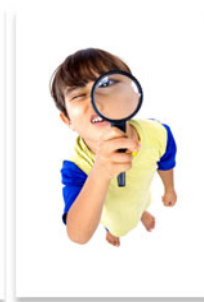
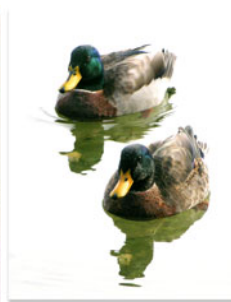


Created for The WritersUA 2009 Conference

Twitter For Beginners



About This Ebook

Have you wanted to check out Twitter, or have you attempted to use Twitter but were frustrated by your first efforts? Learn the basic mechanics of the Twitter communication tool and start building a community around your business online.

This ebook edition was created for attendees at the WritersUA conference in March 2009.

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Subscribe on my blog: <http://blog.CrowInfoDesign.com/>

Download your own copy at: <http://www.CrowInfoDesign.com/downloads/twitter.pdf>

Twitter is constantly changing. We will make every effort to provide an updated version of this ebook to reflect the current Twitter features. Check our blog for version updates.

Does your company have an idea for a ebook, or do you have a library of white papers you would like to publish as ebooks? We can help you!

Contact us at ebooks@CrowInfoDesign.com

Why You Need This

There's a lot of talk today about social media. Whether you call it social media, or new media, or web 2.0, it's all about companies having a two-way conversation with their customers and the public.

Twitter is becoming the sparkplug of the social media engine because it allows you to establish an online community and quickly talk within your community.

In this ebook, you learn:

- ☑ Framework for understanding and using Twitter's features.
- ☑ Importance of defining your Twitter business goal.
- ☑ Best practices for setting up your Twitter account profile.
- ☑ Strategies for defining your Twitter community.
- ☑ Guidelines for crafting effective messages.
- ☑ Procedures for using each message type.
- ☑ Deciphering message components and their importance.
- ☑ Planning weekly activities that build your Twitter success.
- ☑ Starting to use Twitter on your mobile internet-enabled device.



What Is Twitter?

Twitter is a message service that allows you to send and receive short messages (called tweets) within your Twitter community.

Your Twitter community consists of:

- **People You Follow.** You define your community by following other Twitter users. You see the tweets created by everyone you follow. Following someone means that you subscribe to their tweets.
- **People Who Follow You.** Other people read your tweets and decide to follow you. Your followers see the tweets you send out.

What Are Tweets?

Tweets are short, only 140 characters long, so they are easy to skim.

The Twitter website says you tweet to answer the question "What are you doing?" It is more accurate to say that you tweet to answer the question "What are you thinking?"

Perhaps you think it would be boring to read what people have for lunch or about their commute in traffic. Fortunately, most tweets are not about those things. Instead, you learn the major events and the small details about the business and personal lives of the people you follow.



Twitter Is Like A Party

Twitter is a new communication form. Until you use it, you can't quite get your head around it. After you use it, there isn't an easy way to explain it to others. Everyone must make the same journey to understand it.

There is no good metaphor for explaining Twitter to new users. The most effective metaphor I've used (and heard others use) explains Twitter like a huge cocktail party.

- Twitter is like walking through a large party and eavesdropping on conversations as you walk past people.
- You invited these people to attend your party for a specific reason. However, once they arrive, they are free to talk about anything on their mind.

This metaphor explains some of the Twitter features, but doesn't explain them all.



Learn More

You can learn more about how the party metaphor explains the basic Twitter features at [Twitter Metaphors](#), a blog post at [From The Crow's Nest](#).

What Do People Tweet?

People tweet about the things they think about. Here are some examples tweets:

- **Observations about life.** "I imagine that the street signs in heaven will be printed in Helvetica."
- **Interesting things to read.** "Today's Bacon Salt case study on Adweek underscores the 100% targeted nature of social media. <http://is.gd/4WdR>"
- **New blog posts.** "Annoyed by outdated websites and abandoned blogs? Join the conversation: <http://kilobox.net/504/>."
- **A humorous take on life events.** "Who would have thought this granola-eating hippie with a liberal arts education would write a biz book? Life really is amazing."
- **Inspiring thoughts.** "I'm living proof that dreams can come true. I love my work/company/partner/employees. It's great to make a living doing what you love."
- **Professional news.** "The NYT included my website in a list of just FIVE recommended grammar blogs! Wow! <http://is.gd/2rSl>"
- **Workaday life details.** "It's so hard to entrust work to others, and yet so rewarding when they come back with great results. I need to delegate more!"
- **Business issues and challenges.** "What if a fraction of the time spent talking about why social media is so spiffy and how to do it the bestest went into writing new content?"
- **Family life details.** "Excited for my daughter who made the varsity soccer team as a freshman."

