

# **The State of Inbound Lead Generation**

**Analysis of lead generation best practices used by over 1,400  
small- and medium-sized businesses**



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## Summary

In this report we share findings from an analysis of 1,400 HubSpot customers' inbound marketing activities. The study reveals that the following four factors have a significant positive impact on leads:

### 1. Indexed pages in Google

**For every fifty to 100 pages** of indexed pages in Google, **leads achieved double digit growth**. Lead growth experiences significant acceleration for customers with more than several hundred indexed pages.

### 2. The number of keywords for which sites rank in Google's top 100 results

Increasing the number of keywords starts to impact lead growth **only once marketers achieve top 100 rankings for a significant number of keywords** (in the teens).

### 3. Publishing and growing blogs

**Customers with blogs gathered 68% more leads** than customers without blogs. Growing articles starts to impact lead growth once 20+ articles become available.

### 4. Using Twitter and growing followers

B2C customers using Twitter **generated two times more leads** than customers without a Twitter account. **Twitter users with several hundred followers** had approximately **twice as many leads** as Twitter users with followers in the double digits.

In this report, we explore each of these relationships in more detail.

The significance of these factors to lead growth validates the importance of creating unique online content through many mediums. It also demonstrates the importance of distributing this content through social media outlets (e.g. Twitter) to maximize online presence.

## Introduction

This analysis focused on discovering the most significant and positive interactions between inbound marketing activities and leads. We analyzed 3 months worth of data on 15+ metrics for 1,400 HubSpot customers. Six of these metrics stood out, due to the strength of their relationship to lead growth. See metric definitions in the Appendix.

To control for company size and type, we evaluated differences in results for the following groups of customers:

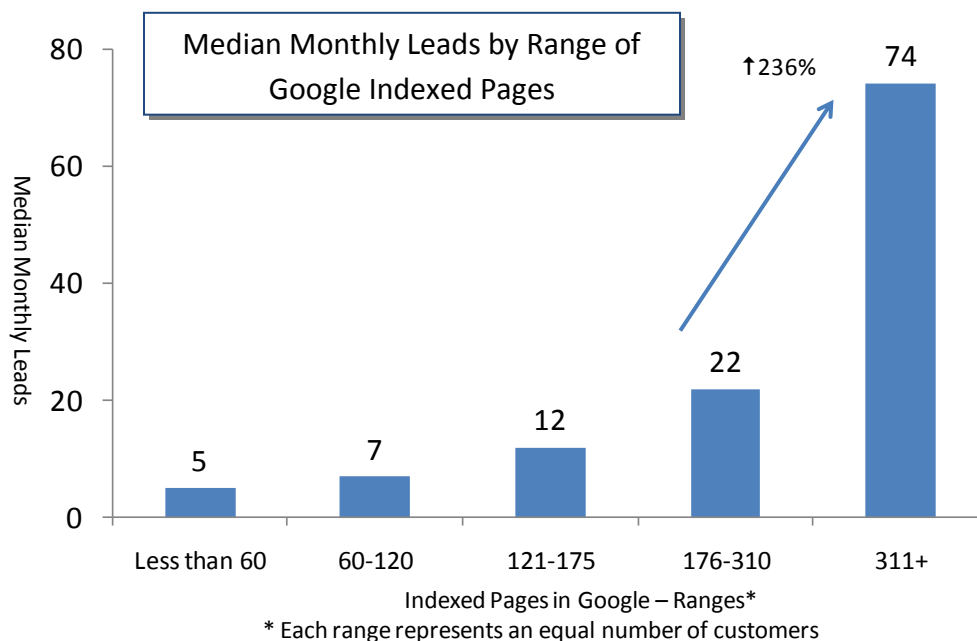
- Large customers (L): defined as customers with 50+ employees
- Medium sized customers (M): 11 to 50 employees
- Small customers (S): 1 to 10 employees
- B2B customers
- B2C customers

