

twitter 101



A Special Guide

Every day, millions of people use Twitter to create, discover and share ideas with others. Now, people are turning to Twitter as an effective way to reach out to businesses, too. From local stores to big brands, and from brick-and-mortar to internet-based or service sector, people are finding great value in the connections they make with businesses on Twitter.

When people working in the Empire State Building twittered that they were craving ice cream delivery, New York local chain **Tasti D Lite** was there to listen and meet their need. When electronics buyers look for good deals, the **Dell Outlet** Twitter account helps them save money with exclusive coupons. When Houston's coffee drinkers decide where to get their daily dose, many choose **Coffee Groundz**, which lets them order via Twitter. Read on to learn what Twitter is and to get detailed examples of how companies are using it. On these pages, we'll also reveal how Twitter can help your business right now.

So what does Twitter do for businesses?

Twitter is a communications platform that helps businesses and their customers do a number of useful things. As a business, you can use it to quickly share information with people interested in your company, gather real-time market intelligence and feedback, and build relationships with customers, partners and other people who care about your company. As an individual user, you can use Twitter to tell a company (or anyone else) that you've had a great- or disappointing- experience with their business, offer product ideas, and learn about great offers.

So how does it work?

A brief history of Twitter



Initially inspired by the concept of an 'away-message' merged with the freedom and mobility of SMS, Twitter began as an experiment in 2006. When value as an instant communication network during shared events like earthquakes, conferences, and festivals emerged, Twitter began to grow—Twitter, Inc. was founded in 2007. Today, Twitter is a privately funded company based in San Francisco, CA.

Twitter lets you write and read messages of up to 140 characters, or the very length of this sentence, including all punctuation and spaces. The messages are public and you decide what sort of messages you want to receive - Twitter being a recipient driven information network. In addition, you can send and receive Twitter messages, or tweets, equally well from your desktop or your mobile phone.

When you combine messages that are quick to write, easy to read, public, controlled by the recipient and exchangeable anywhere, you've got a powerful, real-time communications medium. And that medium is turning out to be ground-breaking for users and businesses alike.

Tip: To listen in on the conversations happening right now, search Twitter for the name of your company, product or brand. If you have a Twitter account already, your home page has a handy search box on the right side. If you don't yet have an account, try typing in the box below or go to search.twitter.com.

So how do businesses use Twitter?

What's up with the name?



Twittering is the sound birds make when they communicate with each other—an apt description of the conversations here. As it turns out, because Twitter provides people with real-time public information, it also helps groups of people mimic the effortless way a flock of birds move in unison. On these pages, we'll show you a few examples of that powerful Twitter characteristic.

Twitter connects you to your customers right now, in a way that was never before possible. For example, let's say you work for a custom bike company. If you run a search for your brand, you may find people posting messages about how happy they are that your bike lets them ride in the French Alps—giving you a chance to share tips about cyclist-friendly cafes along their route.

Others may post minor equipment complaints or desired features that they would never bother to contact you about—providing you with invaluable customer feedback that you can respond to right away or use for future planning. Still others may twitter about serious problems with your bikes—letting you offer customer service that can turn around a bad situation.

You don't have to run a bike shop or a relatively small company to get good stuff out of Twitter. Businesses of all kinds, including major brands, increasingly find that listening and engaging on the service lead to happier customers, passionate advocates, key product improvements and, in many cases, more sales.

A key benefit



One of Twitter's key benefits is that it gives you the chance to communicate casually with customers on their terms, creating friendly relationships along the way—tough for corporations to do in most other mediums.

But Twitter isn't just about useful immediacy. The conversational nature of the medium lets you build relationships with customers, partners and other people important to your business. Beyond transactions, Twitter gives your constituents direct access to employees and a way to contribute to your company; as marketers say, it shrinks the emotional distance between your company and your customers. Plus, the platform lends itself to integration with your existing communication channels and strategies. In combination, those factors can make Twitter a critical piece of your company's bigger digital footprint.

For instance, let's say you run a big retail website. In addition to learning more about what your customers want, you can provide exclusive Twitter coupon codes, link to key posts on your blog, share tips for shopping online, and announce specials at store locations. And you can take things a step further by occasionally posting messages about fun, quirky events at your HQ, giving others a small but valuable connection with the people in your company.

Why 140 characters?



SMS (i.e., texting on your phone) limits each message to 160 characters. Twitter takes that limit and reserves 20 characters for your username, leaving you 140 characters to play with. That's how it started and we've stuck with it!

Tip: Twitter can be "ground-breaking" for businesses—a big claim. We truly believe it because we've seen lots of examples, many of which we share here. But if you're new to Twitter and still wondering what all the fuss is about, hang around the site (or a good third-party client) for a week or two and give it a few minutes a day. Twitter almost always delivers "Aha!" moments for people, but it can take some getting used to before you have your moment of enlightenment.

Go deeper

These are just a few of the ways Twitter is helping businesses serve customers; you'll discover more. If you're new to Twitter, head over to [Getting started](#) for tips on twittering successfully. If you're already on board, check out [Best Practices](#) and [Case studies](#) for ideas to get the most out of Twitter.

Written by Twitter with Sarah Milstein

Getting Started

One of the cool things about Twitter is that it gives you a way to have friendly, public conversations with customers. You'll make the most of those casual conversations if you do a little planning first. In this section, we'll suggest a few strategic things to think about before you dive in, and then we'll give you some pointers to start twittering smoothly.

Before you post your first message

Before you get started, it's important to understand that on Twitter, people choose to view your updates by searching for specific keywords or by following your account. This recipient-controlled model means that if you are compelling to people on Twitter, they'll choose to view your updates through search or follow your account. The reverse is also true (people may choose to un-follow you just as easily).

While dry, boring feeds rarely draw many people, successful Twitter business accounts can take many forms. They may be personal and chatty, or they may include mostly automated information. But no matter the style, the key is to post messages that your followers will find compelling.



Tip: Help people understand what to expect from your Twitter account by posting a little description in your Bio.

So you're ready to be interesting on Twitter—but what are you going to post about? That depends on your goals for using Twitter, which may include things like building deeper relationships, getting on the radar of potential new customers or partners or providing customer service.

You can meet several communication goals simultaneously by thinking about your Twitter account as a friendly information booth or coffee bar. It's a good place for people to ask you spontaneous questions of all kinds, and it's also a good spot to share juicy information they might find useful. When you hit stride with these exchanges, they often lead to unexpected, valuable relationships.

