Everything You Need to Get on Twitter and Start Seeing Great Results

Hey,

Is Twitter a part of your social media marketing?

Or have you let your Twitter marketing drop off lately?

In any case, with the latest Twitter updates, trends in multi-screen usage and real-time marketing, you'll likely want to **take a fresh look at what Twitter has to offer**.

Here's a checklist of everything your business needs to do to get on (or back on) Twitter and start seeing great results.

About Twitter

Twitter is a short message communication tool that allows you to **send out messages (tweets)** up to 140 characters long to people who subscribe to you (followers).

Your tweets can **include a link to any web content** (blog post, website page, PDF document, etc.) or a photograph or video. If a picture is worth a thousand words, adding an image to a tweet greatly expands what you can share to beyond the 140-character limit for tweets.

People follow (subscribe) to your Twitter account, and you follow other people. This allows you to read, reply to and easily share their tweets with your followers (retweet).

How Twitter Is Unique

In the social media world, Twitter falls into the category of microblogging tools because of the short, disconnected messages it distributes. Other microblogging tools include Tumblr, FriendFeed and Plurk.

Twitter shares some features with the most common social media tools (Facebook, Pinterest, LinkedIn, Google+ and YouTube). However, the differences really define Twitter.

- **Facebook**: A tweet is like a short Facebook status update. However, with Twitter, every tweet arrives at every follower's feed, unlike the filter of Facebook's EdgeRank.
- **Pinterest**: Twitter allows you to share photographs and provide commentary in your tweet. However, with Twitter, it's much easier to have conversation around a shared image than with the comment feature on Pinterest.
- **LinkedIn**: A tweet is like a short LinkedIn status update. While LinkedIn is based on trust relationships (and two-way agreements), Twitter allows you to follow anyone, including strangers. This is helpful when you target potential customers.
- **Google+**: A tweet is like a short Google+ status update. Twitter also allows you to organize people into lists that organize conversations similar to Google+ groups.

- **YouTube**: A tweet can contain a link to a video. However, Twitter doesn't allow you to create a channel or organize your videos for easy location and commentary.

Now let's dive into how you can **use Twitter for your business**.

Step #1: Present Your Brand

Your Twitter account and profile are the foundation of your Twitter experience. It's your chance to **tell your business story to the Twitter community**.

It is important that your Twitter presence have the same look and feel as your other online tools. This helps people identify your business and builds trust. **Choose an account name and images consistent with your other online presences and your brand**.

Choose Your Twitter Username

Nothing expresses your brand on Twitter more than your account username. This name appears next to all of your tweets, and is how people identify you on Twitter.

An example of a small business with a Twitter username that matches their website domain.

Choose between your personal name (best for professional individuals) and your business name. Avoid using punctuation to **keep your name easy to type on mobile devices**.

If your exact business name is not available, choose a similar name for consistency.

Profile Images

Twitter uses two different images to represent your account. It's important that you **take advantage of both of these images to tell your business story**. You **upload these images under Profile** in your account settings.

Your Twitter profile photo is a square photo that appears next to every tweet you send. You can **use either your company logo or your headshot for your profile photo**.

An example of a Twitter user with a headshot for his profile picture.

Note: Many small businesses use their business name for the account and a personal photo for the profile photo. This adds a personal touch to your Twitter account.

Your Twitter profile header is a large background photo where you can tell a story about your business. Similar to the Facebook cover photo, your header photo appears at the top of your profile page.

An example of a header photograph that tells the brand's story.

You can also **customize the background that people see** when they visit your Twitter account. You can create a graphic file so it matches your business branding. You **upload this image under Design** in your profile settings.

Example of a small business user who has updated his Twitter background with his company branding.

Step #2: Build a Strong Foundation

It's important that you **complete your Twitter account profile completely**. Each feature gives more details about your business that contribute to your business story.

The location, website and bio portions of your profile provide important information about your business to other Twitter users.

