

growing  **twitter**  
**FOLLOWERS**

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# growing twitter FOLLOWERS

## GROWING TWITTER FOLLOWERS

### ► Top 10 Ways to Communicate with Your Twitter Followers



Just five short years ago a small team of programmers and social networking aficionados began developing what would eventually become Twitter. Since that time the concept of the universal broadcasting of 140 character Tweets has become an integral part of modern media consciousness. Twitter's rate of growth has been nothing short of explosive. It took Twitter more than three years to notch up its billionth Tweet, but today the site often exceeds a billion Tweets a week. Nearly half a million new users sign up to Twitter every day, equal to the entire population of Denver, Colorado.

The customer profile of Twitter users fits snugly in the target audience bullseye of most companies involved in social media marketing. Twitter users are primarily urban and tech-savvy with the highest numbers residing in New York City, followed by Los Angeles, Toronto, San Francisco, and Boston. The age of Twitter users skews to the younger and more active demographic, with the vast majority being under 30 and the figures spiking at 20 years of age. Two out of five of all Tweets originate from mobile web enabled devices, and that rate has increased 182% in 2010 alone.

Business users in the United States are lagging behind some other nations in discovering the advantages of using Twitter for customer acquisition. Only 35% of all American companies are using Twitter to communicate with their audiences versus 44% in China, 50% in Mexico, and 52% in India. In order to catch up with the adoption rate of foreign Twitter promotional users, more American marketers need to become aware of the unparalleled power and reach to their core audiences that only Twitter can provide.

The primary reasons to become an ardent Tweeter include:

- Generating awareness for your brand
- Launching viral marketing campaigns
- Creating and seeking media opportunities
- Recruiting new audiences
- Networking with your followers
- Fostering loyalty from your audience
- Proposing your products & services



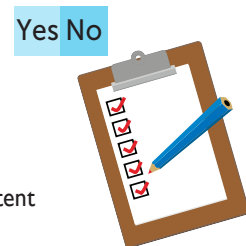
- Managing your online reputation
- Monitoring trends in your sector & among competitors
- Extending event participation

With this extensive rationale for making a firm company commitment to Tweeting, there is no longer any valid excuse to delay launching your 140 character online presence. If you are already engaging your audiences through the unique worldwide conversational dimension of Twitter, you should consider implementing these top ten strategies that can assist your brand in providing content that is of predominant interest to your audience while obtaining a critical edge over your less Tweet-savvy competitors.

## ► 1. Provide Value beyond the Tweet

The information shared in authoritative Tweets has an inherent value of its own, but to truly serve and engage your audience your company should concentrate on providing value that originates from the Tweet, yet transcends it:

- Provide customer service in a prompt and fully interactive manner
- Genuinely seek feedback and let your followers know you're listening
- Supply desirable rewards for any actions completed that promote your brand
- Offer discounts and special offers exclusively to Twitter followers
- Give away ebooks, guides, reports, white papers, tutorials, and other valuable content
- Share articles and multimedia content that is of genuine interest
- Keep your followers up-to-the-minute on relevant news and current events that impact them
- Inform your followers of professional or social events that are relevant to them as well as your brand
- Answer all questions posed to you accurately and quickly
- Shift your focus from selling to informing and participating



There is a prevailing reason for individuals to become and remain your followers. Never let that dedication fade!

## ► 2. Get Your Followers over the Tweet Horizon



For companies, Twitter is as much about teaching as it is about learning. There is no other market research available that is as real time and accurate as polling and listening to your Twitter followers. The platform is indispensable for discovering what your market really wants and what they think of your brand. Individuals are not going to choose to follow your company's Tweets just to subscribe to a series of short commercials, they want to engage and be engaged in topics relevant to your brand which interest them. In stark contrast to the age of conventional advertising's top-down "Buy This Now" paradigm, Twitter marketing is delicately nuanced towards establishing and maintaining trust from an authoritative, reputable source of information. As a brand, you want to be accepted within your followers' social circle and contribute constructively to the conversations within that community. The greatest success in converting

followers into loyal evangelists is achieved by companies that facilitate buying decisions without ever referring to the actual act of purchasing!