Twitter Fact

*As of February 2009,
Twitter processes nearly 2
million tweets per day.*

Source: [TweetStats](#)

Define Your Twitter Goal

Before you jump into the Twitter waters, you need to decide your Twitter goal.

Why do you want to use Twitter?

- For personal communication (stay in touch with family and friends)
- For business communication (to build community with your customers, vendors, and other related business people)
- To keep in touch with your peers or keep an eye on your competitors
- To reach out to potential customers
- To drive traffic to your website or blog

If you are new to Twitter and social media, it may take you a while to define your Twitter goal. That's okay. Get your feet wet, explore what Twitter has to offer, and think about what you discover.

Why Your Goal Matters

Your Twitter goal impacts everything you do on Twitter. It determines your account settings and whom you decide to follow. After you use Twitter for a while, you develop a greater understanding of what is possible. This may change your Twitter goal, also.

Start thinking about your Twitter goal now.



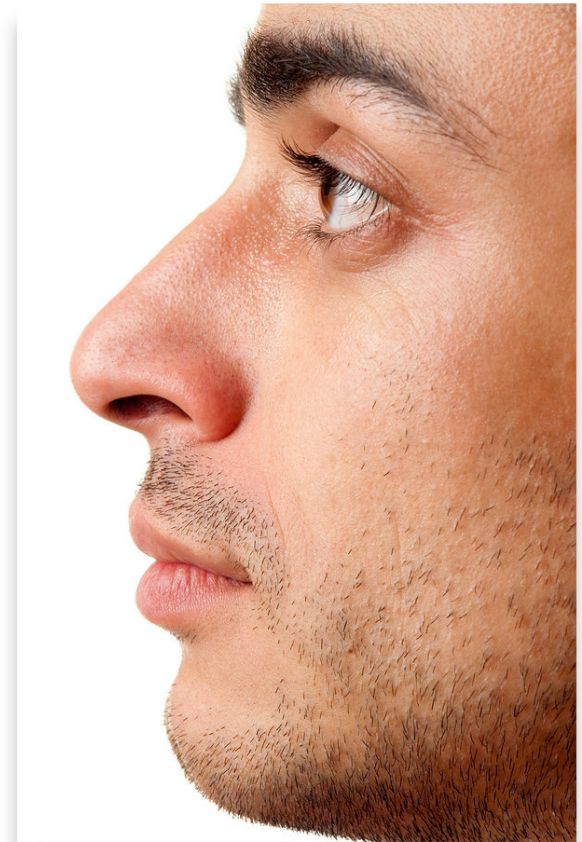
Your Twitter Profile

To learn about Twitter, you have to use Twitter. If you haven't set up your Twitter account, do it now at: <http://twitter.com/>.

Your Twitter profile explains who you are to the world. Each component is optional, but your profile allows other users to find you and learn about you.

- ☑ **Your name** is your real name, not your Twitter username. Use your real name if you want people to find you using the [Twitter search feature](#).
- ☑ **Your location** is your geography. Most people put a city name and a two-letter state abbreviation, but there are no rules.
- ☑ **Your web** lets you link to one webpage. You can link to your website, your blog, or you can develop a special [Twitter landing page](#) that tells people more about you and how you use Twitter.
- ☑ **Your bio** gives you 160 characters to give people a flavor of your personality.

You create these items when you open your Twitter account. You can edit them any time under the Settings option. Others view your Twitter profile when they click on your Twitter username in a tweet, or when they visit your home page (<http://twitter.com/yourusername>).



Learn More

You can learn more about best practices for new

Twitter users at [Twitter New User Checklist](#), a

blog post at [From The Crow's Nest](#).

Account Checklist

Before going any further, use this checklist to make sure you have your account set up to get a good start.

