

A Beginners Guide To

What is Twitter?

Twitter is a micro-blogging web platform that allows users to publish short messages of no more than 140 characters. If you use Facebook, think of it as being like the Status Updates. The service allows you to follow (subscribe to) people and be followed. Those you follow will form your network and their updates will appear on your Twitter homepage. However, you don't need to follow everyone who follows you.

Why is Twitter important for organisations/brands?

Twitter is generally used differently from other social networks, such as Facebook. It has been described as "a better RSS feed" or "a discovery engine" because it is used by many to consume news. Organisations can therefore use Twitter as a specialist news channel. If you are seen as a credible, expert source of news and views (who tweets regularly) your following should grow, enabling you to direct your followers (often your stakeholders) to your website and other online content you wish them to see.

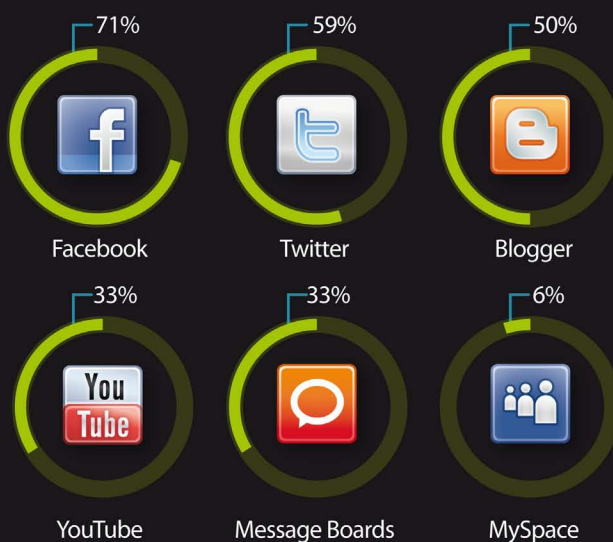
Some interesting Twitter statistics:

- The UK has the highest percentage per head of population using the internet (82.5%) and of those users 13% use Twitter (68% use Facebook)
- Launched in 2006, Twitter still only had 6M users in early 2009. It now has more than 300M registered users
- 5% of users generate 75% of content

Companies & Social Media

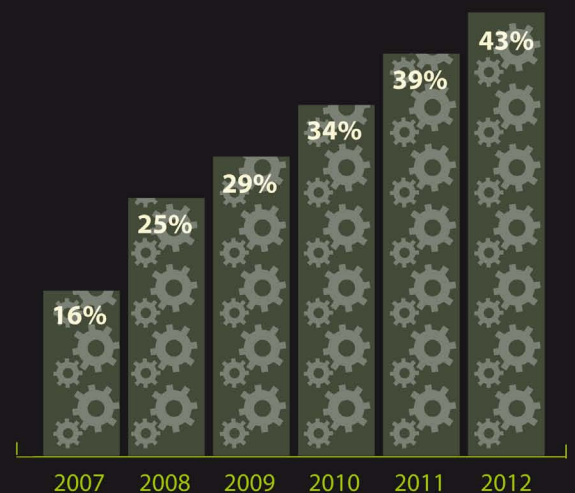
Companies Using Social Media

(Percents)



Companies Using Blogs for Marketing

(Percents)



Step-by-step guide to creating and operating an account

Getting started

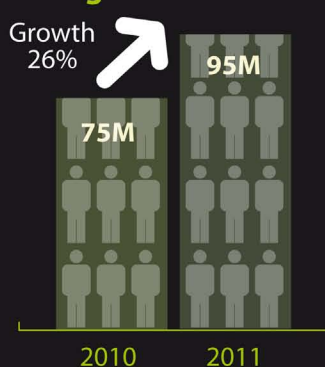
1. Go to Twitter.com and create an account. Upload your photo. If you are opening a corporate account add your logo. Fill in your biography. Say something about yourself. It helps people to decide whether they should follow you.
2. Post your first tweet. It should go in the box underneath the question **'What's happening?'** You'll want to have something on your page when your first visitors arrive. Try posting a link to the most interesting article you've read recently, for example. Or a short description of, and link to, the latest news on your website.
3. Use a link shortening service such as bitly.com or tinyurl.com to enable you to fit hyperlinks within the 140 character limit. If you create a bitly account this will keep an archive of all your shortened links should you wish to re-use them. bitly and also keeps a record of how often your links are being clicked - useful for evaluation purposes.