## Search Engines and Leads

### Google Indexed Pages

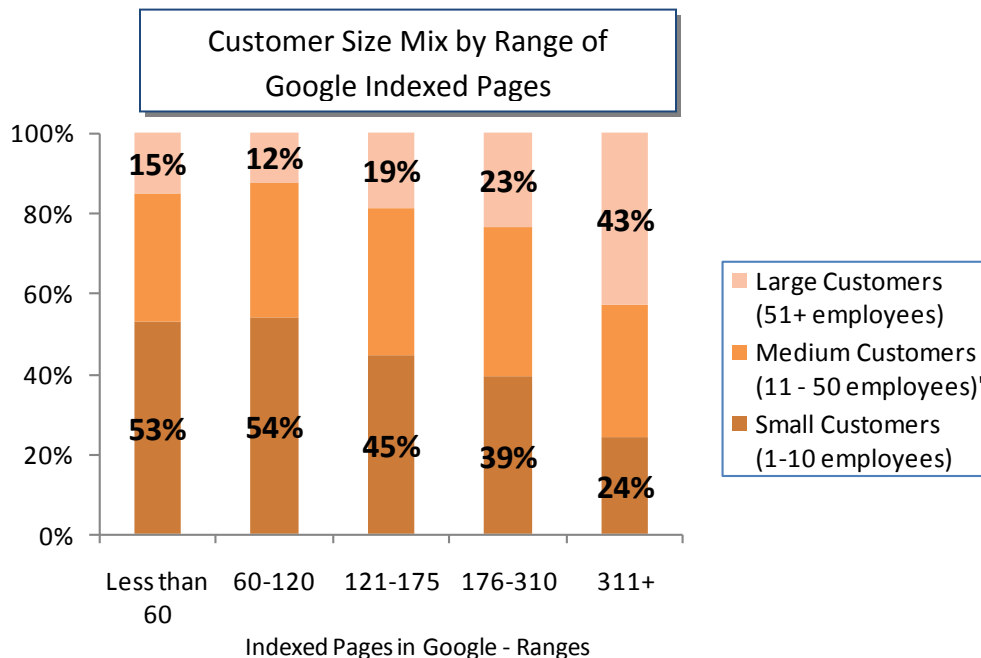
#### Increasing Google Indexed Pages by 50-100 Brings Double Digit Lead Growth

When looking at the first four ranges of Google indexed pages in the graph below, we observe that an **incremental 50 to 100 indexed pages brings double-digit lead growth**. Growth in leads **accelerates significantly** once sites achieve **several hundred pages** indexed in Google (300+).



### Company Size Not a Critical Factor for Growing Indexed Pages

Large companies tend to have more pages indexed in Google versus small firms. But the graph below clearly shows that **size is not a critical factor of achieving a significant volume of Google indexed pages**. While large firms formed the largest group of customers with 311+ indexed pages in Google, small and medium sized companies together out-numbered large firms. In addition, small firms formed the largest percentage of customers with 176 to 310 Google indexed pages.



### Marketing Takeaways

Marketers are likely to ask: What are techniques for growing the number of Google indexed pages on my site?

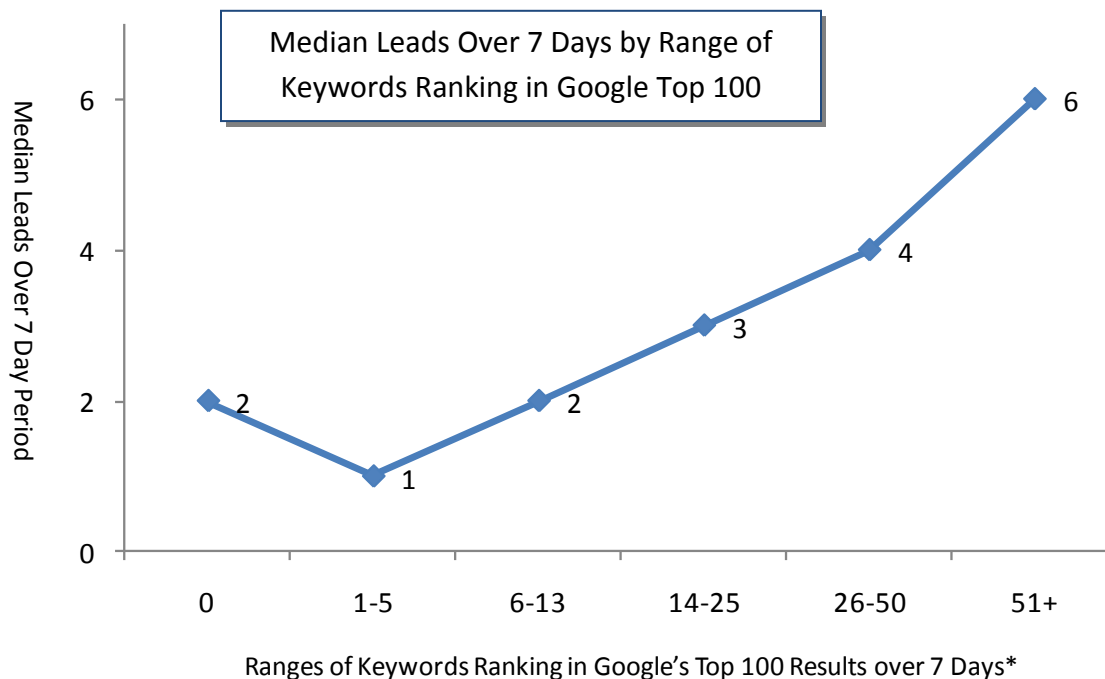
- **Build page volume:** consider starting a blog to quickly increase pages
- **Improve each page's optimization** as per Google's methodology to maximize chances of having all of your web pages included in the index:
  - **On-Page Search Engine Optimization:** placing **keywords** in the right places on web pages such that Google and other search engines know what each page of your web site is about, and what keywords to rank you for
  - **Off-Page Search Engine Optimization:** **building inbound** links from reputable sites, thus demonstrating your popularity to search engines

