

The Ultimate Guide to Twitter Chats

How to run and measure a
successful Twitter chat



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metrics

WHAT ARE TWITTER CHATS?

Twitter chats have been around for years, helping Twitter users connect and share information over a specific industry or interest. Some chats are branded and impeccably organized and scheduled while others are more of a loose collection of like-minded individuals who get together to tweet over a hashtag whenever they can.

Regardless of the formality of a chat- and if you're aiming to launch one for your brand, you can always refine your approach over time- you want to measure to see how your chat is performing. Is your reach growing over time, so you can connect with more interested Twitter users who might want to join your chat? Is your engagement rate increasing over time, or at least holding steady, so that chat members are remaining engaged in your topics?

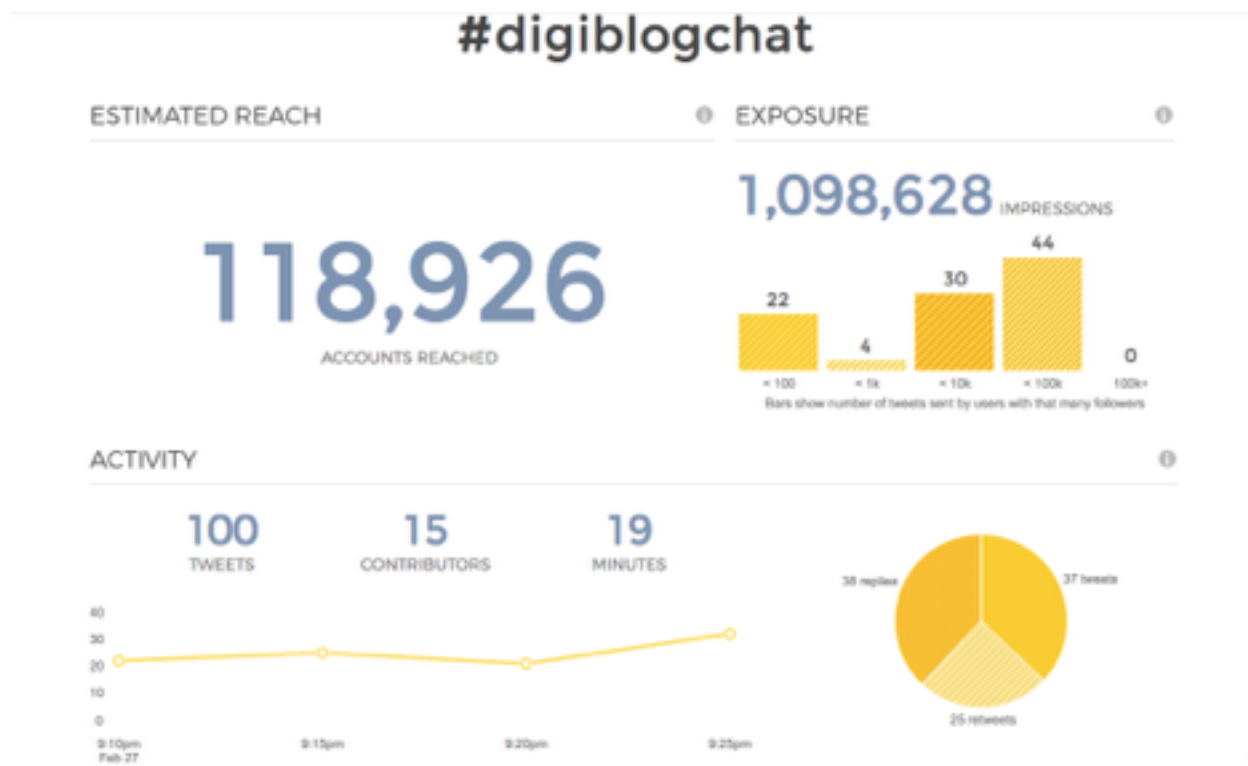
These are just two factors to consider; we'll share some examples and go over more important factors for chat-runners to consider. Feel free to skip around to the sections that are most useful for you. And if you have any questions, you can always reach out to us on Twitter [@UnionMetrics](https://twitter.com/UnionMetrics) or shoot us an email at marketing@unionmetrics.com.

GET A JUMPSTART WITH A FREE SNAPSHOT REPORT.

Our Twitter snapshot report is free and it's a great place to get started: It gives you an overall look at how your chat is performing and if you're starting from scratch, it lets you know ahead of time if the hashtag you'd like to use for your chat is already in use. (When selecting a chat hashtag, you definitely want something **branded and unique**.)



