

THE SIMPLE TWITTER BOOK



STARTING WITH, “WHAT IS RT?”

RT Means ReTweet (as in Repeat)

When you see RT in a tweet, it's because someone found that tweet funny, useful, informative, cool, whatever, and they decided to repeat it.

You can retweet things too. Whether you're using the Twitter.com web site or a Twitter client, you can usually see an RT or ReTweet button when you hold your mouse over a tweet. Click that, and Twitter will resend the tweet from your own account, thereby passing it on to your followers.

If I've got 5,000 followers and I retweet someone who only has a few dozen followers, then I've helped the person reach thousands more people. This is a great use of retweets - helping to get the word out about something. However, the reverse isn't too useful: if you retweet something @Oprah says, you're not really helping anyone, because she pretty much reaches the entire planet. You might even be seen as uncool or amateur if you retweet famous people.

Yes, you and I know you're an amateur right now, but that's about to change, because I'm about to fill you in on how the cool kids use Twitter - starting with manual retweets.

What's This Book?

I've been on Twitter for years, and my friends kept asking me the same questions over and over. I decided to put write all the answers down into a free ebook. I write about how to get started on Twitter, why people aren't following you, how to pick a good Twitter profile photo, why Weiner got ousted, and more.

Yes, this book is free, and you can give it away. (There's not much money in writing books these days anyway - trust me, I'm a published author too!)

Manual ReTweeting: Adding Your Two Cents

When using Twitter's built-in retweeting function, your followers will just see the original tweet, but not your thoughts on it. If you find the tweet interesting enough to repeat, you might want to add your own two cents or opinion. To fix that, you can mimic Twitter's behavior yourself. If I want to repeat something @SQLAgentMan says, for example, the end result might look like this:

@SQLAgentMan: "Lady Gaga is my guilty pleasure."

@BrentO: "Me too - I bought Fame Monster. RT @SQLAgentMan: Lady Gaga is my guilty pleasure."

Here's what just happened: @SQLAgentMan admitted to his followers (including me) that he has a penchant for fashionable pop stars.

I agreed, and I wanted to repeat the message to all of my followers too. **But the most important part is that I added my own thoughts before his words.** That way, it's obvious which part is my thoughts, and which part is his. Everything from the RT onwards is his.

When replying to tweets like this, it's important to recognize who said which part of the tweet. Consider this tweet:

@BrentO: "Good job opportunity. RT @SQLRockstar: I'm hiring a database administrator in the NYC area. Send me your resume."

If you want to respond to the job posting, who should you talk to? The correct answer is @SQLRockstar, because @BrentO was just repeating the message.

Getting Your Tweets Retweeted

Those of us who tweet a lot like to retweet things we find interesting, but we like it the most when we can add our own two cents to the tweet. I don't just want to repeat someone - I want to add in a few words about why I liked that tweet. If someone crammed all 140 characters into their tweet, that doesn't leave me any space to repeat them PLUS add my own thoughts.

To increase the chance that your message will get repeated around the world, keep it brief. At the very bare minimum, leave enough space for "RT @YourName: " - that's the letters RT, a space, the @ symbol, your Twitter username, a colon, and then another space. For me (@BrentO), that's 12 characters, which means any tweets I really want retweeted should be 128 characters or less. Ideally, they should be even shorter, because I want people to be able to add their own two cents in too. You want your followers (and their followers) to be able to all contribute to the discussion.

By adding "Please RT" to your tweets, you might increase the chance that someone will read that and retweet it for you. Be careful, though - this is dangerous territory. Some folks will see you as starving for attention, and they'll start ignoring your tweets. The instant I see "Please RT Me @Oprah!" on a tweet, I'm turned off. If it's worth retweeting, I'll retweet it, but begging for attention makes you look desperate.

Instead of begging for attention, start with a solid foundation - a good profile photo, description, and URL that make people want to learn more about you. Keep reading, and I'll show you everything you need to know.



The Advanced Way to ReTweet

The two tweets above are both retweets. The bottom one was done with Twitter's built-in way - by clicking the ReTweet button. The top one was done manually.

The difference is that in the top one, @MrDenny added his thoughts about the original tweet. Now it's like two tweets in one - the original, plus his comments at the end. That's a lot of information in under 140 characters.

People with lots of followers like to add in their own thoughts when they repeat your thoughts. In the following pages, I'll explain how to pull this off, and how to write your own tweets to make it more likely that other people will retweet you too.

You want people to find you, right?

Where do you live? Sounds simple enough, but here's a few ways I could answer that question: Chicago, Chi-Town, Illinois, South Loop, 18th & Michigan. All of these are valid answers, but not everyone will understand what they mean. People in Europe won't know that Chi-town is slang for Chicago - they might think I mean Chinatown. Houston residents, on the other hand, might think South Loop refers to a district in their own city.

Location matters because some people search for other Twitterers based on location. They want to find nearby people to follow. In order to cover all my bases, I set my location to "Chicago, Illinois, US" so that people who are looking for Chicagoans or Illinois residents can find me.

Every month or two, consider changing your location to something slightly different. I might say, "South Loop, Chicago" or "Great Lakes Area, IL." This can help you turn up in more searches, because if a user is regularly searching for Great Lakes folks, you'll turn up in their search and they'll follow you.

Web sites like Yelp.com and FourSquare.com can even change your Twitter location automatically based on the GPS location of your phone, and we'll discuss those later in the book. I'm not wild about those, because some of them use latitude & longitude coordinates, and that can turn off some followers. When I see somebody listed at the coordinates -45.3591, 13.5398, what the heck does that mean? If I have to go look it up, I'm not going to bother - I just assume they're not near me.

Descriptions: That's What You're Talkin' About

I hate questions that say, "Tell us a little about yourself."

How on Earth am I supposed to capture everything about me and distill it into a few words? That's ridiculous. Thankfully, that's the wrong question. If you reword the question, it's much easier to answer. Think about who's reading the description: Twitterers who've never met you before. They don't really want to know what's important to you, what you believe in, or how many kids you've got.

For example, I'm a database guy, but if someone glances at my 20 most recent tweets, they probably won't be about databases. I'll be talking about my day, my most recent trip, my favorite blog of the moment, or maybe what I'm about to eat for dinner. Heck, I

bet you could swap out my 20 most recent tweets with several other different people, and it might be hard to tell whose are whose. The Twitter description helps bystanders figure out whether we share interests and whether I can help them out.

Picking a Profile Photo

If tweets are limited to 140 characters and a picture is worth a thousand words, then you should put some serious time into picking your Twitter profile photo! Every time someone glances at what you just said, they see your 140 characters, your Twitter name, and your photo. Your photo should convey as much of your personality as possible.

@Peschkaj shows support for standards



Use your own photo – even if it isn't a picture of you. Don't use stock photos or a photo of someone else, regardless of how funny you think it might be. Spammers tend to use stock photos – very high-quality photos that feel like ad photos – and overly high-quality, personality-free photos make users think you're a spammer.

I recommend using a head shot – a photo with your face taking up the majority of the frame. If you just can't bring yourself to use a picture of your face, you could use a photo of your dog, a photo you took on a vacation, or a photo of your favorite drink, but make sure it's your photo and it shows personality.

Tweak Photos, Don't Change 'Em Completely

Avoid frequently swapping your photo for a completely different one. Your friends will get used to your photo, and it'll help you stand out in their crowded list of tweets. Over time, your photo will start to leap out as a recognizable old friend. When you change your photo, you suddenly become a stranger.

Rather than changing your profile photo altogether, consider adding elements to the photo. For example, during the holidays, consider adding a Santa hat on top of the photo. It doesn't have to look realistic – heck, the more tacked-on it looks, the better.

Tacking on items to your photo can help spread awareness for a cause. Take the example of Jeffrey Zeldman, who believes strongly in web standards. No, that doesn't mean everyone uses the same font – it means that all programmers should adhere to some basic guidelines and techniques that others can easily reuse. When he wanted to promote web standards, he created an International Web Standards Day and asked folks to display their beliefs with a blue beanie on their profile photos. I'd never heard of the cause until I saw my good friend @Peschkaj wearing a blue hat on his avatar. I asked him what it stood for, and he gave me a link to the cause. Presto! Instant awareness.

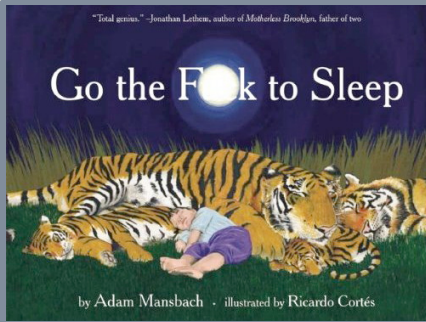
Don't despair if you don't know how to tweak photos. If you don't have the time or the skills to add elements onto your photo, but you still want to spread awareness for a cause, check out Twibbon.com. Twibbons lets users add ribbons onto the corner of their Twitter

profile and doesn't require any knowledge of photo modifications. Just point them at your Twitter username, and they give you a new profile photo with the ribbon of your choice added on.

SIZE MATTERS.



Use a high resolution photo at least 600 pixels across. Even though your photo looks small when viewed in Twitter web pages, users can click on it to see the full-quality version, and some applications will show the full-quality version. TweetDeck is an excellent example – check out the difference between my photo and @BillGates' photo in the sidebar. Having a high-quality photo helps you to look high quality yourself!



GOING VIRAL

In May 2011, New York Representative Anthony Weiner used Twitter to send a private direct message – a picture of his, errr, junk – to one of his female followers. At first he tried to cover it up (the message, not the junk) by saying his account must have been hacked. Eventually, though, he admitted that he'd been using Facebook and Twitter to post inappropriate pictures for a while.

Also in May 2011, a new lullaby book called [Go the F**k to Sleep](#) hit the #1 spot on Amazon's bestseller list. The book chronicles the frustration of a parent trying to coax a child to sleep.

Both were inappropriate. Both went viral.

That's the power of social media: there's no filter. Normally, newspapers and magazines would have taken days/weeks/months to react to inappropriate stories like these. When there's no media involved, and people can just forward things like this to friends, the news spreads instantly.

URL: Your “More Information” Page

Don't make the common mistake of linking your “More Information” URL to the home page of your blog or web site. People who click on this link are looking for more information about you, and it's your one chance to create a bigger Twitter profile page with things like your blog's subscription links, your interests, and your other Twitter accounts. To see what I mean, check out my own Twitter profile, and click on my URL for more information:

<http://twitter.com/BrentO>

The more information URL links you to <http://www.brentozar.com/what-i-do/twitter/> which includes:

- A short bio (but longer than Twitter allows)
- Descriptions of what I tweet about
- Links to subscribe to my blog
- Links to buy my other books

Twitter users usually only look at your profile page one time, and this is your first (and maybe only) chance to get them to read a little more about you. By including links to my blog and my books, I'm saying, “Hey, if you don't find my Twitter feed interesting, maybe you'd like to follow me in other ways.”

Profile Colors & Backgrounds

When someone's looking at their own Twitter home page on the web, they see their own chosen color scheme. When someone goes to <http://twitter.com/BrentO> they see the color scheme and background pictures I chose. The color choices do really matter because when someone looks at your Twitter profile, they'll only spend a matter of seconds deciding whether or not to follow you. Dark, foreboding colors and a menacing profile photo might entice followers for a rock band, but not a Yoga teacher.

