Simple Marketing Now's Twitter Guide



Simplified Instructions To Help You Get Started

Overview
Getting Started
Advanced



Welcome to Simple Marketing Now's Guide to Getting Started With Twitter!

Perhaps you've already read our *Top 10 Tips for Getting Started with Twitter*? If not, here they are:

- Set up your profile. Include ideally a photo of yourself. Succinctly describe your interests and background. Include keywords relevant to your interests. Add a link to your website, blog or LinkedIn profile for more information about you. If you use a company logo, identify your name in the profile.
- Twitter handle = what your username is on Twitter. It's preceded by @
- Twitter language:
 '@username' is a tweet directed specifically to another Twitter user.
 'RT'means 'ReTweet' and refers to repeating another's tweet because you admire/appreciate/find it relevant and want your followers to benefit from the content.
 You can DM [direct message] another Twitter user if you both follow one another.
 '#' symbol is a way to tag or identify Tweets that are related. It's referred to as a hashtag.
- **Publish a 'tweet**': Twitter allows you 140 characters for publishing a succinct message to your followers.
- Keep your tweets to fewer than 120 characters if you want others to retweet you. That leaves 20 characters for others to include a Twitter handle, a comment or even a hashtag.
- Twitter Best Practices:
 Respond back when people interact with you via @ or RT
 Don't autopost automatically to Twitter from Facebook or LinkedIn.
 No hard sell. For every tweet about yourself, issue 7 tweets about others.
 Add value. Don't spam. Be focused on your topic in what you publish.
- Start following others. Use WeFollow to identify people in your space that you might want to follow. Follow people whose tweets you enjoy.
- **Follow back**. You'll receive an email notification of new follows. Check out their profiles to make sure they are real people; if yes, follow them back.
- **Create lists.** Add new people you follow to a list [e.g., dog lovers, marketing mavens] that you create. Follow others' lists.
- Keep two browser tabs open: one for twitter.com/username and one for search.twitter.com.

What is Twitter?

Twitter is a free, micro-blogging platform - micro because you have 140 characters to communicate a message of your choice. As a result, succinctness and the ability to abbreviate - including shortened URLs - are highly prized!

The primary audience for your 'tweets' [i.e., your micro-blogposts] consists of your followers: other folks with Twitter profiles or accounts who have decided to subscribe to your 'Twitterstream' or series of tweets. The secondary audience is the world, assuming your message appears in a Twitter-based search.

Twitter is easy to use via the web, via free third-party applications or on a mobile device.

Yet, it's also complicated! When you first experience a Twitter stream, it almost feels as if you're in a foreign country with a foreign language, different customs and what looks to be a lot of gibberish. If you have no one to experiment with on Twitter, it makes no sense.

Here's why you should care about Twitter:

Twitter continues to grow. In 2010, it listed 75 million accounts, with an active [very active] user base of 15 million. You hear Twitter integrated into the news; into conferences, and emergency relief efforts. It is being used as a source of late-breaking news for trending topics, political or global crises, disasters, and cutting edge thinking. It is searchable via search engines.

Twitter represents an opportunity for you to 'listen' to topics of relevance to you, your brand, and your business, and to interact with potential users of your products/services. It's a research tool that leads to links to relevant articles, other like-minded thinkers, as well as collaboration. It allows you to develop a reputation for sharing information and value, and to participate remotely in events.

For me, it is a B2B tool. For other businesses, it can be a B2C tool.

Using the '#' symbol, you can follow related tweets. E.g., <u>#Surfaces. See my transcript relating to Surfaces 2010</u>. Or weekly tweet chats on a topic. E.g., <u>#brandchat</u>, <u>#carchat</u>, <u>#designchat</u>.

What Twitter is NOT.

It is not a broadcast mechanism – unless perhaps you are Ashton Kutcher or CNN.

You build followers slowly over time as a function of participating and interacting. It's a slow consistent process.