For example, #DigiBlogChat runs snapshots regularly to keep tabs on their chat. Here's what the overview looked like for their February 27th chat:



The free snapshot report looks at up to 100 tweets from the last 7 days, so if you're using this option you want to run a snapshot right after your chat to capture the best data. If it's a very busy chat, you might consider running a snapshot during the mid-point of your chat as well to capture a more complete picture of the impact.

You also want to pay attention to who the top contributors are and if they stay consistent week-to-week or if they change over time. You might consider the most involved contributors week-over-week as guest hosts or even to help come up with future chat topics.

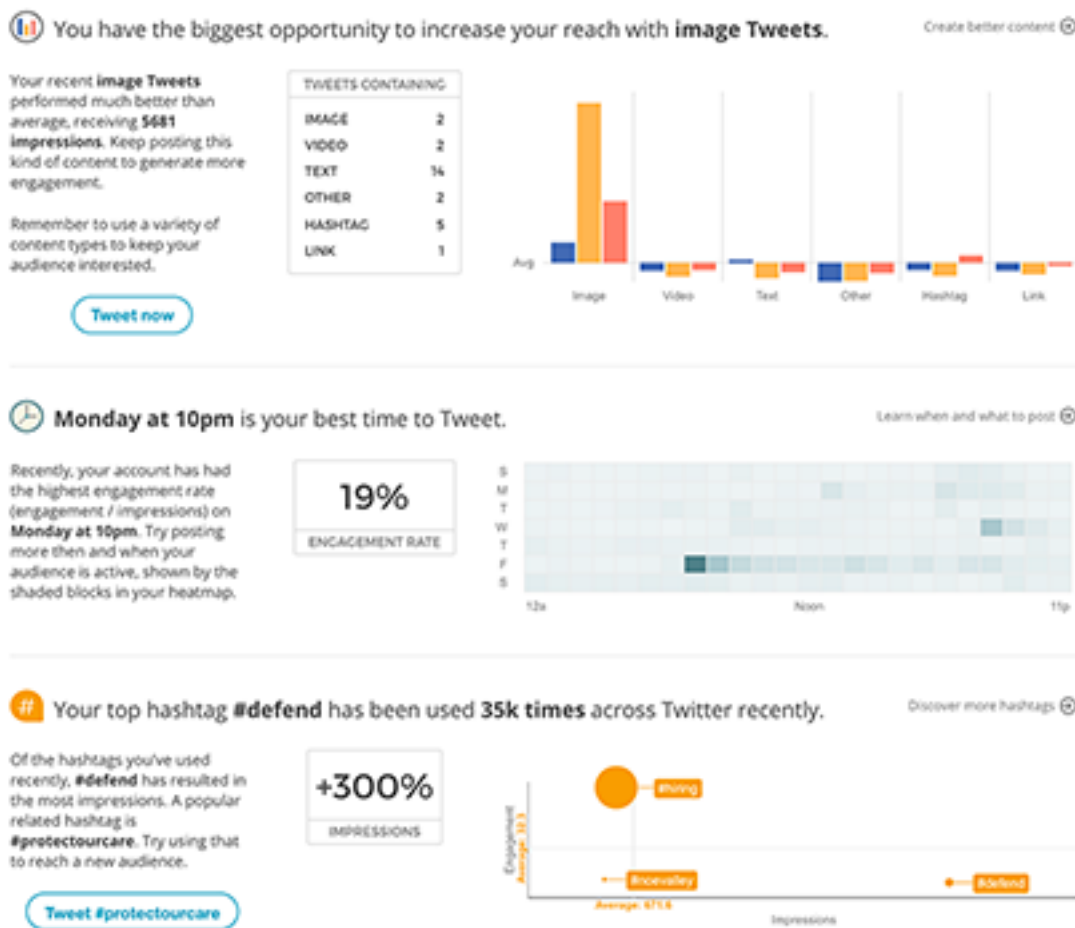


You can also consider keeping tabs on regular attendees who might not be the biggest contributors, but are still involved. You can nudge them to participate more by tapping them for future chat topic ideas or even send them a little branded swag to thank them for their consistency— whatever is appropriate for your brand and relationship. It can be as simple as a “thank you” DM.

Chats also help with establishing a community around your brand, or strengthening your existing community. They help you keep tabs on what’s happening in your industry, giving you insights into what your community thinks about emerging trends, and more.

