

## Web & Social Media Metrics: Who Should You Follow on Twitter?

Martin De Saulles, Principal Lecturer in Digital Marketing, University of Brighton

### [Information Matters](#)

*With over 300 million active Twitter users, how do you decide who to follow?*

If you only want to keep up with friends and pursue the odd celebrity then it's not a problem. However, if you want to use Twitter for professional purposes it can be difficult to find accounts worth following. The chances are that whatever you're interested in, there will be someone or an organisation posting tweets of interest.

This short article will take you through some very simple steps that will help you sift through the rubbish to find the gold. I've used a real example based on how I identified a small selection of Twitter accounts to follow based on my professional interest in the "Internet of Things" (IoT). See [my article in the last edition of eLucidate](#) if you don't know what the Internet of Things is.

I've been interested in the IoT for about a year as it fits well into my research and teaching around the innovation sector. Because of this, I need to keep up-to-date with this rapidly changing area by following relevant news sites, blogs and social media. A Google Alerts RSS feed for the phrase "Internet of Things" coupled with other RSS feeds from the trade press and specialist blogs, all managed from my [Feedly](#) account gives me a good overview of what is happening in the IoT world. However, this does not cover Twitter posts from IoT experts and organisations.

A recent search of Twitter profiles that contain the phrase, "Internet of Things" revealed 2,611 accounts. This is far too many to follow so the trick is to find the most influential accounts based on how many of their posts are retweeted by others.

This is where [Followerwonk](#) comes in handy as it allows you to easily search Twitter profiles and then sort the results by different criteria. The most useful measure is Social Authority, which is an indicator of the extent to which other users share that user's posts. Simply taking the number of followers or tweets is often not a good indicator of authority, as it takes no account of quality. Just as inbound links to a website are a good indicator of the authority of that site, so retweets are also a good signal.

Figure 1 shows the results of searching for the phrase “internet of things” and a sort based on Social Authority.