- Location. **Tell people where they can find you**. But remember, people may be visiting your profile from another city, state or country and won't recognize your neighborhood or community name. **Give them enough information so they can find you**.
- Website. You can **share a web address with your community**. You can **give them your website or blog**, but consider using a special Twitter landing page. This is a great way to **provide additional information of interest** to Twitter users looking into your business.
- Bio. You only get 160 characters to **tell people who you are and what you do**. Skip the mission statement and talk about the benefits you deliver. And **add in a little personality to bring your profile to life**.

Step #3: Start Following People

When you follow another Twitter user, you subscribe to read what they share. So **be selective about whom you follow**, especially at first.

To follow a user, you find their user profile and click on the Follow button.

One simple way to follow new people is to locate their profile and click the Follow button.

Twitter has strict rules about what they call *aggressive following* and *aggressive following churn*, so be careful and take it slow. You don't want to get your account suspended in your first week because of suspicious activity.

Note: Your Twitter experience is defined by whom you follow, not by who follows you. **Pay attention to your follow choices** to give yourself a great Twitter experience.

In general, **start following people in these categories**:

- Your **customers**
- Your **business partners, suppliers, contractors and vendors**
- Your **competitors** or peers
- **Trade organizations or professional organizations** for your industry
- Businesses **in your neighborhood**
- Businesses run by people you know (**your professional network**)

Twitter can help you find people you know by scanning your email address book.
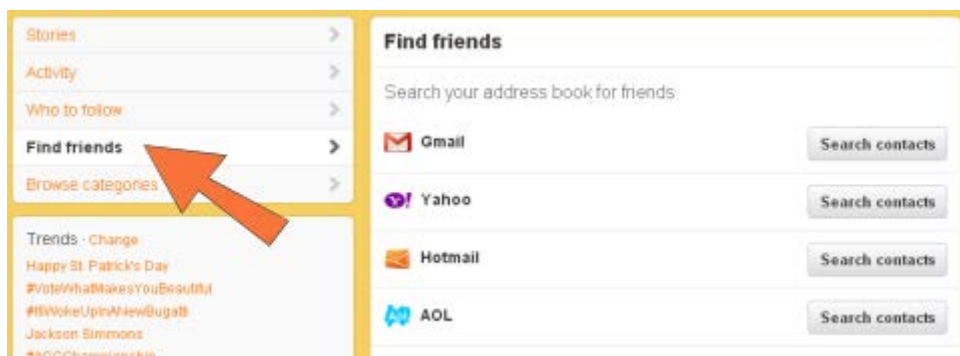
Use the Find Friends menu option on the Discover page to have Twitter scan your email address book for people you know on Twitter.

While you are out following people, you may notice that people are starting to follow you. Don't worry if you don't know these people. **Stay focused on whom you follow for now**.

Step #4: Start Talking

Talking on Twitter is different from every other social media site. It's a fast-paced smorgasbord of ideas and sentence fragments. It's hectic, but it's also fun.

Give yourself a little time to get your feet wet. **Listen to others**. Jump in when you feel comfortable. **Start talking as you get your bearings**.

In general, there are five types of [Twitter messages](#):

1. Tweet: a message you **send out to everyone who follows you**. This is the heart of Twitter communication.

    A tweet is a short message sent out to everyone who follows your Twitter account.

2. @Reply: a message you **send out as a reply to a message you received**. The @reply is a public message that mentions the Twitter username of the person. It shows up in the tweet stream of everyone who follows both of you, and on the @connect (mentions) page of the Twitter user.

    An @reply tweet is a message you send in response to a tweet from another person.

3. Mention: a message you **send out that mentions another Twitter username**.

    A mention tweet includes the name of a Twitter user but is not a reply to a previous tweet from that person.

4. Direct message (DM): a message you **send privately to another Twitter user**. You can only send a DM to someone who follows you.

    A DM is a private message sent to someone who follows you on Twitter.

5. Retweet (RT): a message created and sent by someone else that you **share with the people who follow you**. [Twitter makes it easy to share tweets](#).

A retweet is a message sent by another person that you share with your followers.

Step #5: Talk Smarter

After you master the five types of tweets, you are ready to attack the big question: What should I talk about on Twitter?