Why reinvent the wheel? If you've got a blog or web site, consider matching your Twitter colors to your site's colors. When my book about Microsoft SQL Server was published, I built a web site and a Twitter account to help promote it. I set the web site and Twitter colors to mimic the book cover:

<http://SQLServerTroubleshooting.com>

<http://twitter.com/SQLServerBook>

On the Twitter profile for [@SQLServerBook](#), see the photo and text on the left side that explain more about the account? This is kind of a cheating way to show even more than Twitter's profile. The whole thing is one picture that I built with text on it.

Feel free to tweak colors and background photos over time to see what works best for you. While I advise against changing profile photos frequently, that same advice doesn't hold true here. These are only seen when users click on your name, so you don't have to worry about building a consistent brand.

Keep in mind that any text you use on the background photo is not searchable in Twitter, and the links on the picture aren't clickable.

For more about creating background images, read <http://www.brentozar.com/twitter/back>.

Go Bareback: Don't Protect Your Account

If you choose to protect your Twitter feed, no one can see your Tweets unless they get your permission.

Nobody's going to bother.

I highly recommend leaving your Twitter account public. If you're looking for privacy, Twitter isn't the right place for you. Think about this: other people can retweet your tweets without your permission.

Rather than protecting your account, consider just lurking in Twitter; open an account, but don't post anything. You can still follow other people, reply to their questions, and ask them things, but just don't post any details of your own life. I know plenty of my own followers that just like to watch.

Speaking of watchers and privacy, Twitter doesn't make it easy for paranoid people. Anyone can view your profile or read your list of public Tweets without you knowing. They can simply visit Twitter's site and read this information without actually following you. That can work to your advantage, too – if you're running a company, and you want to keep tabs on your competitors, you can watch their Twitter feed without them knowing. I'll talk more about that later when I discuss Twitter accounts for businesses.

Choosing a Twitter Name

You've probably already picked your Twitter name, but let's step back for a second and just think about the concept of names.

In real life, we all have a few different names. My friends call me Brent. My girlfriend calls me Bert because I had a client who could never get my name right. (I have a tall frame, a unibrow, and a short friend named Ernie, so the nickname stuck.) When my coworkers and clients can't remember my name, they call me what I'm known for:

"Go get the database guy."

"Call the guy who helped us with our servers."

"Don't forget to pay that Twitter fella."

That work name changes over time because what I do changes over time. I started out in the hotel business, then gradually moved into IT, and now I'm in consulting.

My Twitter name is [@BrentO](#), and I can stick with that name no matter how often my interests change. While I could change my Twitter name later, that can create problems. People may have written blog posts or web pages linking to my Twitter name, or I may have printed up business cards or advertisements with that name.

You probably have a few names too, and your work-related name is likely to change over time. (If it hasn't changed yet, just wait a few years.) Right now, you're probably trying to think of one name that sums up everything you do. When you're just getting started, focus on one aspect first – either your work or your personal brand – by asking a simple question:

What Are You Promoting?

If you're promoting a business, get a Twitter account just for your company, and use the company name as the Twitter account name.

If you're promoting yourself, get a Twitter account with your name.

When in doubt, stick with your name.

It can be so darned tempting to choose a name that blends your work life with your personal life like [@DellServerGeek](#). We workaholics live to work, and we have a tough time separating their work identity from their personal one. Remember, though, that

your work is likely to change over the coming years, and you don't want to have to change your name every time you change your job or your life's focus.

I'm not saying you shouldn't tweet both business and personal things. I'm just saying that when you choose a name, pick either business or personal, but don't mix the two.

So you've chosen a name - now pick a password. As it turns out, passwords are important.

On January 5, 2009, FOX News made a rather surprising announcement on Twitter: "Bill O Riley is gay." (sic)

Well, Fox didn't mean to post that. Someone had guessed FOX's Twitter account password and then started posting derogatory tweets. Uh oh...

It gets worse. When a hacker gets access to a Twitter account, they can change the password to something only they know – thereby locking you out of your own account. They can also change the email address to their own, thereby making sure you can't request a

new password to be sent to your email address. They can even send direct messages to all of your followers saying things like, "I never really liked you, and your breath smells like Satan's armpits."

If you're not monitoring your account closely, you might not even know about any of these problems for days – especially if the hacker changed the account's email address. You won't know that your users are unfollowing you or that your account is spewing out spam until it's much too late and the damage is already done.

To prevent disasters like this, use a very strong password with both numbers and letters, making it hard to guess. Ideally, you should use a password that isn't shared with your other online accounts, either. If you use the same password everywhere (email, Twitter, instant messaging, bank, etc) then a hacker who gets access to one of them has access to all of them. I know, it's painful to set up different passwords, but please just start by using a different one for Twitter.

Yes, this actually happened.

twitter



foxnews

Follow

Breaking: Bill O Riley is gay

43 minutes ago from web

HEALTH: Monday Meal Makeover: Turkey Taco Lettuce Wra
<http://tinyurl.com/8khpqg> about 1 hour ago from Perl Net::Twitter

HEALTH: Teen Died After Blood Clot Diagnosed as Stomach
<http://tinyurl.com/9k8cbk> about 1 hour ago from Perl Net::Twitter

My Top 10 Reasons Why I'm Following You On Twitter

I don't go out actively looking for new people to follow, but when somebody else follows me, these are the reasons why I'd turn around and follow them back:

10. Your tweets show a sense of humor.

If I laugh hard enough when I scan your most recent tweets, I'm in. I don't even care what you do for a living or what we have in common – if you're funny enough, then I'll follow you because my workday could always use more yuks. I probably won't catch up on the tweets they sent overnight or on the weekends, but I'll look forward to 'em as they come in during the day.

9. You have an awesome profile photo or name.

If you capture my attention right away with an awesome photo, illustration, or name, that buys you some time.

8. I know you in real life.

This is an instant pass. If I've worked with you, talked to you at a conference, or drank beer with you, you're in.

I'll then go into the list of people you're following, and I'll raid it looking for other people I know in real life. For example, I've had Quest Software people follow me, and through their friends I've found other Questies that had sneaked onto Twitter. Even if I don't like you, I'm probably going to follow you if I work with you, because I wanna know what's going on.

7. I'm friends with your spouse.

I've found that interesting people tend to marry other interesting people. Generally speaking, my friends' spouses are really cool.

6. You tweet often and show pictures now and then.

If I glance at your Twitter profile and your last 20 tweets are all within the last week, bonus. I don't want to follow people who are just playing with it and they're not sure whether or not they'll use it, because often, they don't.

If you share interesting pictures, that's a bonus. The key word is "interesting", though. No pictures from the supermarket checkout line.

5. You have a lot more followers than friends.

If you're following 5,000 people and you have 5,000 followers, that tells me you probably only got those 5,000 followers because you went out and followed people like crazy so they would follow you back, or you ran some giveaway to attract people.

If, on the other hand, your Twitter ratio looks more like [@CodingHorror](#)'s, then that tells me there's a lot of people interested in what you have to say. I'm going to look closely at your page before I decide to take a pass.

4. You're interacting with other people I know.

If I glance at your most recent tweets and you're carrying on conversations with other people I follow, that's a good sign.

If you're just yelling at them trying to sell them something, that's a bad sign.

3. You suddenly follow me on other social networking sites.

If I get notification emails that you suddenly started following me on Twitter, Facebook, Flickr and LinkedIn, I'm guessing you're pretty serious about stalking me. That'll make me stop and wonder more about who you are, because we've probably met somewhere that I didn't remember.

Or you're just a stalker freak, and I like knowing who those people are.

2. You're using Twitter to announce your blog posts.

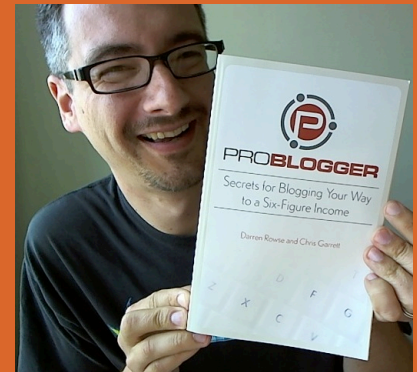
If you hook up your blog so that whenever you post an entry, it tweets, then that's a big plus.

I use Twitter for a casual diversion during the workday – I'll glance over at it when I've got a few free minutes, see what's going on, and interact with friends. If I notice that you just posted a blog entry, I'll go read it, and I might respond on Twitter if I've got comments or questions. It's nice to have that realtime interaction with other bloggers.

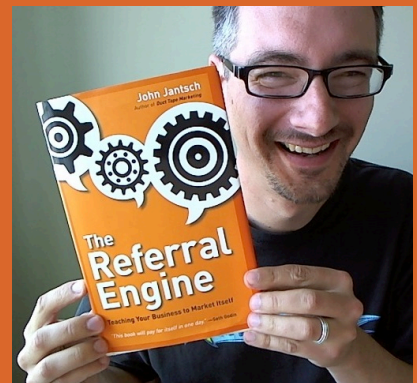
Reason #1: You're doing cool stuff.

If you're doing really cool stuff, you get to break pretty much all of my rules. I'll put up with these folks no matter what.

BOOKS



ProBlogger is an absolute classic internet marketing book. The author built a very lucrative business around a photography blog, and he was one of the first bloggers to really study the effects of different types of blog posts, writing styles, niches, promotions, and more. This book opens your eyes to the business of blogging. [Buy it at Amazon under \\$20.](#)



Referral Engine teaches you how to build tools right into your business so that your customers can market it for you. It's not enough to come in and market something after it's built: you have to build this stuff in from the start to go viral. [Buy it at Amazon under \\$20.](#)

My Top 10 Reasons I'm NOT Following You On Twitter

I don't go out actively looking for new people to follow, but when somebody else follows me, these are the reasons why I'd turn around and follow them back:

10. Your updates are protected.

The instant I see someone whose updates are protected, I just close the browser. If you're looking for privacy, you came to the wrong place.

Sooner or later you're going to say something interesting (I hope) and I'm going to want to retweet it. Then I have to stop and worry - was this protected? Did they mean for this to be public? Should I ask permission before I retweet it? Screw it - it's not worth the hassle.

9. You're not interacting with us.

None of your links are replies - they're all just loudmouthed shouts out into the unknown. "I had a great day! I'm in a really long line at the bank. I love my job. I sure like those Mets."

Just because Twitter asks "What are you doing?" doesn't mean every one of your tweets has to start with the letter I.

8. Your tweets are all links.

I'm not even going to click on 'em to find out if they're to your own site or not. I have a hunch that you're advertising something, and all you do is yell about your product all day long. Every now and then you throw in links to funny videos or news stories thinking that makes up for the spam. It doesn't. Just because @BarackObama gets away with it doesn't mean you can. (And no, I don't follow him either.)

You know That Person who constantly forwards funny jokes and videos to all their friends? The one who instantly makes you groan when you see their name in your in-box because you know it's a waste of time? You're like That Person 2.0.

7. Your bio says "social media."

I even WORKED in a corporate marketing department and I can't stand most marketing people on Twitter because so many of 'em are doing it wrong. If you're a marketing person and you're wondering why we're not following you, this one book will sum up the answers for you: [The Thank You Economy by Gary Vaynerchuk](#).

