won't succeed.

- Instagram influencers?
- Mainstream media outlets
- Newsletters in our field
- YouTubers in this space
- Industry news publishers
- Bloggers who write about X
- Conference organizers

Don't create for these folks

If what you really need to succeed are these folks

Tip #4: Write a Killer Headline

Why write the headline first?

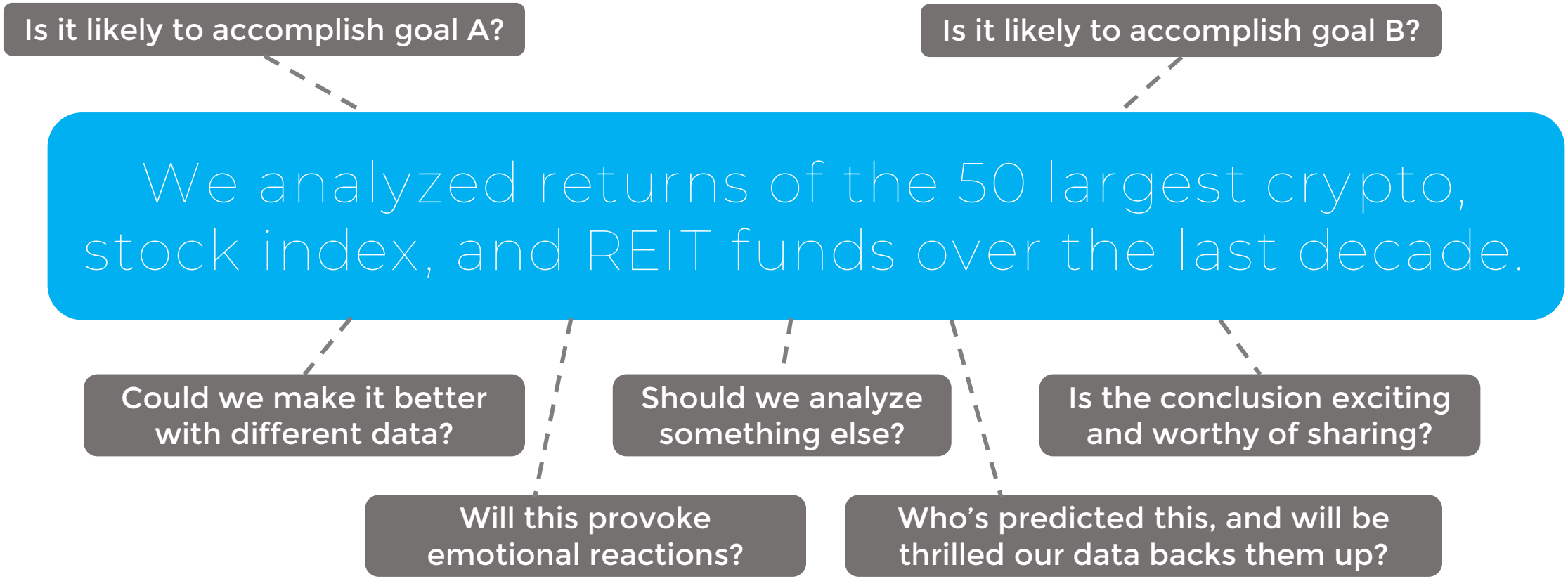
To analyze whether the content will accomplish your goals before investing more work.

The Perfect Content to Meet Your Goals

For example:

Goal A: **earn high social engagement from folks who are just researching how to invest their money.**

Goal B: **earn links from sources of influence in the financial world that can help us earn brand attention (and Google rankings).**



Thankfully, NPR has a great checklist for headline writing:

- ☑ **Headlines should be** specific
- ☑ **Headlines should be** easy to understand
- ☑ **Headlines should** inspire a reaction
- ☑ **Headlines** should not be overly clever
- ☑ **Headlines should** capture the spirit of the story

How to Create Better-Performing Content

SparkToro

Tip #1: Answer the Question – Who Will Amplify This and Why?

Start with the "Why." That will lead you to the "Who."

- Novelty
- Belief Reinforcement
- Surprise
- Ego
- Existing Relationship
- Fear
- Controversy
- Familiarity (or Fame)
- Reciprocation (or Reward)

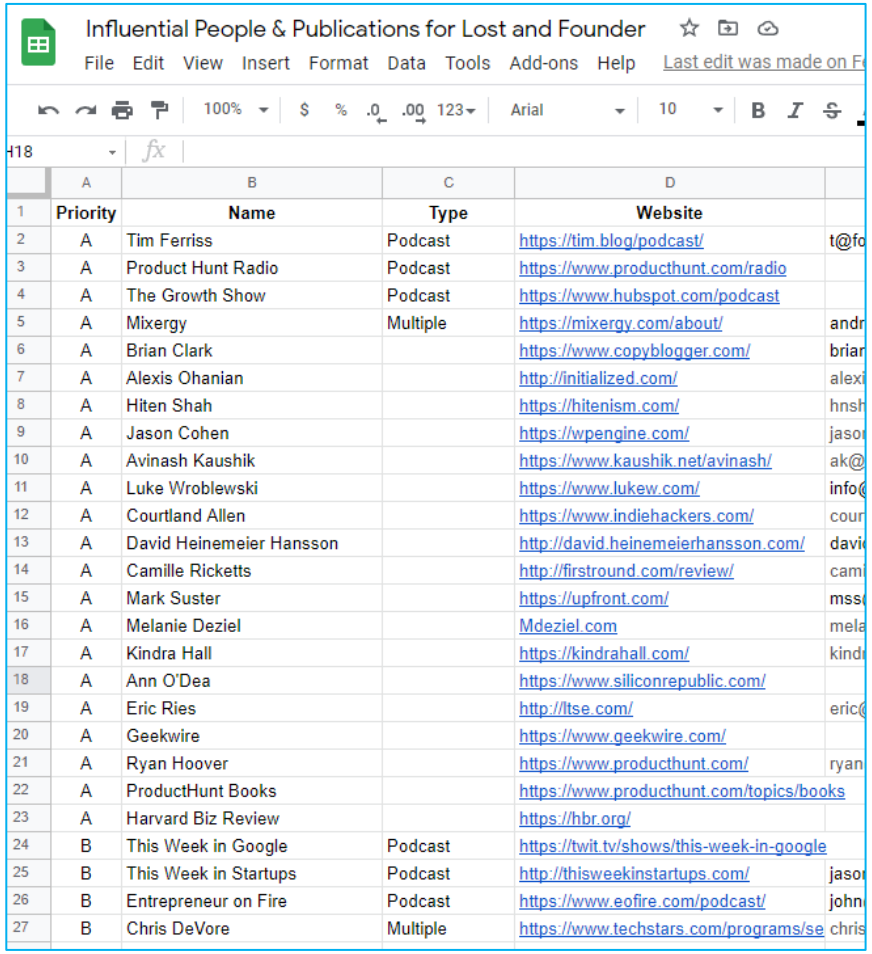
Don't assume triggers are universally effective. What works on Photography Instagram won't necessarily drive sharing on Econ Twitter.