Of course, you can have accounts that focus exclusively on specific goals, like providing customer service or offering deals to move inventory.

Tip: Companies sometimes worry that twittering might require a lot of staff time or even hiring new people to maintain an account. In fact, Twitter works best for businesses when you start slow, devoting a few minutes a day to see whether and how it's valuable to you.

Regardless of the way you approach your account(s), it's worth thinking through any internal processes you'll need to integrate Twitter with your existing communication channels. For instance, if people make enquiries on Twitter that should be handled by your customer service team, how will you connect those customers and staffers? Or if your R&D department does your twittering, but your marketing department wants to share info on a promo, how will they do so?

The answers will depend, of course, on things like whether your company is run by three people or thirty thousand and how you already handle similar cross-platform issues. But don't hesitate to have multiple accounts that serve different purposes, and check out our [Best Practices](#) and [Case studies](#) for additional ideas.

To get a sense of what Twitter can do for your business, spend a little time listening in on the conversations happening right now (you can use [Twitter search](#) whether or not you have an account). Listening will help you quickly learn what people are saying about your company, and it will also give you a feel for the flow of conversations on Twitter. In addition, it can give you insight into how other companies handle Twitter exchanges (our [Case studies](#) can give you more ideas).

Once you've got a sense of how you want to engage on Twitter, you're ready to dive in.

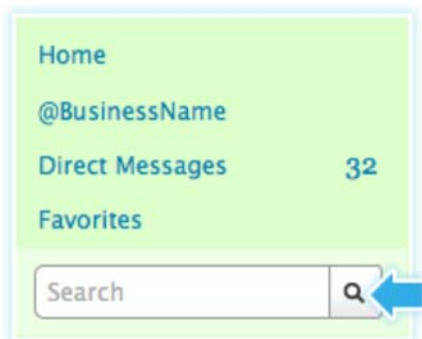
Dive in!

If you haven't yet signed up for an account, it's easy, and it takes just a few minutes. Here's how to get started:

1. Sign up



Head over to the [sign-up page](#), and fill out the four fields. If you're creating a company account, use the "Full name" field to type in your company name. That'll help people find your company on Twitter. (You can add your own name in the Bio field, as described below.)



Whether or not you chose to follow anyone in the sign-up process, now's a good time to search for people and companies of specific interest you. Use the search box on your Twitter home page to look not only for people talking about your company, brands and products, but also for partners and mentions of key terms in your sector. When you find interesting messages, consider following those accounts. No need to worry about the number of people you're following—just follow a few whose updates you really want to read, say hello and let conversations grow. Also look at the [Find People](#) section.

Tip: When you follow somebody, they'll probably get an email from Twitter saying that you've followed them—and vice versa. Anyone can turn off those [notifications](#), though (under Settings > Notices), so don't assume people will know you're on Twitter just because you've followed them.

4. Post your first message.

This is where the real fun starts. On your Twitter home page, in the box at the top, type in a message. As you type, the counter on the upper-right corner of the box guides you down from 140 characters. When you've got a message ready to go, hit Update to post it (pressing Enter won't do the trick).

If you're thinking, "Sounds easy, but what should I say?", consider trying something like, "Excited to start twittering. Let us know what you want to hear about from Our Company." Or you could go with, "Hello! Is this thing on?" A conversational, playful tone flies beautifully on Twitter, so don't hesitate to act some fun into your messages.

Once you've posted that first message, you could follow up with some hellos to people you know on Twitter, and perhaps post a link to an interesting news story about your industry (just copy the link and paste it into the update box).

Tip: Once you've set up your account page, [add your mobile phone](#) to your account so you can Twitter from the road. Customers can also follow you from their mobile phone by texting "follow YourUsername" to 40404.

Written by Twitter with Sarah Milstein

Learn the lingo

On the one hand, Twitter is pretty simple: send and receive short messages. On the other hand, what's with all the symbols and strange terms? In this section, we explain the weird stuff that's important so that you can use Twitter like a pro.

Some of the most useful conventions on Twitter—including retweets (RT), hashtags (#), and @username messages—were user innovations. When people wanted features Twitter didn't provide, they created their own, and we later incorporated them into the system. We assume new features will evolve from users in the future, so feel free to experiment!

The key terms

Following



To receive messages on Twitter, you follow other people and companies you're interested in—which means you get their messages as they post (put another way, their messages show up in your incoming timeline on your Twitter home page). Conversely, people get your messages by following you.

Tweet



Users refer to an individual message as a tweet, as in, "Check out this tweet about our CEO dancing on the sidelines of the Phoenix Suns game." People sometimes use it as a verb, too, as in, "I tweeted about the stimulus package this morning." If "tweet" is hard for you to use with a straight face in a business context, try "twittering" as a verb instead. Alternatives include "post," "message" and "update."

@username

For companies, one of the most useful things about Twitter is that it lets you exchange public messages with individual users. Simply start a message with @username of the person you want to reach, like this:

"@Ev Glad you liked our vegan cookies. Thanks for twittering about 'em!"

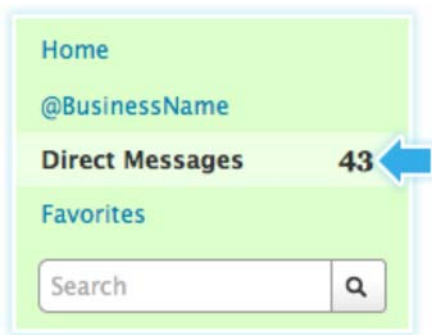
If Ev is following your account, your message will appear directly on his Twitter home page. (If he's not following your account, your message will appear in his folder of @username mentions.) People who are following both you and Ev will also see the message on their Twitter home page. Finally, the message will appear in search results, and people who come to your Twitter home page will see it among the messages in your outgoing timeline.

Tip: On Twitter, @username automatically becomes a link to that person's account—helping people discover each other on the system. Put another way: when you see an @username, you can always click through to that person's Twitter page and learn whether you want to follow them.

To find the public messages that are directed to you (i.e., those that start with your @BusinessName) or that mention you (i.e., those that include your @BusinessName elsewhere in the tweet), head to your Twitter home page, and then on the right side of the screen, click the tab labeled your @BusinessName. For businesses, it's a good idea to keep a close eye on incoming @mentions, because they're often sent by customers or potential customers expecting a reply.

