

TWITTER POWER

How to Dominate Your Market One Tweet at a Time

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MAIN IDEA

Twitter is part of the growing online social media platforms – alongside Facebook, MySpace and many others. Twitter allows users to send short 140-character text messages (called “tweets”) to people who have signed up to receive messages from you. These messages are delivered via the Twitter Web site, by cell phone, by e-mail, through Instant Messaging or Facebook.

Twitter is a great way for people to know what those in their social circle are up to at the present time. But beyond these social interactions, Twitter also has some worthwhile business applications:

- Twitter is now used by political campaigns to keep supporters and volunteers up to date.
- Activists currently use Twitter to organize themselves and coordinate their street protests.
- Many serving political leaders are using Twitter to keep people informed on new policies.
- Businesses are using Twitter to reach new markets, increase sales and build their brands.

Savvy businesses are now starting to integrate Twitter into their campaigns to build buzz for new products, to attract and hire the best new talent, to drive traffic to their Web sites and to stay connected with customers. Twitter is a high-tech, low-cost and most importantly low-hassle way to gain and maintain a solid competitive advantage in the marketplace.

“Twitter is surprising. The idea is ridiculously simple. But the benefits – and the enjoyment – are incredible. It’s addictive, it’s fun and it’s very, very effective. For Web users, it’s a great way to keep in touch. For online publishers, nothing makes readers and customers feel closer. And for commercial users, it’s an incredibly powerful branding tool. The power to broadcast is in your hands – and the power to earn from those broadcasts too. The results can certainly be impressive, but perhaps the most surprising thing about Twitter is just how much fun reading and writing 140-character posts can be. There are few marketing tools that are such a blast to use.”

– Joel Comm

1 What exactly is Twitter? Page 2

Twitter is a microblogging Internet Web site. It was launched in October 2006 and grew out of a note taking feature on project management software. Twitter allows users to send messages which are 140 characters or less to those who have signed up to hear from you and to hear what you’re doing. Twitter is one of the fastest growing phenomena on the Internet and already has in excess of three million registered users. Many of the world’s leading personalities, corporations and government bodies use Twitter as a fast and immediate way to communicate information.

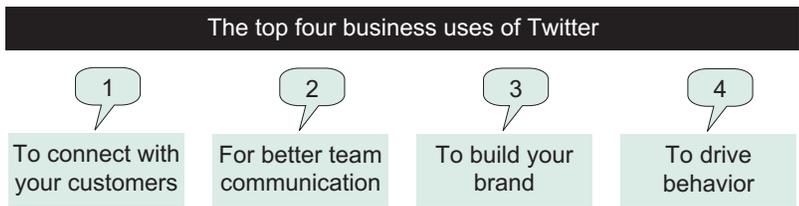
2 How do you use Twitter? Pages 3 - 4

Twitter is the most powerful microblogging service available. In essence, Twitter allows you to conduct an ongoing conversation with those who have signed up to receive your tweets. This allows you to:

- Receive instant feedback on ideas you want to try in the marketplace.
- Have instant 24/7 access to your customers – and other smart people.
- Get the word out on what you’re working on so you can build awareness and buzz.

3 How can businesses leverage Twitter? Pages 5 - 6

From a business perspective, there are four ways you can and should use Twitter:



4 How do you put together a coherent Twitter campaign? Pages 7 - 8

Twitter is a platform on which you can build some worthwhile and powerful business applications. There are also a number of third party tools available. Once you know and understand what Twitter is about, you can and should put together a program with the aim of dominating Twitter. It can be done if you follow a sensible and disciplined approach.

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Twitter is an important and growing part of the online "social media" landscape. Social media uses content which has been created entirely by its users. The most widely known examples of social media include:

- *Facebook* – which allows users to share photos and posted articles with other group members and friends. Facebook has more than 60 million active members.
- *MySpace* – which also allows users to distribute to friends images, clippings and other materials. More than 110 million people use MySpace every month generating 14 billion user comments, 8 million images and around 10 billion friend-to-friend relationships.
- *Blogs* – by most estimates, there are now more than 100 million English language blogs alone.
- *Flickr* – a photo-sharing service which has attracted a large number of professional and amateur photographers.
- *Match.com* – an online dating membership site which charges users \$25 a month to read the descriptions and look at the photos other people have posted.
- *YouTube* – which attracts around 60 million unique visitors every month who watch the more than 10 hours of video which gets uploaded to the site every minute.