It is interesting to note that the number of inbound links did not have a meaningful relationship with leads. Inbound links, however, did correlate well with unique visitors. This implies that for those interested in generating leads, quality of sites vs. quantity is more important when building inbound links.

## Ranking in Google's Top 100 Search Results

### Sites Ranking in Google's Top 100 Results for Many Keywords (15+) Acquire More Leads

Leads start to grow with the number of keywords ranking in Google's top 100 only once **customers rank highly for a significant number of keywords (keyword numbers in the teens)**. Customers ranking in the top 100 search results for 1 to 14 keywords did not do better than customers who ranked for 0 keywords. In fact, median leads of customers ranking for 1 to 6 keywords were lower than for those ranking for zero keywords.



Sample size: 1,400 customers.

•Each range consists of six equal groups of customers.

One reason for this difference is the fact that there were slightly more customers managing blogs in this first group vs. the “1-5 keywords” group and that the percentage of traffic from referring sites was incrementally larger. It is possible that several customers in this group were relatively more successful at converting referral traffic into leads, as opposed to search engine traffic.

Customers ranking in Google's top 100 results for **26 to 51 keywords** generated **twice as many leads** as customers ranking for 6 to 13 keywords. Customers with **51+ keywords** generated **three times more leads** than those with 6 to 13 keywords.

### Marketing Takeaways

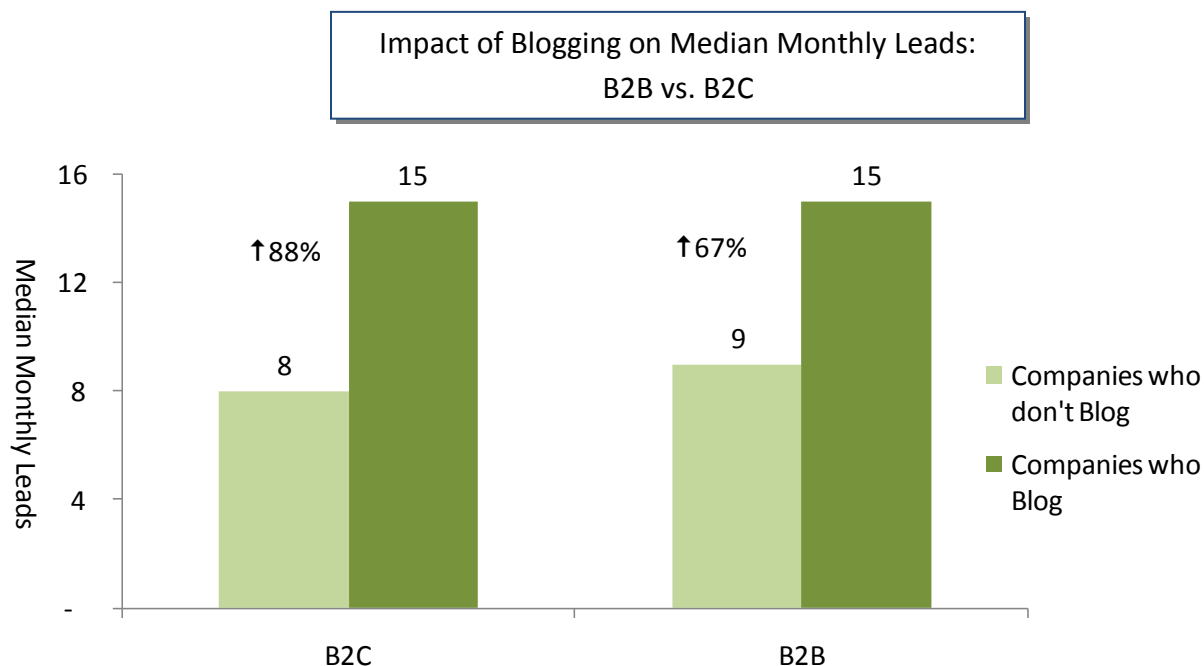
This analysis shows that spending time creating unique and interesting content that can be associated with as many distinct keywords as possible is worthwhile. Such content will maximize the number of keywords a site ranks for and, thus, increase lead flow.