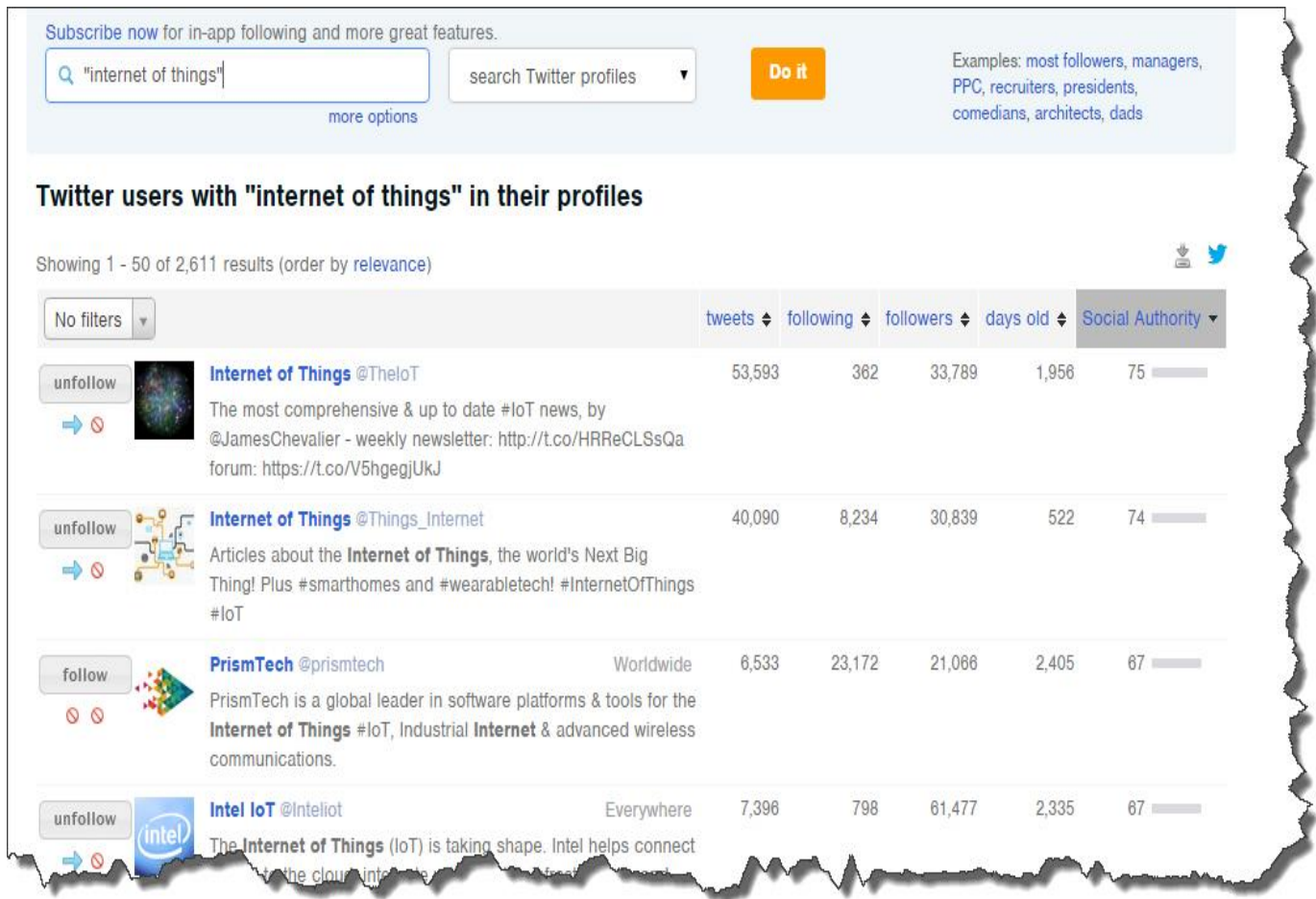


Figure 1. Initial Followerwonk Search

You can scroll down this list looking for accounts that look interesting and following, any which catch your eye. However, there are over 2,000 of them so this would take time and you may miss some good ones. In this case, I took the top 3 accounts, based on their Social Authority, listed above and used another Followerwonk tool called “Compare Users”. This allows you to look for overlaps in up to 3 accounts in terms of who they follow or their followers. I was interested to see which accounts were followed by all 3 of the top ranked accounts listed in Figure 1. My thinking was that any accounts followed by all 3 of them would at least be worthy of further investigation.

Figure 2 shows the results of this.

