



BEST PRACTICES GUIDE | SOCIAL MEDIA

Quick Guide to Getting Started: Twitter for Small Businesses and Nonprofits

Social Media

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What is Twitter?

Twitter is a real-time information network that empowers its users to share and discover interesting content through status updates (or “tweets”) from other users. It is often referred to as a microblogging service because it limits your status updates to 140 characters. But the brilliance is in its simplicity and brevity.

Who is on Twitter?

Twitter is ranked as one of the 10 most visited websites. It enables all types of people to share and consume information they find interesting. Users can choose to “follow” you on Twitter to keep track of your tweets. The follower relationship is not two-way; unlike Facebook, you don’t have to follow someone for them to follow you, and vice versa. However, when you follow someone on Twitter, you’ll see their tweets in real time on your private Twitter feed, including updates from everyone else you follow.

What do they do there?

Twitter users post and consume news, articles, promotions, thoughtful comments, and jokes, all in 140 character chunks. Like Facebook posts, users can share your tweet with the simple click of a button. This is called a “retweet,” and it’s the feature that makes Twitter such a great word-of-mouth platform for reaching an entirely new group of prospective customers and members. For many, Twitter is a great source of real-time news and insights about the things that matter most to them.

Why should you care?

Twitter gives your organization a voice, and is another fast and easy way to share messages and get feedback from your customers, members, and prospects in real time. And because it is so easy for messages to spread quickly, Twitter can bring you to new audiences that you might not be able to find through traditional marketing like tv, newspapers, radio, and email marketing.

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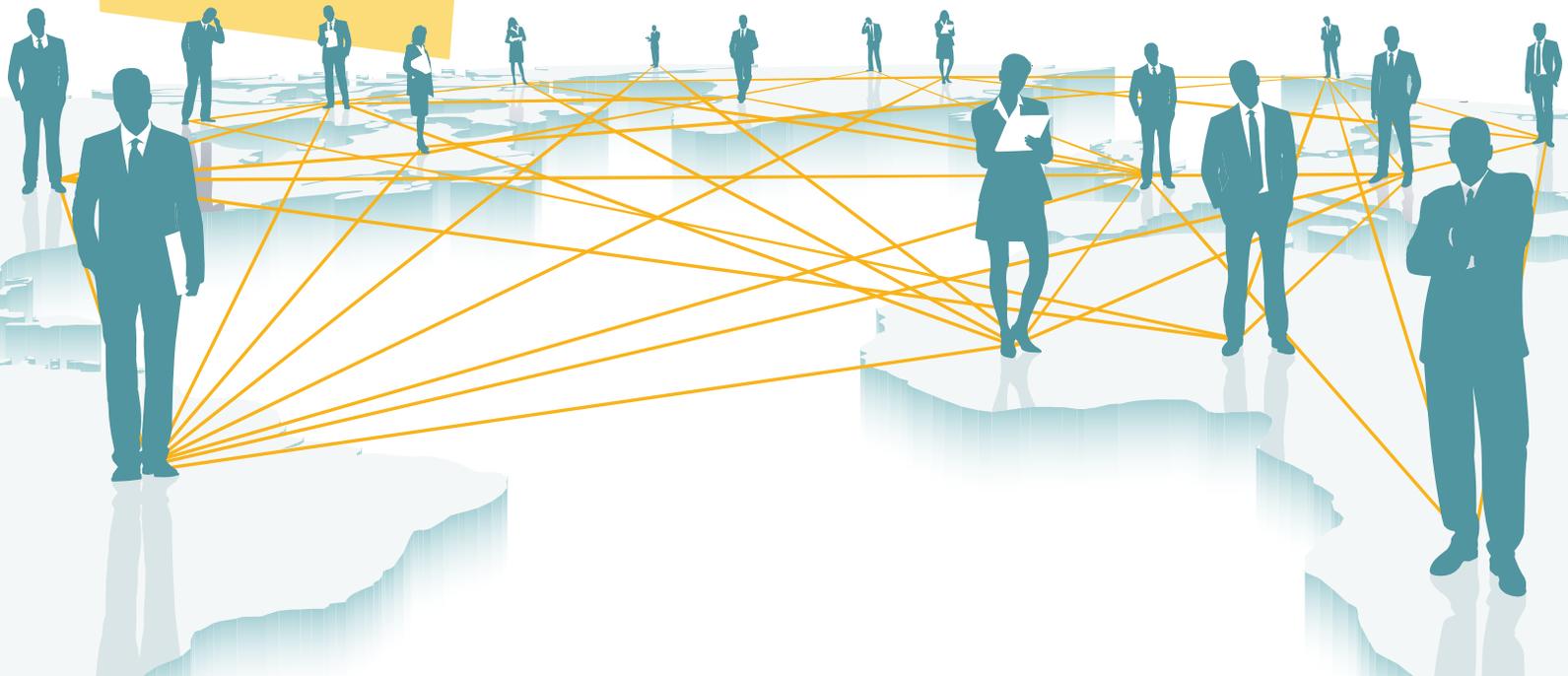
The “Network Effect”