6. You're giving stuff away.

Giving stuff away costs money. So why are you so willing to pay money to get followers? Imagine if you were walking down the street and you saw somebody yelling, "I'll enter you in a sweepstakes to win \$50 if you come talk to me! C'mon over! Two entries if you tell your friends too!" You'd cross the street just to avoid talking to them, because you know they're a creep. It's a thin layer of bacon disguising a pile of spam.

5. You haven't tweeted lately, or you just got started.

There's nothing wrong with just lurking and watching others, but don't expect us to watch you. We'll see if you start participating over time. Remember, lots of folks drop out.

4. Your profile needs the Holy Trinity.

You need a bio, a picture, and a link. If you use a stock photo, we can tell, and that's an instant fail.

3. Your profile has a company name & photo, but no personality.

I will follow company accounts when they've got awesome personalities, like @ThinkGeek, but you'd better show that awesome personality in the very first page of tweets when I click on your name.

2. You're following over 1,000 folks.

Come on, get real. You're not having meaningful conversations with 1,000 people at once. You're just eavesdropping in a room full of strangers. I'm following around 500 people, and I'm already getting nervous because it's about time to start pruning.

Some people game the system by following all kinds of random strangers. Their numbers will go up - but their real reach metrics won't.

Notice that I didn't say there's over 1,000 people following YOU - there's nothing wrong with that. Some people are just really interesting.

Reason #1: The teenage girl in your profile photo isn't wearing clothes.

Sex might sell, but it's a fair bet that the person manning your Twitter account is really "manning" it, if you know what I mean.

BOOKS



Style: an Anti-Textbook is the opposite of what most writing textbooks preach. Using examples from diverse sources like Hemingway and Huxley, Lanham teaches us that beautiful language is rewarding for the reader. Try cramming gorgeous words into Twitter, though. [Buy it at Amazon under \\$15.](#)



Here Comes Everybody is a jaw-dropping analysis of why the power of instant connectivity is changing business, marketing, and even law enforcement. Organizations form out of nowhere and accomplish the impossible in no time. Clay Shirky teaches you how to leverage this power for your own use. [Buy it at Amazon under \\$15.](#)

Is Twitter actually useful for anything, or is it just a time waster?

When I first accessed the web back in the early 1990s, I was so excited at the ability to check the weather in other states, anytime I wanted, for free. Was it snowing in Minneapolis? How hot was it in Miami? With just a few keypresses, I found the answers. Just having that information at my fingertips was addicting, but...

The web didn't really do anything useful right away.

It took years before the promise of the web lived up to the dreams. Today, I can't imagine living without it. I communicate with my coworkers around the world, deliver training webcasts, buy books online, and heck, I even distribute books online - like this one.

When I first got on Twitter in 2007, I was so excited to be so closely in touch with so many cool people doing cool things. I was a big fan of an up-and-coming web browser called Flock, and Twitter gave me an inside peek into what the developers were working on. Twitter showed me the bookmarks they found interesting, the restaurants they liked, or hints at what features might come next.

That wasn't really useful to me either.

It only took a few months for Twitter to become an invaluable part of my life. I can get feedback quickly from other people who have the same job I have, talk to experts, and just commiserate about how things are going. I bet you'll find it useful too - but only after you learn how to use it.



What's This @ Stuff?

Twitter usernames begin with the @ sign. It won't look that way when you first pick a name, but anytime you want to interact with another user, you'll need to prefix it with the @ symbol. When you include someone's name with the @ symbol, they'll see it.



What are some practical uses for Twitter? And don't say "keeping in touch."

Get better at what you love to do.

I bet right now there's something you love doing - running, writing, building, whatever - and you wish you could do it better. Cyclists get motivated by seeing what's going on in Lance Armstrong's head. Writers would love to hear what Stephen King's day is like. Programmers want to know about the latest techniques. Twitter helps us share this information easier and faster.

Find inside deals before they go public.

If you're a bargain hunter, you'll love Twitter. When someone finds a killer deal, they tweet it. Within a matter of minutes, you can get an inside line on a hot offer before it sells out. Companies have even gotten in on the act by running Twitter accounts that announce their latest promotions. Twitter helps them quickly sell the last few of a product at a big discount, which is a win for everybody.

See the future.

Because Twitter is more casual than other methods of communication, people (and companies) tend to leak out information earlier on Twitter. Small companies ask for feedback about their upcoming products, store locations, and customer support issues. Before they go permanent, they go Twitter.

Or maybe you're wondering if your favorite musical artist is ever going to release a new CD. If you followed them on Twitter, you'd know when they were going to the studio and how the recording process was working out.

And...keep in touch. Wait, hear me out.

Yes, we've already got voicemail, email, and instant messaging, but Twitter is different - and useful. The cool thing about Twitter is that anybody can follow anybody else. I would never have imagined that thousands of people would want to hear what I'm up to at any given moment, but it turns out they do. My opinion matters to people who build tools I use, people who do the same job I do, and people who need help from guys like me but can't afford to hire us full time. Twitter helps you interact with thousands of people without requiring a lot of work - as opposed to email, voicemail, or instant messaging.

Oprah's never going to give me her home number. Conan O'Brien isn't going to call me up on Skype. Twitter, on the other hand, is a big, open conversation where the world is flat. Anybody can follow anybody else, and everybody can hear what everybody else is saying - if they want, and if they have the time. It's all up to you and how much time you want to devote to it.

FINDING COOL PEOPLE TO FOLLOW

If you follow people that tweet about boring things, Twitter will seem boring to you.

On the other hand, If you follow people that tweet about interesting things, Twitter will seem fun to you.

But notice that I didn't say "boring people" or "interesting people" – I said "people that tweet about boring things." So many beginners get caught up in following people that seem interesting in real life, but that doesn't necessarily mean that they're fun to follow on Twitter. Take @Oprah, for example. On television, she's an amazing, magnetic personality with so many interesting things to say. Check out her Twitter feed, though, and it's not really all that interesting.

Take @BadBanana on the other hand, a creative director in Nebraska, and his stream is hilariously interesting. Now that's funny – but who would have guessed? If famous people aren't necessarily interesting on Twitter, how can we find all these people who tweet interesting things? Let's look at a few tools that can help.

WeFollow.com: The Yellow Pages

On [WeFollow.com](http://wefollow.com), people can tag themselves (think of tags as categories), and then WeFollow ranks people by popularity in each tag. If you're looking for comedians, you can go to <http://wefollow.com/twitter/comedy> and browse the list.

At the top, you can click on tabs to sort by influence or by the number of followers. Stick

with influence, because it's easy to get huge numbers of followers without actually influencing people. (We'll cover how to get more followers later.) "Influence" doesn't mean people will do what you say, either – it just means people actually interact with you.

Click on the top person in your favorite tag and read their recent tweets. Skip the ones that start with an @ symbol, because those are replies, and you won't actually see most of those when you follow someone. If you find their non-reply tweets to be interesting, follow them. Then check out the next most influential Twitterer in WeFollow's rankings, and repeat the process. Do this for the first 5-10 people max in each tag that you like – any more than that, and you're probably going to get overwhelmed with tweets. You can always go back later and follow more folks.

One drawback of WeFollow is that people pick their own tags. If a hugely popular Twitterer like Oprah decided she wanted to tag herself with the SocialMedia tag, she would immediately be the #1 person in that tag. Thankfully, since WeFollow.com will only list

each person in a max of 5 categories, it takes care of this problem.

Another drawback is that WeFollow requires interaction from each Twitterer. If they gradually change their interests over time without updating their WeFollow tags, they might not be listed in the right categories. If they don't tag themselves, they won't show up in the directory. And hey - while you're there, go ahead and list yourself in WeFollow in your favorite tags. WeFollow will use your metrics to help determine which Twitterers you find the most influential.

If you don't like WeFollow's lists, or if you interact with people who don't bother with WeFollow, there's another way to compile directories of Twitter users.



@Rick_Bayless,
Top Chef Masters
winner

Should You Follow Businesses?

I almost never follow companies on Twitter because they seem to use Twitter more for spam than for good.

One of the few exceptions is @ThinkGeek, the account for <http://www.ThinkGeek.com>. They sell t-shirts, gadgets, and gifts for nerds like me. They do a great job of

catering to geeks, and it shows in their Twitter feed too. They even go so far as to have a separate account for marketing info - @ThinkGeekSpam! Gotta love truth in marketing.

I do follow some individual accounts at companies, though. @DellServerGeek is a great example of someone who understands the difference between work and play.





Finding Twitter Lists

To find interesting lists, check out <http://listorious.com> - a site that's a search directory for lists. Put in the keywords you're interested in, and Listorious finds people who've already made good lists.



Twitter Lists are like independent phone books run by Twitter users.

Twitter Lists let you do two things: follow people without really “following” them, and follow topics instead of individual people. Anyone can start their own list in Twitter’s web site. When you’re looking at a user’s profile, click on the Lists icon to add them to a list.

For example, I do a lot of database work, so I’ve built a SQL Server Twitter list. It’s got hundreds of people who are active in the SQL Server community, but I don’t need to hear their every tweet. I just want to be able to stick my head in the SQL Server world every now and then and see what’s going on. When I go to my home page, I see a list of Lists on the right hand side. I can click on these lists and see what the group of people is up to – but I don’t actually have to be following those people.

The first question you probably want to ask is, “So Brent, how do I make a list?” Well, hold up – lemme show you something else slick first, because you might not want to make your own. Go to <http://twitter.com/BrentO/lists> and you can see my lists. Click on any list, and you’ll see the current activity in that list. Click the Follow button, and the list will be added to your home page.

Here’s the best part – you’re not actually following the people on that list. It doesn’t clutter up your home page, and you don’t have to keep on track of new group members or keep it clean from spam. Somebody else is doing the work for you!

Follow people without actually “following” them.

To find interesting lists, check out <http://listorious.com>, a site that’s like a search directory just for Twitter lists.

To read more about using Twitter Lists, go to <http://www.brentozar.com/twitter/lists>. Maintaining Twitter lists is a lot of work, though. There’s an easier way to find interesting people that doesn’t require any work on anybody’s part.

@MrTweet: the Twitter Matchmaker

To get personalized recommendations from [@MrTweet](http://twitter.com/MrTweet), just follow him on Twitter. He looks at the relationships between your friends and their friends. If your friends are following somebody you’re not following yet, then @MrTweet bets that you would like to follow that person too.

This works well because people don’t have to do anything. With tools like WeFollow, people have to list themselves, but they don’t even have to know about @MrTweet in order to get recommended by him. @MrTweet just watches everyone’s network, finds the new shining stars, and acts as a matchmaker.

One drawback of @MrTweet is that it relies on you finding interesting people to begin with. You have to help get him started by following people. If you’re following people you don’t like, @MrTweet will give you bad recommendations. This is a good argument against simply following

back everyone who follows you, and there's a lot more reasons for that in another chapter.

