

# 7 Rules of Viral Marketing With Twitter

Are You Building a Personal Brand, or Are You Becoming a Commodity?



By Charles Brown  
[webmarketing-coach.com](http://webmarketing-coach.com)  
[twitter.com/charbrown](https://twitter.com/charbrown)

## Introduction

Maybe you are like me (although for your sake I hope not). Maybe you've been sitting on the Twitter sidelines wondering what the big deal is. Maybe, for the life of you, you just can't figure out how to use Twitter strategically to help your business or promote your cause.

For six months after I signed up for Twitter, I did nothing with it. To me it just seemed like a hyped up version of an Instant Messaging service. Big deal.

But a funny thing happened, even though I had all but forgotten about it, I kept getting a slow trickle of emails, each telling me that so and so had just started following me on Twitter.

Huh? How could I be getting these followers if I wasn't doing anything? I wasn't tweeting anything (I didn't even know what a "tweet" was) and I wasn't adding anyone new to the list of people I was following. Yet I continued to get occasional new followers on a regular basis.



This convinced me to take a second look at Twitter to see what was up. I began to realize that Twitter really could add value to my business, but I had to figure out how to use it strategically.

\*\*\*\*\*

Now before we go any further, let me first explain that this ebook is not going to explain what Twitter is. I begin with the assumption that you already know these things (there are certainly enough resources on the web already that can explain the basics).

If you aren't creating a personal brand, a brand built on providing solutions, you are a commodity.

Why should anyone seek you out to do business if they do not believe you can solve their problems?

This ebook assumes you are either already using Twitter or are sitting on the sidelines like I was, without a real understanding of how to use it effectively and strategically.

But what this ebook will do is show you how to get the most out of Twitter as a personal branding and marketing tool.

As you can no doubt tell from the title, I have broken this little masterpiece into 7 rules for viral marketing with Twitter. So without further ado, let's get started.

\*\*\*\*\*

### Rule 1: Don't Be a Commodity

Why are you online? Is it to attract new business? Is it to become the go-to person in your field? Or is it to become a trusted advisor for your clients?

Maybe your reason is as simple as wanting to never have to chase new clients again with traditional marketing methods like cold calling, direct mail or advertising.

Or maybe you are in the job market and want to find a better way to land a new career. You do not want your resume sitting on someone's desk in a pile with a few hundred other applicants.

On the contrary, you want employers to seek you out.

Whatever your purpose, I think it's a safe bet that you don't want to blend in or be a nobody. Basically this means that you do not want to be a commodity. Instead you want to create a "personal brand" that attracts others to you and positions you as an expert in your field.

How can this be done? As Seth Godin teaches in his book *The Purple Cow*, all successful marketing depends upon creating a remarkable product.

And this is never more true than when the product is you.





Unfortunately, most people tend to “play it safe” or take their cues from what everyone else is doing (if you don’t believe me, check out the lawyer ads in your Yellow Pages). The result is that they don’t stand out. Instead they become commodities.

The opposite of being a commodity is establishing a “personal brand” for yourself. *In other words, becoming your own purple cow.*

Twitter makes it extremely easy to create a personal brand. If you understand who you want to attract and find solutions to their problems, you can become the “Purple Cow” with Twitter. You can avoid being a commodity by providing your target audience with quality content that solves their problems.

How do you find this content? The best case scenario is for you to create it yourself. For example, I just bought a Flip camcorder for \$79 and am already making some very simple videos of myself standing before a whiteboard talking about various topics of interest to my audience. Creating fresh, new content can be as easy and inexpensive as that.

An even better way to create new content is to start a blog and write short articles on various subjects. You can also use your blog as a place to host other people’s articles and videos.

But constantly creating new content is a lot of work. So it is also a very good idea to find outside sources of new content that you can share with your friends on Twitter. Follow a few blogs you really like and tweet about the best articles you find. Remember, you want to position yourself as a solver of certain problems or a trusted resource for information on a certain subject.

<sup>1</sup>You should also set up a Google Alerts account to have new web content emailed to you daily on the subjects you are interested in. Or you can search [Digg.com](http://Digg.com) or [Stumbleupon.com](http://Stumbleupon.com) for new content.

Think about the last party you attended. There were probably several different conversations going on at once as people gathered in small clusters and talked about various topics. But at every party, there is always some guy who is the center of conversation. This is usually the guy who has the most interesting things to talk about.