60% of consumers say they are more likely to recommend a brand if they follow it on Twitter.

SOURCE: CHADWICK
MARTIN BAILEY
CONSUMER PULSE 2011.

As with other social networks (i.e., sites like Facebook and LinkedIn), Twitter can help your organization drive word of mouth in a way you never could have before. By sharing your expertise and content with customers, members, prospects, vendors, partners, etc. in a more social environment, you can not only stay in touch with your current connections, you can also make it easy for others to share the things you're posting online with their colleagues and friends, who can then share your content with their friends and more down the line.

Even better, you can now actively encourage this online word of mouth and thank people for sharing your message.



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10 Essential Twitter Facts

1. There are 75 million Twitter users worldwide.
2. Collectively, Twitter's active user base generates 140 million "tweets" per day.
3. Roughly 7% of Americans are currently using Twitter.
4. 460,000 new Twitter accounts are created each day.
5. Twitter users are more educated than the general population.
6. Twitter users have higher incomes than the general population.
7. Twitter users tend to be "early adopters."
8. Twitter plays an active role in purchasing decisions.
9. 67% of Twitter users are more likely to buy from brands that they "follow."
10. Companies that use Twitter average 2x more leads per month than those that do not.

Sources: [HubSpot](#), [Twitter](#)

10 FACTS

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Twitter Glossary

DM/Direct Message: A private note between two users on Twitter. The person receiving the message must follow the person sending it and the message is bound by the 140-character limit.

Follow: The act of connecting with someone on Twitter. People who have elected to follow you will see your tweets in their timeline. You are not obligated to follow people back and you have the ability to block followers (usually used only for spammers) from seeing your posts.

Following: Electing to see someone's tweets in your own timeline. Follow people and companies that you're interested in hearing from.

Handle: Your Twitter username is referred to as your handle, and is identified with the @ symbol. For example, Constant Contact's handle is @constantcontact. The @ is used to refer to a specific person and link to that account on Twitter within a tweet.

Hashtag: Words preceded by a # sign (i.e., #ctctsocial) can be used to tie various tweets together and relate them to a topic, be it a conference, TV show, sporting event, or any happening or trend of your choosing. Twitter automatically links all hashtags so users can search for other tweets using the same tag.

Lists: A way to combine select people you follow on Twitter into a smaller feed. A list can be made up of friends, competitors, people in the same state: anything you want. Lists let you view a slice of your followers at a time and are a great way to focus on specific folks when you're following a large number of people.

RT/Retweet: This is the Twitter equivalent of forward-to-a-friend. When someone posts something you find interesting, you can retweet it and share it with all the people who follow you.

Search: Since the majority of tweets are public, you can use Twitter's search feature to look for tweets containing a keyword or phrase. The search results will update in real time with any new tweets that contain the word or phrase searched on.

Timeline: The chronological listing of all tweets in a given feed, be it your own, in a list, or another user's.

Trending Topics: Along the right side of the main web interface, Twitter lists 10 topics that are "hot" on Twitter at the given moment based on certain algorithms. You can see trending topics for all of Twitter or for certain geographic areas.

Tweet: What a post on Twitter is called.

Tweetup: A term for in-person events (i.e., meetups) that spring from Twitter connections. Tweetups are typically informal gatherings that let Twitter followers meet in real life. Coordinators often use a hashtag to unite tweets related to the event.