Another drawback is that @MrTweet doesn't know why I'm following different people. I tend to follow people for a few basic reasons:

- Work interests – we both do the same things for a living
- Personal interests – we like the same music, chefs, or artists

- Geography – we live in the same city
 - Personality – they're just freakin' funny
- I happen to follow a couple dozen cool people in Houston, but I'm not really interested in who they're following. I don't want recommendations based on who they're following, because I only follow them out of personal interests. I wish I could exclude people from my @MrTweet analysis, but now we're talking about some awful hard work on my part just to get a list of new people to follow.

Wow! Someone Followed Me!

Sooner or later, it's going to happen - someone's going to find you interesting, and they're going to follow you. I know, it sounds unthinkable right now, but it's gonna happen - trust me.

And when it does, here comes the bad part - it's probably going to be a spammer. The first thing you should do is check their profile. Are they selling something? Are they saying anything interesting? Are they someone you know, or you think you'd like to get to know

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better? (And guys, don't be fooled by "hot" women on Twitter - they're probably not really women at all, let alone hot. Anybody can use any profile picture they want to.)

I'm painting a dark picture here, but I've got a good reason.

Should You Follow Your Followers?

If you're looking for interesting people, why not check out the people who find YOU interesting? Some people say that you should follow back everyone who follows you. After all, isn't that polite?

Not so much, it turns out.

You shouldn't blindly follow back everyone who follows you, and you shouldn't feel guilty about it either. There's a bunch of great reasons why this is a recipe for disaster.

First off, spammers are everywhere. Everywhere, I tell you. Spammers have software that goes out and blindly follows millions of people in an effort to get followed back. When you follow them back, they start sending you direct messages to buy their product. Lose

weight! Be better in bed! Get cheap mortgages on foreclosed houses! Make big money working from home! You name it, the spam will start coming. Before you follow anyone, take a few moments to make sure their Twitter account is actually saying something you want to hear.

Sometimes people say, "I follow everyone who follows me because I want them to be able to direct message me." That might be a valid reason for businesses like @ThinkGeek that want to process returns and customer service inquiries over Twitter, but it's not a good idea for the rest of us. The spam problems far outweigh the benefits.

Next, your Twitter experience should be about quality, not quantity. The more people you follow, the harder it is to pay attention. I've found that my personal max is about 500 active Twitterers, especially if they're spread across global time zones. When I follow more, the tweets come in faster than I can handle.

Yet another reason is that some people (myself included) immediately discredit any person's account that's following too many

Topify: A Smarter New-Follower Email

Twitter sends you an email when someone starts following you. Topify improves those emails by adding things like:

Conversation % – are they just yelling at the world, or are they replying?

Links % – how often are they just spamming you with links?

Recent Tweets – so you can see what they're talking about.

You can even click on links in the email to instantly report 'em for spam.

Sign up for free at www.Topify.com.

., Brent Ozar.

Scott Reed (@TheADDLizard) is now following your updates on Twitter.

Scott Reed (@TheADDLizard)

Follow | Block | Report For Spam

1469 Following | 811 Followers | Ratio: 1.8 | 916 Tweets

3 Updates/Day | 0% Conversation - Soliloquist (Way below average) | 100% Links

Bio Han shot first
Location Kitsap County, WA
On Twitter Since July 23, 2009 (244 days ago)

Four Tracker: Bamboozle Chicago, The Specials and Dam-Funk <http://bit.ly/wEdGKH>
57 days ago from API

New Music Report: Los Campesinos! <http://bit.ly/wV3kb8>
7 days ago from API

TOP CHEFS



[@ChefJenCarroll](#)
(I have a huuge crush.)



[@RichardBlais](#)



[@ChefSpike](#)

people. If you follow me, and I see that you're following more than 1,000 people, I don't even bother looking at anything else on your profile. I'm just not interested, because I know you're faking it. Nobody can pay attention to what thousands of people are saying at once. You're probably a spammer in one way or another, and I'm just not interested in more spam. Company accounts are exempt from this rule – I understand why @ThinkGeek would follow everyone back – but I'm unlikely to follow companies anyway.

Another reason is that you can interact with people just fine even though you're not following them. If they need you, they'll say your name on Twitter, and you'll get notified about it.

Uh Oh - I'm Following Too Many People

At first, you're going to go hog-wild following people like crazy. I know - I've been there. I followed everybody I worked with, everybody I saw on TV, companies I liked, authors I'd read, you name it. Pretty soon, my Twitter feed was an overwhelming mess. Messages scrolled by faster than I could read them, and I couldn't pay attention to the people who really mattered to me most - close friends and family.

To prune your list of friends, check out Twitter For Busy People - <http://t4bp.com>. It shows you everyone you're following, organized by the last time they sent a tweet. You can right-click on their icon and click Launch in New Window, and then unfollow the folks you don't really like after all.

Twitter For Busy People is also very useful to find people who haven't tweeted in a while. Every month or so, I go in and check to see if any of my buddies have stopped tweeting. I can send 'em an email to make sure everything's okay. I'm not pestering them to tweet more often - I'm just checking in on them. Sometimes people stop tweeting because they don't feel appreciated or don't feel that it's worth the time, and they're thankful to hear that yes, they really are missed.

How to Interact with People on Twitter

Reading Twitter can be overwhelming because there's so much information coming in so fast. It's not like email, where messages

trickle in one at a time directly to you – it's a loud, noisy party with a million things going on at once, and you're not sure where you should jump in first. Start by reading tweets from the folks you've decided to follow, and then reply to the ones you find most interesting.

Replying to Tweets

To reply to a tweet, start the tweet with the user's name, like this:

@BrentO me too! I hate it when that happens.

Your tweet will show up on that user's Mentions (Replies) list even if they're not following you. This helps those of us who don't follow everybody back, like me. I have thousands of followers, but I can't follow them all back – my Twitter screen would look like a noisy bar full of people! Instead, I can just follow the people I interact with the most, and then if somebody happens to mention my name, I'll still know about it even if I'm not following them.

You only see conversations when you're following everyone involved. If you're following me, and I'm carrying on a conversation with @Wendy_Dance, you won't see my messages to her unless you're following both me AND Wendy. If you want to reply to others but still make sure everyone sees it (not just that one person), start your tweet with something other than their name. The most common trick is to use a period, like this:

“. @SQLAgentMan yes, I too think Journey is the most underrated band ever. Who's with us?”

That way, everyone who's following me will see what I said, even if they don't follow @SQLAgentMan. It's a way for me to bring more people into the conversation.

Twitter conversations can be hard to follow because you can't easily match up all the parts of one conversation. You can't easily see a threaded view of both sides of a conversation. It gets even harder to match up replies when someone asks more than one question in a row. Take this conversation:

BrentO: “Has anybody out there used DirecTV? How's the reception during thunderstorms?”

BrentO: “I'm not sure whether to get them or Comcast. Has Comcast been reliable lately?”

SQLRockstar: "@BrentO Yes, I use them, and they're fine."

Is @SQLRockstar referring to DirecTV or Comcast? There's no easy way to tell, especially if the reply was sent minutes or hours later. Because of that, it helps to prefix your replies with a little about the question, like this:

SQLRockstar: "@BrentO about Comcast – yes, I use them, and they're fine."

Some Twitter conversations may involve more than two people. If you've got the room to include everybody's names in the reply, then do it, so that everyone can notice your new reply easier. Including someone's name in a message greatly increases the chance that they'll read it.

To see more examples of how replying works, check out <http://www.brentozar.com/twitter/r>.

Responding to Replies & Mentions

It's a good idea to respond whenever anyone mentions your name. If someone took the time to ask you a question, take the time to respond, even if it's just a reply to let them know that you're busy.

Because the person may have tweeted more since their original question to you, remember to include a little bit about the question in your reply. That way they know what you're referring to. If it's been quite some time since their initial question, you can follow up by asking if they got their question taken care of, or if they still need your help.

Even if they didn't ask you a question, and if they just name-dropped you, reply back to let

them know you saw the tweet. Check out this conversation as an example:

SusieQ: "Do any SQL Server people use Macs?"

SQLChicken: "@SusieQ Sure, I know lots of SQL people who use Macs, like @BrentO and @AaronBertrand."

BrentO: "@SusieQ @SQLChicken Yep, I love my Mac. Got any questions about 'em?"

@BrentO wasn't part of the initial question, but he responded to @SQLChicken just to acknowledge that he saw the tweet and to offer help.

Getting Someone's Attention by Namedropping

When you mention someone's name in a tweet, Twitter pushes it onto their Mentions tab. Therefore, if you want to get someone's attention, you can start your message with their username, like this:

"@BrentO hey, how's the weather in Chicago today?"

This tweet will show up on their Replies/Mentions screen even though you're not really replying to a question.

Using Mentions To Promote Yourself

I know what you're thinking: by simply mentioning celebrity names, the celebrities will notice you, reply to you, and help promote yourself, your business, or your products. You'll have thousands of followers and millions of dollars in no time, right? Everybody wins!

Think again. That rarely works.

See, celebrities (even mildly

famous people who have just a few thousand followers) know this trick. They're used to people blindly screaming their name on Twitter, and they rarely even glance at their mentions/replies screen. They know everybody is out to promote themselves by piggybacking on celebrities.

If you're really intent on trying this, here's a tip: try to reply to celebrities as soon as they post a message, in under 15-30 seconds. Some celebs do man their own Twitter accounts, and immediately after they've posted a message, that's your best chance to interact with them. You know that they're really at the computer, and they may be briefly checking out their incoming stream to see what people thought of the tweet. Try to craft a message that somehow relates their tweet to your product or company, or make your offer something that gives them a reason to retweet you. Free offers for their followers are a good place to start, but discounts probably aren't going to cut it.

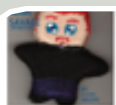
And of course remember that you're competing with thousands of other companies all trying to do the same thing. Good luck. (I told you it rarely works.)

Spambots: The Worst Mentions

Even worse, some companies automate this process by using Twitter bots to simply broadcast tweets with nothing but usernames and URLs attached, like this:

"@BRENTO CHECK THIS OUT! <http://MakeMoneyFast.com>"

This just doesn't work - Twitter users immediately flag those types of links as spam.



dontrythis

✓ Following

I love it when celebs like Adam Savage reply to real people.

@Mrs_Bobcat I'd LOVE to have @neilh himself on MB. Not sure what for, but if it comes up I'll absolutely (try to) press him into service.

14 minutes ago via web in reply to Mrs_Bobcat

@PHRacing It does not shoot. I don't want to "retire" anybody.

Name Adam Savage
Location San Francisco
Web <http://www.adamsa...>
Bio I play a scientist on TV. Obsessive maker of things. Host of Mythbusters on the Discovery Channel.

77 171,965 8,879
following followers listed

Tweets 2,598

Favorites

Actions
block dontrythis
report for spam

Following

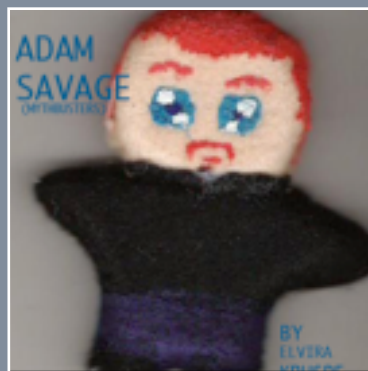


SCIENCE TWEEPS

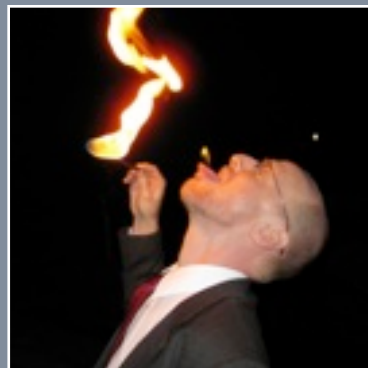
Famous mad scientists.