Tip: To reply easily from the Twitter website, mouse over a message, and then look on the right end for the "Reply arrow". Click the arrow to start a new message addressed to the original user.

DM, or direct message



Direct messages—or DMs—are Twitter's private messaging channel. These tweets appear on your home page under the Direct Messages tab, and if you've got email notifications turned on, you'll also get an email message when somebody DMs you. DMs don't appear in either person's public timeline or in search results. No one but you can see your DMs.

The one tricky concept with DMs is that you can send them only to people who are following you. Conversely, you can receive them only from people you're following.

You can easily send DMs from the Direct Messages tab by using the pull-down menu to choose a recipient and then typing in your note. To send a DM from your home page, start your message with "d username," like this:

"d Ev Sorry those cookies gave you food poisoning! Would you prefer a refund or a new batch?"

Tip: If you're communicating with a customer about something potentially sensitive—including personal information, account numbers, email addresses, phone numbers, street addresses, etc.—be sure to encourage them to DM or email you. As we mentioned earlier, @mentions are public, so anyone can see them.

RT, or retweet

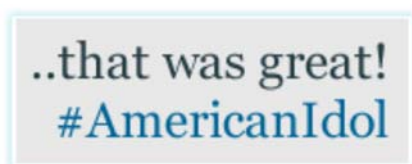
To help share cool ideas via Twitter and to give a shout-out to people you respect, you can repost their messages and give them credit. People call that retweeting (or RT), and it usually looks something like this: “RT @Username: Original message, often with a link.” Retweeting is common, and it’s a form of conversation on Twitter. It’s also a powerful way to spread messages and ideas across Twitter quickly. So when you do it, you’re engaging in a way people recognize and usually like—making it a good way to connect.

Trending Topics

On the right side of your screen and on the Twitter search page, you’ll see ten Trending Topics, which are the most-mentioned terms on Twitter at that moment. The topics update continually, reflecting the real-time nature of Twitter and true shifts in what people are paying attention to. A key feature of Twitter, Trending Topics aggregate many tweets at once and often break news ahead of the mainstream media. (Note that the trends often include hashtags, described below.)

Hashtag (#)

Twitter messages don’t have a field where you can categorize them. So people have created the hashtag—which is just the # symbol followed by a term describing or naming the topic—that you add to a post as a way of saying, “This message is about the same thing as other messages from other people who include the same hashtag.” Then, when somebody searches for that hashtag, they’ll get all of the related messages.



For instance, let’s say you post, “Voted sixty times in tonight’s showdown. #AmericanIdol.” Your message would then be part of Twitter search results for “#AmericanIdol,” and if enough people use the same hashtag at once, the term will appear in Twitter’s Trending Topics.

Companies often use hashtags as part of a product launch (like #FordFiesta), and conferences and events frequently have hashtags associated with them (like #TED).

Tweetup

A tweetup is simply an in-person gathering organized via Twitter, often spontaneous. Companies use them for things like hosting launch parties, connecting with customers and introducing like-minded followers to each other.

Shortened URLs

With just 140 characters at your disposal, Twitter doesn’t give you much room to include URL links—some of which are longer than 140 characters themselves. If you post a link on Twitter via the website, sometimes we automatically shorten the URL for you. There are also a number of services—URL shorteners—that take regular links and shrink them down to a manageable length for tweets, and some even let you track clicks.

Written by Twitter with Sarah Milstein

Best Practices for Businesses on Twitter

Every company has its own experience on Twitter. But whether a business has been

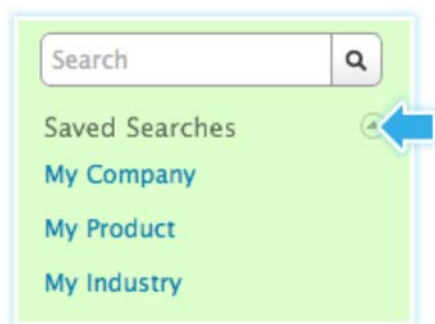
here for a couple of years or just a few months, its twitterers tend to find that certain approaches lead to success. In this section, we share that wisdom, which falls into a couple of big categories.

Think about Twitter as a place to build relationships

Instead of approaching Twitter as a place to broadcast information about your company, think of it as a place to build relationships. Put into practice, that means you could do things like:

Include in your Bio and/or custom background the names (or @usernames) of the people twittering from your company account. It's also a good idea to include additional contact info, like email addresses.

Listen regularly for comments about your company, brand and products—and be prepared to address concerns, offer customer service or thank people for praise.



Tip: In addition to keeping an eye on your @messages, you can use our **Saved Searches** feature to easily track mentions of your product, brand, company, etc. From your Twitter home page, simply run a search, and then at the top of your results page, click "Save this search." A link with your search term will appear on the right side of your page, and whenever you click it, you'll get real-time results for that query. To delete a search, just head to the top of your results and click "Remove this search."

Use a casual, friendly tone in your messages.

While you shouldn't feel compelled to follow everyone who follows you, do respond to some questions or comments addressed to you.

If you like a particular message, retweet it. People often appreciate the sharing and amplification of their ideas, so look to **retweet** cool stuff.

Post links to articles and sites you think folks would find interesting—even if they're not your sites or about your company.

Make sure your tweets provide some real value. You know better than we do what is valuable, but here are few examples to spark ideas:

Offer Twitter exclusive coupons or deals

Take people behind the scenes of your company

Post pictures from your offices, stores, warehouses, etc.

Share sneak peeks of projects or events in development

Don't spam people. Twitter's following model means that you have to respect the interests and desires of other people here or they'll unfollow you. The most common way to run afoul of that understanding—and to thus look like a spammer—is to send unsolicited @messages or DMs, particularly when you include a promotional link.

Of course, if you run an account that focuses explicitly on sharing exclusive coupon codes or sale information, you're probably just fine posting promos. But tread carefully, and consider explaining in your bio or background how the account works.

Tip: You can test the waters by sending just a few promos to start, and then continuing only if people show interest.

To make sure you're not spamming folks, we also suggest you avoid the following:

Posting duplicate updates to an account: Posting the same update over and over throughout the day is considered spammy and a possible violation of our [terms of service](#).

Cross-posting duplicate updates to multiple accounts: If you post the same update to multiple accounts, you could violate our terms of service.

Following churn: Following and unfollowing the same people repeatedly, as well as following and unfollowing those who don't follow back, are both violations of our terms of service.

