

# GeekSpeak

## Jost Zetzsche

### Twicks

**Aside from** LinkedIn, Twitter is my preferred social network, and it can also be very productive—productive for networking with colleagues, for meeting clients, and for displaying publicly who you are and what you stand for. In relation to other forms of social media, it is also less unproductive because it does not necessarily require you to read never-ending posts (though it might lead you to some of those). You are supposed to express yourself in 140 characters or less (though finding just the right way to say it within those constraints can take some time!).

I have looked at some colleagues' tweets in the past couple of weeks and noticed a couple of tips that might be worth repeating.

**1. Never start a tweet that is supposed to be seen by everyone with @username, since this will be seen only by that username plus everyone who follows the username and you.** Enter a period (or some other character) before the @ sign. You have probably seen this advice many times, but during my recent tweet analysis I was surprised at how many experienced tweeters make that mistake.

**2. If you feel like tweeting about private things as well as professional things, make sure you have two different accounts.** Really! I immediately unfollow other tweeters who start to report on personal matters on a regular basis. While it is not important what I choose to do, many of those whom you really want to reach are doing the same. It is not enough to say that you do not promote your Twitter account anywhere in your professional material. As soon as you participate in a profes-

sional discussion, you are effectively promoting it.

**3. If you get frustrated with someone's barrage of tweets but you do not want to frustrate them by unfollowing them, you can also "mute" that account by clicking on the three dots at the bottom of one of their tweets and selecting Mute @username.** To my knowledge, this is available only in the non-mobile web version of Twitter.

**4. Make sure to give credit where it is due.** If you find something through someone else's tweet or e-mail, make sure you mention it in any related follow-up tweet you might send. If you post a link to an article that someone interesting wrote, make sure to research his or her Twitter handle and mention that in the tweet as well. And if you are retweeting someone but have changed some of the content, make sure to precede it not with RT (retweet) but MT (modified tweet).

**5. #Use #hashtags judiciously, but not to #the point that #your #tweets are really #hard to #read.** It is probably a good idea to set a hashtag in front of a central term (like #translation or #x18), but I even prefer not to



do that. Instead, I really enjoy using the hashtag as a way to explain or comment on my own tweet (this should be a whole new area of linguistics). For example, here is a tweet I recently sent that broke my own rule on never sharing private matters, but at least it is language-related:

**Jeromobot**  
**@Jeromobot**

"Give me a rootbeer but go easy on the root" #My21yearoldlivingthedream

Here are some other helpful tips (most of them relate to the non-mobile web version of Twitter):

**6. It is a good idea to download your archives of tweets occasionally, especially if you tweet a lot.** This will help you quickly locate a tweet you might have sent a long time ago. You can do that under Settings> Account> Request your archive.

**7. You can also use helpful keyboard shortcuts in the Twitter interface.** To see all of them listed at once, just press the question mark key when you are in the Twitter web interface. (Cool, huh?) →

## Information and Contacts

The GeekSpeak column has two goals: to inform the community about technological advances and at the same time encourage the use and appreciation of technology among translation professionals. Jost is the co-author of *Found in Translation: How Language Shapes Our Lives and Transforms the World*, a perfect source for replenishing your arsenal of information on how human translation and machine translation each play important parts in the broader world of translation. Contact: [jzetzsche@internationalwriters.com](mailto:jzetzsche@internationalwriters.com).

**8. Obviously, the best way (legitimately) to gain more followers is to post interesting and engaging tweets.** If you want to speed it up a little, here are a couple of ways to follow others so that you engage with them and hope that they will follow you back:

- When there are translation-related conferences happening (and they are always happening somewhere), click on the conference hashtag to see who is tweeting from the conference. Not only will you get a good (and cheap) overview of what is happening at the conference, you can follow the tweeters

and maybe even engage them in a conversation while staying under the hashtag umbrella.

Search tweets under translation-related hashtags such as #x18 and consider following those.

- Select **Discover>Activity** within Twitter to find out who the folks you are following are “favoriting” and following. They might be worth following as well.
- Select **Discover>Find Friends**. If you have a webmail account, Twitter will look through your address book and see whether

they match existing Twitter accounts that you do not follow. Here is a tip for selecting whom to follow among the suggestions: do not do it if there is no profile picture, no description, or no or only old tweets. All of the others might be worth looking at more closely. (Do not spam and invite non-Twitter users, though.)

Finally, make sure that you do not just gain colleagues as followers but also potential clients. Think of Twitter as your interactive, ever-evolving business card. You will be glad you did. ■

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