- ☑ My username represents me by using my name, a nickname, or my business/brand name.
- ☑ My username contains no punctuation (including no underlines) and identifies me in the shortest possible number of characters.
- ☑ I've included my real name so people can find me with a people search.
- ☑ I've included my real name with my business Twitter account (a business username) to put a personal face with my company and brand.
- ☑ My link points to my blog, my website, my Twitter landing page, or another online resource that helps people get the flavor of my personality or a sample of my work.
- ☑ My one-line bio captures my personality, or explains my company and brand.
- ☑ My location is my city and state. I've used either the standard two-letter state abbreviation or spelled out my state name.
- ☑ I've uploaded a photograph avatar (picture) that clearly shows my face.
- ☑ I have not protected my updates.

These items give you a basic Twitter account setup. Later, you can refine your account settings to support your Twitter goals. Don't fret about these decisions. You can change them later.

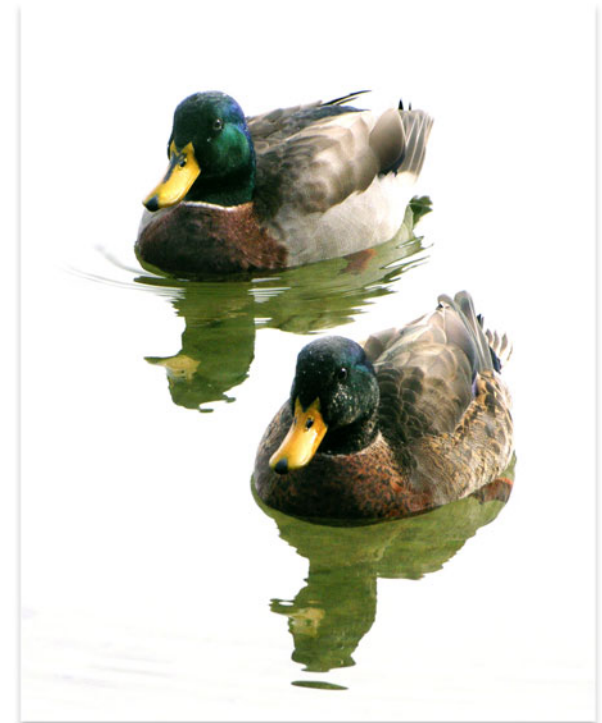


Whom Should I Follow?

When you decide to follow someone, you subscribe to that person's tweets. The people you follow determine what you read on Twitter.

In general, you might follow:

- Friends and family
- People in your local community that you see at professional and personal events
- Customers (and potential customers)
- Peers and people in your industry
- Service providers for your business
- Your help system users
- People who inspire you personally or professionally
- Social media gurus



As you start out, be open to meeting new people on Twitter. As you begin to see the power and potential for Twitter in your business, you can adjust your goals and change whom you follow.

Some of the people you follow are people you know in real life. But don't limit yourself to people you already know. Twitter allows you to connect with many wonderful people you have not met. In fact, you may never meet some of your Twitter community in real life, but you can appreciate their work and their personality, and enjoy engaging them on Twitter.

How Do I Find People?

There are several ways you can find people to follow on Twitter.

- **Resources List.** Use the list of technical communicators created by [Cherryleaf](#) based on whom they follow. <http://tinyurl.com/aa2vcr>
- **Piggyback.** Find people you like. See whom they follow and follow them.
- **Name Search.** Use the **Find People** search feature to locate people by name or Twitter username.
- **Email Search.** Let Twitter go through your email contacts to find people you already know on Twitter.
- **Keyword Search.** Use the search feature to find people who include specific keywords in their tweets. <http://search.twitter.com/>
- **#FollowFriday.** Look for #FollowFriday recommendations from people you like. You can also check out [Top Friday Follow](#), a website that tracks these recommendations. <http://www.topfollowfriday.com/>



Twitter Timelines

Your Twitter timeline is the list of tweets that you see because of the people you follow. Your timeline shows up on your Twitter home page (<http://twitter.com/home>).

Twitter doesn't automatically update your timeline each time someone tweets. You must manually update your timeline every few minutes.

Tip

Click **Home** to refresh your timeline. It appears two places on screen.

Whom You Follow Matters

The quality of your Twitter experience depends on whom you follow. Your timeline contains tweets from the people you follow. If you don't like what you read, if you are not inspired or engaged in conversation from your timeline, change the people you follow!

Public Timeline

There is a public timeline that contains tweets from everyone on Twitter. Click the [Everyone] option (right menu) to view the public timeline.



Someone Followed Me

Everyone makes their own decisions about whom to follow. When someone you don't know follows you, you have a choice to make. Do you want to follow back or not?

- Some people always follow back.
- Some people selectively follow back.

