



Succeed with Social Media

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Social Media: Twitter™

Twitter can be extremely advantageous to help grow your business. Essentially, Twitter is a communication tool that allows businesses to connect with customers, prospective clients, industry experts, competitors and more.

The Twitter website explains: “As a business, you can use Twitter to quickly share information, gather market intelligence and insights, and build relationships with people who care about your business. Often, there is already a conversation about your business happening on Twitter.”

Twitter may seem intimidating to some, but that’s no reason to avoid it— this document will give you the knowledge to get started using this valuable social media tool.

Definitions and examples

The first step to understanding Twitter is learning the language. Here are some of the basics:

- **Follow:** On Twitter, you follow someone to see the messages he or she posts. For others to get view your posts, they must follow you. This is not a reciprocal relationship like some other social media sites—each party can choose whether or not to follow the other.
- **Tweet:** A tweet is post or status update, with a maximum of 140 characters.
- **@Username:** This is the Twitter naming convention.
 - For example, your business Twitter name could be **@XYZbusiness**.
 - This is also how people communicate with each other on Twitter. If a customer wanted to reach out to you, she might tweet **“@XYZbusiness, please tell me more about your services.”**
- **Retweet (RT):** Repurposed information that someone else posted.
 - For instance, if @JonSmith posted “Check out this interesting study” you could repost it by tweeting **“RT @JonSmith: Check out this interesting study.”**
 - Tip: To add additional value when retweeting, include your own opinion, insight or comment. An example might be **“These stats are surprising. RT @JonSmith: Check out this interesting study.”**
- **Reply:** Another way to communicate with someone (besides a tweet using their @username or retweeting) is to reply to their tweet.

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The content of this document is of general interest and is not intended to apply to specific circumstances. It does not purport to be a comprehensive analysis of all matters relevant to its subject matter. The content should not, therefore, be regarded as constituting legal advice and not be relied upon as such. In relation to any particular problem which they may have, readers are advised to seek specific advice. Further, laws may have changed since first publication and the reader is cautioned accordingly.

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- **Direct Message (DM):** Use a direct message to send a private message to someone who is following you. This can come in handy when exchanging contact or other personal information, since all other Twitter communication is public.
- **Hashtag (#):** Using a hashtag (#) helps categorise your post based on keywords you designate. Users can find all posts with a particular hashtag in it, to help filter results on a specific topic.
 - For example, if you specialise in selling energy-efficient products, you may want to use the hashtag **#energyefficient** in some of your tweets, to attract people searching for that term.
 - Or, let's say you are a mattress store and are looking to find others who are talking about or selling mattresses. If you type **#mattress** into the Search bar, you can view all recent tweets with that hashtag.
- **Link shortening:** With only 140 characters, space is limited in a tweet—so you don't have room for a long URL. However, there are many link shortening services out there that can quickly convert any URL into a compact link for Twitter, such as ow.ly and bit.ly. In addition, many of these services also track your click-through rate.

Suggestions and best practices

Once you've mastered the lingo and created your Twitter account, consider the following tips and best practices to get off to a strong start.

- Actively search for clients, competitors and people in your industry to follow.
 - If you have a database of client email addresses, you can import them into Twitter to find any matching Twitter accounts. Find instructions here: <https://support.twitter.com/groups/31-twitter-basics/topics/108-finding-following-people/articles/101002-how-to-find-friends-and-colleagues-on-twitter>.
 - Use the search feature to find people. Try various keywords related to your industry, niche or related topics to find companies, prospects, customers or others that would be useful to follow.
- Make your content easy to retweet by keeping it shorter than the 140-character maximum, so people have room to retweet and add a short comment of their own—a good guideline is to keep your tweet under 120 characters. When you want extra visibility for a tweet, ask your followers to retweet ("please RT").
- You can also use Twitter to look for leads, using the search function. Search targeted phrases that match your location and product/service, and then reach out to people who have tweeted about your topic (for instance, send a DM about your offerings). Some third-party Twitter applications can automatically scan for search terms and notify you of matches.
- Remember to use meaningful hashtags to reach a broader audience that just those who follow you, particularly when tweeting useful insight, information and expertise—this can attract people interested in your topic to your business, which can lead to later sales. You can also add hashtags when you retweet someone, to share helpful information but bring the value back to your business.
- Engage your followers. Don't just throw out information—post interesting questions, provocative statements, fun facts, contests, etc. Find new ways to keep your tweets interesting. For instance, ask customers to submit pictures of them using your product or share success stories.



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- If someone mentions your brand, whether talking directly to you or not, respond. Answer a question, address a concern or find another way to continue the conversation. And always be timely in your reply! In today's digital world, people expect quick responses; you should ideally write back within an hour or two of their tweet.
- Don't hesitate from responding to negative comments. Also, you may be tempted to respond via DM, but it may actually be in your best interest to respond publicly. Your client base and others will see your business as responsive and willing to listen to clients and resolve issues.
- Have a system in place to pass comments, questions and criticism along to relevant people in your business, so that you can gather the feedback you need to respond to a customer, or even just let someone know that their input was given to the appropriate person in your business.
- Try to post (or retweet) several times each day to stay in front of your audience. Aim for every two to three hours during the business day to reach the most people without overwhelming them.
- Offer something of value in your tweets. Whether it is discounts, samples, promotions, advice or expertise, provide something that is worthwhile for your followers. One example would be offering exclusive deals to your Twitter followers, to bring value to your Twitter relationship and make them feel special—and encourage them to share the deal.

Common mistakes

- Avoid broadcasting any private grievances or annoyances. Whether about a competitor, the government or your mother-in-law, Twitter is not the place for venting or complaints.
- Be careful not to offend your customers. This sounds like a no-brainer, but you could do so unintentionally. When sharing advice, for instance, take care not to make followers sound unintelligent.
- Don't use a business Twitter account to talk about your personal life.
- Don't over-promote your products or services. Instead, focus on your customers. Offer solutions, information and advice they will find valuable, rather than simply trying to sell.

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