A Guide to Twitter For Business

 2017

**Did you know?**

• Twitter has been described as the ‘SMS’ of the Internet

• The first tweet was sent on March 21, 2006

• Twitter currently has more than 200 million users

• 47 million tweets are generated each day

• Over 800,000 search queries are processed each day

• The average tweets per day (TPD) is 4.42

• The average number of followers for users is 103.39

• The Blue Twitter bird is called Ollie!

**What is Twitter?**

Twitter is a ‘micro blogging’ social media platform that allows users to send 280-character messages, or "tweets”. Each tweet is posted to a website where it can be read by anyone, and it is sent directly to those Twitter users who have chosen to "follow" you. They can choose to “retweet” (forward) your message, if they wish, or reply to it directly.

Businesses use Twitter to extend the reach of their communications, engage deeply and profitably with entirely new audiences, raise brand awareness, establish credibility and demonstrate leadership in their chosen field.

Used well, Twitter can also help generate sales leads, retain customers and handle customer

queries. And as more media embrace Twitter, businesses can better target journalists with news and announcements and identify opportunities for media coverage.

**Terminology**

Tweet - a Twitter single update of 280 characters or less, which can include mentions of other

users, hashtags, external links, pictures, or simply regular text.

Retweet or "RT" – forwarding a tweet from one user and posting it yourself, while crediting the source. The original retweeting style would take a tweet and re-post it via your own account using the prefix “RT” in front of the user the tweet originated with. The current system does away with this format, and instead directly re-posts the tweet, crediting the origin underneath. For example, 'retweeted from @username'.

Hashtags - Many trending topics on Twitter will be prefixed by a hashtag (#), which makes it

easier for users to search for, and tap into, a conversation on a specific subject of interest. An example of the usage of the hashtag is #wimbledon, which would identify tweets on the subject of the Wimbledon tennis championships. Hashtags are generated by Twitter users themselves (there is no directory or central register of these), although suitable hashtags can of course be suggested and promoted by organisations using Twitter, in order to aid searchability.

Followers – Other tweeters who have opted to regularly follow your tweets – they receive your tweets directly into their message stream as and when they are sent out. Followers are important as the quantity and quality of these is considered a key indicator of success. You can follow also other Twitter users, and these are listed under the “Following” tab on your Twitter home page.

Lists - Users can organize the people they follow into lists of businesses or personalities, which are related in some way. For example, a user could list all of the NPOs and charities they follow into a single list, for easy reference.

Promoted Tweets - A single trending topic which a company or organization can pay to 'trend', to gain attention and traffic from Twitter users worldwide.

Trending Topics (TTs) - "Trending Topics" lists a range of subjects, which many users across Twitter are talking about simultaneously. When Twitter first started, "Trending Topics" were those that were most popular during the span of the entire previous week. But new, more advanced algorithms have now made it easier to detect recent trends, and cite the very latest most-talked about subjects. These days, the "Trending Topics" list contains things that thousands of people across the whole of Twitter are discussing at any one time. When you click on a Trending Topic in the list, it will bring up a range of tweets, mentioning each matter of interest, and for each Trending Topic there will be up to three 'Top Tweets' highlighted. These are the tweets in each topic that have been retweeted more than 150 times.

You can view a list of trends in your area in the right-hand column of the homepage.

**Setting up Twitter**

1. Register for a new account. Go to www.Twitter.com and register for a new account. You will need an active email address to do this and you will have to choose a name and separate username. Your username appears in your profile URL and is unique to you. It's used for logging in, replies, and direct messages, and includes a ‘@’ before the name itself. Your name is a personal identifier (most often a business name or real name), displayed in your profile page and used to identify you to friends. Your username can contain up to 15 characters, while your real name can be up to 20 characters in length.

2. Upload a profile picture or company logo. This picture will be displayed with your name alongside each of your tweets. It must be a JPG, GIF, or PNG file and must be smaller than 700 KB. To do so, click on "Settings" in the drop down menu below your username. Then click on "Choose File" to select a file from your computer.

3. Add your name, location, and website. Under your profile picture, you have the choice to change your name (but not your username). You can also enter a location to let people know where you're tweeting from, and link to your homepage or blog if you desire.

4. Work on your bio. Make it eye-catching and interesting and it will help you build up followers as those thinking of following you will read your biography to see if they have a good reason to follow. Bear in mind that a biography can be up to 160 characters long, so it must be kept succinct.

5. Decide whether you want your tweets to be posted to Facebook. This can give you more views per tweet. If so, click the "Posts your Tweets to Facebook" button at the bottom of the profile page.

6. Edit your language and time zone. Under the "Account" tab of settings, you have the ability change the language and time zone that your Twitter account is based in. Do so by selecting the desired language and time zone from the drop down menus. You can also change your username and email address here if you ever need to.

7. Check the box below time zone to add a location to each of your Tweets. This is different than the location on your profile—it is specific to each tweet and can be as general as a town or as specific as your exact location. Even when this feature is enabled, you have the option to turn it on or off with each individual tweet.

8. Review the “Tweet Media” and “Privacy” settings. These are listed under the “Account” tab of your settings. Check the applicable boxes and hit save.

9. Customize your profile. Every profile begins with the default background and colour scheme. However, organisations really should personalize it to reflect their brand identity.

