



Using Twitter for Business



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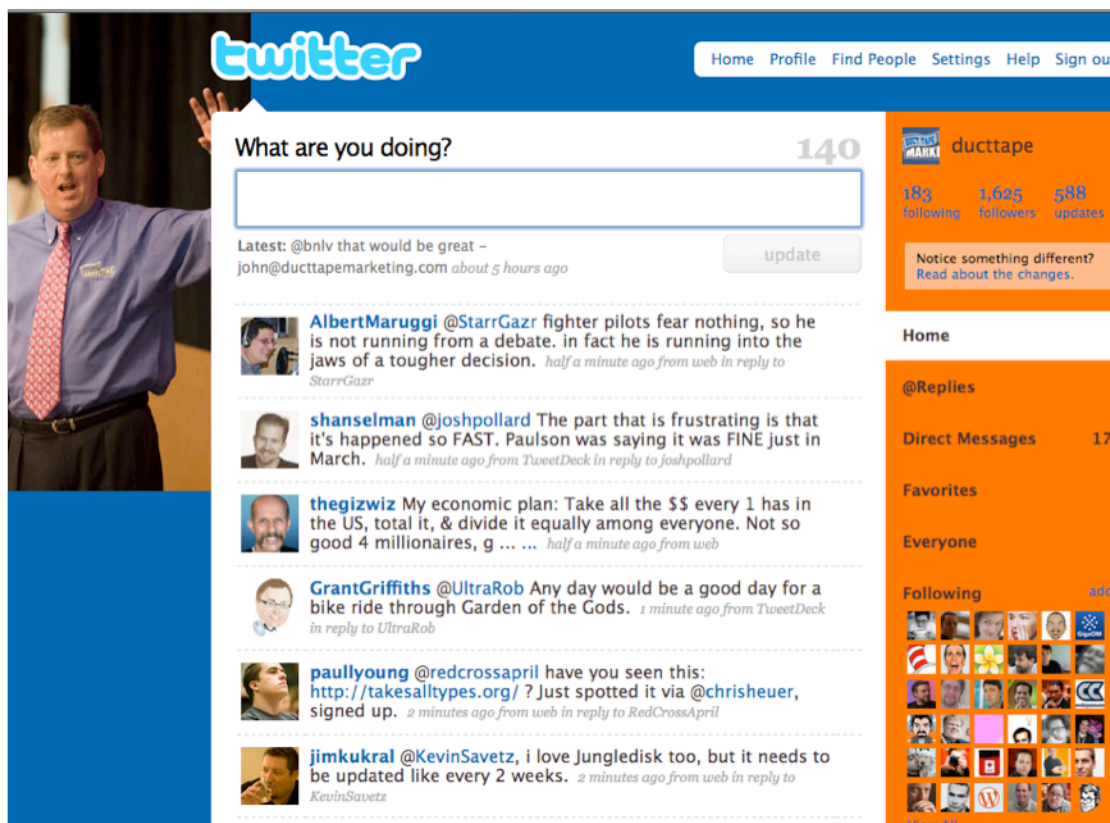
Using Twitter for Business – Perhaps!

Maybe the siren's call of twitter - <http://www.twitter.com> (everybody's doing it) has become too much and you've jumped in. Or, maybe you have no clue what it is or why you would care. I get asked enough about this mircoblogging tool that I thought I would create a practical guide for business folks wrestling with yet another social media outpost.

What is it?

In simplest terms, twitter is a free service that allows anyone to say almost anything to anybody in 140 characters or less – it's the “what are you doing right now” kind of micro-blogging that permeates online social communication.

So, now the question is – is that all? Well, no, not exactly. While people are using it to tell no one in particular what they had for lunch, millions are leaning on twitter pretty hard as a way to network and communicate with contacts new and old. twitter is outfitted, like most social media tools, with the ability to subscribe, share, friend or follow as many twitter feeds as you like. In addition, developers are swiftly creating tools that allow users to bend and twist the feeds in creative ways. More on that shortly.



How do I use it?

First thing, sign up for an account. It's very painless – <http://twitter.com/account/create>

Your next stop should be to the twitter help guide - <http://help.twitter.com/portal>. This is where you get all your basic how to questions answered. Read it, it will save you some time and anguish.

Once you create an account you will be given a home page and a profile page – my profile page can be found here: <http://twitter.com/ducttape>. So my twitter handle is @ducttape. From these pages you can find other twitter streams to follow, post your own messages and even watch the entire public stream of comments flow by. (I don't recommend that unless you are really, really bored.)