## Blogs, Twitter and Leads

### Publishing and Growing a Blog

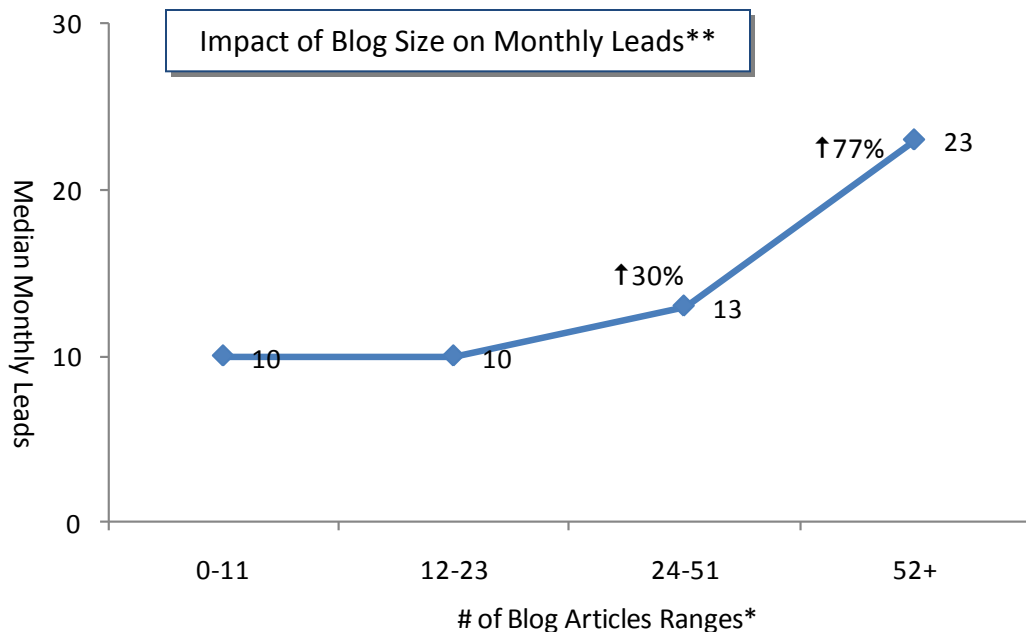
#### Marketers With Blogs Generate 67% More Leads

66% of customers in the sample have a blog. When comparing median leads of these customers to those of the 34% who don't have a blog, we find 67% more leads, or a **median of 15 versus 9 monthly leads**. The results are only slightly more positive when comparing the impact of blogs on B2C companies vs. B2B companies (88% increase for B2C vs. 67% increase for B2B).



#### Growing Blog Articles Increases Leads Once Blog Reaches 20+ Articles

The graph below compares median leads derived in January 2010 across blogs of four different sizes. Size is based on the number of articles available.



Sample size: 767 customers.

\* Each range includes article data for approximately 25% of customers.

\*\* Data is based on blog articles posted as of 2/1/10 and leads generating in January 2010.

