

What are the secrets of success on Twitter? How can I build up a large number of followers? What is the best way to communicate as an individual or a corporation? Twitter had already become the world's third largest social networking site by early 2009, growing by half a million users a month. (See main article on [Future of Twitter](#) and impact on marketing as well as community life.)

1. Register with a name that is easy to recognise for those who know

Remember that with only 140 characters in each message, you can't include a signature so the ONLY way people will recognise who the Twitter message is from, is by seeing your user name. Too many people create strange names like "Bojo the Cat" or "Fed up with Life" or "Robert123". That's fine if you want to remain anonymous, but doesn't help your friends. If you are a business it is even more vital to get this piece of branding right. You could chose a name which tells people what your Twitter messages are about, but it may be better to include your actual brand or company name - or of course you could set up several different accounts.

2. Make sure your profile is interesting

When people are making up their minds whether to follow you or not, they are likely to come to your Twitter "home page". You have the opportunity to say something about who you are. This is your marketing opportunity. Why should people start following you? What are you offering that will be interesting to them? Why should they give you permission to interupt their day?

3. Put your Twitter account details on your website / blog / Facebook

You should promote your Twitter identity widely online - on your blog, YouTube page, website, FaceBook, Plaxo, MySpace, LinkedIn, Bebo and so on. Make it really easy for existing Twitter users to click onto your Twitter page and start following you. Use your Twitter profile wherever you talk about contact details - or even on your business card.

4. Start making some interesting posts – comments, with maybe some useful links

The art of Twitter is to communicate simple, clear messages in just 140 characters. The most profound and complex thoughts can be condensed into a single phrase.

People can unfollow you in an instant - so keep people engaged and entertained with relevant

and interesting comments. If you are a genuine celebrity, it is possible that a large number of people may want to know if you have just brushed your teeth or what Blu-Ray movie you are watching at home, but for ordinary mortals, it is far more likely that they are interested in major life events, and your commentary on life, interesting links and so on. Who is following you? Why are they doing so? Know your audience and you will keep people with you.

5. Avoid a tone which seems to be just marketing / promotion

If every other Twitter message appears to be directly promoting your business, don't be surprised if people unfollow you very fast. Why should they agree to let you blast them out with hundreds of repetitive and irritating messages every month? Twitter should be used to provide a service to people who are following. What kinds of things would they find it useful or interesting to hear about.

6. Search for Twitter topics that interest you and start following people who post messages about them

Sites like Twollo can help you identify Twitter members who are talking about particular issues or ideas that also interest you. You can decide to follow some of them, and if your profile is interesting and your recent posts appeal to them, you may find a few will return the compliment and follow you back. But take care: you will be quickly labelled as a spammer if you start randomly following huge numbers of people. You may be attacked in messages by the Twitter community, and in any case you will be blocked by Twitter itself. You will not be allowed to follow more than 2000 people unless a similar number are already following you. The numbers you follow, and are following you should remain reasonably in balance. The principle is that you should be actively engaged with a community of Twitter users, and in general that is very hard to do if you have more than 2000 people to follow at once.

7. Don't post too often or people may decide to unfollow you

Please be sensitive. Make sure you listen a lot to other people's messages to get a feel of what is going on before you start ramping up your own output. Posting more than 4-5 times a day is quite a burden on people who have to read these things and as I say, you risk losing your audience very rapidly. Less is more. But also make sure you do actually post on a regular basis (at least once to twice a week), or you will be seen as yet another bright spark who came and tried Twitter for a week or two.

8. Post regularly

As you build up your audience of appreciative followers, be consistent. Don't hit them ten times in a day and then forget them all for a month. Make sure you become part of their weekly lives.

9. Reply to those who comment – and make direct comments to people whose posts you enjoy reading

The Twitter community is all about interaction - rather than broadcasting. And remember that for every comment or reply you get, there are probably 10-100 others who think the same thing, but do not have the time or energy to respond. But they may well be listening into the conversation and as you reply, some of them may join in as well.

General replies will be seen by everyone and are part of publicly searchable messages. But Direct Messages are private and filed separately so they are much more personal. Do make sure you check your replies and direct messages. Make sure you have e-mail notifications enabled so that you don't miss people.

10. Have fun with links, pictures and videos

There are many sites that create Twitter feeds eg www.hellotxt.com and allow insertion of links to videos, uploading of photos from your phone and so on. Make Twitter a multimedia experience to keep people with you.

Useful Twitter links

Main article on [Future of Twitter](#) .

[Patrick Dixon on Twitter](#) - read about the future and join in the conversation (if you have an account, just press FOLLOW below the photo.)

[Wikipedia entry on Twitter](#)

[Twitter applications](#) - Twitter site

[Top 21 Twitter applications](#) by actual use

Patrick Dixon's Twitter Updates

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