### ▶ 3. Live Tweet Events

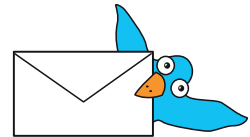
Live tweeting is the art of posting insightful and relevant content while an event is unfolding, and is one of the most effective ways to build a following as well as enthrall your current followers. Live tweeting does not have to be limited to the SuperBowl or huge Apple-type “technology revelation” announcement events, as there are countless opportunities to live tweet events that are relevant to your company’s sector. Any conference, seminar, trade show, or convention your company is attending is prime live tweeting territory, but many opportunities can be found on popular television shows. A music company might want to live tweet during Glee commenting on the various production numbers; a science company may tweet about the equations on the The Big Bang Theory’s whiteboards; or a fitness company could discuss the exercises being performed on The Biggest Loser.



### ▶ 4. Run Interactive Contests & Sweepstakes

Contests are a superlative way to build excitement and awareness about a brand on Twitter. Here are the keys to running a successful contest or sweepstakes on the platform.

- The prizes should be relevant to your branding, as well as being desirable. Cash and gadgets are usually preferred.
- Smaller more frequent prizes outweigh one giant prize at the end (which many may believe was awarded to a company insider).
- Cross-promote with related organizations, websites, bloggers, and evangelists of all stripes.
- Make it easy to enter. One of the best ways is to ask users to ReTweet a fully unique phrase with your @ or hashtag. (ReTweeting the same phrase amounts to spamming.)
- Don’t even think about having a monetary entry fee.
- Have the public judge. Twitter users generally distrust anything that is executed without the purest transparency, so have your followers determine the winners.
- Dovetail the contest into your overall social media presence and campaign goals.



Once the contest is over, keep the interesting content flowing in order to keep those eyeballs you worked so hard to capture.

### ▶ 5. Conduct TwitterChats

TwitterChats are scheduled gatherings of like-minded individuals who discuss a topic of mutual interest, and it is a sensational way to engage, inform, and entertain your audience. There are various formats that can be used in a TwitterChat:



- Question Based Single Topic – Pre-established, numbered questions are allocated a time period to be discussed
- Question Based Multiple Topics – Participants submit numbered questions to be discussed
- Q&A – A guest is asked to answer a set number of questions in an allocated time period
- Freeflow – A topic is chosen and discussed in a free for all format

Different topics and brands lend themselves to varying formats, so the best advice is to experiment until you find one that works for you. Consider multimedia as an adjunct to your TwitterChats as they can help involve your audience; bring in authoritative guests; and make a long term commitment. Like many other online communities TwitterChats may start slowly, but the best ones soon develop a life and dynamism of their own.

## ▶ 6. Tweet in a Chatty Yet Authoritative Manner

There is no reason why your company's shipping & receiving clerk can't provide interesting Tweets, but most followers would much rather get their 140 character dose from your top executives. Your CEO is a very busy person and likely doesn't have a lot of time on their hands to Tweet, but every effort should be made to convince them to connect frequently and successfully with the company's followers through the platform. They can easily use their smartphones from anywhere in the world they happen to be in order to post to the site, and providing short comments and quick thoughts to the followers can act as a powerful magnet to create and manage connections to the company's followers, prospective & current customers, and varied influencers.

Try to educate the CEO about the preferred tone to be adopted in Tweets: Preference should always be given to personal opinions and views rather than impersonal boilerplate renditions of the latest dry sales figures or product specifications. Consistency is the key to maintaining your CEO's ongoing relationship with the followers, as many companies' Twitter success is sabotaged by an executive who quickly loses interest and ceases to post. It is very important that "Never Tweet Impulsively" should be prominently engraved on your CEO's smartphone housing, as any Tweet issued in anger, revenge, or knee-jerk response can cause immeasurable damage to your entire brand's online (and offline) reputation.

## ▶ 7. Monitor Your Presence & React Quickly

There are various ways of keeping up to date about what the Tweetosphere is saying about your brand at any given time, but Search Twitter has to be one of the best. You can enter various keywords that specifically identify your company and subscribe to an RSS feed that will keep you up to date on the state of the Tweetchatter at any given time.