The point of this is that Twitter is like a big party with lots of conversations. You want to be that person who always has something interesting and informative to talk about. So tweet about things that are interesting. Be the person everyone gathers around.

**“The secret to Twitter is:  
tweet quality, tweet  
often, tweet authentically  
and tweet with  
personality.”**

Scott Stratten (@unmarketing)

## **Rule 2: Follow Strategically**

Your followers will probably be a lot like the people you follow. If you want followers who share your interests, then follow people who also have those same interests.

Not only will you find it easier to build relationships with like-minded people, but if you are using

The types of people you follow will have a lot to do with the types of people who follow you. Therefore, mostly follow people you find interesting and who share common interests.

Twitter for business, you will find that these people are more likely to want to do business with you as well.

Why are the people who follow you likely to be a lot like the people you follow? Because many of the people you follow, will follow you in return. Moreover, many of their followers will find out about you and start following you as well.

*This means you must follow strategically.* If you follow anyone and everyone, don't be surprised if the people who follow you are also a hodge podge of different interests. And also don't be surprised if you find it difficult to make connections with them.

Now don't get me wrong. I am not advocating having a totally homogeneous group. Some of the most interesting and fun conversations I've had on Twitter were with people who were very different views from me. I've also learned a great deal from these folks. But it would not be very productive if my entire following were made up of people like that.

So without being afraid to follow interesting people from all walks of life, strive to target a strategically high proportion of people with whom you share common interests.

- Find people you share an interest with, and follow them. You will find that a good number of people will follow you in return if you follow them, so make the most of this and selectively follow certain people.

Focus most of your attention on following people that you share some commonality with. If there is a blogger you particularly like, find out if this person is on Twitter. Or do a search on <http://tweetdeck.com> for people who use certain keywords when they tweet.



- When you find someone who you share common interests with, drill down into the people they follow and check these people out. You will find even more people you share common interests with this way. Then reverse this process and drill down the list of people who follow this person and you will find even more people you share interests with.



form of instant messaging (IM), they really aren't adding anything to the conversation.

### Rule 3:

#### Treat Your Contact List Like An Asset.

This means both your followers *and the people you follow* are valuable to your online enterprise, and should be treated accordingly.

Juliette Powell, who wrote *33 Million People in the Room*, introduced me to the concept of social capital. The idea here is that your contacts are a business asset, just like a piece of property, a patent or a customer list.

If you are familiar with Robert Kiyosaki's Rich Dad, Poor Dad concept, an asset is something that produces a return on your investment.

And what does any good business person do with an asset or capital? The answer is to make it increase or grow. In Twitter terms, this means you want to grow the number of your Twitter followers, but you want to do so strategically while at the same time building relationships with your followers.

Some people using Twitter regard their number of followers as a "score" to measure how much influence they have. After all, they think, when you have a lot of people as followers, you can send a lot of traffic to your website, blog, Facebook page or MySpace site.

You not only want to build a list of followers, you also want to build a following of people you have formed relationships with.

Of course you should work hard to increase the number of your followers. But a large list of people you have no relationship with will do you no more good than someone who just obtained a large list of email addresses and then sends out spam emails to these people.

You may have a lot of people who follow you, but if you do not have their ears and respect, if they have not come to regard you as a person who frequently sends out quality content that solves problems, you will probably have very little success using Twitter.

You not only want to build a list of followers, you also want to build a following.

There are a number of "black hat" methods out there designed to build your followers quickly. Typically these schemes revolve around the fact that most of the people you follow, will follow you in return.

These black hat schemes do not even attempt to strategically follow people you share common interests with. And as for building relationships with your followers? Not a chance.

Instead these schemes tell you to follow a lot of people, wait a few days to see if they follow you in turn, then unfollow those who don't follow you, and then repeat the process over and over.

Admittedly you can build up a large list of followers this way, but what good has it done you if you are not interested in the same things?