When You Ask: "Who Will Help Amplify?"

Bad Answers

- Some of my marketing friends
- People who like XYZ
- Folks with "ABC" in their job title
- My social media followers

Good Answer



Influential People & Publications for Lost and Founder

File Edit View Insert Format Data Tools Add-ons Help Last edit was made on F

	A	B	C	D	
1	Priority	Name	Type	Website	
2	A	Tim Ferriss	Podcast	https://tim.blog/podcast/	t@fo
3	A	Product Hunt Radio	Podcast	https://www.producthunt.com/radio	
4	A	The Growth Show	Podcast	https://www.hubspot.com/podcast	
5	A	Mixergy	Multiple	https://mixergy.com/about/	andr
6	A	Brian Clark		https://www.copyblogger.com/	brian
7	A	Alexis Ohanian		http://initialized.com/	alexi
8	A	Hiten Shah		https://hitenism.com/	hnsh
9	A	Jason Cohen		https://wpengine.com/	jaso
10	A	Avinash Kaushik		https://www.kaushik.net/avinash/	ak@
11	A	Luke Wroblewski		https://www.lukew.com/	info@
12	A	Courtland Allen		https://www.indiehackers.com/	cour
13	A	David Heinemeier Hansson		http://david.heinemeierhansson.com/	davi
14	A	Camille Ricketts		http://firstround.com/review/	cami
15	A	Mark Suster		https://upfront.com/	mss
16	A	Melanie Deziel		Mdeziel.com	mela
17	A	Kindra Hall		https://kindrahall.com/	kindr
18	A	Ann O'Dea		https://www.siliconrepublic.com/	
19	A	Eric Ries		http://ltse.com/	eric@
20	A	Geekwire		https://www.geekwire.com/	
21	A	Ryan Hoover		https://www.producthunt.com/	ryan
22	A	ProductHunt Books		https://www.producthunt.com/topics/books	
23	A	Harvard Biz Review		https://hbr.org/	
24	B	This Week in Google	Podcast	https://twit.tv/shows/this-week-in-google	
25	B	This Week in Startups	Podcast	http://thisweekinstartups.com/	jaso
26	B	Entrepreneur on Fire	Podcast	https://www.eofire.com/podcast/	john
27	B	Chris DeVore	Multiple	https://www.techstars.com/programs/se	chris

Tip #2: Outline the Hook, Line, & Sinker

Hook:

Line:

Sinker:

What if Performance Advertising is Just an Analytics Scam?

By Rand Fishkin October 12, 2021

In 2020, AirBnB cut $542 million of performance advertising spend and saw no measurable falloff in attributable sales. They continued this ad-slashing practice in 2021, with similarly eye-popping numbers. Could it be that all those ads did nothing?

It reminds me of a famous marketing parable:

> One day, Lorena, owner of Lorena's Pizzeria, hired three capable go-getters to paper the neighborhood

Herein lies the scam. I'm not saying "*no one buys because of a retargeting/display/branded search ad.*" I'm saying, "***somewhere between 60-99%* of the people exposed to those ads would have purchased anyway.***"

The ad platforms know this. Many of the ad buyers even know this. But because the platforms have no incentive to make incrementality (i.e. the additional lift in sales that a given ad campaign creates) clear, ad buyers look at their analytics and think, "*I should spend more on performance marketing!*"

My advice: if you have the power to invest any percent of your digital ad spend in other, more serendipitous, hard-to-measure channels, take it. If you have the ability to give your marketing team buy-in for that spend, approve it. If you have the patience and discipline to focus on profitability over unprofitable growth, grab it. You'll be amazed at just how much growth you can invest in once you find channels that don't cost $0.99 for every $1.00 you make.

Grabs attention; makes a promise of content to come; entices the visitor to further engage

Delivers on the content's earlier promise; earns an emotional reaction

Makes the content stay with the reader after they leave; inspires shares, comments, engagement

Hook:

Early Data on Omicron: There's Good News and Bad News

Grabs attention; makes a promise of content to come; entices the visitor to further engage

Line:

The first glimmers of data on the Omicron variant of the coronavirus are starting to come in, and the verdict is decidedly mixed. Early experiments have found that antibodies from vaccinated people are clearly less able to neutralize Omicron in the lab, if not rendered completely useless. But antibodies generated through natural infection and vaccination combined, or with a booster shot, seem to be more robust. There remain many questions, including how these results will translate over to the real-world immunity created by the vaccines or past infection.

Delivers on the content's earlier promise; earns an emotional reaction

Sinker:

Perhaps most importantly, we don't have a firm grasp on what this will all mean in the real world. The original vaccines may still largely prevent the risk of severe illness and death from Omicron, particularly since we still have other aspects of coronavirus-specific immunity, like our T cells and memory cells. Or it's possible that Omicron is inherently milder than past strains. So far, the case data from countries like South Africa, where many people have been previously infected and some vaccinated, isn't clear one way or the other.

Makes the content stay with the reader after they leave; inspires shares, comments, engagement

Hook:

8

Bros., Lecce: We Eat at The Worst Michelin Starred Restaurant, Ever

Posted on
DEC 8, 2021

Grabs attention; makes a promise of content to come; entices the visitor to further engage

Line:

This was a main course. It's about a tablespoon of food.

I've tried to come up with hypotheses for what happened. Maybe the staff just ran out of food that night. Maybe they confused our table with that of their ex-lover's. Maybe they were drunk. But we got twelve kinds of foam, something that I can only describe as "an oyster loaf that tasted like Newark airport", and a teaspoon of savory ice cream that was olive flavored.

Delivers on the content's earlier promise; earns an emotional reaction

Sinker:

Another course – a citrus foam – was served in a plaster cast of the chef's mouth. Absent utensils, we were told to lick it out of the chef's mouth in a scene that I'm pretty sure was stolen from an eastern European horror film.

Makes the content stay with the reader after they leave; inspires shares, comments, engagement

Hook:

Grabs attention; makes a promise of content to come; entices the form entry

Line:

According to the "Diversity Wins" Report by McKinsey, organizations in the top quartile for gender diversity on executive teams were 25% more likely to have above-average profitability than companies in the fourth quartile. For ethnic and cultural diversity, top-quartile companies were 36% more profitable.