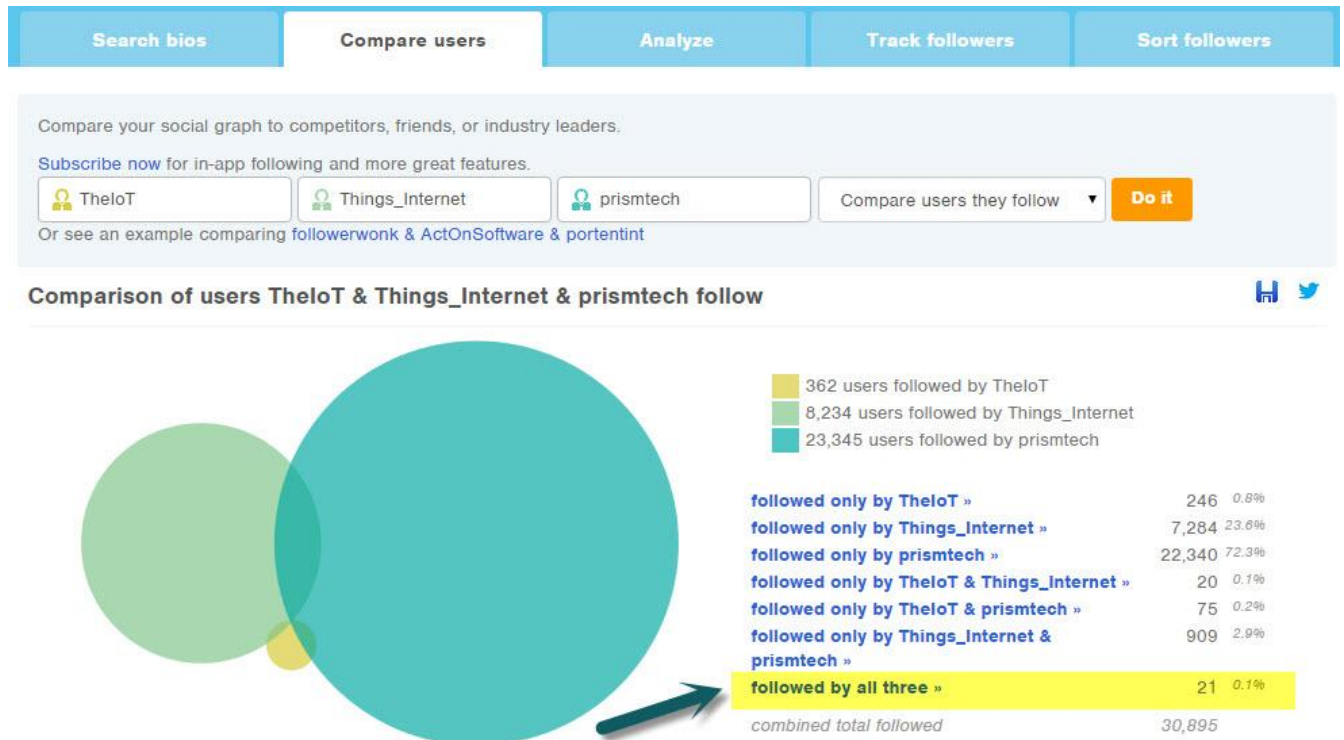


Figure 2. Results of “Compare Users” Test

As you can see from the highlighted text in Figure 2. There are 21 accounts followed by all 3 of the top 3 ranking IoT accounts. Clicking on that allows you to browse through those 21 accounts to identify possible users to follow. Figure 3 shows this list. By hovering the mouse over any of the 21 accounts listed I was able to read their profiles to get a better idea about their backgrounds.

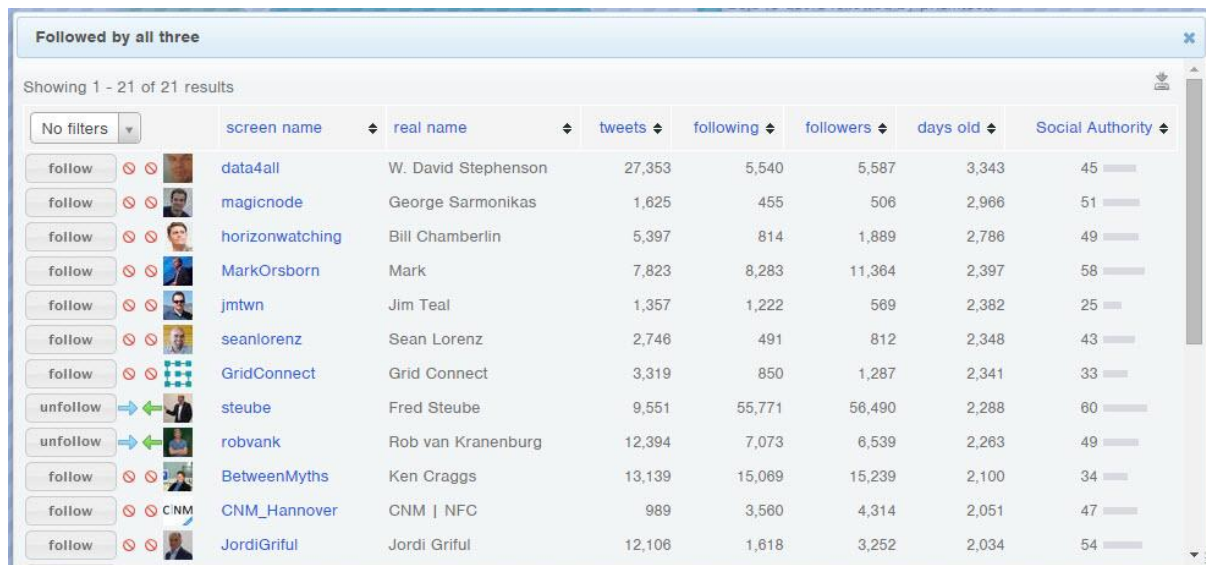


Figure 3. Overlapping Accounts

From this list I found half a dozen accounts which I thought worth following and which have turned out to be valuable sources of information.

Everything I've shown you above is available on Followerwonk's free service and does not require the creation of an account. There is a subscription service that unlocks extra functionality but for my purposes the free level of service has always been sufficient.

Happy searching!