Twitter was launched more than two years after MySpace. As of early 2009, Twitter has more than 3 million users who have generated around 4 million connections. On an average day, in excess of 3 million messages are sent using Twitter. It is estimated Twitter has a large following among older, professional audiences and young people alike. More than a quarter of Twitter users are classified in the "high earners" demographic. Around 60 percent of Twitter's Web traffic comes from outside the United States.

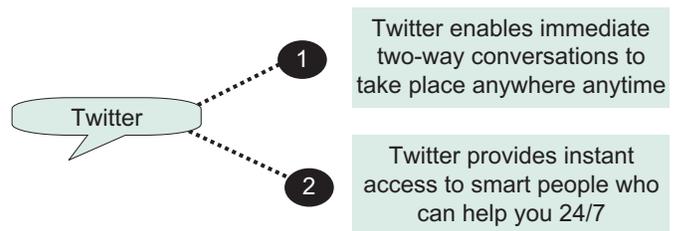
It's clearly early days yet for Twitter. As microblogging catches on, it's not at all hard to envisage Twitter undergoing massive growth. At its heart, Twitter is a very simple service. It centers around answering one question: "What are you doing at the present time?" Twitter users describe what they're doing in 140 characters or less – which is what a "tweet" is. Twitter is like a text messaging service which enables users to send frequent short updates to the people who have signed up to receive them – your "followers".

In practical terms, Twitter functions as a low cost SMS broadcasting service. You send a text message to Twitter (perhaps using your cell phone or else via the Twitter Web site) and Twitter then passes that message on to all your followers by SMS message to their individual cell phones. The benefits of this kind of rapid communication capability can be far-reaching and downright impressive.

To take a few examples:

- The Red Cross uses Twitter to update its people on the status of ongoing disasters. By using Twitter, everyone knows what's going on in real time. Volunteers can in turn use Twitter to advise the Red Cross about a new shelter opening or even the changing direction of a bush fire.
- Well known Twitter personalities have twittered about flight delays and have had local followers help out with making alternative travel and accommodation arrangements.
- Journalism students covering overseas events have twittered details about their arrests to their colleges who have then alerted the local U.S. embassies and arranged local lawyers to represent them.
- When terrorists attacked in Mumbai, India, the first accounts of what was taking place were broadcast on Twitter. These reports were hours ahead of broadcast TV news stations like CNN and all the others.

As can be seen from these examples, there are two characteristics which distinguishes Twitter and thereby earns it the title of "the most powerful microblogging service that exists":



"We now live in a time where ordinary citizens are empowered to be conduits of information to the masses like never before. The major media outlets can not report as quickly or as accurately as those who are actually on the scene. And whether we are talking about breaking news or opportunities to harness this same technology to grow your business, it's clear that the future belongs to those who embrace social media as regular part of their lives."

– Joel Comm

"Just as breaking news is now more breaking than ever, businesses can harness the immediacy of Twitter to innovate and build relationships like never before."

– Joel Comm

"Technology such as Twitter has the potential to give us more than just an opportunity to tell others what happened in our day. If we understand and appreciate what Twitter is capable of, we can use it to instantly share our lives with others, and we can use it to reach more people in a meaningful way. Imagine if you had cost-effective and fast marketing tools that met existing customers where they are and that also helped you acquire new customers. Imagine if you had the power to build a network of like-minded peers, a community of shared ideas and creativity."

– Anthony Robbins, peak performance coach

"If you decide to use only one strategy on Twitter, make it this one: Have fun. On Twitter, that's a pretty good indication you're doing it right."

– Joel Comm

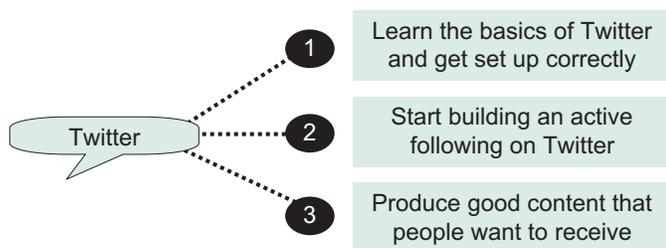
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How do you use Twitter?

