

Twitter Demystified for Business Users

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Twitter is the current top "hot property" on the Web, but its popularity and how to use it has mystified many business owners. Many people think that they want to, or should be using Twitter, but simply do not understand the platform, its use, or its place in building web exposure. This article will demystify Twitter and help you to learn how to use it in the workplace and to promote your business.



First, I have to say that I had been confused on how to use [Twitter](#) to benefit my own business until I downloaded TweetDeck. TweetDeck is a desktop application that allows you to review and post status updates on Twitter and Facebook simultaneously. I consider it a "must have" application for anyone who wants to make sense of Twitter. TweetDeck allows you to sort the people you follow on Twitter into groups, allows you to limit the number of Tweets (Twitter micro posts) to be shown at any one time, and also allows you to remove all Tweets you have seen with one click. Additionally, using TweetDeck, finally a Twitter search on a topic makes sense.

Since using [TweetDeck](#), I have had a much better Twitter experience. As a Twitter newbie, visiting your own Twitter home page is intimidating; it consists of post after post from people who you are following, who you may not know much about, and it just seems like a huge volume of content. To get started effectively first group the people who actually have something interesting to say on TweetDeck and voila, you have a powerful tool that keeps you at the forefront of what is happening in your industry and on the Web.

So how do you get started with Twitter? Well the first thing is to start on Twitter yourself to understand what you like to read, who you like to follow, and to clearly identify what you like about Twitter. For me, it boils down to this: I like to follow people in my industry who say something of value, who provide a link to a new application or point me to an interesting new article, video, or blog site that I should review but may have never have found myself. Based on what I like, and the people who I find interesting to read, I now write my Twitter posts using this same formula to grow my own Twitter audience.

What I also like about Twitter is that the people who I follow also know how to show their true personality in their Tweets. Yes I do like to know what Danny Sullivan (famous search engine marketing guru) ate for lunch, but better yet is the link to the video he thought was funny. I love following Ashton Kutcher (movie star married to Demi Moore who just hit 1 million Twitter followers in April). Man, that guy is really funny and is having a ball with Twitter. His posts are great and he has just earned the status of the user with the most followers. This is why you can't hire someone to "Ghost Twitter" for you. It's about showing the real you - you can't fake that!



So how can you use Twitter for business? Twitter is an excellent tool for linking and this is the real value for businesses. By using Twitter to point people to content on your website, articles you have written either on or off your website, or by linking to a service you want to highlight, you drive traffic. On top of that, Google actually indexes Twitter and so your Twitter page can appear in the organic search results so make sure your bio is well thought out. Don't waste time using Twitter to point to blog posts, use [TwitterFeed](#) to post your blog posts directly onto Twitter. If you have a blog or website, you'll get new Twitter followers by posting your [TwitterFeed](#) right onto your web pages. People who may not have known your Twitter ID can simply click the bottom "follow me link" and start following you on Twitter.

What's important to be successful in using Twitter is to identify what you personally like about this new media and then deliver the same type of things that you like back to your own followers - work to provide value not drive! So you've got to play with Twitter and learn how to use it first before you can really become successful with it for your business.

So how do you get followers? Well, I started by following everyone (who I found by doing a Twitter search) who had the last name McCord. Then I searched for web design, search engine optimization, and pay per click. Any site profile that looked good, I clicked to follow the writer. It was that easy. Many times people who you follow yourself will choose to follow you. That's how you initially build up your Twitter base. Over time you will start to identify your "Twitter voice" and refine the type of Twitter presence you want to have by changing your content style and the things that you Tweet about. As you refine your presence, you will build a following.

Another cool Twitter use is that you can reply to any of your followers by simply putting an @ in front of their Twitter ID. For example to send something to my attention use @mccordweb at the very front of your Twitter posting and click enter. Just remember that this post is seen by all followers on my site and on your Twitter site. If you need a more private exchange, go to the direct message link on the Twitter.com site and select a follower by Twitter ID name and send your message from there. This note will be private. If you are using TweetDeck you can click on a follower's Twitter ID icon and then select to send a direct message or @reply to them. TweetDeck will automatically insert the correct syntax for you in the Tweet.

For many businesses the ability for users to communicate with top management using Twitter is an invaluable resource. This one-to-one exchange allows a company principal to keep tabs on customer viewpoints, concerns, and interests. As a Twitter reply or direct mail does not use email and does not require a response, this is a great way to tap into social networking to test new ideas and to ask for user feedback. For example, if you have a new software product ask your Twitter followers for feedback on a specific feature, or provide a link to your beta version for their testing.

How you use Twitter is all about your personal business needs. The best advice that I can offer to you is that you need to use Twitter a bit yourself first to understand the medium and to find out what you like to read best using Twitter. Then, create your own Twitter network sharing information that you find interesting and have some fun.