HOW THE TWITTER ASSISTANT CAN HELP YOUR CHAT

If you run a chat, running a free [Twitter Assistant](#) can give you information both around what’s working for your profile and Twitter and some help with your chat.



If your chat is the biggest part of your Twitter presence, what is the Assistant telling you relative to your activity and the chat you run? Is the hashtag for your chat the

one that shows up as your top hashtag? If not, is that a related community you can tap into to drive interest to your chat?

What about the best time to tweet? Is that the time you're running your chat? If your chat has had highly engaged, regular attendance don't worry about it. But if attendance and engagement have been dropping off, consider if it makes sense to move it. You can always poll your regular chat attendees to see if the new suggested time would work better for them.

It's also true that this suggestion might just work better for your personal tweets; **building up your own following can also help expand your chat!**

Finally, the post-type recommendations can also give you something new to experiment with in chats. Do you stick to text-only tweets in your chat? Have you tried using GIFs? If it's a branded chat, you might consider designing branded images to share with the topic and questions on them. These are eye-catching and helpful for chat attendees to keep up with what's being asked and discussed during the chat.

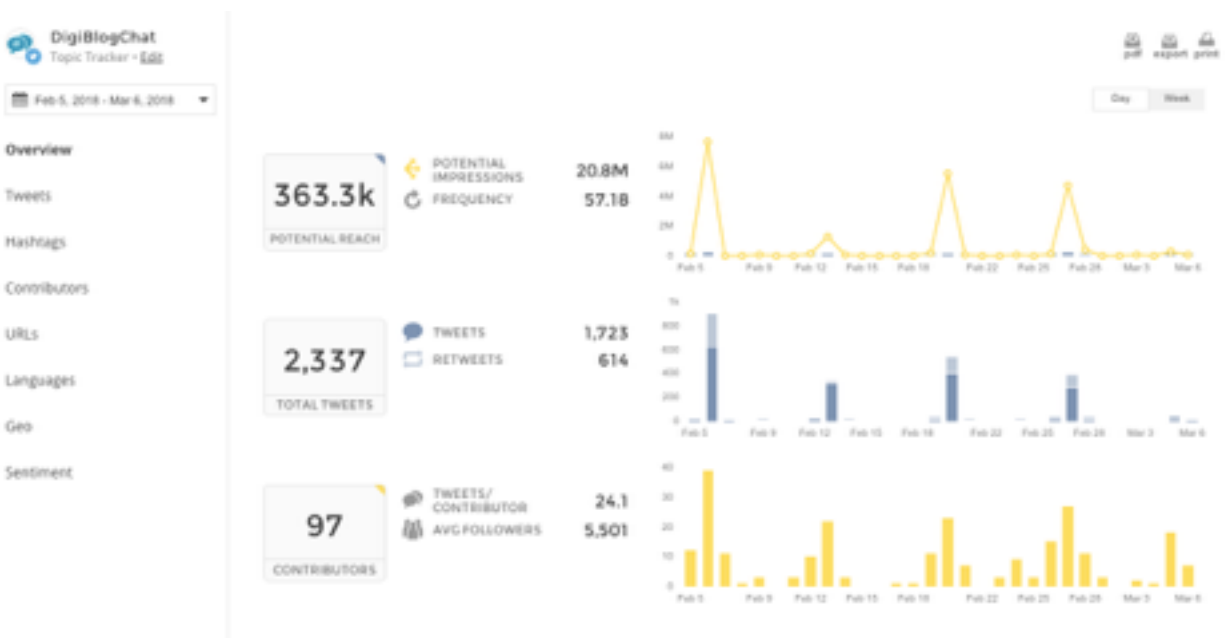
You can also design some promotional ones based around each chat's topic to use before the chat and encourage attendees- and especially any guest hosts- to use them to advertise the chat ahead of time.

DIVE DEEPER WITH A TRACKER

Once you've established your chat, you'll want to do a deeper dive into your metrics. Setting up a Tracker will backfill you with 30 days of data, giving you a good base to track changes over time.

If you hold your chat weekly, you'll see the spikes on the days your chat is held. You can see at a glance if one week was much bigger than the others, then drill down into the details. Was it a hot topic that week? Is there a part of that topic your chat should delve into further, or a related idea you could use in the future? What else can you learn from the data to plan a better chat in the coming weeks?