Twitter is the most powerful microblogging service available. In essence, Twitter allows you to conduct an ongoing conversation with those who have signed up to receive your Tweets. This allows you to:

- Receive instant feedback on ideas you want to try in the marketplace.
- Have instant 24/7 access to your customers – and other smart people.
- Get the word out on what you're working on so you can build awareness and buzz.

To use Twitter as an effective business communication tool, you need to do three things:



1 Learn the basics of Twitter and get set up correctly

The basics of Twitter are very straightforward:

1. *Sign up to create a free Twitter account* – at www.twitter.com. Choose a username:
 - Which will be obviously associated with you.
 - Which is easy to remember and memorable.
2. *Set up your Twitter profile* – which means entering your name, e-mail address and so forth.
 - Don't forget to add the address of your Web site in the "More Info URL" because this is where you want people to go for more information about you.
 - It's very worthwhile to develop a descriptive one-line bio which must be 160 characters or less. To make this as professional as possible, you might follow this format: "Garden development specialist, tree surgeon and dedicated designer who loves the smell of freshly-cut grass." Another alternative is to use this one-line bio to promote the project you're working on: "Currently developing the business plan for the launch of a new TV station."
 - You also need to put together your Twitter profile. Upload a professional-quality picture of yourself – everyone needs to do this. Ideally, make this a portrait where you're smiling and at ease.
 - Use the left hand side of your Twitter profile as an information column. Fill this with details about where people can contact you:
 - Give your blog address.
 - Give your e-mail address.
 - Give the URL of your Web site.
 - Give the Web addresses of your projects.
 - Add in other noteworthy stuff

3. *Set your notices* – which means choosing how often you want Twitter to notify you, whether you want people's replies to be displayed and more. You can fine-tune this as you become more experienced but as initial settings, try this:
 - Choose to show everyone's replies.
 - Don't worry about auto nudge at this stage.
 - Select receive an e-mail whenever you get a new follower.
 - Choose receive an e-mail when you get a direct message.
 - Choose to receive the Twitter Newsletter.
4. *Set up your mobile phone* – so you can send and receive tweets that way. (Details at twitter.com).
5. *Sign up to start following other people you know on Twitter* – by going to their respective Twitter profiles and hitting the "Follow" button.

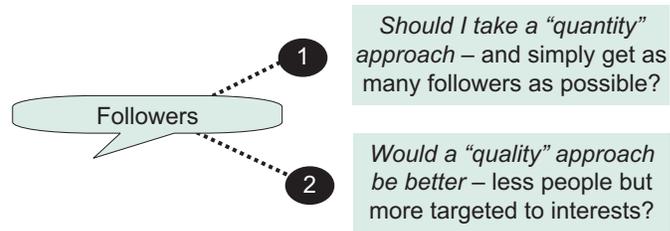
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Start building an active following on Twitter

Twitter followers are valuable. Obviously, the more followers you have, the further your messages will reach and ultimately the greater the influence you will have. The key to getting followers is simply to produce consistently good content which people find interesting, fun and valuable.

The fact you're sending messages which are 140-characters or less is a constant challenge. In addition to telling people what you're doing right at that moment, you can also send your opinion, make an announcement or start an ongoing conversation. You can also include links in your messages which will tell people where to go for more detailed information – which will clearly be a very useful feature.

When you start building your own Twitter following, the first two questions which will come into focus are:



As a general rule-of-thumb, you'll probably want:

- A core group of followers who are passionate about the same things you are.
- As many people as possible who have a mild interest in your topic and who will like to keep in touch.
- Lots of people who might be interested in some aspects of your topic if what you're doing sounds interesting. These will be your casual followers.

To attract your core group of followers:

1. *Identify the experts in your field of interest* – by trying to figure out who the key influencers are. Use search.twitter.com to identify which experts in your field are already active on Twitter.
2. *Gain their friendship and respect* – by reading the material they've posted on Twitter. Sign up to become a follower and reply to the material they are making available on Twitter.
3. *Find ways to give back more than you take* – try and point the expert towards a resource he or she doesn't seem to know about yet or give them something new and relevant. If you do this, the expert will appreciate your suggestion.