Here are some ways I have found to build followers AND build relationships with them:

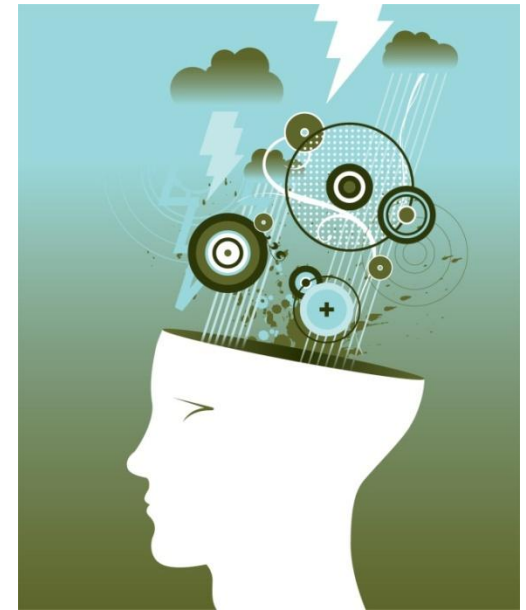
***Tweet often.*** Those two words make up the most important sentence in this ebook

- *Tweet often.* Those two words make up the most important sentence in this ebook. If you look at the people who have the largest number of followers (excluding those who are already prominent or well known) and you will find they also have posted a lot of messages.

Personally, I have noticed that I consistently get about 1 to 3 new followers every time I tweet. If I post 50 or more good, quality tweets in a day, I can almost be certain I will add 100 new followers that day or the next.

- Not all of your tweets have to be serious and business like (see Rule 6). But you certainly want to become known as someone who provides good content and information. As mentioned earlier, use **Digg**, **Stumbleupon**, **Google Alerts** or a select group of quality blogs to keep yourself well armed with good content to share.
- Twitter is a conversation, not a one-way shout out. Don't always tweet about your own content, cast the spotlight on others as well.

Send replies to people often. Compliment them on an insightful tweet (by the way, this is a great way to get noticed and possibly followed by someone who is not following you in return). Or retweet a good message someone else sends.



The more generous you are on Twitter, the more success (and followers) you will have.

- When you comment on someone's blog, put your Twitter ID underneath your name. If someone likes your comment, they may follow you. Also put your Twitter ID on your email signature file and on your website with your other contact information.

#### Rule 4: Own a Niche



What problems are you very good at solving? If you want to own a niche, focus on solving problems for other people.

Unfortunately, a lot of people have a hard time talking about the problems they solve instead of what they do.

Go back to the question I asked earlier. Why are you online? Do you want to become the go-to person in your field or do you want to be a commodity?

Assuming you want to stand out and be the trusted advisor, you must start thinking like a resource. You have to create your own piece of internet real estate for people to find you.

To my way of thinking, no website does a better job of this than a blog. A blog differs from a regular, static website in that it is a place you can easily add new content.

Blogs and Twitter go hand in hand. You may want to send people to links on your static website or Facebook page now and then, but a blog is a place that you can always add new information, which means you can always send your Twitter followers to relevant content.

Moreover, if you look at a lot of really good blogs, you will notice that a lot of excellent content is not entirely original writing. (This should be a relief for those of you who hate to write or think you are too busy to write).

You can also link to someone else's blog article (this is called a "trackback") and simply add your own insights to what the other blogger wrote. Not only is this a time saver, it also tends to attract additional traffic to your site as readers of the first blog link over to your blog to see what else there is to learn about the subject.

Ok, I don't want to get too didactic about blogs here,. So let me sum up by saying as powerful as Twitter is, it won't get you too far if you don't have an interesting place to send the people that follow you.

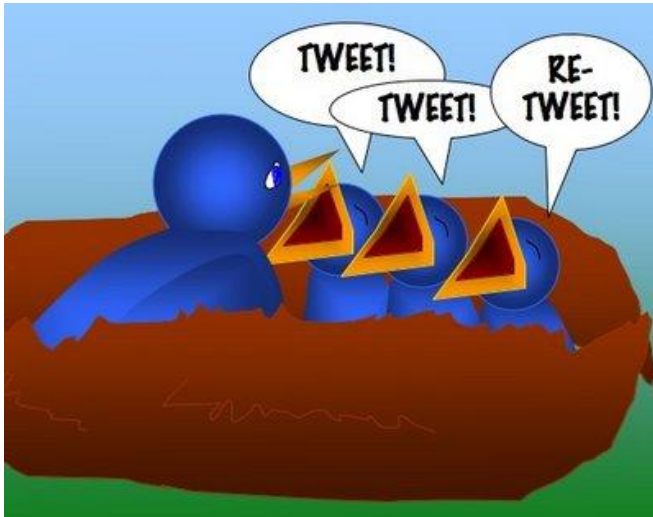
Enough said.