[@GrantImahara - one of TV's Mythbusters.](#)



[@DontTryThis - Bill Nye.](#)



[@BadAstronomer - Phil Plait](#)

HT, OH: Heard It From a Friend Who

There's more to life than cyberspace; sometimes we want to repeat something we heard in real life. When you hear something outside of Twitter that you'd like to share with others, you can credit them with HT or Via. These slang terms just mean you Heard it Through them, and they're used like this:

"Bacon is the new black. HT @SQLRockstar"

"Free Jager tonight at the Zig Zag in Seattle. HT @SQLAgentMan"

"Just found a cool new Twitter site – <http://WeFollow.com> via @BasicallyMyra"

The HT and Via terms are just slang, not Twitter functions. Twitter doesn't do anything special when you type in HT or Via – it's just a way to give credit to your source.

When you hear something you'd like to share, but you don't want to credit the original source, you can just say you OverHeard it with OH. OH is also slang, not a Twitter function, and you can use it like this:

"OH: I'm not saying he's got an alcohol problem, but the contents of his fridge are worth more than my car."

"OH: I don't remember family birthdays. I try to forget everything related to my family."

These OverHeard statements are fun to share with your readers when you don't want to get anybody in trouble for saying them. Then again, guessing who actually said it is half the fun.

Sending Private Direct Messages

To send a private message that no one else can see but the intended recipient, start the tweet with the letter D (short for Direct message), then a space, then the user's name, like this:

D BrentO I've got a burning rash that won't go away. What should I do?

Direct messages won't show up on anyone's Twitter home page or public feed. They'll only show up in the recipient's Direct Messages list – and only if they follow you. You can't send direct messages to people who aren't following you.

It's considered impolite to publicly ask someone to follow you just so you can direct message them. Keep in mind that the other person may have hundreds or thousands of

followers, and they may not want to add more followers to clutter up their home page. Instead, check out their Twitter profile, like <http://twitter.com/BrentO>. They may have their email listed on that page, but if not, click on their URL. Mine goes to my blog, and I've got a "Contact Me" page on my blog.

Plus, before privately asking someone a question, stop to think about whether it's really a private matter. Twitter is all about public conversation. Is the recipient really the only person on the entire planet who can answer your question? Or instead, could you ask it to the public and include their names, like this:

"What's the best laptop to buy right now? @BrentO @DellServerGeek @DSilverman"

That way, the public can see your message, plus several other users will get notified that their name was mentioned in a tweet. If they've got the time and knowledge to answer it directly, they can, or they may also repeat your question so that others can answer it.

If you absolutely must contact someone privately and they're not following you, be as polite as possible in your request, and try to include lots of information in your tweet. Guess which one of these is more likely to get the desired result:

@BrentO hey buddy can you follow me so I can DM you?

@BrentO I've got a private question about advertising on your blog. How should I contact you? Thanks!

By telling me what they want in their public message, I'm more likely to give them a chance.

Replying to Direct Messages

When someone sends you a direct message, make sure to reply to it with a direct message as well. Some Twitter clients have a Reply button that will send a public reply instead of a private one – and that could be a little awkward! If your reply starts with @, then it's going to be public. If it starts with D, then it's going to be a (d)irect message, and therefore private.

Sharing Stuff on Twitter

Twitter's asks, "What are you doing?"

If you're like me, you're probably too self-conscious to say things like "I'm eating an apple" or "I'm surfing the web." That stuff seems boring, right? Instead, consider tweeting the answer to these questions instead:

What are you reading?

What are you concerned about?

What do you need help with?

Where are you going for lunch?

Sharing small bits of text is fun, but sooner or later you'll want to share more – links, photos, music, places, and more. I'll show you how to share these larger things and still stay within Twitter's 140-character limits.

Sharing Links on Twitter

URL shorteners take long links and create new, shorter ones that go to the same place. Take these two links, for example:

<http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0470484284?ie=UTF8&tag=brozsqseex-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=0470484284>

<http://bit.ly/sqlbook>

Both links go to the same web page, but one of them is much easier to include in a tweet because it's shorter. To generate shorter links, go to <http://bit.ly> and put in your long link. Bit.ly will generate a shorter link for you, and you can copy/paste that link into your tweets.

One downside to URL shorteners is that they depend on the URL shortener service. If Bit.ly goes down, no one can access your Bit.ly URLs. This becomes a little more concerning when you realize that Bit.ly is free – you didn't pay anything in order to generate your short link. If you didn't pay, how can Bit.ly build a reliable infrastructure? Bit.ly's approach is to sell services too; if you want customized reports that show you how many people have clicked on your Bit.ly links, Bit.ly will sell you that information.

Another drawback is that the Bit.ly URL isn't directly a URL for your site. If someone includes your Bit.ly link in their blog entry or web article, Google and other search engines may not count that as a valid incoming link to your site. Since Google measures your site's popularity based in part by how many sites link to you, these short links are short-changing your

SHARED PHOTOS

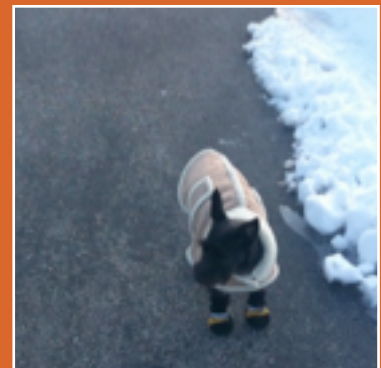
A few of my recent photos:



<http://ping.fm/p/qjGto>: Champagne and expense reports, mmm.



<http://ping.fm/p/EnAVr> Spotted @Rick_Bayless at his restaurant XOCO.



<http://ping.fm/p/2To1j> My dog Ernie in the park.

SQL Server Training on DMVs

192 Clicks

The bit.ly link bit.ly/sqldmvs was added by [dealsnjokes](#)

192 Total Clicks

All clicks on the aggregate bit.ly link bit.ly/tpu8i7

Long Link: <http://www.quest.com/virtualtrainingbroz>
Conversations: [Tweets 7](#); [Shares 0](#); [Comments on Page 0](#); [View All](#)
Locations: [United States 125](#); [Other 33](#); [Russian Federation 6](#); [View All](#)
Share / Copy Link:

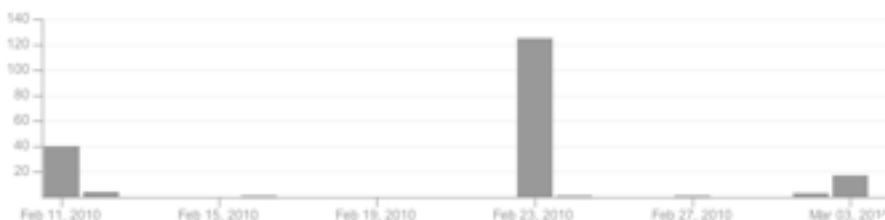
Bit.ly gives you metrics about your shared links

Traffic

Clicks Referrers Locations

Now Past Week Past Month Total

Click(s) 192 Since Feb 11, 2010 EST



page ranking. For now, though, these URL shorteners are the best way to get long links into short tweets.

Twitter clients like TweetDeck will automatically shorten your links for you. You can often choose which URL shortening service you'd like to use, too.

Don't get caught in a rut – sometimes I see people posting link after link after link, and that's not enjoyable to follow. Users want to hear more about you, your life, and what you're up to.

Sharing Photos on Twitter

Instead of thinking of sharing photos themselves, think about sharing links to photos. Free sites have popped up that let you upload photos quickly, then share short links to them on Twitter. Two popular sites are <http://TwitPic.com> and <http://www.yfrog.com>. Remember, though - if a site asks for your Twitter password, bail out! And of course, when you're sharing photos, you probably want to tell your followers where you're taking the photos.

Sharing Your Location on Twitter

Your Twitter profile includes a Location field that you can manually update when you go to different places like restaurants, clubs, parks, or concerts. Thing is, the only time people look at your Location is when they're looking at your profile. You might want a way to broadcast your current location to your followers.

<http://www.FourSquare.com> and <http://Gowalla.com> are two popular tools for location-based social networking, and there's also Facebook Places. You can log into places to announce your presence, and these tools will tell your Twitter followers, Facebook friends, and so on. In addition, they can also help you meet other people who frequent the same places, or tell you what other kinds of places you might like to visit.

A couple of years ago, I went into a local coffee shop (@CoffeeGroundz), sat down on the back patio, and checked into a social networking service to say I was there. An hour later, a friend I hadn't seen in years checked into that same joint, but in a different area of the coffee shop, and I got a text message. I never would have known we were nearby if it wasn't for social networking. I've met other folks through these social services when we frequented the same coffee shops, but at different times of the day.

Sharing your location with these tools helps you meet people that you share something in common with, whether it's your favorite restaurant or a little-known establishment.

Sharing Music on Twitter

When you're listening to one of your favorite songs, it's so tempting to tweet the song name and title. You can do that manually by typing it into Twitter, but that's a pain in the rear. If somebody else sees it and wants to listen to it, they have to pull up their music software, find the song, and play it. And if they don't have the song, forget it – they waste time going to web sites trying to find a preview to hear. Wouldn't it be nice if you could click a button and tweet a link to the exact song?

Blip.fm provides this service, and it's free. You can create an account at <http://blip.fm> and quickly share music with your followers. Be aware that excessive song-tweeting can turn off your followers. I follow 500 people, and if they each just tweeted one song a day, that would be 500 songs on my Twitter feed. I can live without that, and personally, I unfollow anybody who tweets a lot of songs.

If I wanted a DJ, I'd follow one, and you're no DJ. On the other hand, if you ARE a DJ, then your followers might love to see your Blip.fm tracks.

Your followers can listen to the tunes even if they don't own the song, and – yes, you guessed it, this probably isn't quite legal in some countries. Since the whole thing is free, there's a question about how long this business model will last. For now, it works.

Be Copyright-Savvy

Sharing music and photos makes things more complicated. Authors, photographers, artists, and musicians want to get paid for their work. It's always okay to tweet a link to someone's site, but not usually okay to copy their art/music/etc and use it in your own site. [Learn more about licensing my work in your own site or newsletter.](#)

Twitter will take up as much time as you give it.

Twitter can be like one of those nasty, addictive drugs - you know, YouTube, Wikipedia, or CanHasCheezburger.com. If you don't watch the clock, next thing you know you've lost an hour of your life to these sites. Twitter works the same way.

Finally: start by lurking.

When I show people Twitter, they often shy away from it by saying, "I don't know what I would say on there. I don't want to talk about what I had for lunch - that's stupid!" And they're right, because I don't want to hear what they had for lunch either.

Think of joining Twitter just like you would join any conversation. If you walked up to a group of people, would you immediately start talking about what you were doing? Of course not - you'd listen in first to see what they were talking about. You might even listen from afar first, before

even walking up to them, because if you don't know them already, they might not be cool people.