It's a good idea if you are going to jump into social media sites that allow you to build profiles to create a 100 x 100 pixel image (twitter allows a maximum size of 700k in jpg or png format), or avatar as they are called, to use on your profile and often with your activity.

Why would I use twitter?

Now that is the real question isn't it? Many people look at twitter on the surface and conclude that it's just one big waste of time. I can't say I disagree completely, but like all social media and marketing tactics, before you can determine if something makes sense you need to analyze your objectives. So, instead of asking why you would use it, ask how it might help you achieve some other already stated objectives.

- 1) Would you like a way to connect and network with others in your industry or others who share your views? It's a good a tool for that.
- 2) Would you like a way to get instant access to what's being said, this minute, about your organization, people, products, or brand? It's a good tool for that.
- 3) Would you like a steady stream of ideas, content, links, resources, and tips focused on your area of expertise or interest? It's a good tool for that.
- 4) Would you like to monitor what's being said about your customers to help them protect their brands? It's a good tool for that.
- 5) Would you like to extend the reach of your thought leadership – blog posts and other content? It can be a good tool for that.
- 6) Would you like to promote your products and services directly to a target audience? Not such a good tool for that!

Before you really jump into a service like twitter, it's important that you identify at least, and initially only, one objective from the list above and focus your efforts on learning how to use the tool to that end.

Who do I follow?

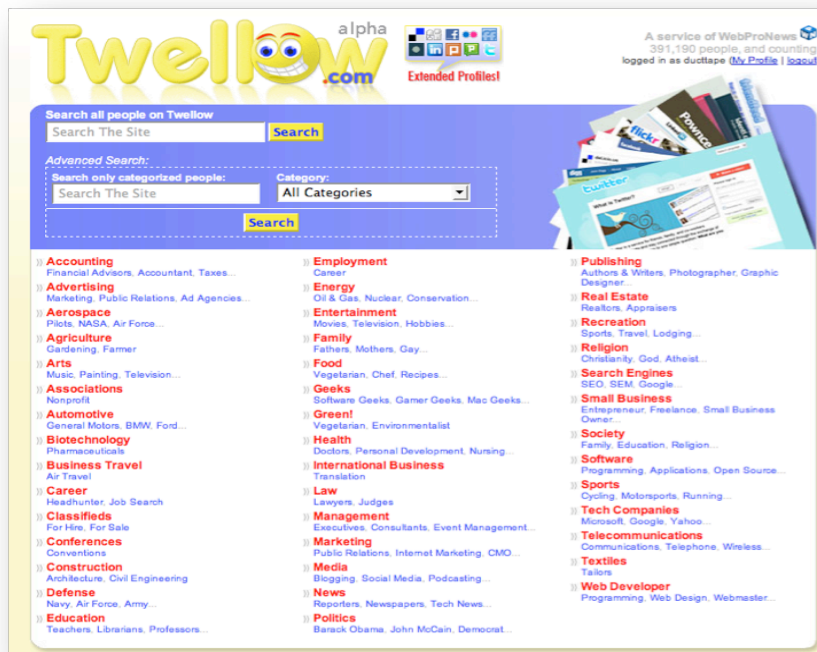
In twitter terms, following someone simply means that their posts, or tweets as they are called, show up on your homepage (or text messages via mobile phone option).

To make twitter more useful for many of the objectives above you need to follow others and begin to have others follow you. Some people take very aggressive and, often, time consuming leaps into this and try to follow and be followed by everyone on twitter. Again, back to the objectives, most often quality over quantity is best.

While you can search for people you know on twitter, I would suggest that you take a look at 2 sites that will help you locate people with focused interest:

Twellow - <http://www.twellow.com/> is like a twitter phone directory that sorts people by industry. This can be a great way to find people in your industry.

The profiles also tell you a little about each person, including how many followers they have. Sometimes following people with large followings can lead to people following you, but if your goal is networking, be realistic and find people who may also just be getting started. If your goal is to keep tabs of what industry leaders are saying, then focus on industry leaders. The twello site has a link to each profile on twitter so you can click on the link and go to a twitter page to follow the person you have chosen and then jump back to twello to keep looking. If you want to get listed on twello use this link http://www.twellow.com/user_add.php



Another directory can be found here - <http://twitterpacks.pbwiki.com/> The nice thing about this directory is that you can also add your twitter links if you aren't afraid to edit a wiki.

What do I say?

Another tough question. Whatever your answer, it needs to be 140 characters or less. So, let's go back to the objectives shall we?