Building a network

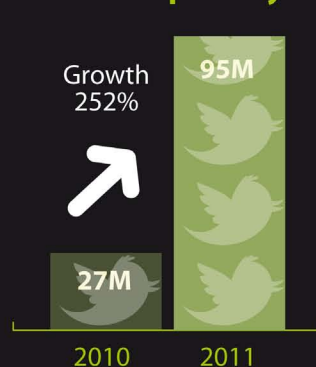
4. Look for friends and colleagues who are already using the site by clicking **'Who to follow'** at the top of the page and searching. When you find someone who you want to add to your network, simply click **'follow'**. Search for and follow people and organisations in your area to build a good local network.
5. Following people is the easiest way to let them know you are there and some of them will soon start following you in return. Your page will display a count of the number of people following you and the numbers you are following. You can stop following people at any time by clicking on one of their tweets and then clicking **'following/unfollow'** in the right hand panel.
6. Each time you find someone you want to follow take a look at who they are following. Add anyone who looks interesting. Try to add at least 100 people so that you have a busy network. Remember – you can prune/enlarge your network as you get a feel for who's who and see what information they share.
7. If you decide to follow more than 250-300 or so you will want to create **'lists'** to easily view them by topic, profession, type of tweeters, etc. Others can follow your lists (if you make them 'public') and you can follow theirs. To make a list on Twitter.com click on the Lists tab and choose **'create a list'**. Give it a name, and decide whether you want others to see it by choosing to make it public or private. To add to a list on Twitter.com go to your list of followers and click the figure symbol. **'Add to list'** appears as an option.
8. Most of the time you'll be posting updates on your news. Don't feel obliged to entertain - but try to tweet something of value. Corporate account tweeters should try to maintain a consistent, authoritative voice - you are projecting your brand. You cannot edit a tweet once posted. You can only delete it.

Twitter 2010 - 2011 Growth

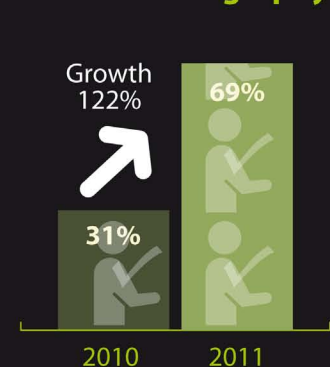
Registered Users




Tweets per Day



Users with a Biography



Interacting with others

9. Sometimes you'll want to reply to a tweet or join a conversation. You can send a public reply to people by putting @ before their username and then typing your message. The person you are replying to doesn't need to be someone you are following and doesn't need to be following you. On Twitter.com, a **'reply'** button will be visible when you hold your cursor over a message. Clicking this will open a text box which will add the @ automatically.
10. If you want to send a message to someone but don't want all your followers to see it, you can send a private message by clicking on a tweet and then clicking the  symbol on the right-hand side of Twitter.com to open a text box specifically for sending **'Direct messages'**. You can only send direct messages to people who follow you.
11. If one of your followers says something that you want to share with your followers, you can **'retweet'** it. This will make the tweet appear in your tweet list. A retweet button will become visible when you hold your cursor over a tweet. It's acceptable to edit another user's tweet but this then becomes a **'modified tweet'** and the etiquette for this is to add either MT at the start of your tweet or "via @ (username)" at the end of your tweet. Twitter.com doesn't have a **'Retweet with comment'** option, so you have to cut and paste to edit a tweet. However, many third party apps do (see below).
12. There may be lots of people talking about a topic you are interested in, but unless they are in your network you won't know about it. This is where hashtags come in. By adding a # and then a keyword (without a space), lots of unconnected people can join a conversation. Search for a tagged word (e.g. #probation, #xfactor, etc) and save your search and you will always be able to return to a timeline of people tweeting with this tag. Television programmes and live events increasingly promote the use of a hashtagged word to encourage Twitter discussion on their programme/event. When a certain number of users begin using the same word in a tweet it begins **'trending'** and appears in the trending topics on the right hand panel of Twitter.com.
13. You can save a message to read later or just for posterity by making it a **'favourite'**. Click the star that appears when you hover your cursor over it. This is a little similar to the 'Like' button on Facebook. Other users will be sent an alert when you have favourited their tweet and people will be able to see the tweets you have favourited when they look at your profile. This helps others see what you like. Some websites collate favourited tweets (e.g. favstar.fm, favebytes.com) for general viewing.

Third Party Apps and Evaluation Tools

Twitter is great, but Twitter.com isn't. You need to keep it open all the time, it doesn't automatically update (you have to keep refreshing it), it doesn't allow you to easily modify tweets... If you become a regular tweeter you will find your experience and effectiveness is enhanced by using one of the many third party desktop/mobile apps available to manage your account.

Being able to keep a casual eye on Twitter by using a smartphone is also likely to make you more effective. With Twitter integrated into smartphone web browsing you will be easily able to tweet a link to a webpage without even going to Twitter.com or your third party app.

Popular third party apps include:

- **Tweetdeck** (owned by Twitter.com and the most widely used app. Users can split the program into columns which show different things. The client supports URL shortening on-the-fly.)
- **Echofon** (popular app for Mac and iPhone. Easy to view timeline with photos and videos embedded)
- **Hootsuite** (popular web-based app that pushes updates to a variety of social media platforms)

A selection of evaluation tools:

- **Klout.com** (measurement on online influence)
- **TwentyFeet.com** (social media monitoring and metrics aggregation)
- **TweetStats.com** (graphs showing how often you - or anyone else provided you know their user name - tweet, when you do it, and your @reply habits)
- **xefer.com** (funky graphs showing Tweets by time of day and day of week)

You should also consider creating a corporate Facebook page and uploading some promotional videos to YouTube too. An integrated social media strategy awaits...