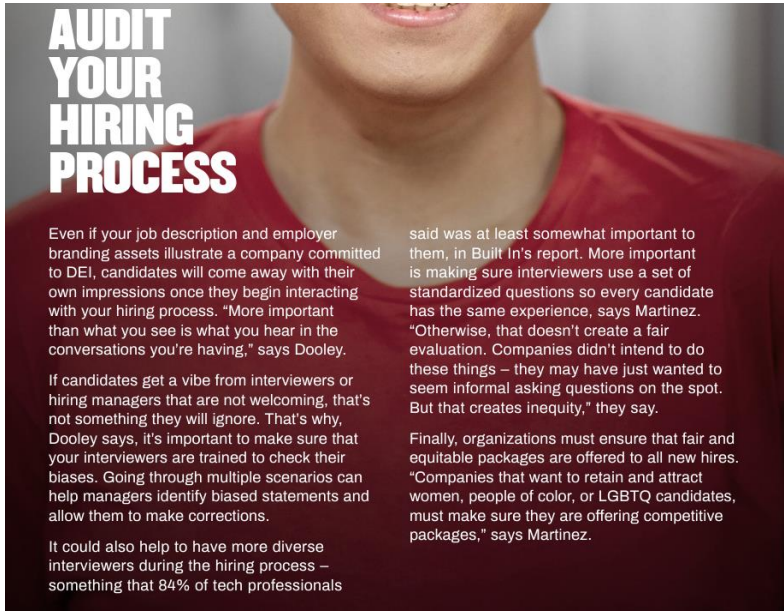
The World Economic Forum's report "Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion 4.0"

And consider these findings from Josh Bersin's Elevating Equity: The Real Story Of Diversity And Inclusion: When DEI is embedded in every HR program, companies are 8.2X more likely to satisfy and retain customers. Plus, it found that high performing organizations are 10X more likely to make the DEI strategy an integral part of the business strategy.

As Lindsay-Rae McIntyre, chief diversity officer at Microsoft, shared in Forrester's ebook,

Delivers on the content's earlier promise; earns an emotional reaction

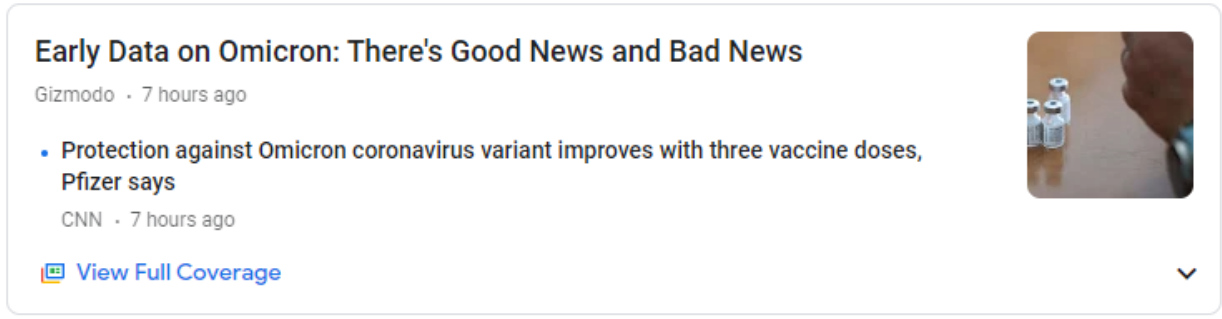
Sinker:



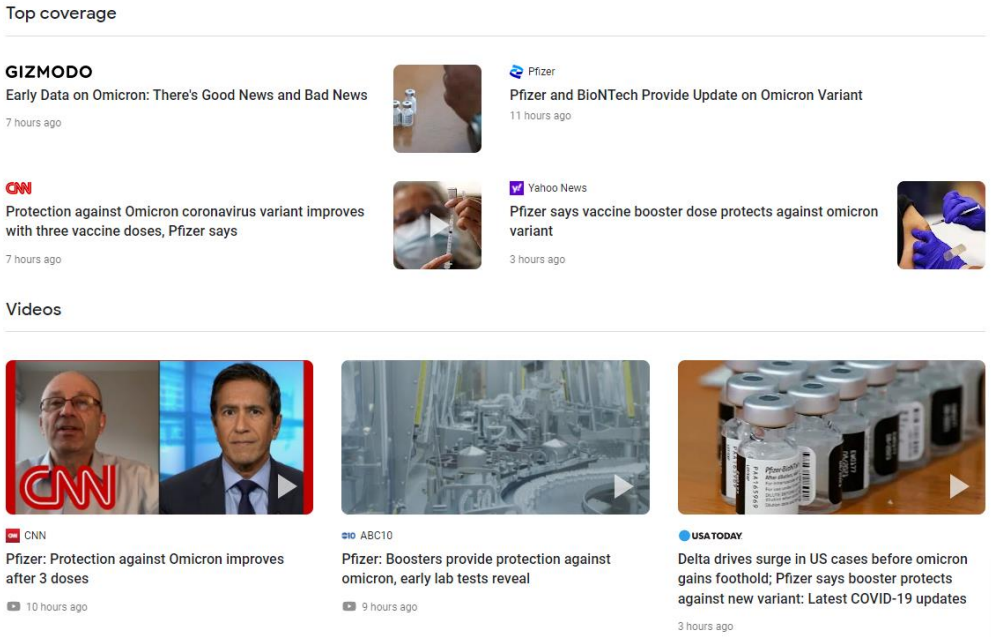
Gives the reader actions to take, and a clear follow-up.

This Technique Might Work For You:

In Google News, look for links that include "View Full Coverage"

