

Twitter – A Professional Networking Tool?

“The world is split between those who have joined and love the ‘Twitterati’ and those who don’t understand it or who simply don’t care...” Where are you?

Grant Appleton, a leading exponent of the genre, is on a mission to open the eyes and minds of the uninitiated and addresses their objections head-on. He recognises that the most common anti-Twitter argument usually goes something like:

“I don’t need to tell the world when or what I’m eating...” and it’s a valid point. Of course, not everybody will want to read a play-by-play post of your mundane life, but as business professionals, we might all benefit from using Twitter to leverage powerful business-focused networking capabilities.

Used correctly and selectively, Twitter has immense power to break down the invisible walls that separate you from your network and can establish (and then keep) your name in the forefront of their minds.



Below are Grant’s 12 Twitter Tips:

- Tip 1** **Decide on your personal brand and use your Twitter account to re-enforce it.** Before jumping into the world of Social Media, consider why you are doing it and what it is that you want to achieve. Think through the image of yourself that you would like people to connect with.
- Tip 2** **Create an account** at www.twitter.com/signup. Choose a professional username (e.g. johndoe), or a name that reflects your professional identity and the image that you want to project.
- Tip 3** **Import your professional contacts.** If you have Yahoo, AOL or Gmail account, Twitter will prompt you to import your address book. This is great! Click ‘follow all’ and you will automatically be connected to your contacts.
- Tip 4** **Learn the ‘Lingo’.**
- **Tweet** a 140-character thought, posted by you that will appear in your followers’ feeds.
 - **Follower:** a contact on Twitter; someone who reads your Twitter updates
 - **Reply:** tweets that begin with @twitter_id will be directed toward that specific user
 - **Retweet:** Much like forwarding an email, a retweet is simply a re-posting of another Twitter user’s update.
- Tip 5** **Follow ‘important people’.** Google top industry players, find their Twitter IDs and start following them. You don’t need permission to follow someone and it is okay if they don’t know you. Read the latest Tweets. Look for trends and follow the advice of the Twitter users you respect. Many companies post links to corporate updates, decisions and job opportunities on Twitter before any other source.
- Tip 6** **Use Twitter Search.** Search industry keywords regularly and find new contacts who are influential in these areas and who you haven’t previously identified and follow them. A good rule of thumb is that if an account is being followed by more people than they are following, then they are likely to be influential.
- Tip 7** **When you have something to say, say it!** Tweets are meant to be informal and, with that in mind, ensure that you create content (tweets) which are still consistent with the image you are trying to project. Join in by replying to an interesting tweet with your own insight or observations. If CEO X reads your tweet and likes what you have to say, they will likely begin following you. You are now in direct daily contact with a ‘mover and shaker’ who is interested in your ideas. Remember that you can always delete tweets or repeat postings if you choose to.
- Tip 8** **Be Seen.** There are a number of tricks that you can use to ensure that your tweets are seen by the people that you want to see them – making it more likely that they will follow you.
- You can retweet someone else’s tweet, with a comment of your own and this will appear as a mention in their timeline.
 - You can praise them (“Have just read an article on fiscal insecurity by @johndoe, very clear and concise analysis – well worth a read”).
 - You can ask them a direct question.

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- Tip 9 Don't forget about the real world.** Go to networking events and update your Twitter, whilst at the event. Many events will have a specific tag (such as #awesomeevent) that you can add to the end of all of your tweets while you are at the event, allowing you to view Tweets from others who are also there. Tweeting at events will also help you to glean more followers.
- Tip 10 Everything in moderation.** It's not a good idea to tweet every five minutes. Nobody is that interesting! Try to stay active by tweeting a few times a week and only tweet when you have something of value or of interest to say. Even if you don't tweet very often, you can still benefit by reading your Twitter feed and see what others are saying.
- Tip 11 Follow the people that you want to follow you.** Once you have built up a bit of content through your tweets, follow those people who you would like to have within your network. Chances are when you start following them, they will have a look at your tweets and if they are broadly of interest to them or to their business, then they are more likely to follow you back.
- Tip 12 Be proud of your new 'social savvy'.** Consider adding your Twitter ID to your business cards. Be bold, but be smart about what you say. The internet remembers all!

Grant says: "Networking is about making connections and building enduring, mutually beneficial relationships. Twitter offers you the opportunity to do this online and provides you with countless opportunities to reach and connect with senior people and influencers in your chosen field.

Twitter creates a level playing field where your opinions and input are as valid and have as much chance as being seen as a CEO who runs a Fortune 500 company.

Take the plunge, you won't regret it!"

Grant Appleton is a leading advocate of Twitter. He works with diverse businesses interested in increasing their online profile, building their network of potential clients and driving visits to their websites or published articles. His solutions are by nature client-specific and cost-effective, allowing a social networking presence with the added bonus of not having huge fees to pay out on Google adword campaigns.



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