



Working the Web

Ellie Becker and Bernadette Nelson | June 2011

Time to Tweet! Overcoming Twitter-phobia

Guess what everybody? Twitter is rolling out New Twitter! Yes, we hear you. You haven't figured out Old Twitter yet. Well, you're not alone.

According to Network Solutions' Fifth Wave of the Small Business Success Index and a recent study from American Express OPEN, small businesses are jumping into Facebook with both feet -- 60 to 70% of those doing social media marketing. However blogs and Twitter are down in single digits.

Last month we talked about why - and how - to use blogs. This month, we'll do the same for Twitter -- and then unveil its new features.

Twitter Power

There are many characteristics that make Twitter a powerful marketing tool. Here are our top picks:

1. **Keyword Searchable.** If you sell windows and tweet about windows, people who type 'windows' into their Twitter search field will find you. Are you going to the American Window Seller's Expo? Type in the trade show name a few weeks beforehand and you'll make contact with participants in advance. You can do the same afterwards for added leverage.
2. **Engagement.** You can have 1-to-1 conversations with the people you follow. Answer a question or comment intelligently on a tweet via an @reply (Twitter handles are preceded by an @ sign). @replies are visible to that person even if they don't follow you - a great way to get the attention of key influencers who may decide to follow back. Then you can send them Direct Messages.
3. **Expanded Reach.** If you tweet information of value to your followers, they can re-tweet your tweet, that is, share it with their followers who can share it with their followers...and so on.

If you put a # before a search term -- for example #americanwindowsellers -- you've created a hashtag. Put a hashtag in a tweet and connect with everyone following that tag, whether they follow you or not.

4. **Education.** A twitter community in your own industry can help you keep up to speed on what's new.
5. **Publicity.** As long as you promote others' content more than your own, use Twitter to drive traffic to your blog and your other valuable content.

So What's New?

New Twitter is being rolled out and for a while you can go back and compare Old Twitter. The main changes are:

1. **Information is better organized.** Your @mentions, retweets, searches and lists are just above your timeline (tweets beginning with the most recent). On the right are your profile, (number of tweets, followers, following), trending topics, and suggestions of who to follow. Watch out for 'Promoted' suggestions as they've paid to be there.

2. View photos, videos and other tweeted content right on Twitter.
3. Related Content. When you click a tweet, you'll see more info about the author or the topic.
4. Mini Profiles. Click an @username to see a mini profile and recent tweets right there.

Give Twitter 10 or 15 minutes a day and get comfortable. Download a link shortener so that links you share only take a few precious characters. A popular one is from www.bit.ly, which also tracks your links. Follow only the people who interest you and we bet you'll be one of the full-fledged Twitterati before long!

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