

How to get the best from Twitter

Twitter can be a very powerful tool for Charities and community organisations if it is used correctly.

This simple guide gives you some useful tips on how to get the best from your twitter account.

Get targeted followers

When you are using Twitter to develop your community group or charity the first thing you need to ensure is that your tweets are being read by people who are interested in what you have to offer. You could be sending out the world's greatest content, but if no one is reading it then you are effectively wasting your time.

So how do you get people to follow you or your organisation?

Growing a large targeted following is actually quite simple, and it can be achieved without spending any money whatsoever.

Firstly you need to define who it is that you want following you, and then you need to find them. There are a variety of ways in which you can seek out twitter users who fit your target market, and all of these methods revolve around one very simple fact: Statistically, for every 10 people you follow, around 3 will follow you back. Start following people who are interested in your niche and this number can quickly double. So now that you understand how to get followers, let's talk about how to get the right followers.

Broadly speaking there are two main ways that you can use to search out people who might be interested in what you have to say.

Method 1

Search for people who are tweeting about your niche and follow them.

Method 2

Find competitors in your area, and follow their followers.

It's as simple as that.

Twitter allows you to follow up to 2,000 people before it imposes any follow limits on you (although you cannot follow more than 1,000 people in one day). Getting your first thousand followers shouldn't take that long. Once you reach your limit, simply unfollow any users who have not followed you back after a few days, and repeat the process. However be aware that twitter frowns upon users aggressively unfollowing people in order to circumvent their follow limits, so do not unfollow more than 350 users per day.

Use the right tools

There a number of free (or relatively low cost) twitter add-ons out there to help you get the most from your account. As your account grows beyond your first few hundred followers it will become more and more difficult to manage via the twitter web interface. Here are a few that are worth looking at.

Hootsuite

A social media dashboard which you can use to display all of your feeds on one screen. You can also use it to schedule future tweets, and tweet from multiple accounts at once.

Dlvr.it

This allows you to automatically tweet your blog or RSS feed.

Tweepi

Great for follower management. Tweepi helps you automatically target new followers, and flush out people who are not following you back.

Crowdbooster

Gives you statistics about how your tweets are doing, and recommends users to target based on their Klout score. The Klout Score is a 1-100 score that represents your influence on the social web.

Engage with people

So now you have some followers. What next? The key word in Social media is Social. This means that you need to engage and interact with people in order to benefit from it. Sending out nothing but promotional links and sales messages is not going to help: We are not saying you cannot send out any promotional tweets, but you do need to work hard to build a rapport with the people you are communicating with: Giving your followers retweets, and @mentions is the way to do this.

Provide quality content

People read tweets and click on links that offer value to them. Think about the kind of tweets that you click on in your timeline. Generally people will click on links to interesting articles or news stories, so try writing some great content for your website and then tweet about it.

Create a Great Looking Twitter Profile

Do not use a standard profile picture and background. You need to create a great looking personalised page that represents your brand. Your profile page is usually the first and last thing people will see before making up their mind about whether or not to click follow, so you need to make the best impression that you can.

There are lots of great guides out there on how to design a profile background – so make use of them.

Use lists

The more friends and followers that you build on twitter, the harder it will get for you to keep track of what's happening on your timeline. Organising your followers into lists is a great way to get around this problem. When you organise people into lists, you are able to filter your timeline so that you only see tweets from one specific list at once. This can be used to categorise people based on your own criteria, so you can monitor what is happening with a particular group of users. You could create lists for different topics such as business and politics, or you can create a list of your favourite users.

The choice is yours.

Have a plan

Have clear cut targets of what you want to achieve each day. Set out a specific number of tweets and re-tweets that you are going to send. A good place to start would be 5 tweets and 5 re-tweets each day. You can build up your usage from there.