When you join Twitter, start by following a few people that you find very interesting - and then just listen. Don't reply at first. Just like that real-life conversation we talked about, you wouldn't want to jump into a Twitter conversation and butt in. Take a little time to get to know the participants, see how they react, and then when you feel comfortable, jump in.

GETTING MORE FOLLOWERS



THIS ISN'T CHAPTER ONE.

There's a reason for that. Don't put the cart before the horse.

It's easy to get more followers. Randomly follow new people, and if they haven't followed you within a day, unfollow them. Keep clickin' that mouse, and you can easily hit a thousand followers within a few days. Use automated software to do it, and you can have tens of thousands of followers in no time. Presto. Mystery solved.

Trouble is, these followers are meaningless. They may not have anything in common with you, may not be interested in what you have to say, and heck, they might not even be people. They could be the robots we've discussed earlier. I chuckle when I imagine an army of robots furiously following each other, trying to sell each other Viagra.

If you want real followers – meaningful followers – you have to do some work. We'll examine some different options and look at their pros and cons.

Get Into Recommended Lists of Twitterers

When new users sign up for Twitter, they get an official list of suggested people to follow. The list includes famous celebrities, highly active Twitterers, and the best of the best. You don't ask to get onto this list – you get invited. For most of us, this isn't really an option. If you can

walk into a supermarket without being asked for an autograph, you can pretty much forget about getting into Twitter's recommended list.

Instead, find local tweeps and people with influence on your chosen topic. One way to do that is Klout.com. Then follow those folks and regularly interact with them. They'll mention your name in tweets, driving their own followers in your direction. If you're really lucky, they may even just outright recommend that their followers follow you too.

#FollowFriday - Recommended Twitterers

On Fridays, some people tweet their personal list of recommendations along with the hashtag #FollowFriday (or #FF for short.) There's no rhyme or reason as to who does recommendations or what they're based on. When I used to do them, I tried to use a different theme every week – my favorite Houstonians, comedians, IT personalities, Better Than Ezra fans, etc.

In my experience, getting a #FollowFriday recommendation isn't that big of a boost. It was effective early in Twitter before the advent of tools like WeFollow.com and [@MrTweet](http://MrTweet), but now that users have other ways to find new people, they don't seem to click on #FF links as often. It may give a small boost when a very, very popular user links to you, but frankly,

GOOD BOOKS



[Everything Twitter: From Novice To Expert](#)



[Twitter Power: how to do social marketing well](#)



[ProBlogger: getting paid for blogging](#)

if you're doing really good work on Twitter, they've probably already linked to you anyway. I don't recommend waiting around for Fridays and hoping that people link to you – instead, get proactive early and often.

Rather than just spouting off a short tweet with your #FF list, consider kicking it up a notch. If you have a blog, write a blog post about your favorite people on Twitter, and why you like to follow them. Put a lot of work and thought into it, and when you're done, tweet a link to it. If you've done a really good job, people will retweet your link, and sometimes the people you recommended will retweet it as well. If they're not super-popular yet, they might be honored that they made your list, and they might broadcast that fact to their followers. Next thing you know, you've gotten a bump yourself.

That method represents my favorite way to gain followers. It's not easy, and it reminds me of that old TV ad – “We make our money the old-fashioned way. We earn it.”

Say Something Retweetable

When you say something really interesting, people might repeat your tweet and include your name. As new viewers see your tweet, they might click on your name, check out your profile, and follow you.

All it takes is one celebrity to retweet your useful/funny/whatever tweet and you can pick up hundreds or thousands of followers in a matter of hours. The first time it happened to me, my web site crashed within minutes due to the load. Demi Moore told her hundreds of thousands of followers that I had a good how-to-use Twitter page, and bam, game over. I learned my lesson, upgraded my web server, and I've been able to survive it – and gain lots of followers – each time it's happened again.

The best possible source for retweetable material is your own web site because you get twice the bang for the buck: people are repeating links to your site, which might gain you new Twitter followers and new blog subscribers. Link to your Twitter account from all pages in your site. That way, if someone

famous tweets a link to your site (without including your Twitter name), their followers will see you're on Twitter, and some of them will follow you. Set up your blog so that whenever you post a new entry, it automatically sends a tweet – giving you another chance to be retweeted.

Don't have a blog? Relax, you don't have to rack your brains thinking of interesting tweets. Here's a few good sources for things people are likely to retweet:

Breaking news, especially industry news that isn't tweeted by traditional sources

One-liner jokes

Movie quotes

Whenever I'm surfing the web and I run across something that would make an excellent tweet later, I bookmark it. Later, when I'm bored and I can't think of something unique to tweet, I go back to my stash and pull out something good. Even if life is boring, I can still tweet something interesting.

Include Twitter In Your Contact Info

In your business cards and email footers, include your Twitter account along with your phone number, email address, and web site. If you run ads for your business, include your Twitter account in the ad.

The majority of your readers and customers probably aren't on Twitter, but those who do might find your account interesting. When I buy things online, I don't usually check to see if the vendor has a Twitter account, but if they include their Twitter info on the invoice or packing materials, I'll check them out.

For individuals and small businesses, this method is probably the least scalable of all the methods. It requires you to get your name out there. If you're only distributing your contact info to people you already know, you're not likely to get as many new followers, either. For large businesses, though, this can be a quick and nearly-free way to get a lot of followers at once. Simply add your Twitter name to your packing slips, and you can have thousands of new followers in no time.

All it takes is one celebrity to retweet your useful information and you can pick up hundreds - or thousands - of followers in a matter of hours.

HANDLING UNFOLLOWERS

Not everybody is gonna like you.

Sooner or later, it's going to happen: someone will quit following you. You might have said something they didn't like, their interests might have changed, or they might just be trying to reduce the number of people they follow.

Twitter sends you an email when new people follow you, but it doesn't do the same favor when someone unfollows you. The easiest and most reliable way I've seen to monitor for unfollows is to use NutshellMail.com.

NutshellMail is a free service that makes it easier to use Twitter behind a corporate firewall, because NutshellMail will send you hourly email summaries of your Twitter account. You can set it up for less-frequent emails, too – I have NutshellMail send me alerts first thing in the morning, right before lunch, and before I leave work for the day. NutshellMail's alerts include:

- Your new followers
- Your latest unfollowers
- Your direct messages
- The most recent tweets from your

followers

I don't recommend taking action on unfollowers unless it's someone you know well and interact with often. In that case, drop the user an email (if you know their address) or send them a public reply. Ask if you can contact them privately, and then ask if there was anything you said or did to offend them. They might find the question a little intrusive, but hey – they already

unfollowed you! Your goal is to find out if you unintentionally offended anyone, and if so, apologize before more people unfollow you.

To track your quitters with NutshellMail and other tools, read our reviews at <http://www.brentozar.com/twitter/quit>.

Measuring Your Success

If you're the kind of person who really needs to know how they're doing on Twitter, there's a few utilities you can use.

<http://TwitterGrader.com> gives you a score from 0 to 100 showing how influential you are amongst your peers.

<http://Twinfluence.com> measures your influence based on how many followers your followers have (among other things). Since your followers might retweet your words, the more 2nd order followers you have, the more powerful you are.

<http://RetweetRank.com> uses a similar gauge of popularity - they check to see how often you get retweeted, and how many people your retweets reach. By now, you've probably figured out that most of these ranking systems are all about the size of your megaphone, so to speak. The name of the social media game for some people is to reach the most people you possibly can.



You like me!
You really, really
like me!

<http://www.TweeFight.com> is a hilarious

twist on the grading system. Instead of giving you metrics, you can set up a "match" between yourself and another Twitter user. Fights are based on number of followers, following, tweets, retweets, and more.

<http://FollowCost.com> shows how annoying it will be to follow someone based on the number of tweets they make. The more they tweet, the more annoying they are. Measurements are given in MilliScobles, a joke that refers to @Scobleizer, a guy who tweets way, way too much.

Keep It In Perspective

At the end of the day, though, don't lose sleep over your metrics. There's more to Twitter success than your number of followers – much more. I like to say that I've earned my followers the hard way - by keepin' it real, being myself, and loving the people I interact with.

Getting The Latest Book

I update this book quarterly. You're holding the version from Fall 2012, so if that's more than a few months old, you might wanna pick up the latest version. It's absolutely free at BrentOzar.com/twitter/book.

You can share this book with your friends, email it, forward it, etc.



For more about the permissions involved with the book, check out <http://www.brentozar.com/twitter/cc>, which explains my Creative Commons licensing.

Contacting The Author

If you've got questions about Twitter, post a tweet with @BrentO anywhere in the tweet.

I do a regular search for mentions, and if I'm awake and online, I'll respond.

If you're interested in advertising here, email me at BrentO@BrentOzar.com.

TWITTER FOR BUSINESSES

Let's get down to work.



SOMEONE IN YOUR COMPANY...

is already using Twitter, and odds are, they're doing it wrong - even if it's you. It's time to face some hard facts about what users like and what they don't like. Read up now before you damage your company's reputation.

Even with the best of intentions, it's easy to make serious mistakes that trash a company's online reputation. Marketing departments work so hard to carefully build a precisely controlled image, and Twitter is anything but carefully built or precisely controlled. Anyone can slap together a Twitter account with your company's name, whether they work in marketing or not, and they probably think they're doing the company a favor by getting involved in social networking.

A typical scary scenario is the employee who tries to personify the business. He creates a Twitter account that's a combination of business and personal, like @AcmeBob, and proceeds to interact with people in a semi-official capacity. People see his actions and interpret them as if they're a sanctioned part of the company's public relations. They ask him support questions or sales questions, and next thing you know @AcmeBob is your company's most visible presence online.

At one company, a well-meaning employee started actively searching out any mentions of his company or their products. He jumped into conversations offering technical support and sales help. The good news was that the public noticed; the bad news is that they started to expect it 24/7. When he didn't answer support questions on weekends, customers complained that the company wasn't responsive enough - yet the

company didn't even know the employee was doing it! The company had their own Twitter accounts, but they weren't participating actively enough in online discussions about their products.

Social networking is completely different from traditional controlled communications channels, and managing your company's Twitter presence must be done differently too. You wouldn't let just any employee field sales questions without a basic understanding of how your sales process works, but you don't have that ability to control social networking conversations. Rather than locking down everyone's access or banning Twitter altogether, start by implementing a simple official Twitter presence for your company.

Step 1: Start with a Twitter Receptionist

When someone calls your company's front office, the receptionist doesn't know how to answer every question. The receptionist just needs to know where the questions should be forwarded internally, and connect the caller to the right employee.

Start with a single official Twitter account for the entire company, like @YourCompanyName. Whoever manages that Twitter account is responsible for routing discussions to the right channel. If someone has a

technical support question, get someone from support to answer the question, or get the Twitterer to email support directly. If someone has a presales question, get that conversation to happen in the right medium. Twitter isn't the right medium for every discussion – price negotiations, for example, are best done in private.

Just like your receptionist has set working hours, you need to do the same thing with your Twitter account. Make it clear on the Twitter profile that the account is monitored during US business hours, monitored 24/7, or just checked every now and then. Then deliver on those expectations; set a working rotation of who monitors and responds to incoming tweets. When someone goes on vacation, your Twitter account shouldn't suddenly go AWOL.