AVG TWEETS/DAY	POTENTIAL IMPRESSIONS/TWEET	POTENTIAL IMPRESSIONS/DAY	RETWEET RATE
77.9	8,887	692.3k	0.4



Trackers allow you to choose different, specific time periods to compare, so you can see month-to-month how the numbers change and identify any seasonal patterns or other changes in your chat over time. (Chat attendance will generally decline over the winter holidays, for example.)

If you notice consistent weeks with low turnout- possibly around certain holidays, or downtimes specific to your industry- consider canceling the chat on those weeks to keep everyone fresh and engaged in subsequent weeks.

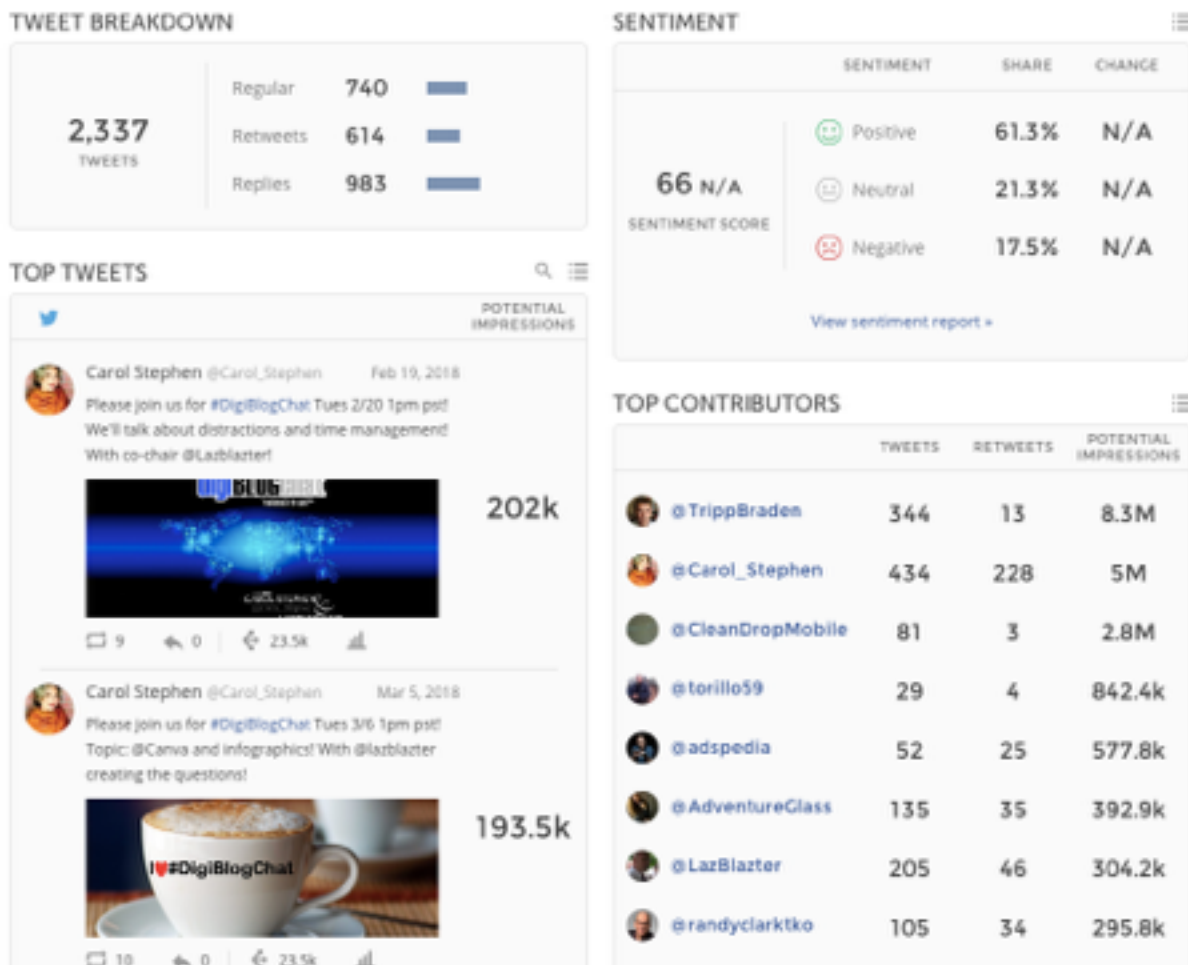
Other parts of the Tracker overview to pay attention to are the tweet breakdown- how many are regular tweets vs. retweets vs. replies- as well as sentiment and top contributors.