For every business, the answer is different. In general, you want to **find the sweet spot between what your target audience wants to hear and things that promote your business**. For many businesses, the answer is to **focus on how your products and services benefit your customers**.

Give people useful information and **answer their questions**, and they will consider you a valuable member of their community. That's an important first step to winning a new customer.

There's a real art to [writing a headline-style message on Twitter](). Experiment with different ways to say the same thing, and see what gets the most response. With only 140 characters, it's important that every word pull its weight in your messages.

Over time, the quality of what you share will help you grow a strong Twitter following. Now, you are ready to take a step back and **come up with a Twitter communication plan**. Your plan focuses your Twitter conversation on topics designed to draw in potential customers and publish your tweets at the times you are most likely to engage people.

Step #6: Drive Traffic to Your Website

Twitter is a great tool for driving traffic to your website. To do this, you **create a tweet around a link**, writing a message that compels people to click to learn more.

Write a compelling headline-style message to get people to click on the link in your tweet.

Because space is at a premium in a tweet, there isn't room to post the entire web address. That's why all of the Twitter tools allow you to **shorten your web addresses using a URL shortener**.

When you paste a web address into a tweet, Twitter automatically shortens it, giving you more space for your message.

When you use Twitter.com, the [Twitter URL shortener](#) uses just 20 characters for your web address, no matter how long the actual web address.

Step #7: Connect Your Online Presence

Now that you have Twitter rolling along, it's time to integrate it into your overall online business presence.

There are **three ways to do this**:

1. **Add your Twitter account information to the social media account information on your website**. Most of the social follow tools used on websites allow you to add your Twitter account easily and quickly to your list of social media accounts. *Note:* Twitter offers a Follow button you can add to your website.
2. **Add a timeline of your Twitter messages to your website** . Twitter provides [widgets that allow you to share a tweet timeline on your website](#). This can be a great way to **share your Twitter conversations with your website visitors**, getting double exposure from the same effort.

   Note: You want to make sure that the tweets you share contribute to your business story, so **be selective about which tweets you share on your website**.

3. **Make it easy for people to share your website content on Twitter**. There are several ways you can **add a Tweet This button to your blog posts and website pages**, including a [tweet button from Twitter](#). This allows your visitors to easily write a tweet about your content and share it with their followers.

Another way you can move the Twitter conversation to your website is by [embedding a tweet](#). This allows you to **select any tweet and insert it into a post**, for example. By embedding the tweet, you allow people who visit your post to jump into the Twitter conversation.

Step #8: Get Mobile With Twitter

Nearly every cell phone can connect you with your Twitter audience.

- Smartphones ([iOS, Android, Windows and Blackberry](#)) allow you to **use the Twitter app and Twitter mobile website to easily send and receive tweets**.
- Non-smartphones with texting service (SMS) allow you to **use Twitter using text messages**.

The Twitter app on the iPhone allows you to perform nearly every Twitter activity from your phone that you can do on Twitter.com.

Twitter allows you to **set up push notifications to your smartphone** so you know when selected activities happen on Twitter:

- People mention you
- Someone retweets or favorites a tweet you sent
- You get a new follower
- Someone sends you a direct message

With Twitter, a speedy response is best, and push notifications make it easy for you to know when things are happening for you on Twitter.

Step #9: Share Photographs in Your Tweets

People love to look at pictures, so **include photographs in your tweets** whenever possible. You don't have to be a professional photographer or have a fancy camera. All you need is a smartphone.

You can [share your photograph from your desktop on Twitter.com](#) or from the Twitter app on your mobile phone. Get into the habit of taking photos of your business activities that you can **share with your Twitter community**.

Twitter integrates into your smartphone's camera roll. This allows you to easily **share photos you have taken with your Twitter followers**.

You can tweet directly from the photos stored on your smartphone, as shown here on an iPhone.

Twitter adds the photo to your tweet and makes it available for everyone to see.

A tweet with a photo allows your followers to view the photo within their tweet timeline.

Twitter adds every photo you share to a photo (and video) gallery. The first six appear on your profile page. Take advantage of this feature to **share pictures that tell your business story**.

