

Twitter for Business: Essential Tips for Success

For many businesses, reaching a local audience of customers and other businesses using Twitter presents an excellent opportunity. But where do you start, what do all those buttons do and what should you tweet and when?

Following his recent talk at the New Forest Business Partnership, [Mark Tillison](#) summarises essential tips for Twitter Success for those that couldn't make it along.

[The following is a summary from a free, 5-Week email course on Twitter Basics for Business.](#)

Relationships and Reputation

First, it's important to understand where Twitter activity, and social media generally, fits in the overall marketing mix.

Broadly, there are three phases to digital marketing each supporting the other to maximise success;

1. Awareness, Interest and Desire. This phase is where you aim to build trust in your brand and to create demand for your product or service.
2. Search. The customer has a need, a desire or a demand and searches for it. This could be a Google Search or equally on LinkedIn, Twitter, a phone contacts list or even a stack of business cards on their desk. They'll either search for their problem, the solution or best of all, you and your brand (if you've worked hard enough in phase 1!)
3. Conversion. Typically, this happens on your website, but could equally be your Twitter profile, your Facebook or LinkedIn pages. A conversion is the goal you are trying to achieve through marketing activity - filling in a contact form, a booking, a telephone call, a request for a quote.

Twitter and Social Media generally fit into the top of the funnel - creating trust in your brand by building relationships and reputation and creating awareness of your event, your product or service.

Avoid the temptation to over-sell or pitch your business at every opportunity, it rarely works well unless you've strong brand equity built in Phase 1.

Twitter Terminology

A tweet - with 140 characters or less, a text post to your Twitter timeline. All tweets are publicly visible, so behave!

Avatar - all tweets are accompanied by your avatar (profile picture), your account name and your Twitter 'handle' - e.g. @Tillison and the date and time of the tweet.

Hashtags and links - you can include hashtags and links within the body of a tweet as well as pictures or video.

Reply - reply to that tweet. Twitter automatically inserts the Twitter handles of those mentioned in the tweet you're replying to. Remember that mentions notify those users and that they take up some of those precious 140 characters.

Retweet - either retweet (repost, reshare) an entire tweet, or quote the tweet and add your own comments to it. The author and anyone mentioned in the tweet are notified of this action.

Like - essentially the same as a Facebook 'like'. I like this, I saw this. The author and any mentioned accounts are notified of your action.

Follow - follow a Twitter account. Tweets from accounts you follow will appear in your news feed. Accounts you follow are notified when you follow them (but not if you unfollow them). You can follow up to 5,000 Twitter accounts or 10% more accounts than are following you.

Direct Messages - a Twitter DM is a private conversation between you and one or more Twitter accounts. Typically, Direct Message participants must be following one another to allow direct messages. DMs can be a source of spam and phishing attacks, so [be careful how you use them](#).

Using Twitter Lists to Organise Your Audience

Following hundreds or thousands of Twitter accounts can make your Twitter news feed a noisy, disorganised experience. Content about football is mixed with your customers, mixed with industry news or your neighbour tweeting about their child's sports day - it can be like a newspaper with no defined sections.

Using Twitter Lists effectively can really help to organise Twitter accounts into areas of interest and help you pay attention to accounts that matter when they matter to you.

This video explains why and how to create Twitter Lists

[embed video - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fm5TeDgj2rM&list=PLwmcQmbZtLaMS-SVTERejtL8IT-hFE-yG>]

Twitter Crimes to Avoid

Twitter DM abuse. Avoid using Direct Messages to pitch your product or service to new followers. There are tools and apps that will automate this process and it does feel like a good opportunity. [Most users either immediately unfollow](#) after such activity or at best, simply ignore the message.

Cross-posting from other platforms. Whilst you can automatically post your Instagram photos or Facebook posts to Twitter, don't. Twitter users are using Twitter. To demonstrate that they are important to you, use Twitter to tweet natively.

Running the Numbers. Your Twitter mission should not be focused on how many followers you have, rather the quality of engagement, the reach of your tweets and the quantity of retweets, likes, mentions and link clicks. Avoid following accounts for the sake of gaining followers and avoid those accounts that appear to follow you for the same reason. They're fairly obvious - they'll have more followers than they have tweets, which rarely happens unless you're Justin Bieber.

Twitter Tips for Success

Use the PIE guideline

- 20% Promotion
- 30% Information
- 50% Engagement

Develop a Twitter Habit

Success won't happen overnight and relationships won't be created by merely following or just one like, retweet or conversation. Commit to an engagement strategy and you won't go far wrong.

Measuring Twitter Success

Using [Twitter Analytics](#), focus on Tweet Impressions. The amount of engagement, link clicks, replies, retweets and followers will follow naturally.

Research and Use Relevant Hashtags

Hashtags are a critical part of Twitter. Used effectively, you'll reach a wider audience of users who may be following the hashtag, but who are not following you. Don't abuse hashtags when they're not relevant to your business!

Twitter Chat Hours

Focused around a specific hashtag, a Twitter chat typically takes place weekly at the same time. The hashtag groups together all the tweets in that chat, so make sure you monitor it and use it in every tweet intended for that chat.

[#HampshireHour](#) is a great example of a Twitter Chat Hour. It has a great local community of businesses in diverse markets, all very welcoming and supportive.

If you only do one thing on Twitter, spending an hour each Tuesday evening in Hampshire Hour would be a great place to learn the ropes.

Read [How to Succeed on Hampshire Hour](#).

There's also a HUGE [list of over 500 Twitter Chat Hours](#) in hundreds of different locations or focused on different topics and subjects.

Finally

Twitter is great for networking, for creating relationships. It's important to remember how relationships work though; like a bank account, you must first invest before you can withdraw.

Seek first to support and help the audience before asking the audience to do something for you.