To attract general followers who will have a weaker interest in what you do, there are seven strategies you can use:

1. *Look for people you know personally* – and sign up to become their followers. More than likely, they will reciprocate by signing up to become your follower, especially if you join in their conversations.
2. *Tweet your blog* – that is, send out teaser messages which will encourage people to visit your Twitter profile where they will be redirected to your blog.
3. *Pay your followers* – give away valuable stuff for free as an incentive for people to sign up as your followers.
4. *Join conversations* – reply to tweets you receive from others and provide worthwhile answers to the questions they ask.
5. *Duplicate your Twitter content on other social media sites* – like Facebook and MySpace. Make sure your friends in other applications know they can also become Twitter followers.
6. *Always include your Twitter name* – in your e-mail signatures, on your business card, in any forum postings you make and so on.
7. *Run a contest* – ask a question on Twitter and have everyone who responds correctly within the allotted time go into a draw for a prize.

“Creating a long list of followers is always going to be one of the most important tasks that you do on Twitter. It’s a process that takes time. While there are no strategies to make that process faster, no one ever builds a four-figure follower list overnight. That’s because, above all, creating a large following on Twitter requires writing good tweets – the kind people actually want to read and that make them feel that you’re going to have more good information for them in the future.”

– Joel Comm

3 Produce good content that people want to receive

It’s crystal clear that to keep followers on Twitter, you have to produce outstanding content which will keep your followers coming back for more and encourage them to participate in the ongoing conversation.

Exceptional content really isn’t hard to describe and visualize. From a Twitter perspective, good content is:

- Highly entertaining and engaging.
- Informative.
- Valuable.
- Concise – 140 characters or less.

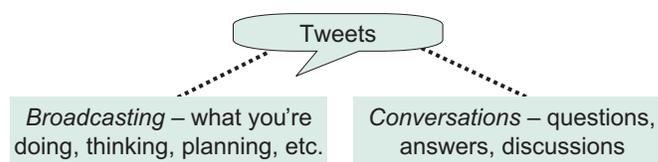
As usual, the devil is in the details. To go about creating good solid Twitter content, there are some general etiquette rules you should follow:

1. *Don’t spam* – resist the urge to send out a constant stream of “I’ve just updated my Web site – check it out!” style messages. In Twitter, this kind of stuff ends up being counterproductive and a waste of time.
2. *Don’t use SMS-style abbreviations* – stick to real words. Use “late” rather than “l8” and “for” rather than “4”.
3. *Give proper credit when you pass on someone else’s tweets* – which is termed “retweeting”. If you’re passing on someone else’s messages, make that perfectly clear. Add your comments in brackets at the end.

4. *Keep it simple* – don’t split long messages into three or four 140-character segments but write complete thoughts in one standalone message. Don’t look like you’re trying to monopolize the conversation.
5. *Follow the people who follow you* – by reciprocating in this way you show you’re genuine about what you’re doing rather than working towards some unstated aim you’re embarrassed to mention.

This is a case where it’s a good idea to be a follower for a while before you start trying to do a lot on Twitter yourself. Observe what others are doing and the etiquette they use. Read their tweets and notice what kinds of things cause their followers to comment. Join in their conversations while you learn the lay of the land. Learn from their expertise. Just make certain whenever you join a conversation, you contribute something useful rather than blatantly plugging your own stuff.

Tweets in general fall into two broad categories:



Ideally, you want your Twitter timeline to be a good mix of both types of tweets. You want to be broadcasting interesting ideas and then responding to those who are interested. If you only have broadcasts, you will seem a bit dull. On the other hand, if you reply and chat too much, you will come across as cliquy. A good mix is required.

To take this a little further, tweets come in various flavors:

- *Link tweets* – where you mention what you’re working on and where people can go to find out more detailed information.
- *Classic tweets* – which detail what you’re doing right now and why you’re doing that.
- *Opinion tweets* – which state what you think about some issue or another.
- *Mission accomplished tweets* – which tell people what you’ve just done and why it’s important.
- *Entertainment tweets* – short message with wry humor, witty comments or humorous insights.
- *Question tweets* – where you ask your followers for help or advice of one kind or another.
- *Picture tweets* – where you post a picture somewhere and then tweet your followers the Web address where they can see it for themselves.