If, for instance you want some immediate feedback on things, you may choose to pose some questions. This often stimulates conversation but it can also do a great deal in terms of helping you make a decision - a bit like a poll. I have received some great ideas for blog content and often cross post a response or two from twitter in a blog post.

What about a company twitter account?

Another great use is to set up an account that everyone in the company can direct tweets to as they find good content and want to bookmark it for others to quickly view.

Using a tool like [Fleeklite](#), anyone create tweets based on a page they visit and then direct it to the company @companyaccount.

Using a bookmarking tool and posting great web finds in your tweets every so often is a great way to mix up your content.

If you want to promote an event or post an idea don't simply link to it, add a twist, ask if people have any thoughts, pose an interesting thought.

To post your own tweets you can simply visit the twitter home page but you might also consider these tools:

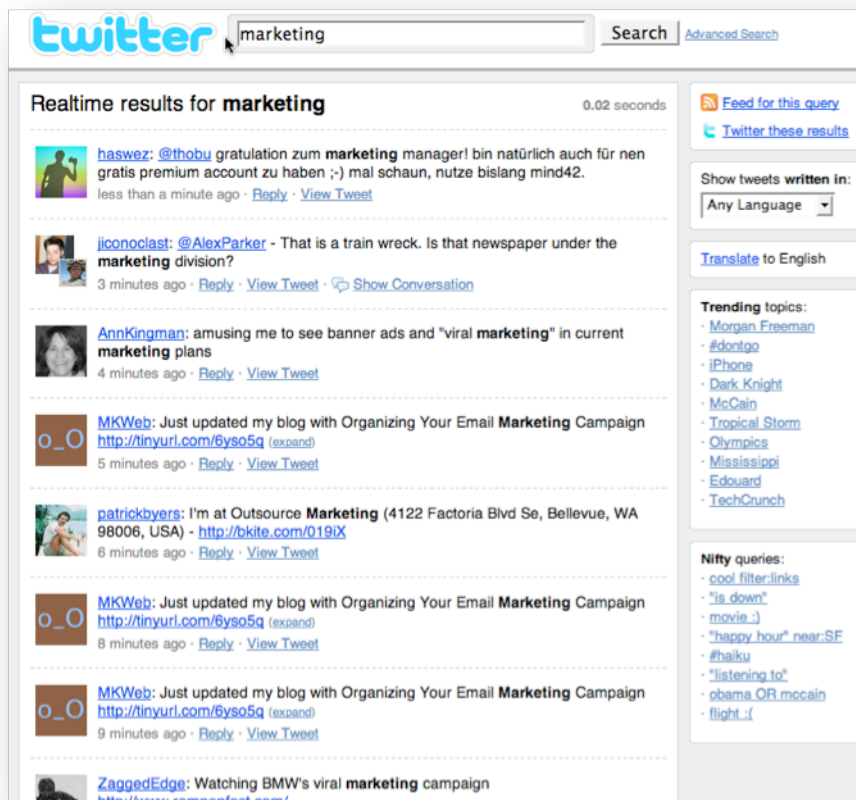
- Wordpress plugins- <http://alexking.org/projects/wordpress> (if you add the Twitter Facebook application your tweets will automatically show up as status changes on Facebook)
- Twiterrific - <http://iconfactory.com/software/twiterrific/>
- Twhirl - <http://www.twhirl.org/>
- twittermania - <http://mashable.com/2008/05/24/14-more-twitter-tools/>

So let's review

Mixing up your tweet content and staying active is a good way to build followers and create dialogue.

- Add content about events
- Retweet other people's great tweets
- Add tweets that are questions
- Add tweets that are links to great web pages you find
- Add random thoughts
- Add your blog posts

Watching



One of most important and frequently underutilized objectives for twitter is as a way to monitor your brand and reputation. Anytime anything is being said about your company, products, people, or services you can track it and respond instantly. You can also use a set of readily available tools to track what's being said about any search term you like. This is another way to find people with shared interests.