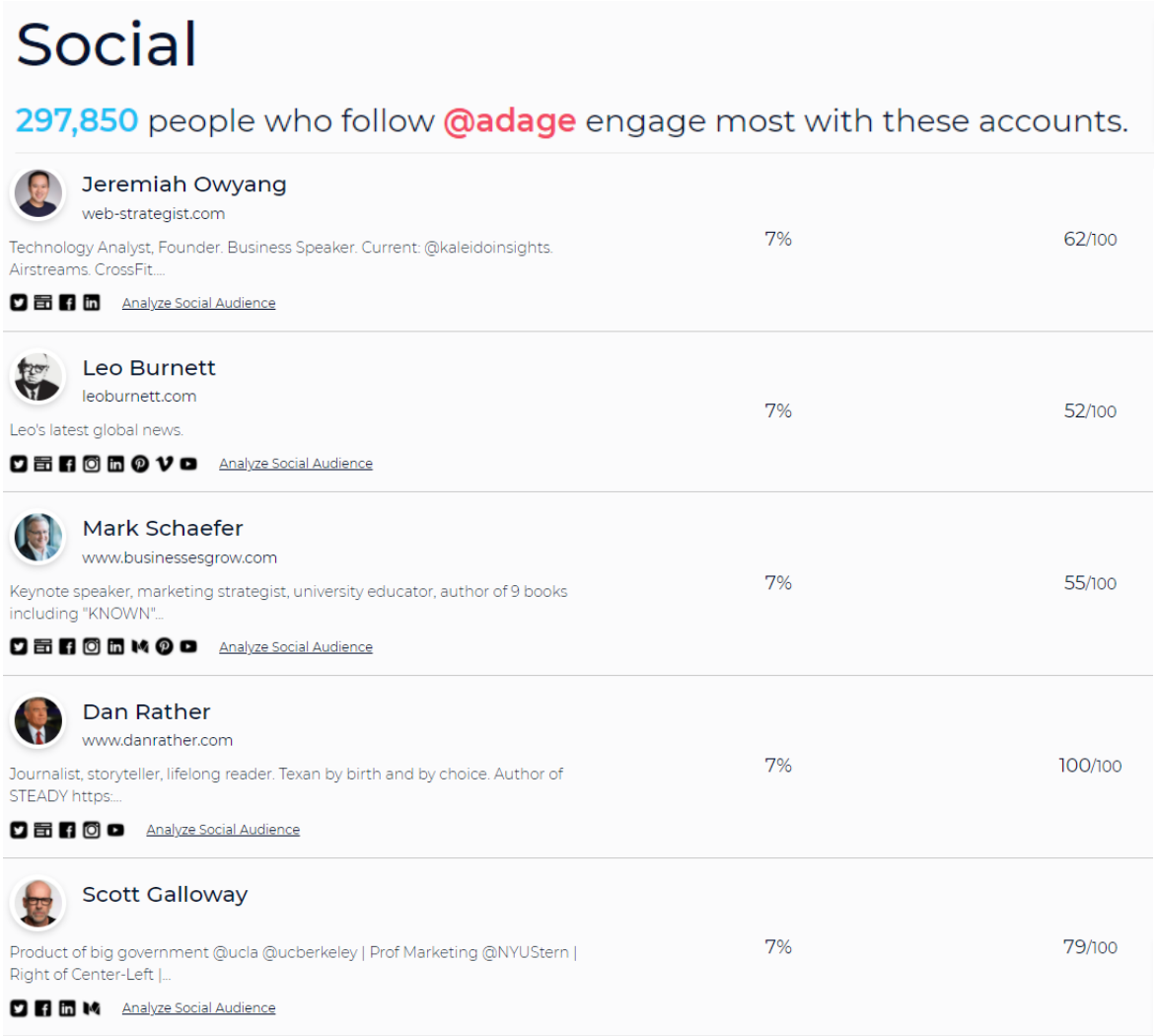


Google News usually makes the story that gets the highest clicks + engagement (i.e. "long clicks") the top story. Now you can study how these pieces do Hook, Line, & Sinker.

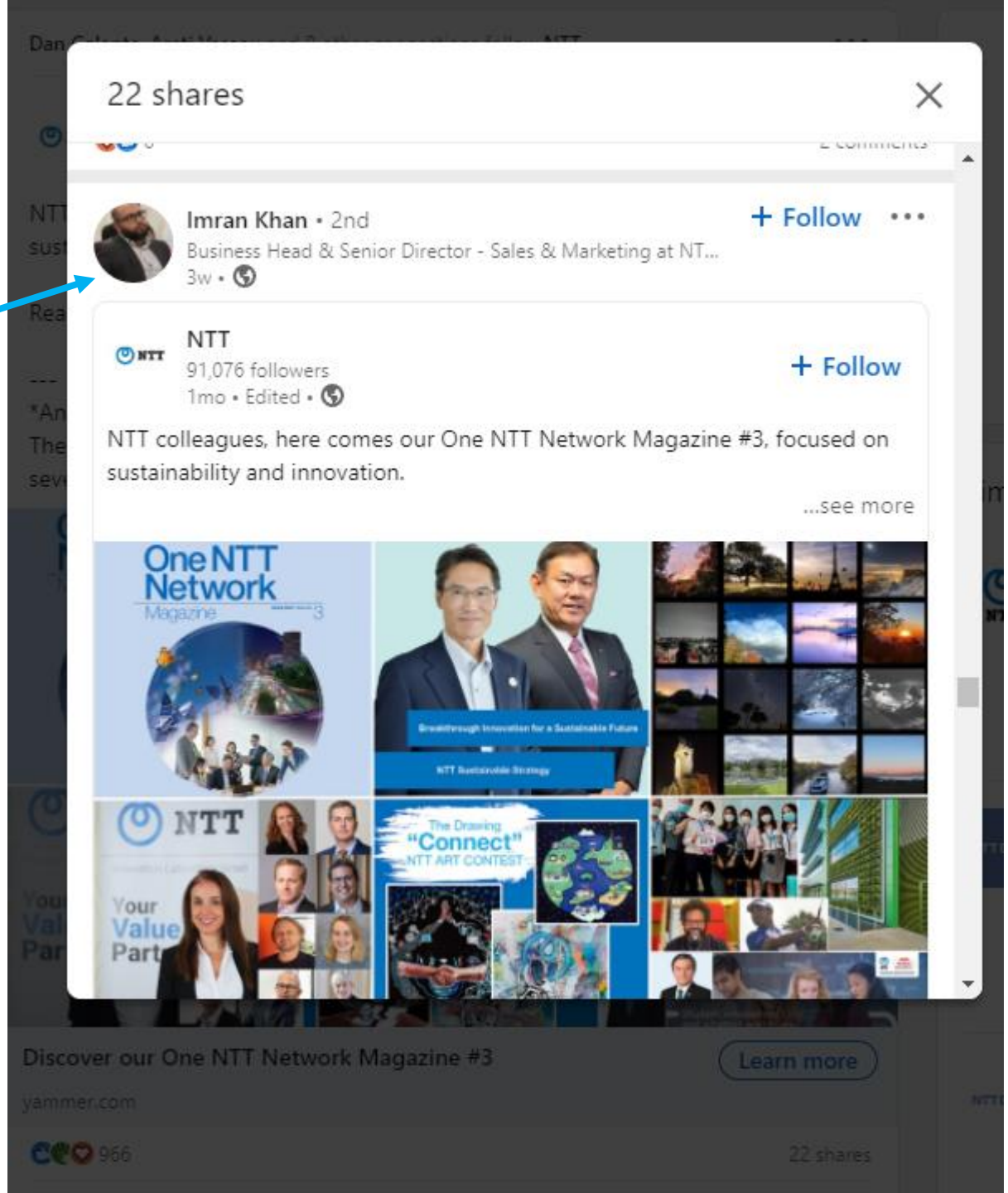


Tip #3: Involve People Who'll Help You Achieve Your Goal(s)

e.g. If your goal is placement in Ad Age, get pre-publication input from people who influence their readers



NTT Group's got a built-in advantage in reaching their audience through their own team on LinkedIn (who are well-followed by exactly the folks they want to reach)



Tip #4: Make the Content Deliver on Your Killer Headline

SparkToro & Followerwonk Joint Twitter Analysis: 19.42% of Active Accounts Are Fake or Spam

Now this article better prove it methodology!