Whoever is responsible for the Twitter account should use a tool like TweetDeck that will alert them whenever someone mentions the company Twitter account's name. Respond fast, even when the response is nothing more than, "@SuzieQ, I'll look into that and get back to you tomorrow. Thanks!" Social networking is all about caring, and ignoring someone sends a clear message that you don't care. This is especially dangerous for Twitter accounts that use scheduled broadcast tools, because if the user sees status updates come out without responding to her tweet first, she'll believe she's being ignored.

With this first step, your company will be reacting to people asking questions directly to the account, but that's not usually where the action is. This one step alone takes work, though, and it's best to get your schedules and responses under control before taking it to the next level.

Step 2: Get Involved in Discussions

When people talk about your company in Twitter, they usually won't include your official Twitter account name. Instead of saying, "Man, I hate @AcmeWidgets," they'll say "Man, I hate Acme Widgets." They could use any number of ways to refer to your company. To look out for happy (and unhappy) customers, set up several searches in your Twitter client or on Search.Twitter.com for:

- Your company's full name (General Motors Cars)

- Popular slang names for your company (GM, GMC)
- Your product names (Suburban, Tahoe)
- Your competitors (Ford, Chevy, Chevrolet, Toyota)

Over time, you can add even more searches like competitors' product names, your executives' names, spokespersons' names, and so on. The problem is that the more searches you add, the more results you get, and you have to be prepared to act on what you find. Otherwise, it's just noise that will distract you from focusing on the basics.

Want to know when someone talks about your web site? Check out <http://BackTweets.com>, a free service that monitors Twitter for links to your web site. This is even better than a Twitter search because it even catches shortened links from URL shorteners like Bit.ly, is.gd, or others.

The faster you react to these conversations, the better. Ideally, you want to be one of the first people to respond to the user, or else the conversation can quickly go into a direction you'd rather avoid. If someone complains that one of your products sucks, the last thing you want is a chorus of agreements. If you step in right away and ask the customer how you can help, you can turn the conversation into an asset rather than a liability. Traditional customer service techniques still apply here – treat it just as if the customer was standing in front of you with a few other customers milling around your store in the background. The only difference is that there's a lot more customers – and potential customers – in the background.

Step 3: Start New Discussions

Companies seem to have the toughest time mastering this step.

Sometimes companies jump straight to this step without getting involved in existing discussions about their product, which makes them seem completely clueless. A technical magazine started a Twitter account and blissfully posted news links, opinions, and polls – all the while ignoring their angry customers. One customer after another tweeted about how they were ready to cancel their subscriptions due to a lack of good technical content. Many tweets even included the company's official twitter account name, like "The latest issue of @MagazineName arrived today, and it's all spam

SPAM TWEETS

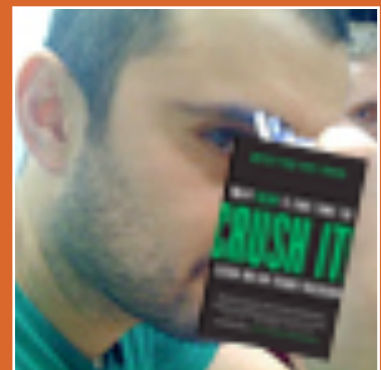
Or marketing pros. Whatever.



[@ProBlogger](https://twitter.com/ProBlogger) – Darren Rowse



[@ChrisPirillo](https://twitter.com/ChrisPirillo) – Chris Pirillo



[@GaryVee](https://twitter.com/GaryVee) – Gary Vaynerchuk

Brent Says:

I run a few businesses, so I've got several Twitter accounts I have to keep an eye on. One thing I've learned for sure: if you want to take Twitter seriously, it takes serious manpower. If you don't define your company's message online, other people will.



SQLCruise

@sqlcruise Miami, FL

The best SQL Server training on a boat!

<http://sqlcruise.com>

✓ Following  

Timeline Favorites Following Followers Lists ▾

 **sqlcruise** SQLCruise
Just wrote an expense check to @sqlagentman to pay for #sqlcruise. I love my job.
20 Nov

 **sqlcruise** SQLCruise
We're up to 9 cruisers on the March 9th Miami/Grand Cayman/Mexico #SQLCruise! Just 6 spots left: <http://sqlcruise.com/cruisers/>

again, no content." The company's lack of response turned public opinion even further negative as users posted questions like, "Come on, @MagazineName, isn't anybody even listening?" The company should have learned to handle existing conversations before starting new ones.

Sometimes companies start new discussions with nothing more than spam links like, "Hey, come check out our new products on our web site!" This does technically work – some folks will click on the links and read out of curiosity. The clickthrough rates might even compete with the company's traditional marketing efforts, so the company decides it's a great idea, and continues on with the promotions. They have no idea how much more effective their conversations could be without spam.

The best company-started discussions, however, have a few things in common:

- They start conversations (not just clicks)
- They get retweeted
- They're social, not spam

Let's look at the difference between two tweets:

"Check out our new products at <http://AcmeWidgets.com/Products>."

"If we gave you one of our products for free, which one would you pick and why? <http://AcmeWidgets.com/Products>"

The first one might get a percentage of readers to click on the link, and might even turn a percentage of those clicks to sales.

The second one goes way above and beyond, and it starts a dialog between Acme and the public. As readers reply, they're telling Acme

Start
conversations.
Don't just yell.

which products resonate most, what features are the most compelling, and how Acme could solve problems. Perhaps paying customers will chime in and agree that a particular product really does work the way it says on the box, and that they've been using it for years. Acme will get testimonials about its product line.

Most importantly, this conversation is happening in public. People who aren't participating in the conversation are watching their peers talk about Acme's products, and they'll start to give Acme a thought.

With traditional media, companies have to pay to get their message repeated – they pay per magazine copy, per TV ad spot, and so on. With Twitter, when Acme posts something really thought-provoking or insightful, other readers will repeat it for free.

That doesn't mean your ad campaigns are suddenly free – rather, it means that you have to invest even more in crafting your campaign, but less in repeating it. Only the very best ideas will get retweeted.

If your message is too big to fit in one tweet, don't rely on multiple tweets each with a piece of the message. Remember that when someone retweets you, they're probably only going to send a single tweet. If your message consists of several tweets, it probably won't go viral. Some readers will only see one of the tweets. If you need more space than a tweet, then write a blog post or a web page instead. Post a tweet that sums up the message and includes a link to the web page.

Step 4: Multiple Accounts

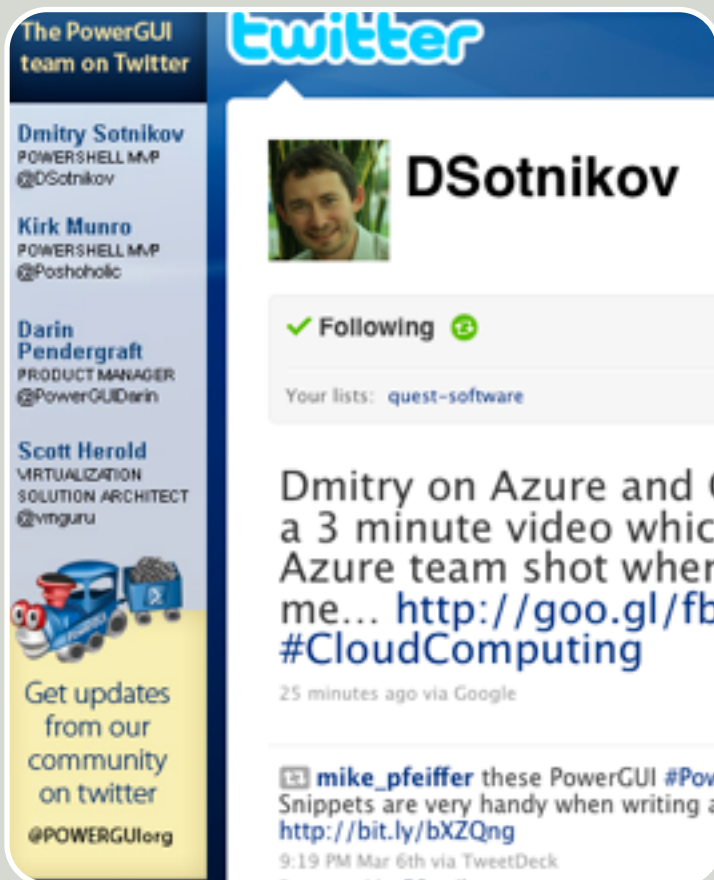
Midsized and larger businesses will inevitably have more needs than one account can handle. They'll have departments with their own Twitter needs such as:

- Marketing departments want to tweet press releases
- Engineers want to ask design questions to customers
- Support teams want to announce hotfixes or react to questions

The company will also have employees with their own blogs and Twitter accounts. Sometimes these employees blur the lines of company and personal use, as we discussed earlier.

The company's central receptionist-style account might be the easiest one for the public to find, so it should also be used as a gateway to the company's other accounts. Here's a few ways to promote the sanctioned accounts:

On the receptionist-style account, use a background wallpaper image that lists other company accounts as shown below (although @DSotnikov definitely isn't our receptionist!):



That works when readers first check out the company profile, but they're not likely to do that again over time. To keep followers abreast of other company accounts, periodically give shout-outs like this:

"Planning a new Quest Software contest with @CHasker and @Wingnut650."

"Happy birthday to @BetsyLM!"

"Watching @JasonFHall give a tour of the new version 5. My favorite feature is the new wizards."

On the receptionist-style account, create a Twitter list of the other accounts. Whenever new Twitter accounts are added to the list, announce that on Twitter as a way of promoting awareness of the list. People may choose to follow the list itself rather than the individual members, and that's even better for the company. If (heaven forbid) employees leave the company on bad terms, the company can just remove them from the list rather than making an awkward public announcement about why that person is no longer tweeting for the company.

Above All, Keep It Social

Whether you're a solo entrepreneur building a small business or a global enterprise, never forget the first word in the phrase "social networking". Twitter is profoundly different from traditional soapbox marketing, and shouting at your followers is bound to fail. Take the time to get to know your most active followers and build relationships with them. Don't pretend your competitors don't exist. I interact with my company's competitors just like anyone else on Twitter; I retweet their interesting blog posts, I reply to their questions, and I link to them when someone asks about their

products. I want my followers to know that I'm a human being, just like anybody else, and I genuinely care about everybody I interact with. I'm not some emotionless drone that's out to dominate everything at any cost.

I get worried when I hear a company say, "Is there a tool to automate all of this social stuff for us?"

Robots & Spam: The Dark Side of Corporate Twitter

Want more followers fast? Post a tweet like this:

"I want a new web host, Viagra without a prescription, cheap home loans, and a diet to lose weight."

The good news is that within a matter of minutes, you'll have several new followers. The bad news is that they're slimy spam software. These aren't real people; they're automated tools that constantly watch for tweets containing certain phrases. They follow anyone who tweets a key word or phrase, and then send message after message pimping their wares, saying things like:

"@BrentO we've got great rates on home loans! Follow us and spread the word! <http://SuperRates.com>"

"@BrentO I see you're talking about web hosts. Buy our bestselling guide on how to host! <http://CheapHost.com>"

"@BrentO sorry about your small tool. Do better in bed with Extenz! <http://RatedX.com>"

These are the robots of today. So much for that idealistic stuff we saw on the Jetsons.