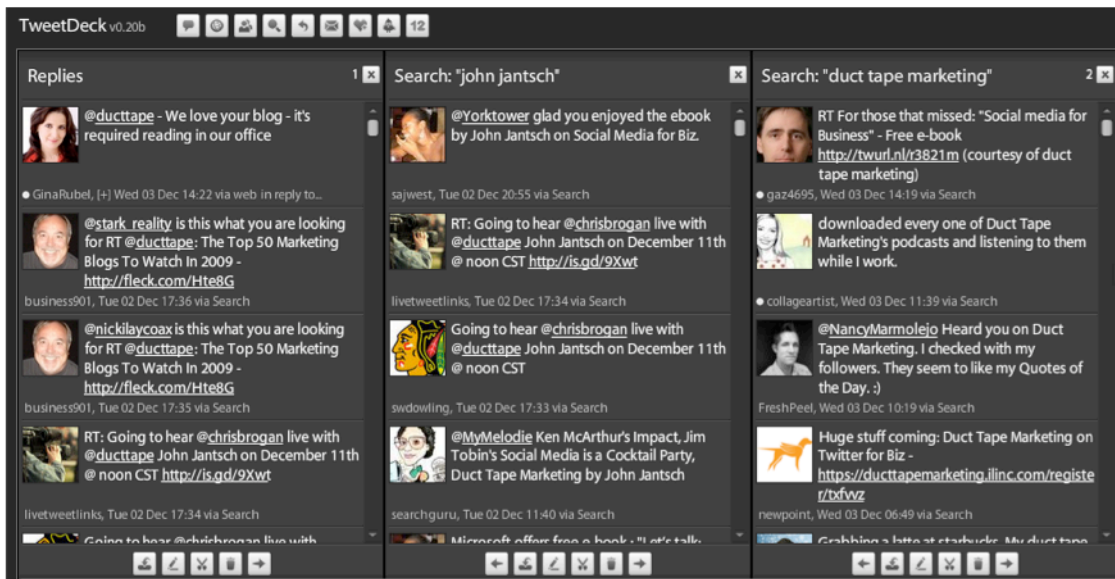
Twitter Search - <http://search.twitter.com/> This little tool allows you to monitor anything you can search. I use it to see what's being said back to me @ducttape and then do searches like "duct tape marketing" or "john jantsch" – now for some this may feel a little vain, but this is a great way to stay in touch and even network with folks who have an interest in your products and services.

Some large organizations such as **Dell** use twitter very effectively to communicate with customers - happy and sad alike. This has become a major customer communication tool for them because they can respond immediately.

Lastly, twitter search allows you to create RSS feeds from your searches so you can have them sent directly to your RSS reader or you can republish a stream of content on your website or blog and add the collective twitterverse to your content creation.

TweetDeck – <http://www.tweetdeck.com> - This is a piece of software that you run on your desktop. You can post tweets from it, respond to replies from others and, this is what I really like, set up various searches and get updates in real time when someone tweets on a subject or phrase you are following.

This is a great way to monitor your brand or jump on opportunities to connect around your specific topics of choice, without having hang out on twitter all day.



Some More Great Tools



[TweetLater](#) or [EasyTweets](#) - allows you to auto follow back anyone who follows you and auto send a welcome message via DM (Direct Message). This one gets mixed reviews from twitter maniacs as it

can be abused - don't use it to auto send your spam selling messages, use it to greet a new follower in a fun and engaging way. I get lots of messages back from my auto greets as many people don't sense it's an automatically generated message. You've still got to reach out to people and connect, but this gets the ball rolling automatically and saves a great deal of time.

The other feature of TweetLater is the ability to create tweets that you post later automatically. Now this also gets abused and is looked down on by some, but there are some good uses of this as well. Let's say you are having an event and you want to auto tweet a reminder or start time without having to go online and do it. Get creative and think about your objectives and you should be fine.



[Twitturly](#) is a service for tracking what URLs people are talking about as they talk about them. It is sort of a real time link tracking popularity tool.

[Tweetbeep](#) – Another phrase and twitter word tracker.

Custom Twitter Backgrounds – Since you've read this far, I'm guessing you are getting into this twitter thing. All the best dressed twitterers have a custom background on their twitter homepage instead of the default ones provided by twitter. If you set up correctly, a custom background is a good branding touch.

Here's a tutorial from [Twittip](#) on how to create a [custom background](#)

And one last note from Tim O'Reilly – [Why I love twitter](#)



I hope you enjoyed this little guide. It is not meant to be the complete guide to everything twitter, it's simply intended to try to help you make a little sense out of twitter as a useful business tool.

Let's Get Social

If you would like to connect with me on one of the following social networks, here are my profiles:

Plurk - <http://www.plurk.com/user/ducttape>

LinkedIn - <http://www.linkedin.com/in/ducttapemarketing>

Facebook - <http://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=740360803>

StumbleUpon - <http://jjantsch.stumbleupon.com/>

Flickr - <http://www.flickr.com/photos/ducttapemarketing>

Twitter - <http://www.twitter.com/ducttape>

YouTube - <http://youtube.com/jantsch>

Slideshare - <http://www.slideshare.net/ducttape>

Digg - <http://digg.com/users/jantsch>

Friend Feed - <http://friendfeed.com/ducttape>

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