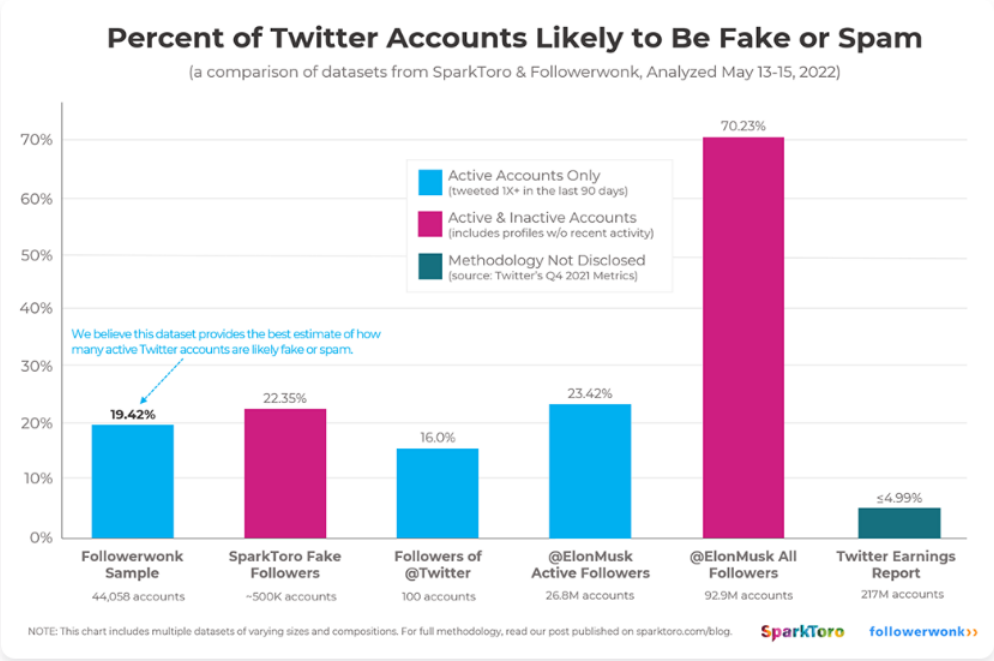
To achieve virality, a visual, preferably a chart or graph, is needed

Clear definitions for all of these terms “active,” “fake,” “spam,” need to be provided.

SparkToro & Followerwonk Joint Twitter Analysis: 19.42% of Active Accounts Are Fake or Spam

By Rand Fishkin May 15, 2022

TL;DR – From May 13-15, 2022, SparkToro and Followerwonk conducted a rigorous, joint analysis of five datasets including a variety of active (i.e. tweeting) and non-active accounts. The analysis we believe to be most compelling uses 44,058 public Twitter accounts active in the last 90 days. These accounts were randomly selected, by machine, from a set of 130+ million public, active profiles. Our analysis found that 19.42%, nearly four times Twitter's Q4 2021 estimate, fit a conservative definition of fake or spam accounts (i.e. our analysis likely undercounts). Details and methodology are provided in the full report below.



For the past three years, SparkToro has operated a free tool for Twitter profiles called Fake Followers. Over the last month, numerous media outlets and other curious parties have used the tool to analyze would-be-Twitter-buyer, Elon Musk's, followers. On Friday, Mr. Musk tweeted that his acquisition of Twitter was "on

We didn't do a perfect job, but it was enough to start a big conversation!

Rand Fishkin

SparkToro CEO. Author of Lost & Founder. Feminist. I love underdogs, cooking, & helping people do better marketing

View full profile

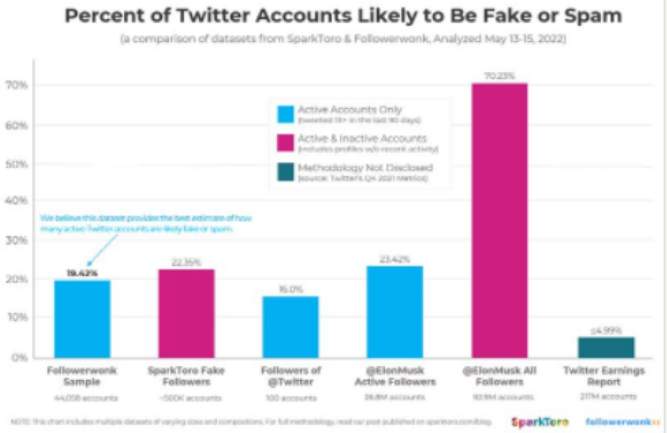
Rand Fishkin (He/Him)
SparkToro CEO. Author of Lost & Founder. Feminist. I love underdogs, cookin...
2d •

Last Friday, Elon Musk tweeted that his deal to buy Twitter was "on hold pending details supporting calculation that spam/fake accounts do indeed represent less than 5% of users."

This weekend, Casey Henry and Marc Mims (of Followerwonk) worked tirelessly to provide the most rigorous, robust estimate possible. That report is now published here: https://lnkd.in/djpzukMP

We used several methodologies, all of which are compared in the chart. But, the best estimate we have is that 19.42% of active, public Twitter users (i.e. those who've tweeted in the last 90 days) are fake or spam.

I don't know if this will have any impact on Mr. Musk's planned purchase of Twitter, but I am quite proud of our work here, and especially grateful to Casey & Marc for their diligence.



Blake Emal and 2,163 others 227 comments • 130 shares

Reactions

Like Comment Share Send

393,509 views of your post in the feed

Add a comment...