The results indicate that median **leads start to grow once 24-51 articles** are written. This is most likely an indicator of the time it takes to build a blog with enough pages of content to impact Google indexed pages and attract visitors and links from other sites. **Median leads were 77% higher among customers with blogs of 52+ articles** versus customers with 24 to 51 articles.

### Marketing Takeaways

Marketers who are choosing not to start blogs are leaving leads on the table. Blogs can help marketers grow leads quickly. Starting a blog can:

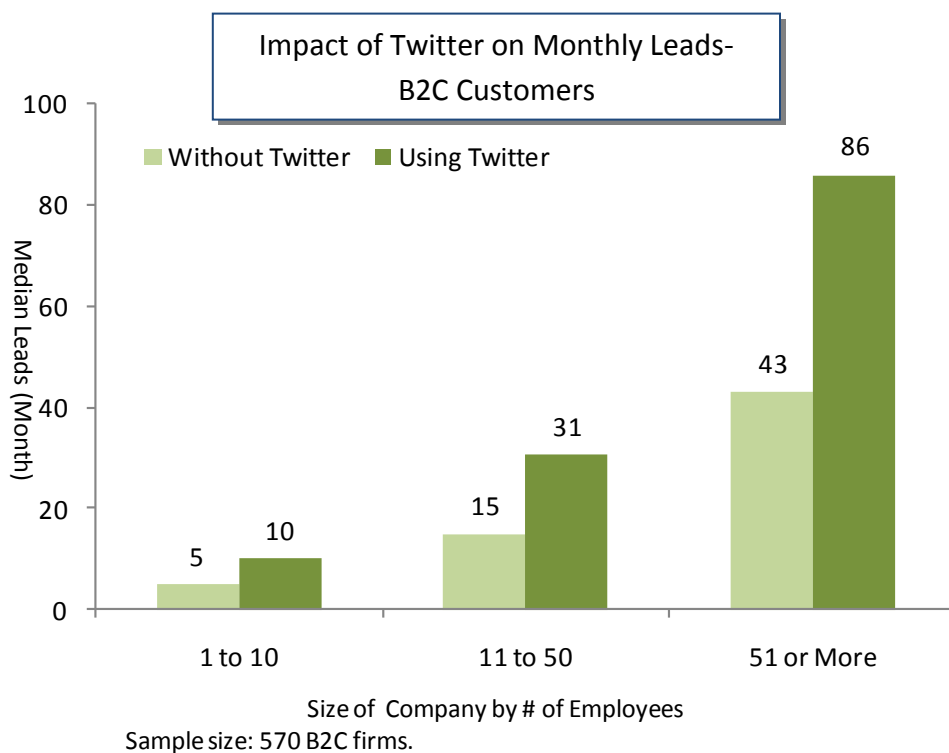
- **Grow indexed pages in Google** more rapidly than by adding web site pages. As we showed earlier, the more Google indexed pages a site has, the more leads it is likely to obtain.
- **Increase the number of keywords marketers rank for in Google.** Through blogs, marketers have the opportunity to create unique content that can be very different from their web site content. They have the potential to significantly increase the number of keywords they rank highly for in Google.
- **Generate inbound links**, which are a central factor in Google's organic search ranking algorithm. Other related sites are likely to link to a blog that provides interesting and fresh content.
- **Increase repeat visitors.** Blogs give visitors a reason to come back to and interact with sites.