Savvy operators learn to mix and match these various kinds of tweets to produce an experience which is engaging and fun for everyone. It’s also possible to use the spontaneous nature of Twitter to good effect. You might announce you’ll be doing something for the next hour and invite all your Twitter followers to view proceedings as your special guest. There are a number of different ideas which can come to life using the Twitter framework. It’s very workable to generate loads of traffic to your Web site (where you can convert interest into sales) using Twitter to first engage and then keep a sizable number of followers.

3 How can businesses leverage Twitter?

From a business perspective, there are four ways you can and should use Twitter:

- 1 To connect with your customers
- 2 For better team communication
- 3 To build your brand
- 4 To drive behavior

1 To connect with your customers

As mentioned, Twitter is both a broadcasting device and a conversational tool. It allows you to have great two-way conversations with customers. You can:

- *Have conversations with customers which enable you to spot potential problems* – even before your new products get released. You can use Twitter to provide sneak peeks at your new products while they are under development. The comments you receive can identify bugs which need to get sorted out before you do a large rollout.
- *Get feedback on how your emerging products will rate* – by comparison with existing products. Twitter followers have a well earned reputation for being blisteringly candid about what they think. You can fine-tune and hone your product ideas through this kind of feedback.
- *Discover who will be the biggest fans of your stuff* – who your potential product evangelists might be. Twitter lets you identify those individuals who are passionate enough to become one of your key marketers. Evangelists can be pure gold for your business.
- *Keep track of what people are saying about you, your product or your industry.*
- *Run a micro help desk* – where people can advise you of their problems and you can work to make things right. The way you handle these complaints openly and candidly by using Twitter will be something your customers will love and potential customers will take note of and appreciate.
- *Publicize your conferences and other live events* – by posting a running commentary of what’s going on. Twitter is ideal in this context. You can use it to tweet questions to the panel, to give others a taste of what they’re missing or to tap into the expert sources of information who are gathered in one place.

“When you produce interesting tweets, your followers benefit. They find their way to your site where they can pick up some valuable information. They enjoy the benefits of special offers and discount codes. They gain a greater understanding of the sorts of products, services and information that you provide. They feel they are part of a community that shares even more useful information and that provides support too. And they can have a good time as well.”

– Joel Comm

2 For better team communication

Twitter is a great way to talk to your own staff and teams. Instead of waiting for conventional blog posts or Web site updates, your people can get a number of small messages throughout each day. In many ways, Twitter can act as something of a virtual water cooler where the people who work for you hang out, shoot the breeze and interact with each other.

The advantages of using Twitter for team conversations are:

- *Everyone can see what everyone else is working on at the present time* – which can be helpful when you have team members who are thousands of miles apart. Twitter posts can act as a virtual whiteboard for projects.
- *All your conversations don’t need to be strictly work-related* – but everyone will have the chance to shoot the breeze a little with some personal, informal tweets as well. This is good because it reminds everyone of the human element. By and large, talented people work on projects because they find the challenge interesting and they like the people they’re working with. Twitter can deepen and strengthen those various interpersonal connections.
- *Everyone can get updated quickly and efficiently* – you can send out a single tweet announcing a blog update or changes to the Web site. Everyone feels like they are in the loop. Twitter is amazingly inclusive.
- *You can create a dedicated Twitter project profile specifically for members of the team* – which cannot be accessed by outsiders. Team members can feel like they are working on something exclusive. Just be aware that private conversations have a way of finding their way into the public domain with monotonous regularity so be careful not to say things in tweets which would generate problems for you if publicized later on.
- *You can use Twitter to put together a great team in the first place* – by visiting the Twitter profile of potential team members and looking at the kind of work they have done in the past. Twitter is an excellent way to do some solid background checking and vetting. You can see what people are like by their Twitter postings. You can also gauge their technical competence, their personality traits and more. And don’t forget Twitter is a two-way tool. Potential team members can also learn a lot about your company and what you do by using Twitter well in advance of when you approach them.

“Twitter works wonderfully when used by individuals to broadcast information about themselves and to keep in touch with other individuals across the Twitterverse. It can also be hugely beneficial to businesses relying on scattered teams, allowing them to create the kind of bonds that previously could only be formed in offices.”