Step #10: Add Video to Your Twitter Timeline

Video is another powerful way to tell people about your business.

You can **add videos to your Twitter timeline**, but you cannot add them directly from Twitter. You must first **upload them to another service** like YouTube, and then **link to them in your tweet**.

Twitter allows you to play videos without leaving the platform.

Recently, Twitter launched a [new video service called Vine](#) that allows you to take short, 6-second videos from the Vine app and play them on an endless loop inside Twitter.

Step #11: Organize Your Followers Into Conversation Lists

As you follow more people, it can be challenging to focus on the information coming from specific people and groups. That's where Twitter lists come in.

[A Twitter list allows you to separate the Twitter accounts you follow into groups](#). You might **create separate lists for**:

- Customers
- Potential customers
- Neighborhood or community businesses
- Trade or professional organizations
- People who inspire you
- People you talk with the most

A list allows you to **see the tweets from the list members** as a separate Twitter timeline. This distinguishes them from the crowd so you can **pay attention to what these people say**. You can also **share tweets from a list on your website** using a widget (explained in this article).

You can organize your lists in any way that helps you. You can **create one or many lists**. You can also **make your lists public or private**.

- When you create a public list, list members see when you add or delete them from the list, and anyone can choose to follow your list.
- When you create a private list, people don't know they appear on it and only you can see the list's tweet timeline.

To review the public lists created by any Twitter user, display their profile page. Then click Lists in the left menu. Their public lists appear in the right column.

To add someone to a list, display his or her profile. Click the gear icon and choose add or remove from lists. Then check or uncheck them from your list of Twitter lists.

You can add any person to your lists, even if you don't follow him or her.

Step #12: Expand Your Audience With Hashtags

Most people's Twitter experience is limited to the people they follow. It's always a good idea to **keep looking for new, fresh voices to follow** to keep expanding your online conversations.

There are **two great ways to expand your Twitter audience** beyond your circle.

Hashtags appear in tweets to [identify a common topic or theme](). They use the pound (or hash) sign followed by a unique identifier. For example:

- #sxswi is the hashtag for the conference, South by Southwest Interactive

- #NCAA is the hashtag for the US college sports association
- **#VZW is the hashtag for Verizon Wireless**
- #FF is the hashtag for Follow Friday, a way to promote people on Twitter

Scroll through your timeline to spot tweets with a hashtag.

D_Town96 @D_Town96   2m
I'm watching The Vampire Diaries (145 others checked-in)
bit.ly/JFHEKv #GetGlue #tvd
View summary

An example of a tweet with a #GetGlue hashtag.

When you see a tweet with a hashtag, click on the hashtag to see a list of all tweets that include the same hashtag. You will see tweets from people you do not follow.

Results for #GetGlue

Top people · View all

GetGlue ✓ @getglue
Social network for tv, movie & sports fans.
Download our app for your iPhone:
http://bit.ly/VZ3oc1, Android
http://bit.ly/y85wwf or join at
http://GetGlue.com

Follow

Tweets Top / All / People you follow

WWE @WWE — 11 Mar
I unlocked the Countdown to WWE WrestleMania 29: Chris Jericho
sticker on #GetGlue! getglue.com/stickers/wwe/c...
Retweeted 36 times
View summary

D_Town96 @D_Town96 — 5m
I'm watching The Vampire Diaries (145 others checked-in)
bit.ly/JFHEKv #GetGlue #tvd
View summary

PsychFan @DuleFan — 8m
Happy St. Patrick's Day Connor!(x
#DivineSecretsoftheYaYaSisterhood #GetGlue
getglue.com/movies/divine_...
View summary

Easily Amused @MindyD1013 — 10m
Welcome back, Sheriff Graham!! You've been missed!
#OnceUponATime #GetGlue getglue.com/tv_shows/once_...
View summary

Jessica Lazar @jesserker — 12m
This is awful and hilarious #LeprechaunintheHood #GetGlue
getglue.com/movies/leprech...
Followed by Charles Bivona
View summary