Unfollow: By unfollowing someone, you no longer receive their updates in your own timeline.

Learn more at <http://www.constantcontact.com/learning-center/glossary/social-media/index.jsp#Twitter>

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By leveraging Twitter's many features, you can increase the online visibility of your business or organization and join in on the many conversations taking place on the network. It's one powerful way to stay top of mind, find new prospects, and connect with customers and members.

In this guide's five sections, we'll show you how to quickly get up and running on Twitter:

1. Setting up your profile
2. What to post and how often
3. Who to follow
4. Getting more followers
5. Tools to help

twitter

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Setting up your profile



Start by going to <http://twitter.com> and clicking on the “Sign Up” button. You’ll then be asked for your full name, email address, a password, and a username. The username is what people will refer to as your Twitter “handle”. It will have the web address twitter.com/username. You should pick something directly connected to your organization, related to what you’ll be posting (tweeting) about, or your actual name.

Once you’re done, click “Create my account.” You now have a Twitter profile! (Note: You can change your username at any time, but doing so can cause you to lose followers.)

Two more things that you will want to do right away are to upload a picture and write a short bio.

Your photo should either be your business or organization’s logo (or some small area of it) or a picture of you. Your followers will want to know who they are receiving information from. People will see this image every time you post, so make it a good one!

To upload your photo you’ll need to click on your username in the top right of your screen and select “Settings” from the drop down menu. Then click on “Profile” and you’ll see where to upload your image, add your website, and put in a short bio.

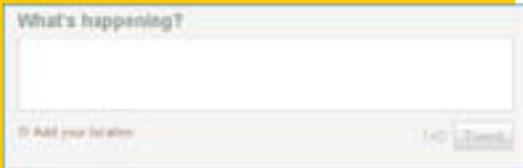
It’s important to add a descriptive bio to your profile for a couple reasons. First, this allows you to tell other Twitter users more about yourself and what’s important to you. Second, you’re setting expectations for what you’ll be posting about and why others should follow you.

You may also want to select a background from the options available through Twitter in the Design section, or by using a more advanced (but still free) service like TweetyGotBack.com.

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What to post and how often

Before you send your first tweet, you'll want to think about what you're going to post and what you can share in a compelling way in just 140 characters. Here are five things to remember:



1. **Be relevant.** Pick topics appropriate for your customers and prospects.
2. **Experiment and see what works.** What do people respond to? What do people retweet? Try a mix of content until you know what is most compelling to your followers.
3. **Have fun.** You don't always have to be serious in your posts. Find a tone that's comfortable for you and your business or organization.
4. **Don't make it all about you.** Twitter is designed to be a conversation, not just a megaphone. Post links to other articles, brands, products, and services that you like more often than you post about yourself. Equally important: Ask your followers for their opinions and feedback.
5. **Be responsive.** Try to answer questions, comments, or concerns that people post to you or about you promptly and professionally.

Now that you've decided what to post, you'll want to create your first tweet. Simply type in the "What's happening?" box at the top of the page and click the Tweet button.

Note: If you have included a web link, it may extend beyond the 140-character limit. To shorten it, you can use free services like <http://bit.ly/>. If you share an article through Twitter from someone else's page, most websites have a built-in link shortener.

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What to post and how often continued

The other big question is how often you should post. The answer is different for everyone, but our advice is that because Twitter moves pretty fast, you'll want to post often enough to get noticed without spending all day tweeting instead of running your business. (We'll discuss tools in later on that can help manage this.)



There are several factors to consider here:

How much time do you have? If you only have an hour a day to engage in social media, we recommend spending 15 minutes of that hour reading and sending tweets. If you only have half an hour a day, you might spend 10 minutes tweeting.

What industry are you in? Some industries naturally lend themselves to platforms like Twitter. For example, if you're an event planner, photographer, graphic designer, restaurant owner, or hotel manager, Twitter is the perfect place to prospect for new customers. However, if you sell concrete, you may want to have a Twitter presence, but you may not need to be as active.

What kind of return are you looking for? Social media works by engaging with people. The more often you engage, the higher your success rate. Whether you can send two or 20 tweets a day, remember that consistency matters.