– Joel Comm

“Today, it can cost literally nothing to create content and make it available for people to enjoy online. That low cost means it doesn’t matter if it’s not read by millions. You can focus on a small market – even one interested in stamp collecting in Mozambique – and still find enough people to form a community and maybe even make a profit through advertising and product sales. It’s called ‘the long tail’ and the Internet has made fantastic use of it.”

– Joel Comm

3

To build your brand

"The Internet might have changed some of the ways that advertising works, but brand-building is still important. If you want people to know who you are and remember the name of your business, you have to keep putting it in front of them, and you have to continue to interact with your buyers."

– Joel Comm

Twitter is a superb branding tool – as evidenced by the fact a number of Fortune 500 firms now make use of this platform to promote their brands. This is because Twitter is an excellent way to create and tell an engaging and entertaining story so when customers see the company's products, they trust them and associate with them.

How can you use Twitter to build a brand? A few possibilities:

- *You can build a memorable Twitter profile* – which has a design that encapsulates what you or your company are all about. Good examples of this are twitter.com/JetBlue or twitter.com/Direct2Dell.
- *You can put a human face on your business* – by allowing one of your people to run a Twitter service. For example, Comcast is renowned for poor phone-based customer service. To address that perception, the Director of Digital Care for Comcast set up a customer service site at twitter.com/comcastcares. This features tweets coming from a real person rather than some company rep and has gone a long way to defuse the perception that nobody at Comcast is concerned about public perceptions.
- *You can use Twitter as an extension of your customer service* – which is exactly what happens at places like twitter.com/starbucks.
- *You can use Twitter to do the four things which build brands* –
 - Post news updates about interesting changes.
 - Deliver customer service and answer questions.
 - Invite people to say something about your company.
 - Deliver discounts and other special offers.
- *You can use Twitter to reinforce what your company stands for* – regular ongoing updates can make your customers feel closer to you. By doing this, you can make your brand come to life in the customer's mind.

When it comes to branding activities, repetition is vital. Most of the time, getting your brand in front of people requires expenditure of lots and lots of dollars. In the Twitter world, all you have to do is keep sending out tweets. That way at least once a day and possibly more frequently, people will be reminded what they like about you. That's got to be a good thing.

Note that when it comes to sending out corporate tweets, formality just doesn't do it. The most effective tweets don't read like press releases. Rather, they reflect the tastes and personality of a real live person. Opinions need to be expressed and an easy familiarity established. Different kinds of tweets need to be generated on an ongoing basis in order to inject some zest and vitality into what's happening. Some companies have latched on to these necessities early on and are using Twitter very effectively to build their brands. To do something similar, pay careful attention to what they are doing. Use that as a template for your own branding efforts and you can produce some long-term branding benefits.

4

To drive behavior

Branding is nice but its benefits are derived over the long-term. Sometimes, you want to drive more immediate behaviors. Twitter is good for this as well. Just bear in mind a tweet is not a direct mail piece or even a direct sales page with calls-to-action and gripping headlines. Rather, with Twitter, you have to be a little more subtle. In practical terms, you have to build interest and trust first and then suggest your followers follow through and do something.

Twitter can be used to do three things:

1. *You can drive followers to your Web site* – simply by including the URL of your Web site in the tweets you send out.
2. *You can use Twitter to conduct surveys which gather data and build responses* – perhaps to ask what topics you should cover in your blog over the next month or so. Twitter is a great way to harvest fresh ideas or even to secure guests. Every time you post something new on your blog, you can also announce it on Twitter.
3. *You can harness Twitter to mine your customers for valuable feedback* – which will enable you to make even better products in the future.

Twitter can drive direct sales as well, but that isn't really its strong suit. The way to make this work for you is to keep in mind a few simple guidelines:

- *Don't overdo your special offers* – once a week is fine but more than that and followers will start to feel exploited.
- *Make your offers genuine specials* – either time-limited offers or discount coupons seem to work best on Twitter. It's vital that your followers feel like they are part of an exclusive club.
- *Keep your offers closely aligned with your specialist subject* – because followers will only stick around for as long as they find your tweets interesting and entertaining. If you offer stuff outside your speciality, your profile as an expert will unavoidably get diluted.
- *Don't link to any offer which doesn't make followers feel special* – or in other words always create the impression your followers are getting preferential treatment.