When you click on a hashtag or do a search on it, you get a list of tweets from all Twitter accounts that use the hashtag.
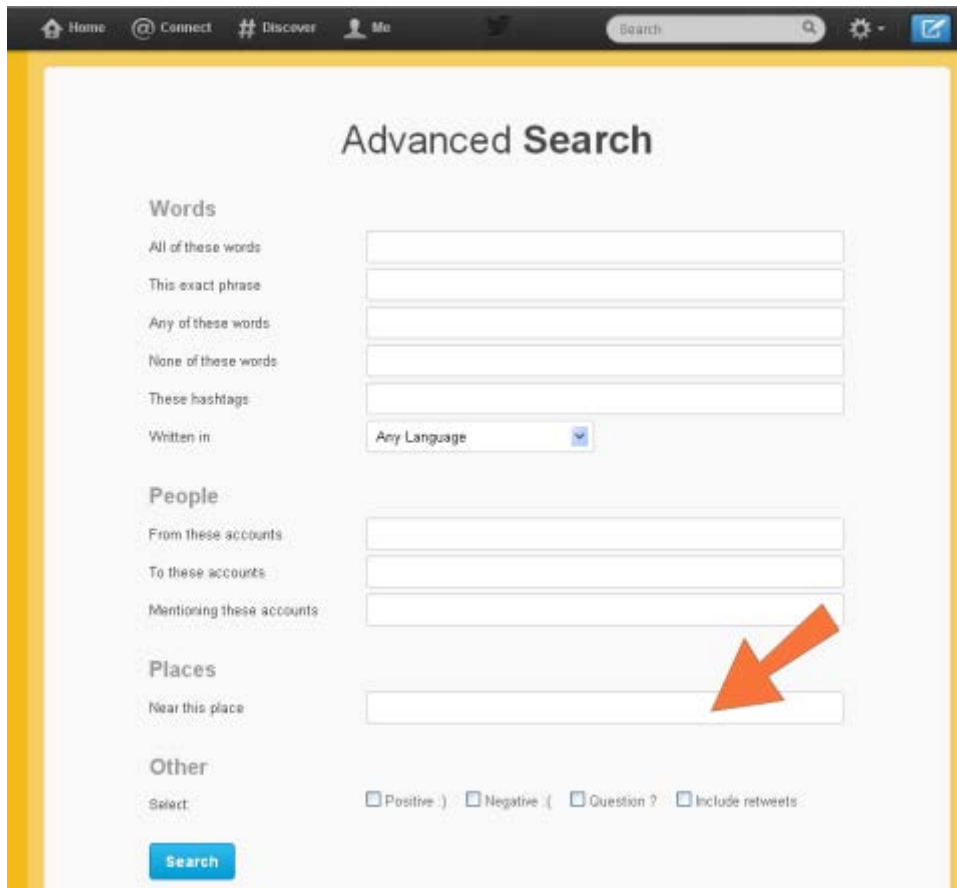
If you attend a conference, the conference may ask all of the attendees to include the conference hashtag in their tweets. This way, hashtags pull together the conference tweets into one huge conversation, even though you may not be following all of those people.

You can create a hashtag unique for your business and use it in your marketing to **help people find your company and the conversations around it**. In fact, hashtags are a great way to use Twitter for customer service and support.

Step #13: Pinpoint Potential Local Customers

People often think that social media allows you to connect with people outside of your local geography. And while that is true, one of the great strengths of Twitter is the ability to focus on people in your own backyard.

Most businesses need local customers. You can **use Twitter to help you find potential customers** who live and work near your business. Use Twitter Advanced Search to find people near your location.

Use the Advanced Search feature to find people by city and zip code.

Use the Places feature to identify your location by city or zip code. Twitter displays a list of people who are tweeting near that location.

An example of a local search for "Tempe, Arizona" and the list of tweets in that area.

Use this tweet timeline to find people who may be potential customers. You can follow them or add them to a potential local customer list. It's the first step to engaging them in conversation.

Use these suggestions to launch (or relaunch) your business's Twitter presence.