Click on the "Design" tab of “Settings”. You can choose from one of the background images provided, or upload your own by clicking on the button that says "Change Background Image." Then, click on "Choose File" to upload one from your computer. You can also play with the colour scheme by clicking "Change Design Colours."

**Tweet away!**

If you want to let your followers know what you are doing, ‘Compose a new tweet’ by typing in the ‘what’s happening’ box. Once you have composed your tweet, click on the ‘Tweet’ button. This publishes it. Tweets are limited to 280 characters or less and, if you exceed this number when drafting a tweet, the ‘Tweet’ button will show a minus figure. Remember to use any appropriate hashtags, but bear in mind that these will use up your 280 characters. Once published, your tweet will now appear in your “Tweets” stream on your own Twitter page, which will be www.Twitter.com, followed by your username.

**Build followers**

Keep your posts interesting and relevant if you wish to gain followers. Give your top followersoccasional mentions. This could

be through direct tweets, or referencing them in tweets by usingtheir username in full.

Look at who is following your competitors - and who your competitors are following - and start following them. They are likely to be interested in your business area and may be very interested in what you and your organisation have to say.

Remember to check any replies from your followers that are directed to your profile. Click ‘@Mentions’ to see if there are any replies to any of your ‘tweets’. When tweeting, remember and use ‘@’ followed by a username (with no spaces) in your tweet will send a mention to the user you choose. For example, ‘@username’ will send a mention to ‘username’, and the entire tweet will show up in the ‘@mentions’ section.

**Develop a process**

Twitter, like many social media applications, can become very time consuming. Yet if it is to be done well, tweeting can’t be squeezed into an hour last thing on a Friday afternoon, nor passed down to juniors, assistants, or anyone known to use it at home. Just like all PR and marketing activity, Twitter needs to be planned, managed and closely monitored if it is to work. Make a decision early on about how much time you will devote to it and about how big your community of followers will be. Consider focusing on the quality of those how follow you rather than numbers of followers alone.

**Who to follow**

You will probably find that you know quite a few organisations on Twitter. Using the menu tab on your page click on 'Who to Follow'. There are several ways to find people on Twitter:

• Use the 'Find Friends' link to find people you know through your various Gmail, AOL, MSN, Hotmail and Yahoo! accounts.

• Use the 'View suggestions' link for a wide range of possibilities that may, or may not, connect with your interests. (Twitter is also working on personalizing lists of suggested followers; so keep an eye out for the feature.)

• Use the 'Browse Interests' tab to find those on Twitter by their specific interest.

**What to tweet**

Here are some ideas to get you started:

• Share upcoming events and announcements with ‘teasers’ in advance

• Promote business news with tweets that link back to news items on your website

• Highlight and link to news about the industry and sector you operate in

• Tweet relevant pictures by clicking on the camera icon in the

message pane

• Retweet interesting posts from your followers, and add something to them if you can

• Post a question as a tweet – polls are also an option once you have sufficient followers

• Use keywords and hashtags to help others find your post

• Incorporate links to relevant content (especially on your website!), wherever possible

**Frequency of tweets**

How often should you tweet? There’s no easy answer, but remember that Twitter is meant to help your organisation develop conversations, share news and information - and build your reputation. One or two tweets in isolation each month will not deliver any benefits. Your network will be slow to grow and the impression will be that you are not really interested. Conversely, if you tweet 20 times a day then your followers may get tired of seeing your picture hogging their stream, and unless the tweets are rich in interesting content, they risk being ignored. Experience suggests a minimum of one or two tweets a day, and to not let a week go by without posting something.

However, monitoring conversations on Twitter and tapping into them can take considerable time and effort, and so time spent managing Twitter must be closely planned - like every other marketing activity. Consider outsourcing it to a suitably qualified PR agency.

**Writing style**

Writing for Twitter is not the same as writing for print or other media. It is very hard to be stylish with only 280 characters to play with, while the immediacy of the channel tends to invite overfamiliarity - or oversimplification.

While an engaging ‘voice’ is important, it’s essential that tweets are spelt correctly and reflect the professionalism of the organization behind them. Spelling mistakes are inexcusable and, while there isn’t much room for punctuation in those 280 characters, your tweets should be grammatically correct. Use approved abbreviations where you have to, and leave out whole words rather than adopt ‘text-speak’. If a subject cannot be addressed in its entirety in one tweet, consider splitting it across a number of tweets, with dots at the end of each tweet to indicate a subject that continues. Some Twitter clients will shorten lengthy tweets into multiple messages automatically.

**Suggested day-to-day activity**

1. Monitor conversations on Twitter to identify opportunities to get involved
2. Engage with audiences by holding Q&As, conducting surveys and promoting incentives
3. Target journalists that use Twitter and promote stories and identify editorial opportunities
4. Build your Twitter community and expand its reach - both in terms of quantity and quality
5. Setup and monitor keywords to help react and manage issues and crises
6. Disseminate news to augment traditional PR and communications activity
7. Measure your online influence through services such as Klout, Kred or PeerIndex
8. Track your campaign progress with tools such as Twitter Counter status updates and Tweets,

**Ten tips for better Twitter**

1. Ensure your Twitter account reflects your brand

2. Go beyond general, impersonal marketing messages

3. Use hashtags wisely

4. Keep photo size in mind

5. Don't ignore customer service

6. Run competitions and Incentives

7. Track analytics to develop more effective marketing campaign

8. Delete any spammers and people who don’t reciprocate

9. Remember to change your password regularly

**In a nutshell:**