Tip: Think you've encountered a spammer? Let us know, and we'll look into the account. You can alert us to spam profiles by sending a direct message to @spam! In addition, you can block the spammer by heading to their account page, and on the right side, clicking the block link (they won't know you've blocked them).

Understand the real-time nature of Twitter

Messages on Twitter are short, quick and able to reach people wherever they happen to be. That combination makes it an instantaneous medium, which has a couple of implications for businesses:

You can ask questions, float ideas and solicit feedback on Twitter—and expect pretty quick replies most of the time.

If you've just launched a product, ask users what they think or search for real-time tweets from people talking about your product. You can also ask or search for feedback on new ad campaigns you've launched, stores you've opened or murky issues you have to handle.

When people raise customer service issues on Twitter, they generally expect a quick reply—within a day, if not within a few hours, depending on the nature of your business. Keep an eye on your [@mentions](#).

Measure the value of Twitter

Before you set up measurement tools, focus on the quality of your engagement, and use your gut to check how things are going. How's the feedback and interaction with your followers? Are you responding to most or your @messages? Are most tweets about you positive? Or if they started out largely negative, are they coming around? Are more people beginning to engage with you and mention your company?

Next, think about quantifying your experience. Although it can be tricky to add up the value of relationships, Twitter does lend itself to measurement in a few ways—especially if you've already defined what you hope will be different for your company in three months, six months or a year if you succeed on Twitter. Tactics like these can then help you assess your progress in meeting that goal:

Keep a tally of questions answered, customer problems resolved and positive exchanges held on Twitter. Do the percentages change over time?

When you offer deals via Twitter, use a unique coupon code so that you can tell how many people take you up on that Twitter-based promotion. If you have an online presence, you can also set up a landing page for a promotion, to track not only click-throughs but further behavior and conversions.

Use third-party tools to figure out how much traffic your websites are receiving from Twitter.

Track click-throughs on any link you post in a tweet. Some URL shortening services let you track click-throughs.

Written by Twitter with Sarah Milstein

@DellOutlet: Raising Awareness, Increasing Sales, Measuring Results

Dell Outlet faces a common but vexing challenge. A division of the giant made-to-order computer business, Dell Outlet carries refurbished equipment and other inventory that it needs to sell quickly. Because the division has to get the word out fast, it doesn't have the luxury of hiring an agency and developing an ad campaign.



Instead, the outlet relies primarily on email marketing, paid search results, search-engine optimization and affiliate links to raise awareness and drive sales. It's always looking for new, cost-effective ways to reach people.

Holding Conversations

When company employees discovered Twitter at the South by Southwest conference in 2007, they thought they'd hit on a good channel for pushing out information.

“We thought, ‘Great—this has a really short lead time, and it will let us communicate our message effectively,’” says Stefanie Nelson, manager of demand generation at Dell Outlet. “We started using it for one-way communication.”

The company was surprised when people responded. “They wanted to ask questions. They wanted to share their experiences, good and bad,” says Nelson, who’s based in Austin, TX. “We realized that people were really interested in talking with us.”

Raising awareness

So instead of using Twitter just to let people know about deals, the company has come to think of it as a good place to interact with customers—and to raise awareness about the brand. “When we respond to people on Twitter, they get really excited, and we gain advocates.”

That doesn’t mean Dell Outlet has abandoned the deals. In fact, the company often posts offers that are exclusive to Twitter. They twitter only a few times a week so as not to spam their followers, and they use tracking URLs to gauge what followers find most appealing.

Increasing sales

Do the coupons work? Big time. Not only do they get retweeted and picked up by coupon sites—both of which spread the brand name—they also drive sales. Dell Outlet has booked more than \$3 million in revenue attributable to its Twitter posts. In addition, the division has done research showing that awareness of the outlet has grown, too. “The uplift has been more than we dreamed,” says Nelson.

Connecting with customers

Dell now has more than 80 Dell-branded Twitter accounts (including [@dellhomeoffers](#) for new system deals) offering everything from videos of new technologies to promotions for Asia-Pacific customers. It also encourages employees to twitter, and has well over 100 employee accounts. Dell uses many of those accounts (with names like [@StefanieAtDell](#)), primarily for customer service exchanges that require direct messages (Twitter’s private channel) and to reach out to people who are twittering about Dell (which they find via [Twitter search](#)).

Nelson has learned when starting a new account on Twitter, it’s smart to reach out to your current customer base. They’re already interested in chatting with you, and they’ll tell other people about you. But no matter who’s following you on Twitter, she says, “offering relevant information that people are interested in is key.”

Written for Twitter by Sarah Milstein

@JetBlue: It's Fun, But Does it Scale?

When JetBlue joined Twitter in the spring of 2007, it was one of the first major brands to do so. Today, the company has nearly a million of followers, and its account is often cited as an example of smart corporate twittering. But the company started out on Twitter with modest goals. It wanted to help customers.



"Some people were asking for help, and others were saying things that weren't correct," recalls JetBlue's manager of corporate communications, Morgan Johnston. He'd been spending time on [Twitter search](#), and he'd realized that JetBlue customers, often on the move, were Twittering about travel problems. "You can only see that a few times before you want to jump in and do something."

Testing the waters

He proposed the idea of setting up a JetBlue account on Twitter and cleared it with marketing and corporate communications executives at his company. They were very supportive—in part because they could start by just dipping a toe in the water. "It helps that as a business, you're not immediately exposed to hundreds of thousands of people," says Johnston, who's based in New York. "It's a slow scaling process."

Gradual growth turned out to be just what JetBlue needed on Twitter, as it gave the company time to learn what worked and what didn't. Chatty posts and customer service assistance tended to generate a lot of replies and new followers. Press releases announcements were met with silence.

From this experience, Johnston hit on what he calls the Twitter "kernel of truth": be receptive to what your followers want. How do you know what that is? You can gauge their responses to your tweets, and—as it turns out—you can also ask them.

When JetBlue faced dead air after pushing out new route announcements, Johnston started wondering what people wanted from the account. So he asked. The responses surprised him. "People said simply, 'This is what we want. We want to see you asking.'" He adds that people even went as far as to say that they wanted the company to see them as a resource for helping JetBlue deliver a better product.

Scaling up

Johnston started using the account to ask questions and to post questions and info that people clearly responded to. He also used it quite a bit for customer service—much of which other people don't see because it happens via [direct messages](#) (Twitter's private channel).

