

# Study reveals secrets of a successful tweet

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Cramming your tweets with shouting capital letters, cutesy asides and hyperbolic claims won't bring you lots of followers.

Instead, those 140-character gems you hurl into cyberspace can spark retweets by focusing on technology, including references to celebrities and citing credible [information sources](#), according to a study by Hewlett-Packard.

That latter point is particularly important, according to Bernardo Huberman, an HP senior fellow and director of its [social computing](#) group, who co-authored the study presented this month at a European conference.

"What we are saying is that the source of the news is extremely important," he said, noting that [tweets](#) citing established news [media outlets](#) or respected tech blogs carry far more weight than somebody relatively unknown just blowing off steam. "If Johnny says, 'A helicopter fell out of the sky,' that's not something that is going to go very far."

By looking at more than 40,000 news articles and how they were retweeted over a nine-day period in August, the study by Huberman, Sitaram Asur and Roja Bandari developed an algorithm that they said was 84 percent accurate in predicting how popular tweets will be.

The study found that the emotional tone of the item was unimportant in determining how widely it would be distributed. Instead, the crucial factors were the source of the information, references to well-known

personalities and the topic - with technology attracting the most interest, followed by health and a category the researchers dubbed "fun stuff."

Huberman said the Palo Alto, Calif., company this week is pursuing a patent on the [algorithm](#) so it could be licensed to others hoping to make a bigger splash in the Twitter world. That could include a lot of people - particularly during this election season.

Aside from journalists, [content providers](#) and advertisers, the study noted, "this is also important for activists and politicians who are using the Web increasingly more to influence public opinion."

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