An integral part of using Twitter to drive behavior is to track the results of your tweets and use that information to learn how to do better in the future. A simple way to do this is:

- Record in your sales journal when you send out a tweet.
- Count the number of replies you receive and record that.
- Note who replied so you know who are most likely to respond favorably again in the future.
- Track how often your tweet gets mentioned elsewhere or subsequently forwarded on to other people.
- Look at the direct results of what you offered – whether that is more followers, sales, registrations, survey responses, etc.

Tweeting is always a process rather than a one-off event. By tracking your results, you can start to determine what sequence of tweets works best for you. It may be that your followers will respond most positively when you mix action tweets with random thought tweets and question tweets. Or some other sequence may be better. Figure it out and determine the sequence that will work best for you. Then you have a template which can be used over and over again.

4 How do you put together a coherent Twitter campaign?

Twitter is a platform on which you can build some worthwhile and powerful business applications. There are also a number of third party tools available. Once you know and understand what Twitter is about, you can and should put together a program with the aim of dominating Twitter. It can be done if you follow a sensible and disciplined approach.

Twitter already has some very useful add-ons and third party applications. It's certain many more will come in the future. Some of the best add ons currently available include:

- Tweetlater (www.tweetlater.com) which lets you set up your tweets in advance so you can keep your timeline active even while you're away doing other things.
- Twitterific (www.iconfactory.com/software/twitterific) which allows Macs and iPhones to send and receive tweets without using a browser.
- Twirhl (www.twhirl.org) which is a social software desktop interface which works on PCs and Macs.
- Twist (twist.flaptor.com) which tracks the popularity of specific topics and keywords on Twitter.
- Twellow (www.twellow.com) which is designed to be the Yellow Pages or Yahoo! of social media.
- Tweetbeep (www.tweetbeep.com) which sends out regular alerts whenever a specified keyword (like your company name) is used on Twitter.
- Twittercounter (www.twittercounter.com) which lets you track how many followers a person has over time.
- Tweetdeck (www.tweetdeck.com) which allows you to group tweets and followers according to subject.
- TwitThis (www.twitthis.com) which can add buttons to your Web site or blog. When visitors click a button, the message gets sent out to your Twitter followers.
- TwitPwr (www.twitpwr.com) which creates short URLs you can then tweet to others and also tracks the most popular URLs in use on Twitter.

It's clear that many more powerful Twitter applications will emerge in the future. Equally, Twitter also allows users to build their own applications by offering APIs – essentially pieces of software which allow Twitter to communicate with other software packages. Software developers can use these APIs to integrate Twitter into all kinds of core business processes.

What distinguishes Twitter from other types of social media is the fact it is incredibly basic and incredibly powerful at the same time. Twitter is simple to use and quite enjoyable, but it is also a platform which enables you to listen in on and participate in a universe of conversations. You can interact with Twitter in the usual way or you can use Twitter to discover trends and highlight hidden opportunities. If you're smart, you can use Twitter to gain a sustainable competitive advantage.

For all these benefits to flow, however, you have to start somewhere. You should set a goal to get up and running on Twitter as soon as possible. It's reasonable to anticipate that you can become well established on Twitter within 30 days if you follow this plan:

A 30 Day Plan to Dominate Twitter

Day	Action
1	Sign up for Twitter with a descriptive username and have a good look around. Read some tweets and get familiar with the lay of the land. Sign up for TweetBeep and create alerts for whenever your company name or products get mentioned. You'll likely be surprised to find people are already talking about you on Twitter.
2	Create a professional looking background image for your Twitter profile. For inspiration, look at what the leading Twitterers at Twitterrank use for their profiles. Play around with some designs and come up with something you can be proud of.
3	This is reading day. Focusing on the kinds of topics you will tweet about, have a look at what kind of material is already available on Twitter. Pay attention to what kinds of tweets seem to have generated the most replies thus far.
4	Start writing your first tweets. Download a client like Twhirl or Twitterific to make this easier. Try and make your tweets entertaining, interesting and fun.
5	Start following the main Twitterers in your field. Hit the "follow" button and note how many follow you in return. And don't forget to keep tweeting regularly.
6	Look for your friends, acquaintances and contacts who are already on Twitter. Add them to the list you follow and tweet them a direct message.
7	Target Twitterers with large follower lists and make an effort to get them to follow you as well. Try replying to their tweets with interesting and valuable information. They will likely pick up on that quickly.
8	Start with the big Twitterers and check out the followers in their lists. Start following those people yourself and see how many of them follow you in return. Twitterers who post regularly tend to have long follower lists you can and should mine for more followers for yourself.
9	Ask your followers a question you genuinely want answered and see if you can pick up a good answer. Tap into the information they possess. It will probably surprise you to find out how much collective wisdom there is in your existing follower list, even though it's still only early days yet.
10	Become a contributing member of the Twitter community by finding a question you can answer today. If one of your followers has a question you can help with, then you're all set. Otherwise, use the Twitter search page to find someone who has posted a query you have the expertise to answer. Follow them and answer their question. Spontaneity like that is all part of what makes Twitter fun.