That approach has helped @JetBlue draw followers, and today, Johnston is assembling a team to maintain the account. In addition to the half dozen staffers who can post directly to the Twitter account, he's identified key people in departments across the company who can answer questions. Often, for scheduled events, like the announcement a new policy that might generate a lot of questions, he lines up the right people to help ahead of time.

That kind of preparation has helped JetBlue scale up. The next challenge for is to staff the account 24/7, so that travelers at any time can get a quick reply.

Tearing down the walls

Meantime, the company is pleased with what was initially an experiment. Johnston says that for JetBlue, the success is largely about qualitative rather than quantitative improvements:

Our routes mean we're really susceptible to weather issues, so if there's a rash of delays, I can say, "Heads up, everybody." When travelers have more knowledge, it helps them keep calm. That affects their dealings with people in the airports, which reflects back to them. It can change the dynamics in the airport, and that makes all of our lives a lot easier.

In addition, Johnston believes there's value in personalizing the brand.

"That's a clichéd phrase, but Twitter really is about tearing down the artificial walls between customers and the individuals who work at companies."

Written for Twitter by Sarah Milstein

@Teusnerwine: A One-Person Sales Department Builds Relationships

Teusner Wines, a boutique winery in Australia's Barossa Valley, has three employees. Dave Brookes is the sales and marketing department. A cycling fan, Brookes was watching the Tour Down Under in January 2009 when he noticed that Lance Armstrong was on Twitter. "I followed him," says Brookes, "and I starting thinking Twitter would a good tool to tell people about the winery."

How do businesses use Twitter?

But Brookes hadn't yet seen any other businesses on Twitter. A search led him to [@Starbucks](#) on Twitter, which helped him see the potential for his company.

"It's not about trying to sell your product, but more building relationships with customers and potential customers," says Brookes.

He created a Twitter account for Teusner, and to get rolling, he searched for wine-related terms. When he found interesting and influential people talking about the business, he followed them. Then he started conversing about wine and interacting with them.

Building trust

Once Brookes had a feel for Twitter, he began reaching out to people talking about Teusner wines. When he finds them, he sends a friendly message. "We say, 'Thanks for trying the wines, we're really glad you've tasted them. G'day.' They're really surprised, and they're happy to hear from us."

Brookes, who keeps the exchanges relaxed, steers away from sales. "This is about building trust as well as relationships—and that comes from not selling."

He likes the conversational nature of Twitter, which he says leads to good connections and helps him build interest and loyalty in Teusner.

Since he started twittering, Brookes says more people are coming to the winery for tours. And although shipping restrictions prevent Teusner from selling directly to individuals outside Australia, the company has seen an increase in traffic to its website, along with a jump in the number of people from the US and Canada ask where they can find Teusner wines at stores and restaurants near them.

Gathering feedback

Because he can engage with customers in an immediate way, Brookes also finds Twitter useful for learning what people like. "It's real-time responses with people, and you're getting authenticity in the feedback from consumers."

And he likes that customers talk with each other about Teusner wines. "The openness is great. You've got customer-to-customer conversations, not just you-to-customer." Recently, for instance, customers sought out the company's Riebke Shiraz and then turned to Twitter to discuss it. That helped Teusner learn what people think, and it also exposed new people to the brand.

Sharing information

In addition to lots of chatting with Teusner customers and distributors (The Jug Shop in San Francisco ([@JugShop](#)) and Stokes Fine Wines in the UK ([@JustinELLiddle](#)) are both on Twitter), Brookes posts third-party reviews of the company's wines; if they get a really stellar one, he might repost it a couple of times over a few days. He also shares information about tastings and dinners featuring Teusner wines, and he reports on what's happening at the winery.

In the mornings, he schedules a few tweets to go out during the day so that he doesn't bombard people. Then he uses his BlackBerry during the day to send last-minute updates about tastings and other live events.

“People enjoy what we’re doing”

All of the activity has helped spur have a dozen new retail accounts. But Brookes says that he focuses on the connections, not the numbers.

“There’s no cost, which is fantastic for guys like us because our marketing budget is tiny,” says Brookes. “And you can see that it’s building. We’re building relationships, and people enjoy what we’re doing.”

Written for Twitter by Sarah Milstein

For the 2008 presidential elections, Current knew it had to do something different. The media company, headquartered in San Francisco, would receive the same live feed of the debates as every other broadcaster. Unless Current distinguished its coverage, viewers would have no particular reason to tune in.

As they cast around for ideas, Current staffers noticed something interesting during the conventions. When the candidates gave live speeches, there were surges of commentary on Twitter. “A lot of us are Twitter users,” says Current’s vice president of strategy, Robin Sloan, “and we saw this real-time commentary track that suggested a parallel to the commentary you normally hear on the news.”

Current realized that if people were twittering about the conventions, they would definitely comment on the debates. “We thought: ‘What a cool thing to harness!’”

Playing with the idea

The first debate was just a few weeks off when Current hit on the idea of incorporating tweets into its broadcast. With no software engineer dedicated to the project, Sloan—who had done a bit of coding in the past—started playing with the Twitter API. (An API, or application programming interface, lets a company offer its data in ways that others can use and incorporate.)

“We didn’t have a giant bundle of resources,” says Frank Lentz, Current’s senior vice president for creative affairs. “We were in scrappy, let’s-make-a-case-for-this mode. There was a lot of playing, tinkering, experimenting.”

To deal with the volume of messages, Sloan created an application with two levels of filtering. The first was a triage phase. About ten people searched Twitter for debate-related terms, and then quickly tagged any post that looked like it didn't contain profanity, hate speech or material that would raise copyright issues.

The second phase was actively curatorial. Three or four people looked at the queued messages from the first filter and then decided which of those would be shown on air.

The final step, displaying the messages over the debate, proved a little tricky to figure out. In addition to integrating the Twitter data feed with the video feed, Current had to decide how the tweets would appear.

“We knew this idea had merit, but nobody has figured out the best way to display text commentary on TV,” says Lentz. “How do you do TV in the era of the Internet?”

Why it worked

After a lot of quick experiments, Current settled on the idea of having a stream of tweets roll up the screen and then dissolve about halfway up.

“We used Flash for the rendering, which just isn't done on TV,” says Lentz. “But it turned out to have this quality that was really wonderful. There's a jitteriness that lets you know the information is live.”