Neither policy is right or wrong. It all depends on your Twitter goal.

- Some people are selective about whom they follow back because they don't have time to read and talk with everyone who follows them.
- Other people follow everyone back, and selectively read the tweets in their timeline.

Decide on your follow policy starting out. Be prepared to reassess your policy as you gain Twitter experience and as your Twitter following grows.



Tip

Your follow policy may work when you follow 100 people, but might not work when you follow 500 people.

Your Twitter Community

Twitter divides your community into two basic groups:

- People you follow (blue)
- People who follow you (green)

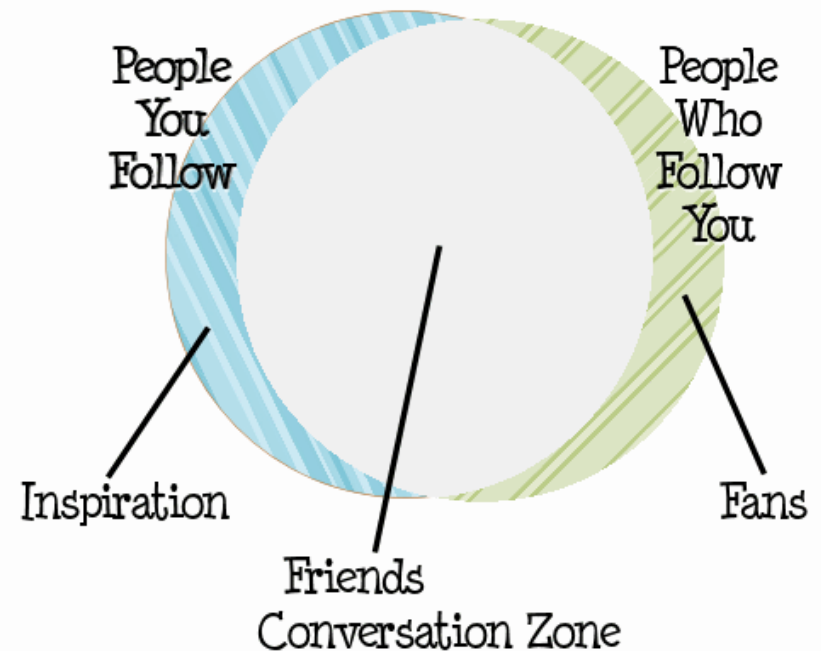
However, it is more helpful to talk about your Twitter community as three groups:

- Your Twitter **friends** are the people you follow who follow you back. This is the conversation zone for your personal community.
- Your Twitter **fans** are people who follow you even though you don't follow them.
- Your Twitter **inspiration** are people you follow who don't follow you back.

Your inspiration may be people, or they may be information services like weather or news updates. You follow them because their tweets help you to meet your Twitter goals.

Language

Twitter does not use the terms friend, fan, or inspiration to describe your community. However, they are helpful for understanding your community dynamics.



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What Do I Tweet?

Tweet Writing Tips

There is an art to writing an effective tweet. Think of each tweet as a headline and use language to engage and hook your readers.

No matter how important your tweet content is to you or your company, your followers ultimately decide the value of each tweet.

There are three types of tweets you can send out.

- **General tweets.** A public tweet sent to everyone who follows you.
- **@Replies.** A public tweet sent to a specific person on Twitter. You may send an @reply in response to a tweet sent out by a person. Or you can use the @reply to send a message to anyone on Twitter.
- **Direct message.** A private tweet sent to a person who follows you. You cannot send a direct message to someone who does not follow you.

Start Tweeting!

Now, it is time to start sending tweets to your followers. It may take you a while to figure out what you want to tweet about. That is normal. Take some time to read what other people tweet while you figure out what you want to say.

Here are some suggestions for tweet ideas:

- What you are doing (but don't be boring).
- Your current business challenge.
- What you are reading with details so others can read along (if interested).
- Announce a new blog post, press release, product release, promotion, etc.
- Share an insight or humorous look at your current challenges or situation.
- Ask a question. Your followers may have an opinion or offer you some insight based on their own experiences.



Tweets With Links

Many people use Twitter to share online resources with their community. You identify the online resource by its web address or URL (uniform resource locator).

Most web addresses are very long, more than 25 characters, and sometimes more than 100 characters. Within a tweet, a web address takes up valuable real estate.

Why Twitter Matters

Twitter is a publishing platform because you can add links to any content with a web address.

As content developers, you must understand Twitter and its importance as a publishing platform.