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Day	Action
11	Relax today and have some fun. Write a few witty tweets that hopefully make your followers giggle. Reply to tweets you find interesting. Do things which will entertain your followers.
12	Try and identify who your budding evangelists are. Look at who is most active in responding to your tweets, or who frequently mentions your Web site or your products. Draw up a list of possibilities.
13	Sign up as a follower of each of your potential evangelists. Respond to their questions and address any issues they raise. Start offering them advance peaks at projects you're working on. Reel in your evangelists and build a relationship with them.
14	Look on Twitter for anyone who is making negative comments about your company or your products. Reply to any of their complaints with an apology and a request for more information so you can follow through and see what's gone wrong. Do some worthwhile customer service work.
15	Set up a new page on your Web site and post a tweet which recommends that page. Add a link for people to click on. Then pay attention to how many page views this generates for you. Look at any comments people make after visiting. Spend today trying to get a feel for how active your followers are.
16	Now do the same thing with a discussion tweet. State an opinion and ask your followers what they think. Keep track of how many replies you get.
17	Post an action tweet. Ask your followers to buy an affiliate product or to join your mailing list. See whether your followers are actually prepared to spend money on the basis of your recommendation.
18	Start understanding the best tweet sequence for your stuff. Decide what kind of action you want followers to take at the end of the sequence and then figure out what sequence of tweets should guide your followers to that action. Start putting things together.
19	Try a different sequence today. Although you have a preferred sequence in mind, try something distinctly different today and compare results. Validate whether or not your perceptions are sound.
20	Have fun. You've been driving your followers pretty hard over the past few days. Pull back. Join discussions. Read other people's timelines. Chill out. Your followers don't want to be driven all the time so recharge your batteries.

A 30 Day Plan to Dominate Twitter

Day	Action
21	Try some off-Twitter marketing. Register at TwitThis so you can add their icon to your blog posts. Post a Twitter badge on your Web site. Include your Twitter URL on your e-mail and forum signatures.
22	Make use of all the social media tools at your disposal. If you use Facebook, add the Twitter application to your account. Mention your Twitter timeline in all your other social media forums. Let people know this is a good way to see what you're up to.
23	Offer your followers a special offer – either a discount on one of your own products or secure a worthwhile discount on someone else's product. Create a tweet sequence that primes your followers and then send out the call to action. Record the results this generates.
24	Make your followers aware of your blog. Announce that a new posting has gone up and invite your followers to comment. Record what happens when you push your followers to your blog.
25	Take up the discussion which started on your blog and continue it on Twitter. Try and turn all your Twitter followers into RSS subscribers. Get them used to interacting with you in multiple venues.
26	Create a series of tweets which drives your followers to buy something – even without the direct benefit of a special offer. Issue a call to action and track the results. This will give you a baseline from which you can build in the future.
27	Today is a fun day. Show your followers you value them and not solely their wallets. Send out some stuff that will make them laugh.
28	Set up a separate Twitter account. Having more than one timeline is helpful because you can then create different brands for different products. Or you might use the second timeline solely for automated tweets. The options are there so position yourself advantageously by getting a second timeline going now.
29	Spend today building followers for your new timeline. By all means tell the followers on your first timeline about this but also do all those other things you did when first starting out on Twitter.
30	Today is another fun day. Having fun is an integral part of Twitter so enjoy yourself. The more fun you personally have, the easier it will become to convey that feeling to your growing lists of followers.