

## Retweet After Me: The Etiquette for Sharing on Social Media

ALLIE JEKA



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Social media is all about content sharing. Whether you're retweeting, reposting or regramming, sharing the posts and photos of others is a great way to foster engagement between users, spread news and ideas, and garner more digital attention for your brand. For the most part, social media content sharing is a good thing. However, to maintain your brand's credibility, it's important to do it right.

Because the social media landscape is rapidly growing and changing, and is shaped significantly by the actions of millions of users, it's almost impossible to find a concrete set of rules on what is and isn't acceptable when it comes to sharing the work of others. Despite that lack, the work that each person creates and posts on social media, including written posts, blogs, articles, photos, videos, and so on – called User Generated Content – is that individual's own property. It's important to follow ethical social media etiquette to ensure that you're *sharing*, not *stealing*, when reposting someone else's content by giving credit where credit is due.

Facebook and Twitter make it easy to share content, as Facebook's "share" feature and Twitter's "retweet" feature allow users to automatically share a post with its original content, as well as link back

to the content's creator. These two platforms will also notify the original poster that the content is being shared. Because the sharing features on these

platforms would *not* be acceptable to save a photo or other content from one of these sites and then post it as if it were your own. Because sharing



Above is an example of a retweet.

two platforms maintain the integrity of the original post and ensure that credit is given, it is generally seen as acceptable to share and retweet without expressly asking the creator for permis-

on these platforms preserves original content, you can easily share a post and continue the conversation by adding your own opinion about, or expanding upon, the shared material.



**Sharing photos – such as this one featuring cute children showing off new Timberland footwear – is a great way to grab attention and foster engagement.**



**Photo owners should be credited when their photos are shared.**

When it comes to Instagram, where there is no “share” feature (although content can easily be shared by taking a screenshot or using a third-party app), the general assumption is that the photos posted on each person’s Instagram page are his or her own. Reposting photos is common on Instagram, but because this platform doesn’t have a “share” function where credit is automatically given and the user is notified, it’s crucial to ensure that you obtain permission and give appropriate credit when sharing Instagram posts. Many Instagram users consider it acceptable to share a photo and then give credit to the owner by tagging them in the photo caption. Use caution, however, because while many content creators will find this adequate, there are others who won’t. The best way to ensure that it’s acceptable to share someone else’s photo is by obtaining written permission. Avoid trouble for your brand by

When you give ownership credit in the caption of a shared photo on Instagram, further show your support for the creator of the content by tagging them in



**Sometimes a photo explains, such as showing what a Brannock device does.**

the first 125 characters of your caption. Otherwise, the photo credit won’t be visible on your posted photo unless

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expressly asking the content creator if you can repost their photo via a comment on the photo or a direct message.

viewers click “read more” to access additional characters. Note that in sharing photos on Instagram and Twitter, where

characters are limited, many people use the camera emoji followed by the tagged content creator to signify that the content creator is the owner of the shared photo.

Tagging the original owners of the content you share (with permission when necessary) can only benefit your brand. When you tag, or mention, other users, you boost their brand visibility as well as your own. You’ll be putting yourself on their map, as well as showing your followers that you align with another brand that they may know and like. Additionally, by giving credit to original creators of content that you share, you’ll be establishing your brand’s credibility and transparency. And, by interacting with other brands and users on social media, you increase your chances of experiencing engagement reciprocity: When you connect with others on social media and take the time to boost their visibility, they’ll be more likely to do the same for you.

If you ever find that another social media account has shared your content without giving appropriate credit, you have every right to send them a direct message and ask them to add credit or take the photo down. And, if the owner of content you’ve shared ever asks you to remove it, kindly recognize the fact that someone else is the owner of that creative work and oblige the owner’s request.

Word spreads faster on social media than anywhere else – and you don’t want an angry content creator telling followers that your brand has stolen the creator’s content. Instead, go above and beyond when acknowledging the source of all your shared content; acknowledgement will foster positive engagement and establish high credibility for your brand. ■

*Allie Jeka is social media manager and marketing assistant at Retailworks, Inc., an award-winning design and consulting firm specializing in retail, corporate and hospitality spaces. For more information, visit [www.retailworksinc.com](http://www.retailworksinc.com).*