The tweet breakdown can tell you a lot about the nature of your chat— are a lot of attendees tweeting with original responses, or just retweeting what the guest host is saying? Are they replying to the guest host and one another with questions and more? You can think about how to encourage more of the type of conversation you want, depending on what the goals are for your chat.

Sentiment is important to drill into week-by-week, seeing how your chat attendees feel about different topics. But a word of caution: Just because sentiment is negative one week doesn't mean your attendees didn't enjoy the chat; it might just

be because a hot-button issue in your industry came up during the chat, whether or not it was a planned topic.

Keep in mind that sentiment has trouble with sarcasm, which can show up as negative. You still need a human eye to go over the sentiment breakdown; don't take the score at face value and move on immediately.



You also want to keep in mind if you run a branded chat **you can never completely control where the conversation will go**. Definitely don't hesitate to block and report any trolls or bots who join the chat with the sole goal of disrupting it, but otherwise politely entertain differing points of view.

Top contributors is important to pay attention to over time as well. See who is contributing over time and reach out to them to thank them in a way that makes sense. If you notice former top contributors who dropped out a certain point of

time for your chat, reach out to see if their workload or other circumstances have changed if you feel comfortable and that it's appropriate to do so. They might make the chat a priority in their workflow again if they feel like they're a very important contributor to the community and conversation.

TOP HASHTAGS

	TWEETS	CONTRIBUTORS	POTENTIAL IMPRESSIONS
#DigiBlogChat	2,337	97	20.8M
#Analytics	14	9	238.4k
#innochat	22	12	217.6k
#vermont	16	10	193.5k
#Coffee	13	8	180.8k

[View hashtags report »](#)

TOP URLS

	TWEETS	CONTRIBUTORS	POTENTIAL IMPRESSIONS
twitter.com/i/web...	11	11	158.4k
yoursocialmediawo...	12	10	150.9k
twitter.com/i/web...	7	7	131.2k
twitter.com/i/web...	10	10	129.5k
twitter.com/i/web...	10	10	112.5k

[View URLs report »](#)

Finally, you want to look at top hashtags and URLs for your chat. Obviously the chat hashtag should be the topmost hashtag, but you also want to see which other hashtags chat participants are using. This might give you ideas for what else you

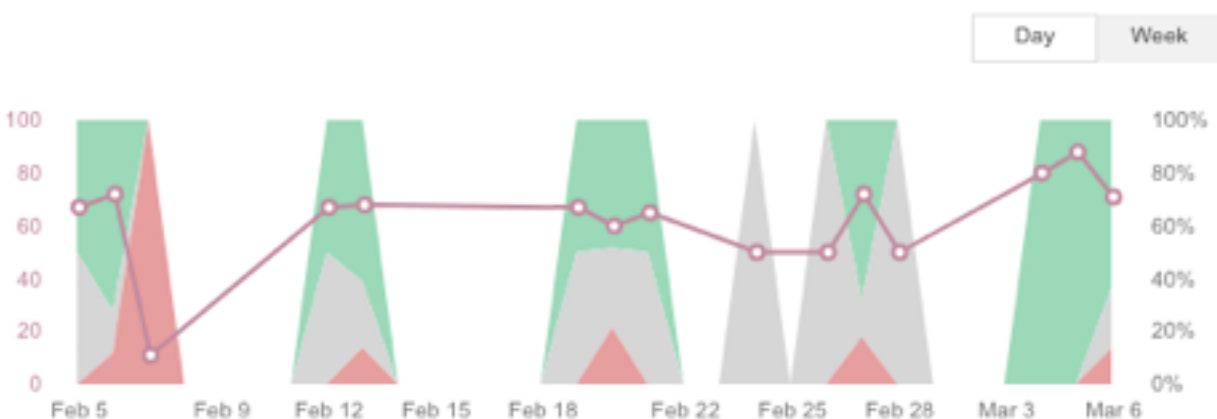
can connect over during introductions and casual chat moments, but it might also inform future topic ideas.

URLs are very important because they tell you which resources chat participants are sharing with each other. What do they find important? Informative? Are they all coming from the same sources? If they aren't sources you regularly read or pay attention to, you definitely should. If your company has a blog or other resources, are they regularly being shared? How much do the top URLs shift over time?

If they change week-to-week because they're from different guest hosts, that's a good indication that chat participants are interested in what the guests have to say and share that you're sourcing good hosts and topics.