## Rule 5:

### Cultivate Evangelists by Being an Evangelist

I read an article recently by a marketer who felt that Twitter was a waste of time because each



tweet only has a limited exposure before it scrolls off the page.

The trouble with that thinking is that it is old school media marketing and fails to grasp the significance of how social media marketing changes the game.

This author felt that what *he* had to say was the important thing. But social media is not about what you or I say, it is about what others say about you.

Social media marketing is all about letting the market do your marketing for you. In other words, social media only works when other people start talking about you.

Twitter especially makes this easy because users can easily “retweet” your content if they like it and feel it will benefit others.

In that sense, Twitter is an incredibly generous community for those who act generously. If you become known as someone who adds value to the conversation, creates new content or shares news and ideas with others, you will find that your content will often get retweeted.

I call these people evangelists. These are the people who willingly pass your content and ideas along to others.

When your content gets retweeted, it is not just shared with the people who follow you, but also with the people who follow your evangelists.

I used the words "Viral Marketing" in the title of this ebook for a reason. "Viral" is when your message has legs and is spread by other people.

Think of some of the amazing YouTube videos that have spread around the world in a matter of hours or days. Or think of the U.S Airways flight that landed in the Hudson River. These images were spread because they were so interesting that one person just had to share it with others.

Do you want your tweets to get retweeted virally? If so, there are three rules:



- Be an evangelist. If you are known as someone who is generous on Twitter, who passes along the content of others, then you are far more likely to get retweeted yourself. But, and this is a very important point, only retweet quality content. Don't retweet just to be seen doing it. You still want to be known as a source of quality information, whether it is your own or it originates from someone else.
- Ask for a retweet. Studies<sup>2</sup> have shown an exponential increase in retweeting when the original person simply said, "Please RT" at the end of their tweet.
- And this leads to the next point. Don't expect your subpar content to get retweeted. Don't ask for people to retweet content that does not add value to the conversation or is a valuable resource to others. Save your retweet requests for your best stuff.

Social media marketing is all about *letting the market do your marketing for you*. In other words, social media only works when other people start talking about you.

### **Rule 6: Make Friends**

You will be surprised at how quickly you can make friends on Twitter if you actually participate in various conversations.

---

<sup>2</sup> See Kevin Gibbons' great article "How to Find Twitter Twits to Retweet Your Tweet!" at <http://twurl.nl/gt88vl>

I can't think of a better example of making friends than @BillHurlbut. Bill, is an insurance agent, but he hardly acts like any insurance agent you've ever met.

Bill's whole mission is to make friends. You would almost swear that Bill is more interested in helping grow your business than he is in growing his own.



And I should know, I have gotten two (so far) speaking engagements as a result of Bill using his contacts to help me out.

On Twitter, as in the offline world, Bill is constantly networking. He retweets quality content and is quick to answer questions posed by other users. He does no overt marketing, and if I hadn't just told you, you probably would never have guessed that he sells insurance. He is leading a one-man effort to salvage the reputations of insurance agents everywhere. Literally, Bill markets himself by making friends.

\*\*\*\*\*

I've already mentioned that I'm not a huge fan of constantly using Twitter as if it were an Instant Messaging service. For the rest of us, watching you conduct a back and forth conversation with someone else is not terribly helpful and we feel left out and confused.