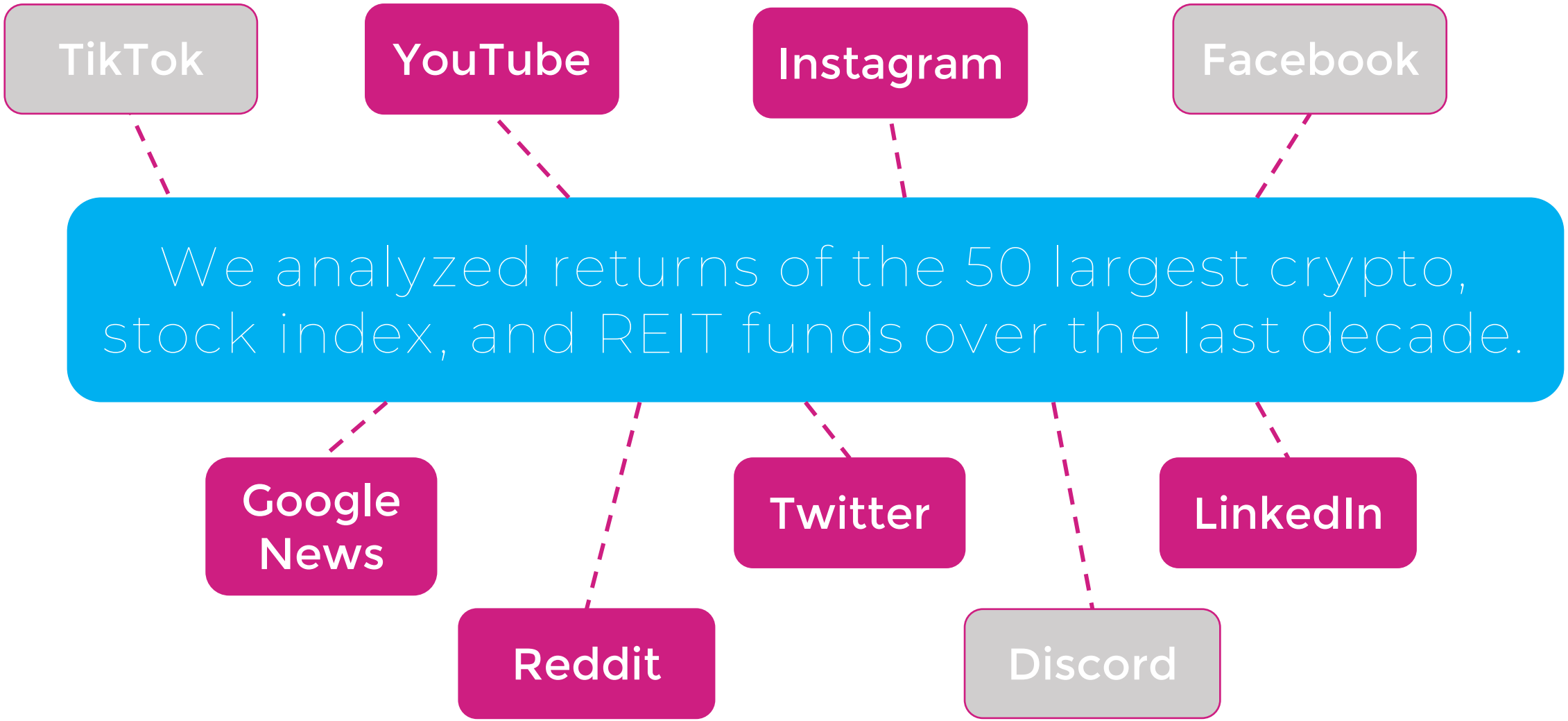
Most relevant

Marty Weintraub • 1st 2d
(Hiring, See Post Below) Marketing Lead, Founder: Aimclear® Integrate...
Reason number 2,704 you are awesome Rand Fishkin

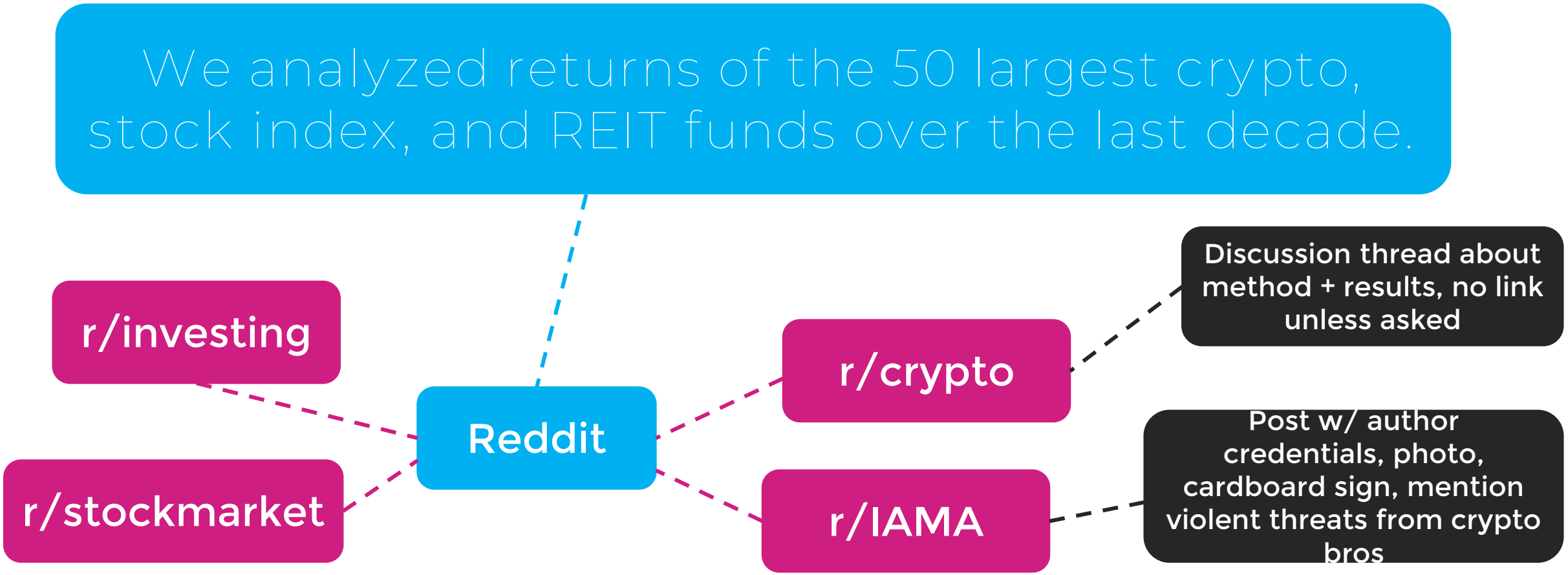
How to Distribute Better-Performing Content