Your followers follow you because they expect consistent content from you.

It is not a hard sell tool. Hard selling is considering SPAM.

There are rules! For every 2-3 tweets about you, you need to come up with 7 or 8 about and for others. That can be articles of interest, inspirational quotes, retweeting content from others.

Although you can use Twitter to run campaigns, it's more effective for relationship-building over the long haul – just like other social platforms.

It is NOT the solution to all of your marketing and business issues. Rather it is an element of your overall strategy.

It is not a one-time/static platform. You need to show up and participate to get the most benefit for your brand and business.

Get Started On Twitter

Set up your account, explore and dedicate 15 to 20 minutes per day experimenting. Investigate whether your customers might be participating. If so, can you engage with them and offer value?

Go to http://Twitter.com and register. Create a profile; make it meaningful and representative of what defines you and your brand; try to include keywords. Include a URL so potential followers can learn more about you and your brand. Upload a photo of yourself [also known as your Avatar] and give it a try. Your twitter handle with be something that starts with @ [mine is @cbwhittemore].

If you decide to use your company logo as your avatar, be sure to identify who is tweeting in your profile. If several in your organization tweet under that account, identify in your tweets who's speaking by adding initials at the end of each tweet [e.g., ^CB].

Visit http://search.twitter.com and enter in some search terms. Try keywords, brand names; enter your own twitter handle, with and without the @; what are the hot topics being discussed. See what appears.

- 1. Go to your web browser and create 2 tabs: one for search.twitter.com and one for twitter.com.
- 2. Next, find people relevant to your world to follow. Relevance is key, so you don't get meaningless breakfast details.

Go to your search.twitter.com tab and enter search terms. When you notice a meaningful tweet for that term, click on the person's image. This will take you to their Twitter home page where you can decide whether to follow them or not.

Just as you learn about additional relevant blogs by exploring the blogrolls [i.e., the blogs listed on a blog's sidebar] of bloggers you respect, with Twitter you can decide who to 'follow' by checking out the followers of various Twitter accounts, or clicking on the @name in a tweet of interest.

Look for thought leaders in your area[s] of interest and follow them. How do they use Twitter? What about your friends? Can you practice with them?

Another resource for Twitter searches is BING - http://www.bing.com/twitter.

If you search under keywords or terms that are relevant to you, you'll notice people whose tweets appeal to you. Consider following them.

You can search on ExecTweets and explore those accounts.

Two resources – <u>WeFollow</u> and <u>Twellow</u> – allow you to find users by subject area.

There's also <u>Twellowhood</u> which is geography-based.

Whenever I click on a new Twitter profile, I evaluate it to determine whether I do indeed want to follow that user or not. I check to see if there is a picture and a description, (after all, I'm doing this to make sure that I'm dealing with a real person vs. an automated account) and whether the content is relevant to me. Is there contact information? What about the quality of the Tweets? Is there conversation going on? Just shouting*? Interaction? Or is it all one-way?

Check out the 'Lists' that profile may have created and be a part of. Follow them. Follow interesting individuals included in the lists.

*Note: Shouting refers to writing all in caps, pushing only sales messages, repeating the same sales message multiple times, or communicating in a way that allows no interaction. You get the picture, right?

Deciphering the Twitter language:

You'll notice many unusual terms when you first check out Twitter.

- The '@' symbol is a tweet [a Twitter entry] directed specifically to another Twitter user.
- The 'RT' letters represents 'ReTweet' and refer to repeating another's tweets that you admire/appreciate/find relevant so your followers can also benefit from the content.
- Twitter offers the ability to DM or direct message another Twitter user as long as you are both
 following one another. This can come in very handy as the DM generates an email message to the other
 party. You must go back to Twitter to respond.
- The '#' symbol is a way to tag or identify Tweets that are related. For example, #TalkFloor or #Surfaces 2010 will bring up any tweets relating to those subjects.
- You may also notice tags such as #FF or #FollowFriday and #MarketerMonday followed by a list of Twitter account names those are friendly ways that the Twitter community has come up with to draw attention to other Twitter users.