How Twitter Handles Long Web Addresses

Twitter realizes that web addresses eat away characters that you could use for your message. When you enter a long web address, Twitter does one of the following:

- Displays only the first 25 characters and allows the link to work (truncates the link).
- Converts the link using TinyURL.*

**The rules for this seem to be changing, but if you paste in a very long web address, Twitter sometimes replaces it with a TinyURL (shortened) web address.*



Free Web Address Shortening Tools

There are many free services that people use to shorten web addresses to use in tweets. You use these services while crafting your tweet and insert the shortened web address yourself.

- TinyURL <http://tinyurl.com/>
- Is.gd <http://is.gd/>
- Budurl <http://budurl.com/>

Retweets

When someone posts an interesting tweet, you may choose to retweet it. By retweeting, you share the tweet with your followers. If you found the tweet interesting, perhaps they will feel the same way.

To retweet, copy the tweet and paste it in the tweet box. Add “RT” (short for “retweet”) at the beginning, and add “@” before the username.

For example: CrowInfoDesign Anyone know a Twitter client that allows you to use multiple Twitter accounts besides Twhirl?

Becomes: RT @CrowInfoDesign Anyone know a Twitter client that allows you to use multiple Twitter accounts besides Twhirl?

As people retweet, a tweet goes beyond one person’s community. A popular tweet that many people retweet becomes viral, meaning that it spreads far beyond its source and beyond the reach of the person who wrote it.

Request a Retweet

Occasionally, you may want others to retweet for you. You can ask people to retweet by adding “please RT” or “please retweet” at the end of your tweet.



@Replies

You send an @reply (at reply) to a single person, but an @reply is not a private message. @Replies show up:

- In your timeline.
- In the recipient's timeline (only if the recipient follows you).
- In the recipient's @Replies list.
- In the public timeline.
- In the timeline of every person who follows both you and @reply person*.

**This is the default setting. You can change your @replies option under Notices in your settings.*

Each @reply must start with the “@” + username to guarantee the person receives it.

Tips

Use an @reply to send a message to someone who does not follow you.

If you follow a large number of people, you can reduce the noise in your timeline by changing your @replies setting under Notices.

Reply to a Tweet

If you read a tweet and want to reply, simply hover your mouse over the tweet until a back arrow appears on the right. Click the back arrow and Twitter starts creating your @reply.

Twitter provides a link back to the original tweet so the @reply recipient can link the reply to the tweet.

Using @Reply To Start a Conversation

You can send an @reply directly to a person without replying to a tweet. Type @ + the username and your tweet.

For example: @WorkingGirl Great news about your book launch party!

Direct Messages

You can send a direct message to any user who follows you. You don't use the tweet box on your home page to send a direct message. Instead, you send it from the Direct Messages page when you are logged into your account. Click the **Direct Messages** option (right menu).

Direct Messages web address: http://twitter.com/direct_messages

Tip

You may notice that some people who follow you do not appear in the direct message drop-down list.

Use one of the other two methods to send a direct message to the people missing from the drop-down list.

Three Ways To Send a Direct Message

Display the direct messages page. Use the drop-down list to select the person to receive your direct message, and type the message in the box. .

You can send a direct message from a user's tweet archive if that person follows you. Click the user's avatar or username to display the person's tweet archive. Click [**Message Username**] under **Actions** option (right menu). Twitter displays a special direct message page where you type the message.

When someone sends you a direct message, you can reply to a direct message with a direct message if that person follows you. Display your **Direct Messages** page, locate the direct message from that person, hover your mouse over the direct message and an envelope with a left arrow appears. Click on the envelope, and Twitter starts creating your direct message to that person.

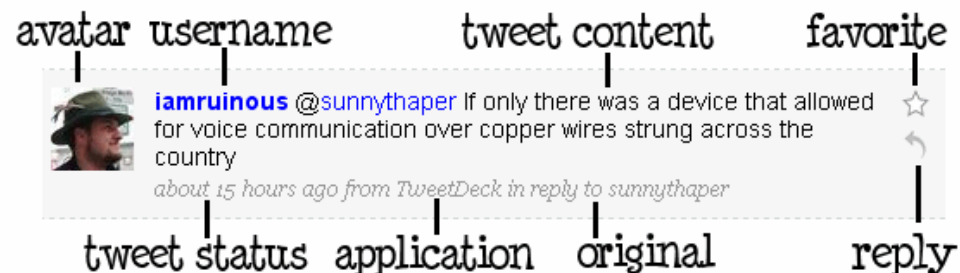
Tweet Anatomy

Here are some tweets broken out to show you the tweet components. The next page explains these components in detail.