As excitement grew, more Current team members pitched in to help. With each debate, they improved the system a little more. “If you do something like this,” says Sloan, “expect you're going to have to iterate.”

Sloan says the ease of using the Twitter API was also critical to success. “It's open, and it's simple. That was key. That was empowering.”

A great experiment

Throughout the election season, Current received a lot of attention—far more than it would have had it stuck to a traditional broadcast.

The company also received a lot feedback on the project. “Some people thought it was too aggressive, some thought it was just right,” says Lentz. “But everyone acknowledged that it was a great experiment and that in the world of a two-screened experience, we moved things forward.”

@tastidlite: Generating unexpected customer insights

The popular dessert franchise Tasti D-lite offers customers over 100 flavors of guilt-free frozen treats. Tasti has been beloved by customers in the greater New York area for over 20 years, growing to 50+ locations and continuing to open new locations while expanding its geographic reach.

When and how did you get started?



Name Tasti D-Lite
Web <http://tastidlite...>
Bio Tasti D-Lite serves its creamy delicious, dairy dessert in more than 100 flavors to thousands of devoted customers every day.

BJ Emerson is the Director of Information and Social Technologies at Tasti D-lite and manages the @tastidlite feed. BJ heard about Twitter in May 2008, but wasn't initially sure how to take advantage of Twitter and use it to benefit his business. So BJ decided to start slowly, using search to listen to what Twitter users were saying about tasti, its products, and its competitors. BJ feels his learning curve on Twitter applies equally well to other companies getting started on Twitter, regardless of industry. He advises a three "m" approach to getting started on Twitter – monitor, then mingle, then measure.

How does twitter add value?

Before long, BJ decided he wanted to jump into the conversation and mingle with customers who were already talking about tasti and their New York dessert needs. BJ began following users who made comments about Tasti D-lite and turned their comments into immediate two-way conversations via @replies or Direct Messages (in the cases where customers followed tasti back). Many of these conversations led to surprising encounters and even sales.

Twitter allows BJ and Tasti D-lite to mingle with customers on their terms and in an immediate way, thereby forging relationships and also generating unexpected customer insights.

In one case, a customer working in an Empire State Building office tweeted about a fierce afternoon craving for Tasti D-lite, but bemoaned the fact that he couldn't get away from his office and that the Empire State Building management wouldn't allow food deliveries. BJ quickly jumped in to clarify – tasti was exempt from delivery restrictions because they run a location in the building! After numerous similar encounters on Twitter, BJ realized ESB customers were clearly unaware tasti offers delivery services to office workers within the building. Tasti D-lite subsequently addressed the awareness problem by tweeting about their delivery services and adding signage about delivery at the ESB location, which led to increased awareness and ultimately sales.

Twitter provides a window into the real-time thoughts of customers – leverage what you learn to improve your marketing. Experiment with coupons on Twitter as way of increasing customer engagement, and sales. BJ often tweets Twitter-exclusive coupons for customers to print out and redeem at their favorite tasti location.

He creates specific codes for each coupon that are entered into the point of sale cash registers at tasti locations to enable the tracking of coupon conversions and the resulting sales. From the numbers, BJ concluded that Twitter coupon campaigns can outperform similar targeted ads on other social network platforms or certain PPC ads if Twitter is used effectively. However, BJ sees these efforts as merely the beginning of what tasti can do on Twitter. Next stop? Experimenting with paperless mobile coupon options and Twitter accounts for individual stores.

Lessons and advice for new companies on Twitter?

There is no need to be daunted by the open-ended possibilities of Twitter. BJ is quick to point out that he does not have a classic marketing or PR background, but it doesn't matter. "The spirit of what we are doing on Twitter is very different from what classical marketers have been doing over the years. We are not blasting our sales messaging - big agendas don't translate well into the end customer's community. The opportunity out there is tremendous, however, if you approach Twitter like a conversation and think creatively about how you can add value to followers."

Written for Twitter by Ray Bradford

@coffeegroundz: Strengthening the bond with customers

CoffeeGroundz is a popular, albeit modest, Houston, TX based independent coffee shop that sells a variety of locally roasted coffee, tea, pastries, sandwiches, and alcoholic beverages. There are a couple of booths, 16 tables and another ten on the patio. If you come to CoffeeGroundz, J.R. Cohen, its general manager, strives to make sure "you feel at home."

When and how did you get started?

J.R. Cohen started using Twitter in October 2008 at the prompting of a CoffeeGroundz angel investor. At the time, J.R. admits, "I had no clue what I should be doing and didn't even know what DM stood for!" It didn't take long, however, for J.R. to realize how critical Twitter could be to his business.

J.R. went out of his way to interact with Houston customers following him on Twitter. Growth in followers was slow and organic, but the connections with followers were strong. He would ask his followers from Houston to "come into the store and ask for J.R." J.R. then seized the opportunity to meet with each and every patron who asked for him by name, strengthening his bond with his followers. To J.R. and his customers "this is what social media is meant to be."

Most interesting Twitter experience?

Halloween morning 2008, one of CoffeeGroundz's regular customers, Sean Stoner (@maslowbeer), requested to place a 'to-go' order for a breakfast wrap. It is argued that Sean's request for an order 'to-go' was the first of its kind on Twitter. And because J.R. is an avid user of the Twitter service, was able to reply quickly to Sean's requests. With this reply, J.R. spawned a whole new way to place and receive an order online.

JR seized on the opportunity to grant Sean's request and started taking to-go orders via direct message from all of his Twitter followers. J.R., to this day, continues to receive 'to-go' orders via DM. Customers can also reserve a table/booth, order from the patio, or reserve our place for events through direct message.

"It just makes sense. If a customer sitting on the patio in front of the store with his dog and doesn't want to leave it there unattended while he order my food inside, he can DM me, get whatever he want and I'll even bring my customers dog a bowl of water!" A customer of his says "everyone's pretty impressed with his management of the to-go DM system. The man is so efficient."

@coffeegroundz I want to pre order a bkfast wrap so i can zip thru to get back for gas man. c'est possible?
07:27 AM October 31, 2008 from mobile web

Written for Twitter by Tristan Walker

@Etsy: Harnessing the collective brains of the community

Etsy is an online marketplace for buying & selling all things handmade. Since launching in 2005, the Brooklyn, NY company has grown to over 65 employees. More importantly, over 250,000 sellers have opened up shop on Etsy to sell their handmade goods.