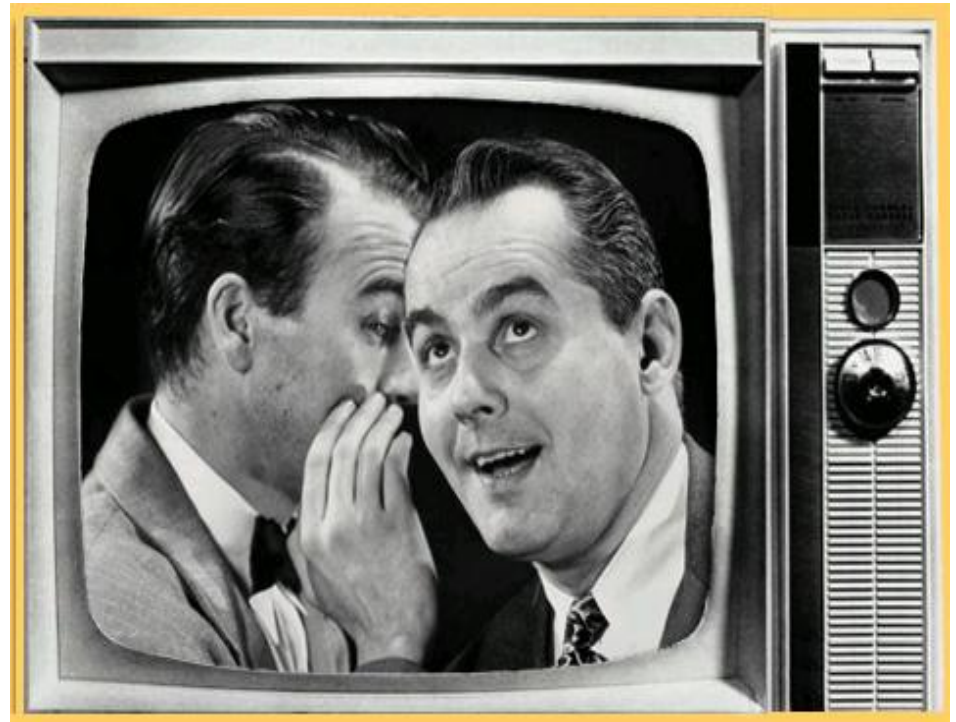
But one-on-one conversations do have their place. Replying and retweeting to other people's messages is a great way to get noticed, get followed and make friends.

Engage in a little humor when it is appropriate. If you have the knack for making others smile, do so freely. Or if you can't do that, tweet about funny news items.

\*\*\*\*\*

If one of your fellow Twitter contacts is promoting something, whether a non-profit cause or a for-profit venture (and you can honestly, without reservation support it), consider becoming that person's advocate.

When you occasionally promote someone else's efforts, you naturally have more credibility than the person who has a personal stake in the venture. And you will most definitely make a friend.



Twitter does not, and should not, be all business. Most of us social media types have a great desire to *avoid* dealing with suits, so for goodness sake don't act like one.

Obviously your own credibility is at stake whenever you advocate for someone else, so make sure you can truly support the other person. Also, you don't want to overdo this tactic or you will become known as shill.

\*\*\*\*\*

Twitter does not, and should not, be all business. Most of us social media types have a great desire to *avoid* dealing with suits, so don't act like one. (I am personally very proud of the fact that I've worn a tie only once in three years).

Compliment someone on good content. Letting them know that you appreciate an article they spent an hour writing is well received. For example, one of my very good Twitter friends is @allenmireles who is always encouraging me and complimenting me when she thinks I have written a good article (By the way, @allenmireles would be a great person for you to follow).

In my experience, few people take the time to visit other people's sites to see what they do. Acknowledge what their business is and use it to start a conversation. They will be surprised/honored that you took the time to make a single mouse click to see their little piece of online real estate.

Tweet to raise awareness to a worthy cause. That will show that you are not just about business, but also have a heart.

### **Rule 7: Don't Be a Jerk**

Twitter is the "NFL" of social media, which means "Not For Long" if you violate its code of conduct. Think of Twitter as a community. We have our rules. We are tolerant of a little self promotion as long as you also contribute to the conversation, are generous, polite and genuinely add value in some way.

But if you are a spammer, we can unfollow you, or if you are particularly obnoxious, block you. Unlike our poor helpless email inboxes, we can protect our Twitter accounts since it gives us ways to quickly get rid of undesirable people.

Kenneth Wu (@emailcopywriter) suggests a very good Twitter rule of thumb: send 7 informative content tweets for every 1 self promotional message.

But even with the best of intentions, it is still possible to be perceived as a jerk. Give thought to where you point your links to in your tweets (I'm referring to your self-promotional messages here). If you send people to one of those one-page, sales letter websites, your followers may feel tricked or annoyed, even if you have faithfully observed @emailcopywriter's 1 to 7 ratio.





A far better option is to send people to a blog page (yet another reason you should have a blog) or a Squidoo lens that explains the value of what your sales page offers. Then provide a second link directing them there if they are interested. The reason: the 140 characters allowed on a tweet hardly gives you room to explain what they will gain by your link to a sales site.