A tweet you send includes the following components in your timeline:



A tweet someone else sent includes the following components in your timeline:



Tweet Anatomy (cont.)

Here are the tweet components and how you use them.

- **Avatar.** Click to view user archive and profile. Click on avatar on user archive to see a larger picture (when available).
- **Username.** Click to view user archive and profile.
- **Tweet content.**
- **Link (optional).** Click to view link in a separate window. Might show the whole link, a truncated web address, or a shortened web address.
- **Tweet time and status.** Provides exact (after 48 hours) or relative tweet time (less than 48 hours). Click to view the single tweet (identified by its status).
- **Application.** Program used to create this tweet. Options include: web (Twitter.com), txt (from text message), or application name (Twhirl, Tweetdeck, etc.). Click on application name to visit the application website.
- **Original (with some @replies).** Provides a link (“in reply to username”) to an original tweet. Used with @replies created by clicking the reply (back arrow) only.

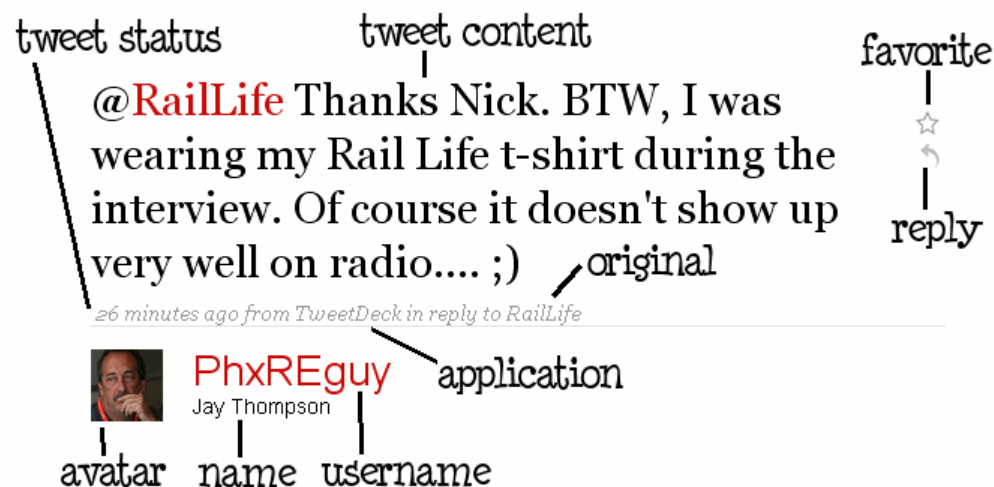
These items appear when you hover the cursor over the tweet:

- **Favorite (star).** Click to add to your list of favorites. Yellow means it is marked as a favorite.
- **Delete (trash can).** Click to delete this tweet. Only available for your own tweets. Removes the tweet from Twitter completely.
- **Reply (back arrow).** Click to create a reply to this tweet.

Tweet Status

Twitter assigns a status number to each tweet. You use that status number to display an individual tweet. Click on the tweet status (time) component of a tweet in your timeline to display a single tweet.

Here is an example of a tweet displayed by its status.



When Twitter displays this tweet, it shows you the web address (in the browser). The web address of this tweet is <http://twitter.com/PhxREguy/status/1183311207>.

With the tweet status, you can identify the tweet outside of Twitter. For example, you can:

- Send a tweet as a link in an email
- Link to a tweet in a blog post
- Create a tweet bookmark

Conversation Tips

On Twitter, you must listen as well as talk. Read what people are saying. Jump into the conversation. Get to know the people you follow by reading and replying to their tweets. If they suggest something to read, check it out.

No one wants to read your tweets if you only talk about yourself and promote your business. Sure, you can do these things, but find a balance. Twitter is about the conversation, and no one likes to be around someone who constantly talks about himself and never listens.

Personality and Transparency

Your community expects to engage a person, not a company, through your business twitter account. Find the balance between staying on-target with your Twitter communication goal and expressing your personality.

Also, your community expects you to be real and honest in your communication. The buzzword for this is “transparency.” It means that you don’t spin news to your advantage. You admit your mistakes and faults. This is a culture change for traditional PR and marketing people, so move slowly to make sure you stay on target.