How and when did you get started?

Etsy originally joined Twitter in December 2007 at the insistence of an early adopter within the company, but the account initially was underutilized. That is, until Anda Corrie (who manages the @Etsy account) saw the powerful ways many Etsy sellers were using Twitter to promote their handmade items and Etsy shops. Anda followed their feeds and learned how to make the best use of Twitter by observing the tweets of followers of @Etsy that she found to be insightful. As Anda points out, "Our community always comes up with great ideas."

How does Twitter add value?

Etsy originally began using Twitter only to share new posts from Etsy's blog, The Storque, which Anda now calls a classic Twitter "newbie mistake."

After realizing Twitter could be more than just a RSS feed of the blog, Anda decided to, "just have fun" and experiment with using Twitter in a broad variety of ways. @Etsy now uses Twitter to alert followers to particularly creative products from Etsy sellers, share valuable tips & tricks, and provide information about upcoming events and promotions on the site.

Twitter is also used to share information from individual Etsy sellers (via "retweets"), monitor and respond to Etsy-related questions and concerns that users express via Twitter, and garner feedback and ideas instantaneously, effectively creating focus groups from the @Etsy followers.

In Etsy's experience, a company that constantly seeks to build community and, "voraciously" learn from its users will find that Twitter is, "amazing in the way it harnesses the collective brains of so many people." For example, Anda recently tapped into the community to come up with helpful tips for craft fair season.

According to Anda, "The best Twitter experiences are when you ask a winning question and get hundreds of captivating replies. It's a super fast way to get info you'd spend hours searching for... and it's valuable info as well." Besides sourcing tips and tricks, Anda uses Twitter to discover users' favorite Etsy items, design blogs, and projects. She also uses it as a tool for impromptu surveys and feedback (including feedback on how she can make the Etsy Twitter feed more valuable to followers).

@Etsy has also realized that great content on Twitter has the opportunity to reach new users who were previously unaware of Etsy's website. Anda often tweets about particularly unique and creative handmade items that Etsy sellers have listed. The coolest items are subsequently "retweeted" by @Etsy followers, exposing a broader audience to the handiwork of Etsy sellers.

Etsy Day unites the community on Twitter

Individual Etsy sellers and groups of sellers known as teams have also found new and powerful ways to use Twitter to promote their shops. An exciting culmination of these grassroots efforts was on April 24, 2009 – otherwise known as "Etsy Day."

Photographer and Etsy seller [SchuGirl](#) was surprised how few of her friends and family were aware of Etsy and decided to do something about it. She used the website's Forums to a call to action, for Etsians to band together on April 24, 2009 and, "get the Etsy name out there in the brightest, sparkly-est, boldest way you can think of!" Etsy Day was born.

Advice for other companies joining Twitter?

For a site specializing in handmade goods, there is no experience more flattering than being one of the first Twitter accounts to be followed by Martha Stewart (@[MarthaStewart](#)). That's exactly the "spine-tingling excitement" Anda and @Etsy recently enjoyed. Anda's advice to new companies? What she recently told the legend herself about how Etsy uses Twitter.

@[MarthaStewart](#) To connect, listen, interact, get feedback from our users that use Twitter too. And to have a little fun while we're at it.
9:52 AM May 13th from Tweetdeck

Written for Twitter by Ray Bradford

@NAKEDPizza: Twitter becoming mission critical to the business

Founded in late 2006 as one small store in New Orleans in an area that flooded during hurricane Katrina, NAKEDPizza (originally named World's Healthiest Pizza) was launched as an ambitious business model that seeks to change the nutritional profile of fast food in America.

By way of example, NAKEDPizza is demonstrating that pizza does not have to be part of the problem in our national epidemic of obesity and chronic disease, but in fact can be part of the solution.

How and when did you get started?



Jeff Leach and Randy Crochet, co-founders of Naked Pizza, started using Twitter in March 2009. Mark Cuban, an early investor in the company, advised Jeff to sign up for a Twitter account to help create a community around healthy eating, save on marketing costs, and ultimately drive sales. There is a heavy focus on direct mail within the pizza industry, which proves to be particularly costly for owners. Opt-in newsletters cost \$2000 to \$3000 per year for even small database of names. Open rates are dropping to single digits and for small business owners, this can be prohibitively expensive.

“Direct mail is sent to a single address but there are multiple people in those houses. We want to maximize and extend our marketing reach and Twitter helps us do this in leaps and bounds.” Jeff now takes that newsletter content and feeds it to Twitter.

Today, Jeff claims that Twitter is mission critical to his business, so much so that he has created a kiosk within his store, where customers can sign up for a Twitter account if they hadn't already been users. In addition, right next to Naked's online ordering page, there will be the Naked Pizza Twitter stream in case customers have questions about the company's product offering.

How have you used Twitter in interesting ways?



A custom Twitter button in the point of sale system.

Naked Pizza relies heavily on tracking promotions that are fed into the company's Twitter stream. In a test run April 23, an exclusive-to-Twitter promotion brought in 15% of the day's business.

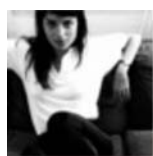
Jeff continued to experiment, and iterate and recently (May 29th) set an in-store sales record, the bulk of which came directly from Twitter. A whopping 68.60% of total dollar sales came from customers who said "I'm calling from Twitter".

Written for Twitter by Tristan Walker

@americanapparel: Winning ideas for ad campaigns outside of Twitter

The Los Angeles company and leading basics brand provides hip clothing for people of all ages. Vertically-integrated American Apparel is the largest clothing manufacturer in the United States.

How and when did you get started?



americanapparel

Name American Apparel
Location Downtown LA
Web <http://www.americ...>
Bio Official Twitter for American Apparel

American Apparel employees began exploring with personal accounts in 2007 and established @americanapparel shortly thereafter. The account was started by Lisa Kim from the web marketing department and now multiple people are involved with responding to comments Twitter users make about the company, taking advantage of the opportunity to interact directly with customers.

Most interesting Twitter experience?

Photos from the blog

American Apparel fans with blogs occasionally write posts with favorable mentions of the company or its products. In some cases, these AA fans use Twitter as a conduit to share their posts with the company directly. In one memorable encounter, Lisa @americanapparel received a DM from a freelance photographer (Ryan Marshal @ThePanicRoom) chronicling his wife's pregnancy with week-by-week photos of the mother-to-be in American Apparel threads. After seeing the blog, Lisa and American Apparel liked the photo series so much that they not only provided the new mom with free clothes, but used the images as the basis for an ad campaign showing cute and comfy looks for expectant moms.