Keep moderation firmly in mind and do everything in your power to keep from overreacting. Realize that the internet is a repository for rudeness, incivility, and nihilism, and don't unleash the heavy artillery every time someone Tweets something that is mildly negative. Just ignore it and it will go away. More severe negativism must be nipped in the bud, especially as it starts to spread through ReTweets. The first rule of online crisis management is to divulge clearly, swiftly, and unequivocally. If the Tweets contain scurrilous illusions or misstatements, state your righteous, justified, and supportable position without delay. If your brand has been caught doing something that denigrates your reputation, then apologize quickly and thoroughly. In the Twitter universe silence is an admission of guilt, so say what you have to say and don't waste a single second in doing so.

## ▶ 8. Expand Your Twitter Follower List

Another great use of Search Twitter is that you can find all the individuals who are discussing your brand and click on their username to reach their profile. From there you can follow them, and they may be so impressed by the fact that someone from your company is actually following them that they will Tweet about you to an even greater extent. Quality always trumps quantity on Twitter, making it preferable to have a handful of serious, engaged followers than thousands of disinterested apathetics, but there are effective, proven ways to build a legitimate following:

- Mention your Twitter account everywhere, from your website, other social networks and emails to your business cards, letterhead, packaging, and both online and offline advertising.

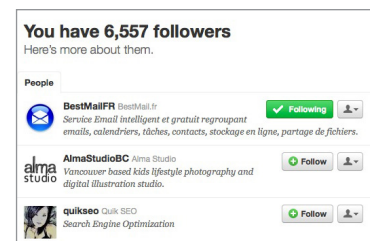


- Encourage your Facebook Fans and followers from other social networks to join you on Twitter.
- Interact with the Tweeters who influence the individuals you would want to follow you.
- @ mention Tweeters you would like to follow you to some of your other followers who could benefit from the cross-pollination.
- Post relevant and informative content on trending topics.

The cost of buying Twitter followers is precisely equivalent to the amount of money you will be throwing away. Not only do they provide no value other than superficial number stuffing, but the names on these lists are so widespread and easily discovered that your competitors will be able to determine that you purchased your following and could publicly humiliate you. The same caveat applies to all “black hat methods” such as running competitions to promote ReTweets, or buying an existing popular Twitter account. Always follow Twitter’s ethics guidelines to the letter or you may find your account penalized or even disabled!

## ► 9. Make the Best Use of Twitter Tools

Providing a list of the most effective Twitter applications for company interaction is next to impossible due to the fact that innovative and ever more capable tools premiere on an ongoing basis just as yesterday’s favorites fade away. The best way to keep current on the Twitter functionalities your company should be applying is to regularly visit review sites such as OneForty. Each application is nested within a category such as Social CRM; Analytics; Marketing; Automation; and Brand Tracking, as well as being rated according to fully independent, user-submitted reviews. Through this process you will be able to identify the best tool for any Twitter brand requirement including:



- Managing your Twitter followers to discover the ones who are following you that you are not following back.
- Locating Twizter users through directories that allow you to engage the communities that are most relevant to your brand.
- Searching and aggregating currently relevant topics in order to discover where the trends are in your industry.
- Automating many of your repetitive Twitter chores.
- Providing images, video, and other multimedia content through Twitter to boost the interactivity of your brand experience.

Many of these tools are completely free and offer similar functionality to the applications that charge for their use. Every company’s needs are different, so experiment with various tools to discover which ones best suit your Twitter tasks.

## ► 10. Leverage Email Marketing

The Direct Marketing Association has stated that email marketing returns a remarkable \$43.62 for every dollar spent on it, making it the most effective online channel. By integrating your email marketing activities with your Twitter presence you can maximize your online buzz and deepen engagement with your audience. Click-through rates have been proven to increase by as much as 30% in emails that include social media sharing buttons, and Twitter is the single most popular email sharing option, found in more campaign newsletters than Facebook links. Twitter also leads in the click-through rate for email messages shared on specific social networks, beating Facebook by more than 12%. You can help integrate Twitter into your email campaign by Tweeting:

- A link to your subscription form
- A notice as soon as your newsletter has been sent
- Particular quotes from the newsletter content
- Specific offers as a sampling of the benefits your subscribers obtain
- Information about subscribers being empowered to freely set both content and frequency preferences



Twitter is diametrically opposite to the one-to-many broadcast promotional scenarios of the past and thus is the ultimate expression of modern social networking. Twitter lights the way to engagement in a truly bilateral, peer-to-peer discourse between a brand and its followers... if you can restrain your selling instincts and allow the conversation to organically evolve.

## ► About Benchmark Email

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