Currently I am following 204 people and 183 people are following me on Twitter. Personally I find Twitter great fun and a very cool way to find out first what's happening in the world before you see it on TV, read it on the Web, or see it in the newspaper. That's the real power of Twitter; you share, you find out, and you know, all by a person-to-person exchange of information.

For those of you clicking in from my e-newsletter the rest of the content on Twitter applications and uses follows.

Below are some of the Twitter applications that I like and use regularly for my business.

Twuffer – I love this one, it is a Twitter post scheduler. Some people feel that Twuffer defeats the immediacy of Twitter posts or Tweets, but I like it as I will schedule Tweets on days that I am not blogging to keep my followers advised of things I find important. It is easy to use, allows you to Tweet ahead, and lets you select a posting schedule by day and time. If you are pushing content on a service or product this is an excellent tool to use. Set your Tweets up one week or one month at a time and feed your content to readers in addition to your regular Tweets. Make sure to use www.TinyUrl.com to change any long URLs you point to in the Tweet to a Twitter-friendly short version to save space.

Twitter Feed – This is another one of my top favorites. TwitterFeed allows me to show my blog posts from “[The Web Authority](#)” directly onto Twitter. It also allows me to post my Tweets back on my blog (by installing a widget) in my blog template - very cool cross interaction! I pick up many Twitter followers with this technique. Readers come to visit my blog and then choose to follow me on Twitter.

Twitter Grader – This one is a vanity application that allows you to see where you stack up against other Twitter users. Twitter Grader measures the power of a Twitter user based on followers, number of updates, and posting frequency.

TweetBeep – With this application, you can manage your online Twitter reputation. Alerts will be emailed to you whenever a Twitter user Tweets about your business, name, or domain. You select the alert criteria and what to

watch for using TweetBeep. This is great for a business that is concerned about branding and online identity. PR professionals should make sure to use this tool to watch for comments about their clients.

Twitoria – Clean up your Twitter followers by finding out which people never use Twitter or post infrequently so you can delete them right from the Twitoria interface.

Qwitter – If you want to know when someone stops following you, sign up for this service. Actually, this can be an excellent tool to find out what a reader hated that you posted about and caused them to “chop” you, so you can fine tune your message. If you get a flood of drops after a Tweet, it allows you to learn that people don’t like a certain type of Tweet – instant feedback at an anonymous level!

One big thing about Twitter that I have not even mentioned yet but is actually one of Twitter’s best features is the ability to text-in Tweets from your mobile phone. Although you can’t easily link to great content typically on the fly like this, the ability to connect with others without being tethered to a computer is an opportunity to show the “real you”. Maybe your followers do want to know what you are eating for lunch or about a seminar you just attended, just be kind and don’t vomit out Twitter spam using your Blackberry on meaningless drivel.

You can easily set up the ability to receive text messages from your Twitter account to your cell or Blackberry, but be careful as you may be inundated if you have a large following. I would recommend receiving Twitter updates via text message to your cell only from a small group. For example if you have a project team, set up a Twitter account for each member to allow them to post just to this small unique circle of team members. The value to track and interact with each other at anytime and anywhere using Twitter by computer or by cell phone adds real value for work groups and teams - particularly team managers. Twitter even allows you to make this type of group private.

Another feature of Twitter is the ability to add hashtags in front of keywords in your Tweets to help with sorting to allow others to find your important content. For example if you wanted to Tweet about a recent earthquake in LA you would use #laearthquake in the front of your Tweet. By using hashtags you enable Twitter to return your information for topic searches on newsworthy Tweets. You can visit Hashtags.org for more information on the current hot hashtags that are in use for today so you can follow, add to the topic, or create your own. For example in Twitter World, Fridays are the day you post with #followfriday and enter in the Twitter IDs you want to recommend to others. You would be amazed at the cool new people you can follow and interact with from recommendations of the people you follow.

In conclusion, Twitter is one of the hottest new mediums to arrive on the Internet scene since Facebook. Although it is not exactly “new”, Twitter has just recently become very high profile. If you are in business, Twitter definitely warrants your attention. Not only is it a very smart new tool to use in your marketing arsenal, but I think that the more you use it you will grow to love it and find it fun to use. The ways that you can use Twitter are endless: for teams, for family members, for business networking, to stay at the forefront of news, to promote yourself and your services, and to just have fun connecting with others online. Just remember you can’t really make sense of Twitter for business without using TweetDeck or another similar aggregating and sorting application. Thanks for reading, see you on Twitter, you can reach me at @mccordweb or visit me at www.Twitter.com/mccordweb.

About the Author

Nancy McCord is the founder and President of McCord Web Services LLC which provides search engine marketing, web design, blog writing, and webmaster services globally. Since 2001, Nancy McCord has developed a national reputation as an expert on search engines, blogging, and how businesses can harness the power of Web for profit. You can visit Nancy and her firm at www.McCordWeb.com.