Another important feature for effectively using Twitter and making the most of the 140 character limit is compressed or tiny URLs. You can create your own using third party applications to shorten otherwise lengthy web addresses. To do this, open a third browser tab for http://bit.ly/ or similar URL shortener [3rd party Twitter apps integrate this functionality as we'll see below].

The Twitter Code of Behavior

As with all social media, it's critical to be aware that norms for behavior exist. If you don't follow some of the rules, you chance not being taken seriously and will have trouble building a meaningful following.

When you first get started, it's a good idea to pay close attention to what you observe before jumping in. Imagine that you're entering into someone else's home and you know no one... how would you behave? Exactly!

Be respectful. Listen first. Acknowledge when people refer to you [i.e., say thank you when someone sends you

a tweet directed @ you].

To keep track of whether people are referring to you, monitor the @Mentions tab in Twitter or create a search on your Twitter handle without the @. Acknowledge those who do and say thank you.

Share what others say that you find meaningful - i.e., RT a tweet.

Pay attention to #identifiers [aka hashtags].

Think about what you might share with others - articles, quotes, links? [That's when you'll want to use tiny URLs to fit all the info in 140 characters!] Try to leave enough room in your tweet so someone can RT your message [i.e., don't use all 140 of your characters].

Follow people back - assuming they are relevant to you!

Don't ever shout!!! Yes, this goes against many traditional advertising practices. But then Twitter is not a traditional mass advertising medium; it is for engagement, conversation, relationship- and brand-building, and sharing relevant information. When done authentically, consistently and respectfully, it can lead to business. So, be aware and ready to adapt!

In terms of frequency for participating in Twitter... if you want to develop relationships, you need to show up and participate regularly – daily if possible or as frequently as you can. You don't need to be on every minute of the day, but be ready to acknowledge and contribute.

Twitter and Search

Interestingly, Twitter is poised to become more significant to search engines according to a recent AdAge article titled, "What Social Media Means for Search". The author refers to Search 3.0 where "relevance is determined not just by what's on a page and what surrounds that page but how that data relate to your personal network."

From a very practical perspective, you can subscribe to the Twitterstream of established news sources, like the New York Times, NPR News, even possibly your favorite local paper

Some people are fantastic about capturing conference highlights via Twitter. To follow what happens at a conference you can't attend, try finding the 'hashtag' corresponding to the event [e.g., the MarketingProfs Digital Marketing World conference was coded #mpworld. Read Links of Note: Digital Marketing [Profs] Inspiration]. Then, enter the appropriate #code into Twitter Search and absorb the knowledge. At the South by Southwest conference #sxsw, Twitter was a critical communication and organizational platform.

Increasingly on Twitter, you will discover stories and blogposts worth reading based on people's tweets. You see, part of doing Twitter right is sharing with others. Sharing information or links or humor or wisdom. The share economy definitely exists. You'll notice that links are compressed into 'tinyurls' [visit <u>Tiny Url</u> and try it for yourself; then cut/paste into Twitter] to not hog up all 140 characters+.

Many companies have become active on Twitter. Some of the most recognized are <u>Dell</u>, <u>Zappos</u>, <u>Comcast</u>, and even <u>MoMA</u>. Twitter has been useful during natural disasters [e.g., the SoCal fires], the recent elections and the

Mumbai terror attacks.

Advanced Twitter Introduction

At this point, you've set up a Twitter account; you've experimented with it, and done searches using Search.Twitter.com. You've shortened some URLs using Bit.ly. If you've done it enough, you've started to get aggravated with the inefficiency of working with 3 browser tabs, going back and forth. That's when you know you are ready to go to the next step and set up TweetDeck [which Twitter recently purchased] or another similar application.

What is TweetDeck? How Do You Use It?

