RT2WIN!

How 50 lines of Python made me the luckiest guy on Twitter
“No purchase necessary, enter as often as you want. So I am.”
Introduction

• I’m Hunter
• Electrical & Computer Engineer
• Working in Silicon Valley
• Currently disrupting social local mobile big data analytics with cloud based MapReduce deployments on Docker with Rust
Origin

• “Hey, there’s a ton of contests on Twitter. All you have to do to enter them is retweet them…”

~$ vim rt2win.py
I love getting packages.

I set up a script to search eBay et al. for $1 items with free shipping.

I gave it $365, so each day it can buy me something random.

What if you just end up with lots of crap? I'll give it away. But I'm sure I'll get some interesting stuff.

Day 1: Length of rubber hose. Could be handy around the house.

Day 2: Ski mask. It's spring, but hey.


Day 4: Tourist map of the Pentagon. Uh oh.

Day 5: Lube. I'm stopping this before I end up on every F.B.I. watch list ever.
HS
@HS

I'm up all night to get lucky

Here

Tweet to HS
“How hard could it possibly be?”

• Step 1: Look for contests, retweet them
• Step 2: Profit
• Started with simple search terms at first
  • “rt2win”, rt to win”, “rt 2 win”, “retweet to win”, etc
• Used the Twitter API
• Rate limit = 😞
• So, retweet slower, add random delays
RT2WIN your very own set of @... products! Ends at 21.30 - must be following both accounts... good luck!
I will provide 500 Real Twitter Followers within 24 Hours for $5

Rating: 4.60 / 5.00 (132) 7 Orders in Queue

Digital Marketing / Social Media Marketing

Order Now ($5)
Better solution

• Turn the follow queue into a FIFO
• Unfollow the 1\textsuperscript{st} account when I follow the 2000\textsuperscript{th} account
• The amount of time it takes to enter 2000 contests that require following is enough that the 1\textsuperscript{st} contest is almost certainly over by then
• Side effect: I get more real followers because people follow back as a courtesy.
• My bot actually looks more legit now
Interesting interactions
Forgot to change my name on one of my accounts that won the same contest as another one…

Direct messages › with [redacted]

3m

...Are you the same Hunter Scott handle we just spoke to?
Yes, I won this.

RT for a chance to win these tupaware LIDS that have been warped in the dishwasher. Must be following.
Bots vs Bots

My best RTs this week came from: @blank @blank @blank @blank @blank @blank #thankSAll via sumall.com/thankyou
hrey bb fanks 4 teh folw, iv u have sweg subskrieb 2 mi on uteub 4 anemashuns: youtube.com/channel/UC0hR7... -via @justunfollow
Someone offering a postcard signed by ME as a prize...
Sometimes my bot was accidentally a jerk 😞
Also, I don't want to make this a big deal, but I'm one follower short of 500. That lucky person will win absolutely nothing.
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Guess who?
Another false positive

@HS retweeted

Quote with your Top 5 Cereals 🍩ereal®️ Lucky Charms, Frosted Flakes, Cinnamon Toast Crunch, Captain Crunch, Coco Puffs... no order

2 retweets 1 like
Another false positive

@ [redacted] Quote with your Top 5 Cereals "Lucky Charms, Frosted Flakes, Cinnamon Toast Crunch, Captain Crunch, Coco Puffs...no order"
The Haul
The full list:

hscott.net/winnings.txt
@[REDACTED] Thank you so much for #RT u + mum were the only 2 who did. I raised just over £1500 4 Great Ormond Street. Sun is shining on you. x.
But even this backfired...

For every 1 RT I will donate $1 in hope of curing Tyler's disease that makes him super ugly.
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People ask you for weird stuff

@ Someone | 14h
I'm making a YouTube video to ask Luke on a date but I need more RTs on this link, please RT ❤️ twitter.com...

@ Someone | 1m
Can u make it to my party? I would love for u to go.
When:
Sunday, April 27th
Time: 7am PST
Where: Snow forts, sleet...
Ask me for more details

@ Someone | 6m
Drop everything now and follow >>>@ Someone <<< Ask for a follow back :))
Are you simply stupid, or are you possessed by a retarded ghost?

#skid #derp

12:17 PM - 25 Sep 2014 - Details

Reply to @

HS @ 12s
the second one.
Stats

- 165,000 contests entered
- On average, 4 wins per day, every day
Stats

• 165,000 contests entered
• On average, 4 wins per day, every day, for 9 months straight
Stats

• 165,000 contests entered
• On average, 4 wins per day, every day, for 9 months straight
• Most valuable prize: $4000 trip to Fashion Week in NYC
Yes, I paid the taxes.
Other attempts

• Before I did this, there were at most a few people auto-entering twitter contests
• Couldn’t find any obvious examples
• Did see some manual examples
• Now a lot of people do it
  • Or at least, they try
Often imitated, never duplicated
How to keep me from winning

• Take two seconds and read the feed of the winner
  • It will usually be pretty obvious.
  • I made no attempt at stealth and still won. Some people do attempt stealth and are much harder to catch

• Make it hard to programmatically enter
  • Add something that requires natural language processing

• Consider running the contest on Facebook
  • Much harder to make a fake but convincing profile
  • Tied to real identity

• Accept that people always try to game contests