American Apparel ad

Lisa also connected her colleague in online advertising with the photographer to set up American Apparel advertising on the blog. They ran a unique banner ad for baby clothes, and the blog (pacingthepanicroom.com) became one of American Apparel's top performing sites for online ads.

A serendipitous Twitter interaction can lead to fresh and creative ideas for engaging customers with campaigns outside of Twitter.

Written for Twitter by Ray Bradford

@Pepsi: Moving At the Speed of Culture

Pepsi may be a classic brand, but it's using 21st century tools to collaborate and build relationships with customers.

For years, PepsiCo, based in Purchase, NY, has had a toll-free number that consumers can call to share product feedback. People call in all the time, and the company considers the line successful. But when Pepsi brand managers wanted faster and more personal ways to connect with soda drinkers, they looked online—and in January 2009, the team started using Twitter to listen to and talk with consumers. (The brand twitters as @Pepsi; the corporation twitters as @PepsiCo.)

“We’re trying to humanize the brand, to make it more accessible to consumers,” says Anamaria Irazabal, brand director for Pepsi. “On Twitter, they can complain or praise, and we can use it as a way to gauge how people are feeling.”

Reaching a new audience

Interestingly, the company finds the conversations on Twitter are different from those on the toll-free line. The callers, says Irazabal, tend to focus on products. Twitterers, on the other hand, tend to have opinions not just on the products, but on promotions, too. “They feel they’re invited to give their opinions on the how the brand should move forward, and they’re very detailed.”

After the spring 2009 launch of Pepsi Throwback—an initiative that involved packaging with a retro look and real-sugar sweeteners—the company was able to collect quick reactions on Twitter. The company has also found asking questions works well on Twitter. Even something as simple as “How many Pepsis do you drink a day?” generates a lot of chatter.

“Consumers own the brands as much as we do, and they want to share their interests and likes,” says Bonin Bough, director of social and emerging media for PepsiCo. “Twitter is the only medium where we can have a two-way continuous dialog about the brand.”

Fast response

Pepsi brand managers find that Twitter is useful not only for quick responses from consumers but for quick responses from the company, too.

When Michael Jackson—who made high-profile commercials for Pepsi during the 1980s—died suddenly in July, the company used Twitter right away in its “Thank you, Michael” tribute, engaging with fans. “We can move at the speed of culture,” says Irazabal. “Twitter means we can react to something that happens and provide a platform for dialog. That’s the key word. It’s about engagement and building the relationship.”

Dealing with complaints

Although Pepsi finds that nearly all of the conversation on Twitter is very positive, people do sometimes complain via tweets. The brand managers try to address negative comments very quickly.

“We try to gauge the overall tone and type of problem,” says Josh Karpf, manager of social and emerging media for PepsiCo. If somebody doesn’t like a piece of advertising, the company accepts that. But if a person has had a problem with a product or is attacking the company in some way, Pepsi has a process in place to resolve the issue directly. The company responds once in public, and if the person stays negative, they switch to DM and then to email or phone if needed. Internally, a cross-functional team can help solve problems.

“When we respond quickly,” says Irazabal, “people give us kudos.”

The logistics

Pepsi’s assistant marketing manager, Rachel Mills, works closely with two agencies to coordinate the @Pepsi Twitter account. With Mills’s oversight, one agency does the day-to-day twittering. But Mills sees all the tweets, and she gets involved if there’s a problem of any kind.

Another agency helps Pepsi develop its digital promotion calendar three months ahead of time. The calendar—along with guidance on tone of voice and how to respond to certain types of comments—help Pepsi maintain a consistent brand presence across the Web, including its Twitter account.

Finally, Pepsi requires that staffers maintain personal accounts on social media sites—not to interact on behalf of the brand, but to learn about the channels. “It’s very hard to talk to agencies if you have never used the tools,” says Irazabal. “So we ask our teams to use these tools to learn what we can get out of them.”

Measuring success

Like many brands, Pepsi looks at the number of followers it has. But the company also looks at the sentiment of tweets, rating them on a scale from positive to negative. The balance changes from week to week, and the company—which considers itself to be in experimental phase with Twitter—is still figuring out what affects consumer feeling and how to measure it.

“We’re six months into this,” says Irazabal. “We’ve got a lot ahead of us, and we’re learning every day.”

Key Resources for More Info

In addition to the info we've shared on these pages and on our own [Help pages](#), we want to point out a handful of resources that other people have created to help you shine in the Twittersphere.

Although we may not agree with every word of these books, articles and blogs—and we don't endorse them as official sources of Twitter information—we think you'll find their perspectives useful and even inspiring.

Sign in with Twitter



Twitter has a data service, [Sign in with Twitter](#), that lets people interact with Twitter from your site. You might find it useful and cool if, for instance, you're a retailer and you want to let your customers tweet about their purchases while they're still on your site.

Books

[The Twitter Book](#) \$, by Tim O'Reilly & Sarah Milstein. A full-color guide to effective twittering for businesses and individuals. Includes lots of examples and advice.

[Twitter Tips, Tricks, and Tweets](#) \$, by Paul McFedries. Step-by-step instructions and advice for smooth twittering.

Articles and Sites

[The Boston Globe](#). Restaurants using Twitter for cheap, effective marketing.

The Twitter API

The acronym "API" stands for "Application Programming Interface". In Twitter's case, we provide an API *method* for just about every feature you can see on our website. Programmers use the [Twitter API](#) to make applications, websites, widgets, and other projects that interact with Twitter, we call this the Twitter ecosystem.

[Mashable](#). Tweetable eats, what street vendors can teach businesses about Twitter.

[BusinessWeek](#). Why Jack & Suzy Welch are now big fans of Twitter. To those with eyebrows aloft, read on to find out how it happened

[CNN Money](#). 5 Twitter tips for your company

Blog posts

[So Should a Business Be on Twitter?](#), by Frank Eliason.

[Zappos Blog](#). How Twitter can make you a better (and happier) person from Tony Hsieh, CEO of Zappos.com

[10 Twitter Tips for Nonprofit Organizations](#) (but great advice for any business), by Heather Mansfield.

[50 Ideas on Using Twitter for Business](#), by Chris Brogan.