<u>TweetDeck</u> is a free application now owned by Twitter. The best part about TweetDeck [others are Seesmic, HootSuite, Twhirl, ...] is that it allows you to create multiple parallel searches that you can easily edit and monitor to make sense of the Twitter Stream of all those you follow. You can filter based on keywords or terms that matter to you.

When you download it [just go to a search window and type in TweetDeck; you can also get a version for your iPhone. For your Blackberry, equivalent tools are available.], you'll see 3 columns:

- All Friends
- Mentions
- Direct Messages

Go ahead and add more columns! You might add a column for #TravelTuesday or flooring, perhaps a brand name or a company name.

You might create a group and have a column for tweets made by those in the group [e.g., all those involved in home interiors or green based on their profiles]. You might have one for a list you are following.

As you filter, you can start to pay attention to who says what, and then start interacting by RT or by addressing someone directly with @. Then share some links. By the way, TweetDeck automatically shortens links - a marvelous feature!

Making Meaning out of Twitter

Twitter is different from LinkedIn and Facebook, where you connect based on who you know professionally and casually. **Twitter allows you to connect based on AFFINITY and shared interests**. Similar to an in-person networking event except that you have a better chance of quickly finding people with whom you share a lot in common. I find it extremely beneficial as a B2B tool, whereas others have found it extremely useful as a customer service tool, or for special offers – for ordering, or to communicate specific information [e.g., the Red Cross]. It also works for focus group type research, or for conversational marketing or generating word of mouth. It all depends.

Whole Foods, for example: each store has its own Twitter account. There's also a Whole Foods Twitter account for cheese and one for wine. [For more about Whole Foods and other Twitter success stories, read <u>Twitter</u> <u>Success Stories From MarketingProfs Digital Marketing Mixer</u>.]

Word of Caution: Don't plan on building your following overnight. Focus on quality rather than quantity. Build it slowly, consistently over time. Beware of schemes that promise you 10 million followers. You will regret it.

I build my network by connecting with folks I meet at conferences or in anticipation of a conference by following the # for that conference. During webinars, I follow and share observations via Twitter and meet liked-minded professionals.

There are events called Meetups and Tweetups – i.e., meetings organized online. At Coverings, I participated in a Tweetup and met several fascinating people with whom I continue to exchange updates and relevant information.

Meetups address - Meetup.com -- Tweetups address - Twtvite.com

Check Out a Twitter Chat!

Another fascinating event that takes place on Twitter is a <u>Twitterchat</u> - a regularly occurring conversation on a specific topic usually weekly and at a set time. There are a whole range of Twitter chats available. For example: #PRchat #carchat #booktweet #KBTribechat or #BlogChat.

<u>Here's how it works.</u> The organizer will put together a summary blogpost in anticipation of the event, listing a discussion topic and questions for the Twitterchat.

On the day of the event, you can participate by creating a search column with the # for the event in TweetDeck. At the start, the moderator will do introductions and start the conversation by asking questions sequentially and responding to participants. Event can last 1 hour+. When it's over, the moderator will summarize key points in a recap and include a transcript.

See <u>How Do I Twitter Chat?</u>

Ideas on How to Use Twitter for Business

WiseGrass uses Twitter to exchange perspectives and get advice from fellow businesspeople. [See <u>Small Businesses Marketing With Twitter</u>: WiseGrass, NakedPizza, Berry Chill.]

Let's say you are a big supporter of Girl Scouts. The <u>Girl Scouts</u> has several active Twitter presences. You can connect with them on Twitter and help them get the word out.

<u>Street food vendors around the country use Twitter</u> to announce where they will be selling and what they have available. [e.g., talk about a fascinating mobile/geo location based use of Twitter].

Laura Gainor used Twitter in combination with a few other tools [Twitpik and Twitvid + Foursquare] to stand out for a position when she was relocating from Charlotte to Milwaukee. [See <u>Simplifying Social Media</u>. For Research, <u>Connection</u>, <u>Differentiation</u>.]