Building On Your Conversation

Don’t carry on whole conversations through replies, however. When you engage someone with a reply, shift to direct messages for ongoing comments. This way, your conversation doesn’t appear in the timeline for your followers. You may enjoy the conversation, but it may just be noise to them. After you have a rapport with someone you meet on Twitter, at some point you can shift to email and other communication tools.

The More, The Merrier

You may decide to follow most of the people who follow you. This follow policy creates a large group of friends and gives you a large conversation zone.

As your number of friends grows, you may find it difficult to keep up with the tweets in your timeline.

Here are some ideas for managing a large conversation zone:

- **Skim your tweets.** This is like walking through the room at a large party. You know you are missing great conversations, but you just can't talk to everyone all of the time. Adjust your expectations so you can jump into any conversation that catches your attention, and let the rest go.
- **Adjust your @reply setting.** You can remove all @replies sent by the people you follow. You only see @replies sent to you.
- **Focus on your direct messages and @replies list.** This way, you catch the conversation directed at you.

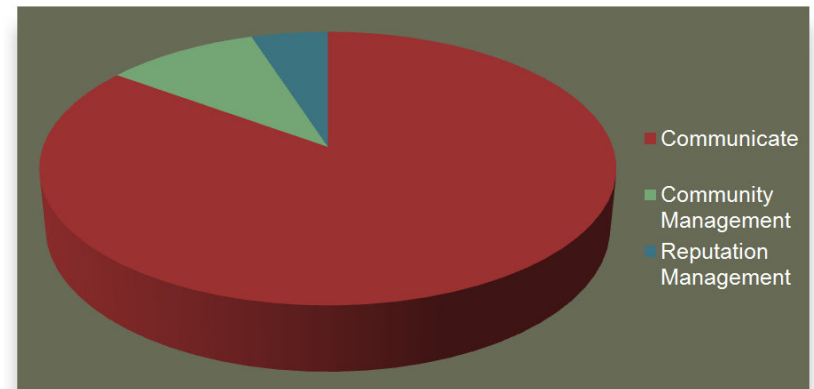


Tip

Some Twitter clients, like [TweetDeck](#), allow you to sort the people you follow into groups. This feature makes it easier to skim your incoming tweets.

Weekly Twitter Activity

You should perform three types of activities to maintain your community and fulfill your Twitter goals. They are equally important, but they take different amounts of time.



Communicate

Sending and reading tweets is your biggest activity on Twitter. The whole purpose of being on Twitter is to engage your community in conversation.

Learn More

You can learn more about the time it takes to effectively use Twitter at [Twitter Your Time Away](#), a blog post at [From The Crow's Nest](#).

Community Management

In the beginning, it takes some time to define your Twitter community and figure out your follow policy to meet your Twitter goal. But after you get those basics figured out, you can do your community management in a few minutes once a week.

Reputation Management

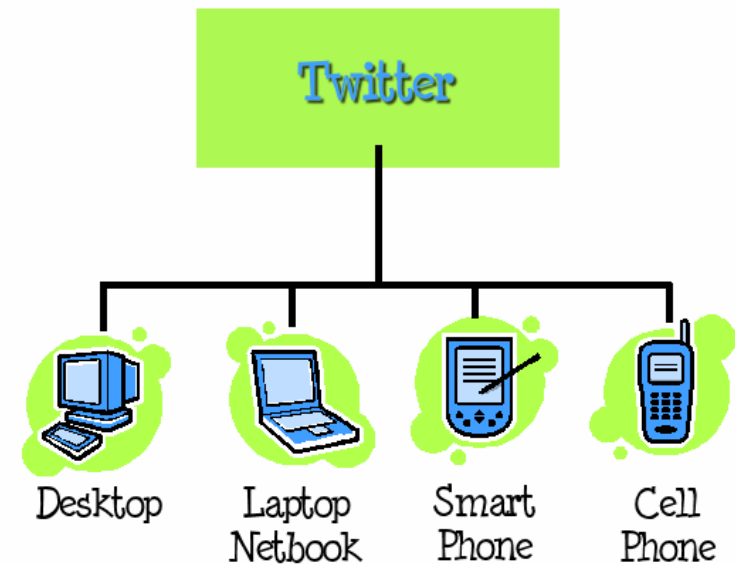
Here is where you listen to what people throughout Twitter are saying about you and your company, products, and brand. There are [many ways to tap into these hidden conversations](#) on Twitter. After you figure out the tools and processes that work best for you, this task takes a small amount of your time each week.