Keep in mind this is all the high-level overview of your Tracker, and you can dig much deeper into the metrics that matter the most to you, your brand, industry and any specific goals you have for your chat.

Sentiment in particular is useful, because you can see pretty quickly if a particular week had more negative or positive sentiment and then dig into notable positive and negative tweets.

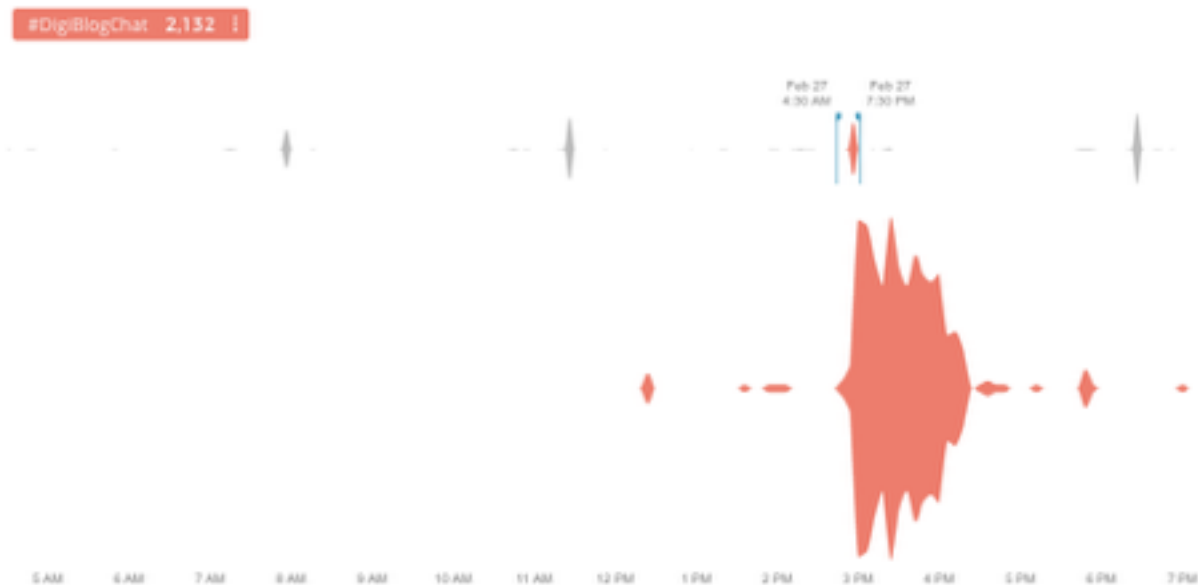


GO IN FOR A LONG-TERM, DEEP DIVE

If you want to see how the conversation around a particular chat has changed over time, you can dive into the detail using Echo.

Echo will allow you to drill into the chat conversation and watch it unfold on a particular day, week-to-week, month-to-month, or even longer.

It's the perfect way to see the build-up and wind-down of your chat on a particular day, and those waves can show you if certain topics were maybe more interesting to your chat participants— did they start using the hashtag earlier, eager to get started? Did they keep sharing the last chat long after it ended because they got so much out of it?



If you're considering starting a branded chat, Echo is also a good way to do some research around the hashtag you're considering for it and any general areas of interest in your industry that you want to tap into for chat topics.

This way you can make sure **any hashtag you're using is unique and hasn't been associated with anything in the past that would be harmful to your brand.**

WHICH METRICS SHOULD I PAY ATTENTION TO?

Like everything else, this will depend on what the goals are for your chat. If you're trying to grow your share of voice in your industry or your brand recognition, a steadily increasing reach is important.

If you're trying to build up your community then engagement will be more important.

Chats are a great way to **identify your brand advocates and industry influencers** your brand might want to work with; our Trackers and even our free tools make it easy to identify these participants through our different Top Contributor sections.

Our analytics also help you vet any influencers your brand is looking to work with, confirming their engagement rate and enabling you to see any crisis moments they may have been a part of in the past (via Echo) in order to protect your brand and ensure a good return on the partnership.

OUR FINAL ADVICE

The bottom line rule for chats? **Make it interesting.** You want your chat topics to be something that's useful to your audience and as entertaining as possible.

Use GIFs for introductions and icebreakers. Let your employees running the chat employ their sense of humor in a way that still works with your brand voice. It helps put a human face on your brand.

If you still have questions, you can always find us on Twitter at [@UnionMetrics](https://twitter.com/UnionMetrics) or shoot us an email at marketing@unionmetrics.com.

Happy chatting!