SparkToro

Tip #1: Plan the Distribution Channels

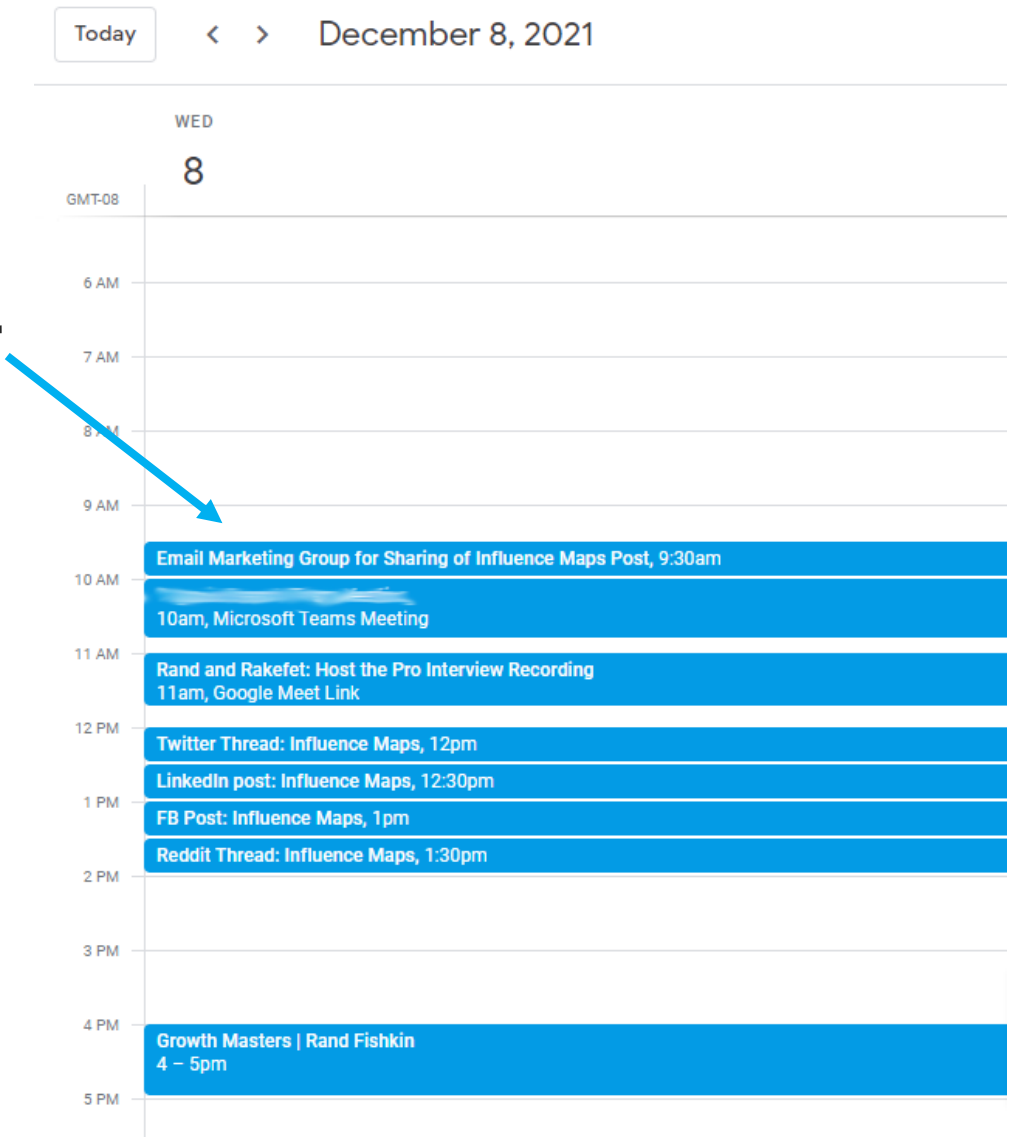


Tip #2: Now Plan the Distribution Tactics



Tip #3: Make a Promo Schedule

If you put it on your calendar, you'll probably do it. If you don't...



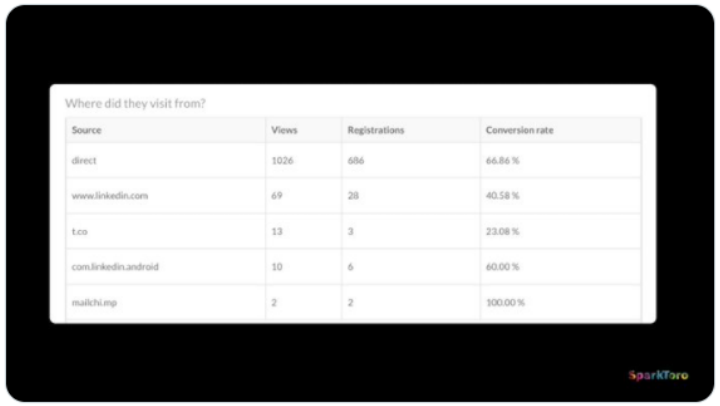
Tip #4: Use Viral-Likely Formats to Promote Viral-Unlikely Links

Amanda Natividad
@amandanat

A lot of marketers are sleeping on LinkedIn.

For SparkToro, we promoted next week's Office Hours webinar on Twitter and LinkedIn 1hr ago and the difference in signups are absurd:

Twitter: 3
LinkedIn: 34



12:57 PM · Dec 3, 2021 · Twitter Web App

19 Retweets **7** Quote Tweets **276** Likes

Amanda Natividad @amandanat · Dec 6
Whoa. We now have 1,146 signups.

Twitter: 41
LinkedIn: 259 🤯

@randfish is presenting on Thursday, Dec. 9. Join us!

crowdcast.io
SparkToro Office Hours - Crowdcast
Register now for SparkToro's event on Crowdcast, scheduled to go live on Thursday December 09, 2021 at 11:00 am PST.

2 7

Tip #5: Leverage Other People's Publications

MUST READ Nagaland killings: Direct 'marise'...they shot right at us, we did not flee, says ambush survivor

'Fear and Greed' index tool and Crypto investments: What to keep in mind

Alternative. me, the company behind the crypto Fear and Greed Index—analyzes emotions and sentiments from different sources and crunches them into one simple number.