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Who to follow

Choosing who to follow is a key part of getting value from the Twitter experience. You may want to follow different people for different reasons: To keep up with the competition, to get great ideas, to be entertained, to make connections with people you want to know, etc. When you follow someone, you're letting them know that you're interested in their content. In many cases, they will follow you back.

There are three main ways to find great people and businesses to follow: Twitter Search, Who to Follow, and Endorsements.



- 1. Twitter Search.** Twitter Search (<http://search.twitter.com>) lets you find topics that might be interesting to you or other local organizations. For example, if you're a party planner, you may want to search for "party planning tips" to see who else is talking about party planning. If you like what you see, you can follow users by clicking on their handle and clicking on the "Follow" button." Note: If you want to refine your search further by topic or location you can use the advanced search at <http://search.twitter.com/advanced>.
- 2. Who to Follow.** Clicking on "Who to Follow" at the top of your screen gives you three options. The first thing you should do is "Find Friends," i.e., search through your existing contacts for other Twitter users in your email, LinkedIn, and other accounts. Second, you can find other users based on their interests by clicking on "Browse by Interests." Finally, once you've started following people and posting, Twitter will recommend other users to follow when you click on "View Suggestions." This will also show you who in your network is already following or being followed by this user.
- 3. Endorsements.** The best way to find people to follow, however, is by seeing who the people you follow are re-tweeting and posting about, and checking them out. When your network is "endorsing" a user, there is a good chance that you may want to follow him or her too.

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Getting more followers

There is no question that the best way to get Twitter followers is by creating great, consistent content.

The more active you are, the more easily people will find you. Tweet articles you find interesting. Share your own newsletters, blog posts, and photos. Reply to other people's tweets, or retweet what they post. Do those things and the followers should come. That being said, here are five more ways you can get more followers:

1. **Be responsive.** If you answer questions, comments, or complaints quickly and publicly, people will be eager to engage with you.
2. **Integrate your email newsletter.** In every issue of your email newsletter, include a link to your Twitter page and tell your readers why they should connect with you there (e.g., they'll get additional tips/advice, learn about special offers, or whatever else you plan to share). Also, make sure you're sharing your newsletter on your Twitter (and other) profile.
3. **Add links in the signature of your regular email.** In many cases, your Twitter handle can be as important as your phone number. Include it in every email you send.
4. **Put your Twitter handle everywhere.** Whether it's by the register in your store, on tables in your restaurant or at your event, on your business cards, in your circular, in dressing rooms, on the front door, or in another visible place, create signs, flyers, or display placards that mention your Twitter handle. You can also add links to your website, your receipts, and other places people connect with you.
5. **Talk it up.** Everywhere you go (conferences, service appointments, events, phone calls, etc.), ask your customers and members, "Are we connected on Twitter yet?"



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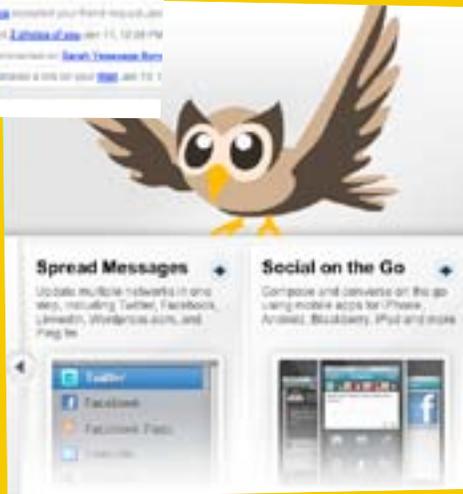
Tools to help

Very few people are able to spend all day on Twitter. You have other things to do that are more pressing than building and engaging your Twitter following. Here are two tools that can help you be successful with Twitter without spending all day on your computer or smartphone.

NutshellMail: NutshellMail is a free service from Constant Contact that sends you an email once or multiple times a day with all of your social network activity so you can read and respond on your own schedule. See how it works or sign up at NutshellMail.com.

HootSuite: While HootSuite can be a little overwhelming when you open it for the first time, it can be an extremely valuable tool. With HootSuite you can schedule tweets ahead of time, set up individual streams of news

for each of your social networks (and lists within those social networks), post to multiple accounts at once, and, because it's web-based, you can access it from a web browser anywhere. Even better, it's free for individual users.



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