Be sure to integrate your Twitter activity with LinkedIn and Facebook

What's the point of all of this Twitter stuff?

Digital visibility! Twitter is search engine visible. It's a way for you to differentiate yourself, it's a way for you to be visible, to reach out and provide value.

Common Twitter Mistakes to Avoid:

At a recent <u>MarketingProfs B2B Forum</u>, I offered 20 minute 1-on-1 Twitter consulting advice to corporate marketers. My sessions started out with a quick evaluation to find patterns that got in the way of effective Twitter engagement. Here are some of the patterns I was on the lookout for:

- Unequal follower/following numbers
- No engagement as in all tweets coming from you without any kind of interaction with others. May include a lot of 'shouting', too. It's usually because someone is tweeting from the web and has no idea conversation is taking place! This may make sense for a news organization, but not really for individuals.
- Tweeting as a corporate entity rather than as a person with a human voice.

What's Your Twitter Assignment?

Here's your assignment: Go explore! Think about how Twitter can create value for your business by thinking how you can offer value to others using the tool.

Set up a Twitter account, prep 5 tweets that share value with others.

- Find followers.
- Identify people to follow, check out lists they are included in and who their followers are. Consider following those people.
- Check out the recently updated <u>Social Flooring Index Twitter</u> list. You'll find ideas there [e.g., <u>BuildDirect</u>, <u>McKayFlooring</u>...]
- Follow @cbwhittemore
- Search on some terms: flooring, #flooring, brand names.
- Use search.twitter.com
- Use bing.com/twitter
- Interact with 3 or 4 followers. Observe what happens. Do they interact with followers? Do they share information?
- Repeat tomorrow.
- Set up an Outlook or other calendar reminder so you explore Twitter regularly for 15 to 20 minutes at a time.

Resources

A Practical Twitter Primer

#TalkFloor Series on Social Media

#TalkFloor Series: Twitter & Social Media

#TalkFloor Series: Advanced Twitter

21 Tips for Using Twitter for Business

How to Use Twitter Events to Grow Your Network

About Simple Marketing Now LLC:

Simple Marketing Now, an inbound marketing strategy consultancy, helps organizations get found online using social media and content marketing. Simple Marketing Now publishes the *Content Talks Business Blog*, issues the *Social Flooring Index* which monitors the social state of the Flooring Industry and writes *Flooring The Consumer* about marketing to women and the retail experience, now a BuyerZone Top 20 Business Marketing Blog. Simple Marketing Now is a certified HubSpot Partner.

For more information, visit http://SimpleMarketingNow.com.

About Christine B. Whittemore:



Christine B. Whittemore is Chief Simplifier of *Simple Marketing Now LLC* and has been immersed in social media marketing since June 2006 when she launched her first blog, *Flooring The Consumer* about the customer retail experience, marketing to women and social media marketing. It is ranked in the <u>AdAge Marketing Power 150 Blogs</u> and listed on <u>AllTop</u> and has been named a BuyerZone Top 20 Business Marketing Blog of 2012.

In March 2009, she launched the <u>Simple Marketing Now Blog</u>, a Junta42 Top 42 Content Marketing Blog, about marketing with social media and content.

Whittemore is a columnist for <u>Floor Covering Weekly</u>, a <u>Hearst publication</u>, where she writes <u>about the customer retail experience</u>. She contributes to MarketingProfs and the Content Marketing Institute and is a frequent speaker on the topic of customer experience and marketing with social media at industry events. She presented on the topic of Social Media for Lead Generation at the MarketingProfs B2B Forum 2011.

Christine is a member of the Floor Covering Institute, serves on the <u>Columbia Business</u> <u>School's Alumni Club of New York</u> Board of Directors and the Kinnelon Public Library Board of Trustees, and is a member of the Surfaces Education Advisory Council. She earned her undergraduate degree from Smith College and her MBA from Columbia University.

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