Written by Mehab Qureshi | Pune |
Updated: November 24, 2021 9:08:01 am

On the Fear and Greed Index ,a value of 0 means "Extreme Fear" while a value of 100 represents "Extreme Greed". (Screenshot: Alternative. me)

Tip #6: Listen, Watch, & Set Up Alerts for Promotional Opportunities

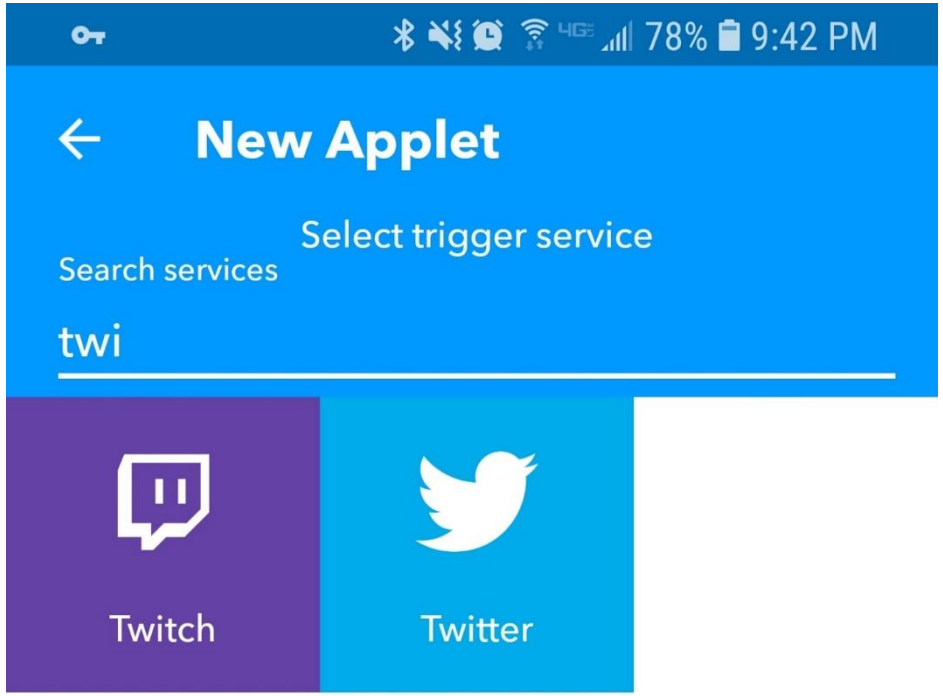
How to get push notifications when keywords or links are tweeted

Nick Gottschlich Apr 13, 2019 · 3 min read

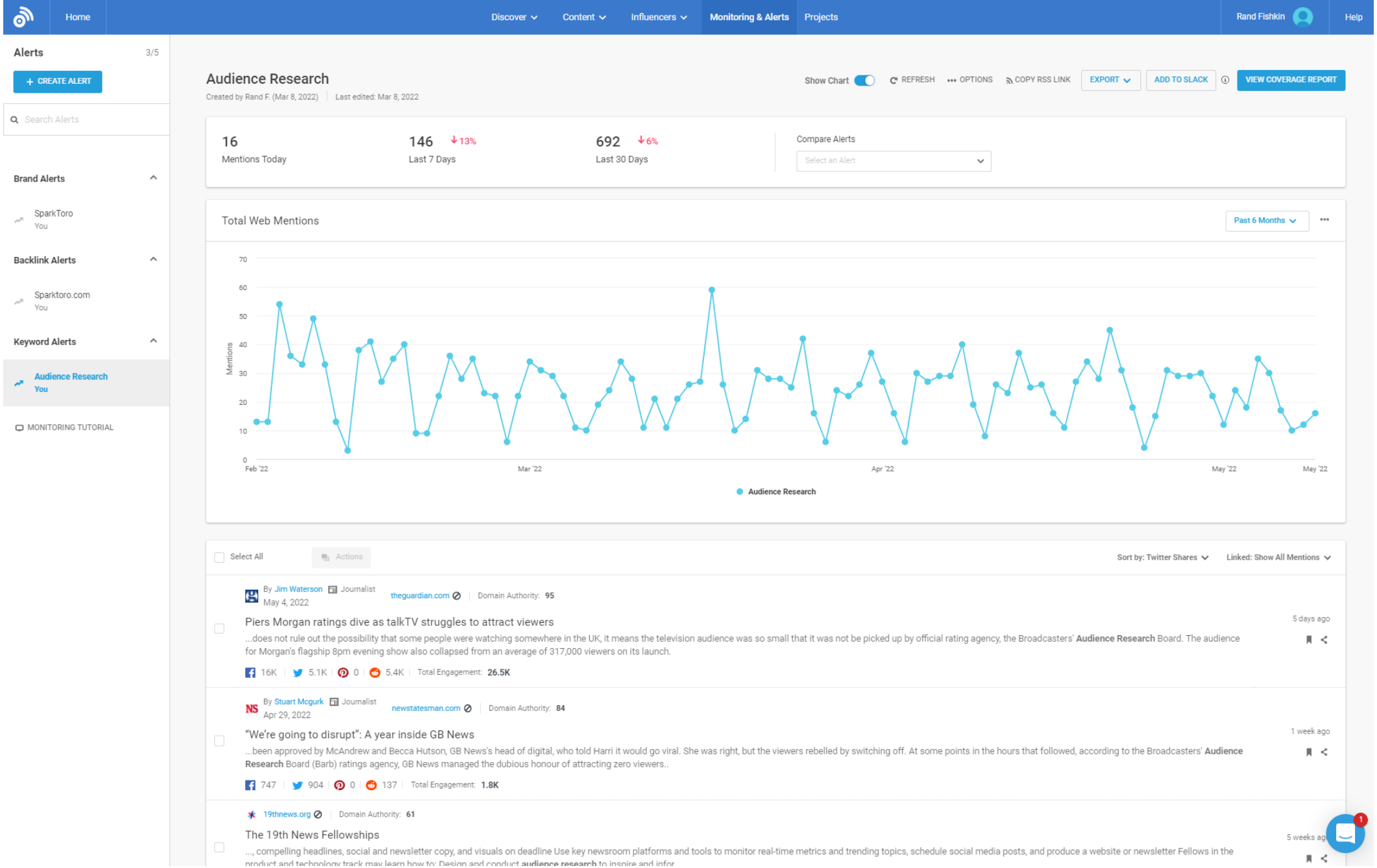
Recently, I was pleasantly surprised to find out that a project of mine had gotten some traction on twitter, as someone commented about it in a tweet chain that was getting a fair bit of "favorites" and re-tweets.

I was unpleasantly surprised though that I found out about this 11 days after those tweets had been made. This is basically a million years in twitter time. So I resolved to figure out a way to ensure that I would be notified if some creation of mine was getting tweeted about so that I could inject myself into the conversation as it's unfolding, instead of way after it's happened.

I wanted to ensure that every time someone tweeted out a link to the github page of my project, it would push a notification to my phone. I looked up a couple ways to do this, and ended up settling on IFTTT. IFTTT (If This Then That) lets you set up "applets" that can, among other things, search twitter every few minutes or so and send a push notification to your phone if it gets a keyword match.



Via Nick Gottschlich



I use and like [Buzzsumo's Alerts]

Thank You!

These slides will be available soon ☺

SparkToro

What Qs can we answer for you today?

[in]novate with LinkedIn

Thank you

Connect with us:

/in/purnavirji

/in/randfishkin