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TWITTER: Getting Started Guide

By Susan E. Jacobsen (@SusanEJacobsen)

So you've made the decision to jump on the Twitter bandwagon... The first thing to remember about Twitter is that it is an open forum, one where you can follow who you want and anyone can follow you. The purpose of Twitter is to post very short updates - no more than 140 characters – and engage in conversations with your followers. Your tweets can be in response to something someone else posted, or links to sites and resources that you have found to be interesting and useful.

Twitter can be an invaluable tool for finding answers to questions or finding individuals with like interests. The constant flow of short messages (known as the 'Twitter stream') can be a bit overwhelming at first. However, once you take hold and embrace this micro-blogging community, Twitter can prove to be a fun, engaging experience, and one that will enrich your life, both personally and professionally.

Below, you will find an easy, step-by-step guide to help you get started on Twitter. There are a number of resources noted at the end, which include "how to" articles, the "do's and don'ts" of Twitter, along with additional insight on who to follow and how to get the most out of your Twitter experience. I look forward to sharing tweets with you; be sure to follow me @SusanEJacobsen.

- 1) Go to: www.twitter.com
- 2) Click: Join Twitter!
- 3) Complete Questionnaire (*Tip: Use your real name as user name, if available, so as to help others identify immediately with you; also makes you easier to find*)
- 4) Once Account is Established, Go to Settings
 - a. Complete One-Line Bio (*Key words related to your field, areas of expertise, etc.*)
 - *Note: Transparency is key – some people will not follow others of their bio is not completed.*

- b. List Web site address (*Company or personal, depending on how you are representing yourself on Twitter*)
 - c. Make sure “protect my updates” is NOT checked; this inhibits people from following you. Twitter is an open forum and you should make it easy for others to follow you, as opposed to going through an “approval” process.
 - d. Upload Your Photo (*People want to identify with those they are interacting with; friendly, smiling photos that show the “real” you should be used*)
 - e. Create your design/background using the templates available on Twitter, create your own design and upload, or use of the many free services that will help you to design a background *e.g. Twittbacks.
- 5) Start Following People – there are a number of “lists” available that segment individuals by industry; below please find those I recommend following in a number of categories (media, publications, legal, social media, celebrities).
- a. Click on the “Find People” tab
 - b. Type in name of individual/organization you are looking for (*if you have an @address, do not type in the @ symbol, just the name*)
 - c. Click on “follow” tab
 - d. You will be notified via Email when folks start to follow you; you can look at their profiles in your “followers” tab and decide if you want to follow them.
 - e. You can “block” followers that you do not wish to see your Twitter posts by clicking on “block.” (*Note: There are a number of “get rich/money making” followers -- you can choose to ignore them, follow them or even block them. I tend to ignore them.*)
- 6) Getting Into the Conversation
- a. Follow, listen and engage when appropriate – be yourself – real – do not try to “impress” others with items that do not represent who you are.
 - b. You will start to notice tweets beginning with RT and then a Twitter address. RT refers to “re-tweet” and by re-circulating items that you come across via the Twitter-stream, you not only validate and compliment the original sender, but you also show others that are following you what interests you and what you feel is worthy of sharing. When others re-tweet your posts, then their followers will see your @name and perhaps, begin to follow you as a result. It is a great way to build up followers. (*Imagine if @Oprah, with her*

1,000,000+ followers re-tweets one of your posts ... all of those followers will now be seeing your @name and know that Oprah found it to be interesting.)

Twitter etiquette includes “thankng” those that re-tweet your posts since they helped to get you in front of a wider audience.

Also, remember that Twitter is a collaborative environment and one that thrives on the sharing of information, so if you see a link or post from someone else, always give credit to the original sender (e.g by re-tweeting or noting that the information is via @name.)

- c. Once individuals that you are following start to follow you, you can send them a DM (Direct Message). DM's are private messages between you and the other person. Sometimes this is helpful when you want to exchange telephone numbers/email addresses that you do not want to go into the Twitter-stream.
- d. Search for topics and people of interest via the Twitter “Search” tab at the bottom of the page on the Web or via the search tab on TweetDeck. Twitter search provides you with instant results in “real time.”

7) Accessing Twitter via Other Applications

- a. TweetDeck (Desktop Application/www.tweetdeck.com): TweetDeck shows you everything you want to see at once, so you can stay organized and up to date on the conversations taking place. Once you download the application, you can set up categories to organize your followers' tweets (e.g. Media, Marketing, Legal, etc). TweetDeck makes it easy to shorten url's and upload pictures, as well as conduct searches on topics/individuals you want to follow. I highly recommend using TweetDeck to help stay organized and not overwhelmed.
- b. TwitterBerry (for Blackberry Users): Free downloadable application so you can view the Twitter-stream on your Blackberry.
- c. MoTwitt (for Treo Users): Free downloadable application so you can view the Twitter-stream on your TREO.

8) Search & Engage

- a. You can search topics, events, products, etc. via the search feature in Twitter on the Web (located on the Right navigation) or TweetDeck (clicking on the magnifying glass). This is a great way to identify followers interested in the same things you are, monitoring the tweets about a specific topic and/or engaging in the discussion.

- b. Hashtags (#) are a community-driven convention for adding additional context and metadata to your tweets. You create a hashtag simply by prefixing a word with a hash symbol: #hashtag. (e.g. if you are attending an event, say MickeyMouse Expo, there maybe a hashtag created - #mickeymouse to monitor all the tweets related to this expo and so when you search #mickeymouse, you can track what's going on.)

9) Recommended Resources

- Industry-specific guides to Twitter, by profession: <http://bit.ly/8LLoQ>
- 12 Ways to Find Brands & Companies on Twitter: <http://bit.ly/F57me>
- The Top 7 Mistakes new Twitter Users Make: <http://bit.ly/1jYc>
- Twitter? It's What You Make It: <http://bit.ly/pWNH2>
- Top 5 Ways NOT To Use Twitter: <http://bit.ly/fn20I>
- How to Attract and Influence People on Twitter/The Ultimate Twitter Resource: <http://bit.ly/imJqt>
- 6 Ways to Maximize the Use of Your 140 Characters: <http://bit.ly/RKsyL>