Twitter To Go

News flash!

You don't have to be sitting at your desk to use Twitter. You can send and receive tweets using a variety of mobile devices.

- A laptop computer
- A netbook computer
- Any cell phone with text messaging service.
- Any web-enabled cell phone or smart phone.
- Any portable wifi device (like the iPod Touch)



This flexibility makes it possible for you to take Twitter with you wherever you go.

Text Messaging

Depending on where you are in the world, Twitter provides a free text-messaging service that converts your tweets to text messages, and your text messages to tweets. To use this service, you must register your cell phone with Twitter (use the Devices tab under Settings).

Twitter doesn't charge for this service. However, your cell phone carrier may charge you for each tweet. If you want to use Twitter this way, upgrade to an unlimited text messaging service, or be prepared for a large cell phone bill.

Twitter & Mobile Devices

To use Twitter on your laptop, netbook, or smart phone, you need a mobile Twitter client. Here is a brief list of some popular Twitter clients you can use from your mobile device.

Name	Type	Mac	Win.	Mobile Devices	On Twitter
<u>Twitterific</u>	Mobile	Y		iPhone, iPod Touch	<u>@Twitterific</u>
<u>Twitterfon</u>	Mobile			iPhone, iPod Touch	<u>@TwitterFon</u>
<u>Twitterberry</u>	Mobile			Blackberry phone	Not on Twitter
<u>TinyTwitter</u>	Mobile			Blackberry, any Java enabled device	<u>@TinyTwitter</u>
<u>ceTwit</u>	Mobile		Y	Windows mobile	<u>@ceTwit</u>
<u>Pocketwit</u>	Mobile		Y	Windows mobile	Not on Twitter
<u>Twibble</u>	Mobile	Y	Y	Blackberry, any Java enabled device	<u>@Twibble</u>

Use a list like the Twitter Fan Wiki's [mobile applications](#), or use Google to find a Twitter application for your specific device.

Keys For Success

You find what you expect to find on Twitter. If you jump into it thinking it is boring or stupid, you might as well stay home.

You can create Twitter success for your business by following these simple guidelines:

- Have an open mind.
- Be curious and willing to experiment.
- Ask questions and share your insights with others.
- Clearly define your Twitter goal, and make your Twitter-related decisions support your goal.
- Be real and honest, and show your personality.
- Engage others in conversations around topics that are important to them.
- Reply to interesting tweets.
- Retweet helpful information and insights, giving other people the credit for their contributions.
- Consider your community and share information that your community finds useful and helpful.
- Provide accurate and complete profile information so people can learn about you.

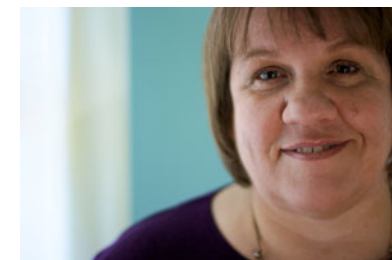
The quality of your Twitter experience depends on whom you follow. If you don't like your experience, follow different people.



About The Author

About Charlene Kingston

Charlene Kingston is an information strategist and writer with more than 25 years experience solving business challenges with practical information solutions. She started Crow Information Design in 1995 in the Phoenix metropolitan area.



When she is not advising people about Twitter or [writing about Twitter](#), Charlene spends a lot of time using Twitter.

Find Charlene online:

- Follow Charlene on Twitter: [CrowInfoDesign](#) (business) and [Kinchie](#) (personal).
- Visit her website: [Crow Information Design](#)
- Read her blog: [From The Crow's Nest](#)

About Crow Information Design

Crow Information Design provides services that help companies and freelance professionals present themselves in writing online and in print. My team can help you with:

- | | | | |
|----------------|------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|
| ■ Social Media | ■ Screencasts | ■ User Manuals | ■ Online Help |
| ■ Ebooks | ■ Websites | ■ Software Demos | ■ Training Programs |
| ■ Blogs | ■ Press releases | ■ Job/Task Analysis | ■ Knowledgebase Articles |
| ■ Editing | ■ Indexing | ■ Business Analysis | ■ RFP/RFQ Responses |

Finding the shortest distance between your message and your audience.

I wrote this ebook to help business people like you get off to a great start on Twitter.

I'd love to hear how you use this ebook to kick-start your business on Twitter.

Regards,