## Using Twitter and Growing Followers – B2C Customers

### B2C Twitter Users Generate 2x More Leads Than Non-Twitter Users

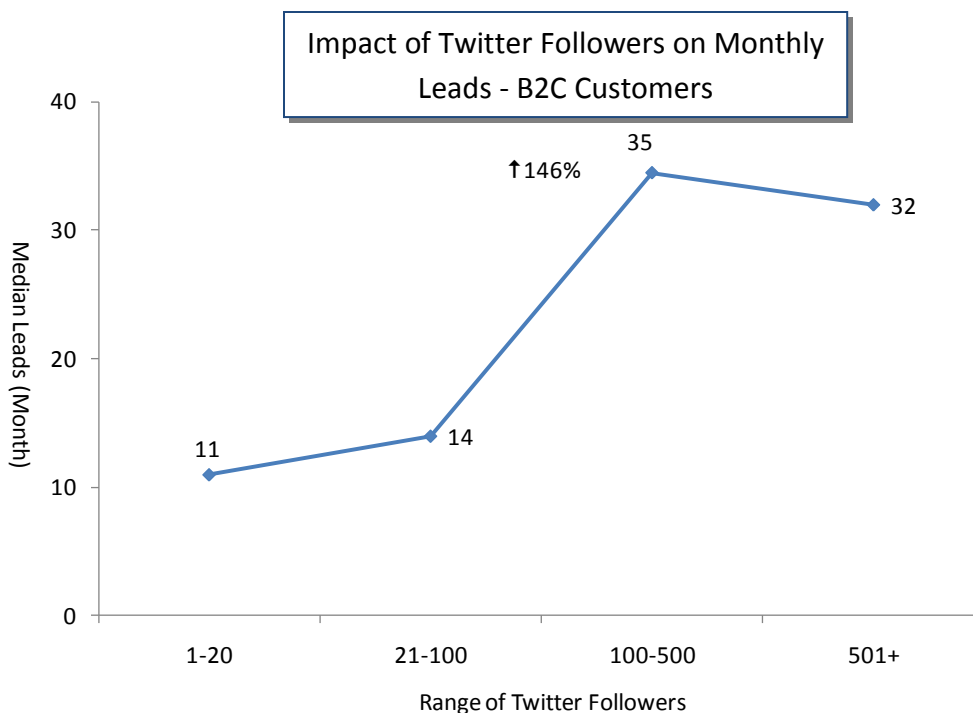
Twitter's positive correlation to leads was statistically confirmed for B2C companies. For B2B customers, however, the results are less reliable.

The 56% of B2C customers who use Twitter **generated two times more leads** than customers without a Twitter account. The results were consistent across company size.



### Growing Twitter Followers Increases Leads for B2C Companies up to 500

The graph below shows the relationship between Twitter reach and median leads. Median leads jump almost 30% once customers achieved follower numbers in the high double digits.



**The largest jump in leads takes place once customers garner several hundred followers.** As the graph shows, leads may not continue to rise with Twitter reach past 500 followers. Customers with large numbers of followers are probably attracting viewers who are exclusively interested in the content.

#### Marketing Takeaways

Consider leveraging Twitter to:

- **Build relationships** with individuals who prefer shorter-format content and the interactivity Twitter enables.
- **Enhance relationships** with individuals who are already blog subscribers by serving them blog content in a shorter, more digestible format that they can consume “on the go” through mobile devices.
- **Increase your presence in Google.** Tweets are now searchable in Google through Google real-time search.

**Follow to get followers.** Build your Twitter reach by following companies and individuals related to your industry. They will likely follow you.

## Conclusions

The findings in this report should encourage marketers to adopt the following four inbound marketing techniques:

1. **Creating many pages of unique and compelling content** to maximize the number of pages indexed in search engines
2. **Identifying keywords** for each page that are **relevant and specific** to maximize the number of keywords that a site will rank highly for in search engine results
3. **Creating a blog** and updating it frequently to grow indexed pages and keywords and to keep the company's community interested
4. **Leveraging Twitter** to build a community of followers eager to receive blog and web site content in a shorter, more accessible format

By implementing these practices on a weekly and, in the case of blogs and Twitter, on a daily basis, marketers are likely to attract more visitors who convert to leads.

## Appendix

### Inbound Marketing Metrics Definitions

The metrics discussed in this report are defined below.

Metric	Definition
1. Monthly Leads	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Leads captured in the prior month</li><li>A Lead = a web site visitor who fills out a form capturing information that would allow for a more customized and individualized interaction</li></ul>
2. Indexed pages in Google	Pages Google includes in its database of pages considered for ranking for specific keywords
3. Keywords ranking in Google's top 100 results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>The number of keywords for which a site ranks in the top 100 results in Google</li></ul>
4. Publishing a Blog	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Customer has a blog once they have published at least four articles</li></ul>
5. # of Blog Articles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Number of blog articles available on a site at one point in time</li></ul>
6. Twitter use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Customer has created a Twitter account</li></ul>
7. Twitter Reach	Twitter followers (the number of individuals who subscribe to a company's Twitter updates)