By directing people through a blog page or Squidoo lens, you have the ability to position the sales page as a valuable resource your followers may wish to consider.

### **Conclusion**

That's it. You now have the 7 rules for using Twitter to create a viral marketing machine. There isn't any magic to it really. Just be generous, make friends, have interesting and informative content to share, don't be pushy, follow strategically and tweet often.

But in another sense, Twitter IS magic. I know of no other way to make so many contacts (and friends) so quickly. Good luck to you, and I'll be looking forward to your tweets.

## Who Is Charles Brown

(and why did his parents name him after a comic strip character?)

I am a blogger, writer, trainer, speaker, coach and former lawyer, with an unhealthy interest in just about everything.

I coach and consult with professionals and professional services organizations that want to become recognized authorities in their fields. For lack of a better description, I guess you could call me a "Rainmaker Coach" or an expert on how to become an expert.

My mission is to help other professionals establish their own personal brands using blogs, Twitter and other social media platforms.



You can visit me at my blog, <http://webmarketing-coach.com> , follow me on Twitter at @charbrown or become my Facebook friend at <http://www.facebook.com/people/Charles-Brown/1138107560>.

You can even call me at 817-501-6892. And if you ever happen to be in the Dallas-Fort Worth area (like say, you get stuck at our infamous airport), give me a call so I can buy you a cup of coffee.

## Twitter Resources

- [Twitip.com](http://twitip.com) – a blog about Twitter with lots of great ideas from Darren Rowse.
- How to Attract and Influence People on Twitter — The Ultimate Twitter Resource <http://prevential.com/twitter-tips/>
- Top 10 things New People to Twitter Should Know <http://twurl.nl/uro740>
- Forrester: Recession won't dampen social media marketing spending <http://bit.ly/E7Vaq>
- 20 Ways Twitter Helps Businesses Beat The Economic Downturn <http://twitpwr.com/8Zm/>
- How Social Media Helped Us Reach 25+ Countries and Close New Deals In 60 Days <http://twitpwr.com/8Zm/>
- 5 Answers to Tough Questions Companies Have About Using Social Media <http://twentyset.com/5-answers-to-tough-questions-companies-have-about-using-social-media/>
- What the hell can social media do for me? <http://www.socialdesire.com/2008/07/10/what-the-hell-can-social-media-do-for-me/>
- Is Your Online Strategy All Tweet and No Meat? <http://twurl.nl/xvu7jt>
- Are you wasting 80% of your marketing budget? <http://webmarketingcoach.blogspot.com/2009/03/are-you-wasting-80-of-your-marketing.html>
- White paper on how marketers are using social media: <http://www.whitepapersource.com/socialmediamarketing/report/>
- 12 Twitter Stream Aggregators To Make You Smarter <http://www.toprankblog.com/2009/02/12-twitter-stream-aggregators/>
- 35 Must-Read Articles For Social Media Marketers [http://digg.com/business\\_finance/35\\_Must\\_Read\\_Articles\\_for\\_Social\\_Media\\_Marketers](http://digg.com/business_finance/35_Must_Read_Articles_for_Social_Media_Marketers)
- Twitter: How To Generate Contacts, Leads And New Clients <http://twitpwr.com/8Zm/>
- How Social Media Helped Us Reach 25+ Countries and Close New Deals In 60 Days <http://twitpwr.com/8Zm/>
- 10 Reasons You Should Use Twitter <http://digitallabz.com/blogs/10-reasons-you-should-use-twitter.html>
- How to Grow Both Twitter Followers and Your Blog Subscribers <http://www.chrisg.com/twitter-versus-feed/>
- 19 Handy Twitter Mashups and Tools <http://digitallabz.com/blogs/19-twitter-mashups-and-tools.html>

---

**People you should be following:**

<sup>1</sup>@charbrown (Of course I want you to follow me, why do you think I wrote this ebook?)

@unmarketing

@allenmireles

@billhurlbut

@marketingprofs

@danshwabel

@dmscott

@perrybelcher

@probblogger

@debbieweil

@denisewakeman

@jonathangunson

@barefoot\_exec

@chrisbrogan

@shoestringing

@pamslim

@emailcopywriter

@podcasting101

@marismith

@sujatachadha

@nicheprof

@rynge