Don't be tempted to use a service like this to promote your own business. People see right through these cheap tactics, no matter how legit your business is, and the robots drag your reputation down into the sewer. It's especially obvious when prospective followers visit your Twitter account's page and see the same message over and over.

Page after page of automatic replies tells visitors you're a spammer. Some users even flag these type of accounts as spam – enough complaints, and Twitter will block the account altogether. These robots might work for short-term gain, but over the long haul, they'll either get shut down or they won't attract real users. If you want more followers, you've got to put in some work.

ABOUT @BRENTO

I'm a tech consultant who's built a company by giving knowledge away. I know, right?

I know this stuff works because I've lived it. I got my start years ago in the hotel industry, then switched to technology during the dot-com rush. I went into programming, then databases. Along the way, I've had a bunch of odd jobs that have given me a unique background.

My nickname should be Odd Job.

My time in the hospitality industry taught me the basics of customer service - how very important it is to make every customer feel welcome and valued.

My dark (and thankfully brief) days in accounting showed me how executives want to see plain, simple ROI numbers. They don't want vague promises of future returns - they want to see real data as fast as possible, illustrated in beautiful, thought-provoking ways. It's not enough to show that sales went up by 12%: proving exactly where that sales came from is the key to executive satisfaction.

My tech work keeps me grounded in geek culture. The early adopters of social media, location-based networking, and other cutting edge tools tend to be us geeks. We can sense fake marketing crap from miles away, and we avoid it like the plague. Traditional marketing techniques just don't work.

And all along, I've been blogging - since the late 1990s, in fact. I toiled away at BrentOzar.com, gradually building up a following of thousands. My work in social media ended up paying off when I got hired as an evangelist for a major technology company.

Yes, I actually worked in the marketing department.

I worked at Quest Software from 2007 to 2009 as an evangelist. They hire real-world technology experts who can work with the community. I wrote about technology, spoke at conferences, and built up web communities. We pioneered blog syndication in the SQL Server community and built up a heck of a following, gaining over 50 bloggers in a matter of months.

My time at Quest taught me how the corporate marketing side of the business works, how to measure the success of marketing projects, and what kinds of social media experiments were the most likely to succeed at the lowest cost. From the #SQLHelp hash tag to Twitter Bingo at conferences, we threw all kinds of stuff against the wall to see what would stick.

I turned my blog into a business.

After I achieved the ultra-rare Microsoft Certified Master designation, I decided to spread my wings and build my own company. The choice of a business name came down to trying to find a domain name that had a solid brand image and a proven history of bringing in income. Along with three partners, we founded [Brent Ozar PLE](#), a team of highly specialized experts who focus on your goals, diagnose your

Ozar.
Brent Ozar.



toughest IT pains, and prescribe remedies. The company's new site? My blog. My blog turned into an asset with a real dollar value.

For years, I've worked with the community to turn employees into bloggers into self-made consultants. While you're building your company's brand, don't forget to build your own. I firmly believe the better you get at your job, the more value you have as a consultant - no matter what your job is.

Want proof this works? You're holding it.

You're reading this very ebook because I've made Twitter work for me. I've never spent a penny advertising this book, and I don't flack it. I used social media marketing techniques to get the word out there the right way, and now people just keep pointing each other to it.

This is how **your** social media should work. Now get out there and start giving.

Getting The Latest Book

I update this book quarterly. You're holding the version from Fall 2012, so if that's more than a few months old, you might wanna pick up the latest version. It's absolutely free at [BrentOzar.com/twitter/book](#).

You can share this book with your friends, email it, forward it, etc.



For more about the permissions involved with the book, check out <http://www.brentozar.com/twitter/cc>, which explains my Creative Commons licensing.

Contacting The Author

If you've got questions about Twitter, post a tweet with [@BrentO](#) anywhere in the tweet. I do a regular search for mentions, and if I'm awake and online, I'll respond.

If you're interested in advertising here, email me at BrentO@BrentOzar.com.

AND WHY NOT START A BLOG?



I'm a huge believer in the power of blogging to reinvent your career.

WHAT'S YOUR MOTIVATION?

People decide to get into blogging for different reasons. Understanding exactly why you're doing it will help you determine what kind of blog you need to write and how you need to set it up.

Blogger Motivation #1: Making a Little Money Fast

If you want to make just a little money quickly by sharing your expertise with others, then the easiest way is to write material for an existing web site. Find a web site that specializes in the kind of material you'd like to write, and see if they're looking for guest authors. For example, in the computer database world, guest authors can make around \$25-\$50 per post by writing technical articles for MSSQLTips.com. These sites make money by selling advertising next to the material you've written.

The downside is that you're selling all rights to your work, permanently, to someone else. You'll never make any more money off that particular article you wrote. They own it, and they control the publication. I've seen similar blogging sites completely shut down, remove a particular author's hard work, or just put a generic author name like "Contributor" on the posts. You have to understand that when doing

Yes, you can - and should - blog.

I used to think only Those Kinds of People wrote blogs, but there's really been a revolution in the writing world. Blogging opens all kinds of doors for you. Let's talk about how to do it. I'm going to tell you all the things I wish somebody would have told me way back when I got started blogging in 2002 at BrentOzar.com.

this kind of blogging, you're not really blogging - you're just working as a writer. That's not really the kind of blogging we're here to talk about, but I wanted to mention it so you'd understand that we're not going to make money quickly in this book.

Blogger Motivation #2: Becoming Famous

Quick, name five bloggers.

I'll wait.

Still thinking, huh? And to make it even tougher, could you pick them out of a police lineup?

If you think hard, you can probably come up with a handful of bloggers, but life as a blogger isn't as glamorous as it looks. For every Perez Hilton and Tyler Durden, there's thousands of us who don't get great tables when we walk into restaurants.

If you're just trying to get a lot of eyeballs quickly, sign up for a blog author account at an established site. They won't pay you to blog, but because those sites already have huge readership numbers, they'll get

you the most name recognition in the least amount of time. Starting your own blog is going to mean toiling unappreciated for months or years before you hit the "big time" - or whatever that means for blogging.

Blogger Motivation #3: Getting a Better Job

If you want to make a personal investment of your time in order to gain long-term career traction, then start by writing your own blog under your own domain name. It's not going to pay off for a while - in fact, it's going to cost you around \$100 per year, and it's going to suck up some of your time. I'm not saying this is an either-or proposition: you can write both for yourself and for other sites. (That's the approach I took when I got started.) I highly recommend starting with your own personal blog under your own control, though, to build your own brand and benefit your career.

If you're going to blog to make money or gain name recognition quickly - and there's absolutely nothing wrong with that - then you can stop reading here. The hosted blog site will handle the plumbing for you.

The rest of this book is for motivation #3.

If you're going to blog for yourself, then listen up and repeat after me: **"I am blogging for my long-term career success."**

As you read through my suggestions, there's going to be times when the advice will seem odd, but we have to circle back and remember why we're blogging: for our personal long-term career success. Not to make money quickly, not to get our name out there overnight, not to make compromises on our integrity in order to get popular, but for our long-term career. So now let's get started with some of that questionable advice....



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Don't Expect Overnight Success

Whether you define success as visitors per day, money from ads, or the number of paparazzi camped outside your door, you are not going to be happy with your success metrics for months or years if you start your own blog on your own domain name.

If you want to achieve any of those things, I'd suggest that instead of blogging under your own domain name, go blog for one of the big existing blog sites. There are some brilliant people blogging over there, and success over there is contagious. If you like one blog at SQLServerCentral, for example, odds are you'll go subscribe to more of them, or at least check them out. You can piggyback off guys like [Andy Warren](#) just by blogging for the same site as him - your name will be on the site near his stuff.

The downside is that you don't really own that. You can have a falling out with somebody, you can get pissed off, you can get pissed on, or the site might get bought by somebody that decides to festoon ads all over your content. If you decide to publish a book later, and you include snips of your blog entries in the book, you won't have to worry about content ownership. Perhaps the worst problem, though, is that when a company wants to associate their name with your good content, they won't be paying you - they'll be paying your blog host. In my personal case, I was approached by a company ([Quest Software](#)) who wanted to hire me as an evangelist. I'm pretty sure I wouldn't have gotten that opportunity if I hadn't been running my own blog with a large

BLOGGING TOOK ME TO:



From the kitchen at WD-50, cruising Alaska with a viking, and the Disneyland Half Marathon, I've been all over thanks to my blog. It wasn't easy, it wasn't overnight, but eventually it happened. I'm so thankful!

following, but on the flip side, [Aaron Bertrand](#) got hired as an evangelist for SQL Sentry even though he blogged at [SQLblog.com](#).

Why You Should Start a Blog Under Your Own Domain Name

When you decide to start off on your own, it's really tempting to use a blogging service like Blogger, Live Spaces or WordPress.com. These sites have all the plumbing already set up for you, and they take care of all the tricky parts about web hosting. On the other hand, you end up with a blog domain name that looks like this:

<http://myblogname.blogger.com>

The problem with that is that you never really own it. The provider can change how your blog looks, change how it works, or just plain go out of business. A company that seems huge today may be nearly gone tomorrow, and it's already happened in the blogging business - think GeoCities and Tripod. When you get fed up and want to change blogging providers, your web site name will change to:

<http://myblogname.someotherblogservice.com>

You'll start over from scratch in the search engine rankings, people will have to move their bookmarks, and you'll lose a lot of what you've worked for. If you're going to take the hosted service route, just save yourself a lot of heartache and go right back to the first step where we talked about writing for a SQL Server blog community site.

My recommendation: spend \$10/year to get your own domain name like www.myblogname.com. I use [GoDaddy.com](#) for my registration, and I use [Namedroppers](#) to help pick domain names. Give Namedroppers a list of key words that you might want in the domain name, and it'll mix and match to show which ones are taken and which are available.

It can be intimidating trying to pick a web site name - there's so many choices! - but I recommend that you....

Use Your Real Name as Your Domain Name

When I first started my site in the 1990s, I had WickedLife.com. At the time, I was into the goth thing (I know, I know) and I thought it was the coolest domain. It was catchy, people liked it, and I had a little following going, but times changed and I stopped being wicked. I realized that wasn't really the image I wanted to project, and not everybody was going to think it was cute, so I switched to BrentOzar.com.

Back then, I wasn't blogging about SQL Server - I was blogging about systems administration. Then I got a couple of read-eared slider turtles, and I started writing about those because I couldn't find any good information on the web about them. I got most of my hits from people searching for how to set up their aquariums, what to feed their turtles, or how to take care of them. I also wrote about a server monitoring program called ServersAlive, and I wrote ASP templates for



other sysadmins to track their database servers. Then, over more time, the site's focus shifted to SQL Server, and here we are today. Two or three years from now, maybe this blog will be mostly cloud-focused, because that's the direction my interest seems to be aiming.

The beauty of using your real name as your domain name is that the site always reflects YOU - your interests, your personal focus, and your career. You don't have to worry about rebranding some blog, worrying about whether people will find the new one, getting your readers to read a different blog, yadda yadda yadda.

Right now, you might be really deeply excited about SQL Server or .NET, and you might want to pick up a cute, funny domain name like [SQLServerTriggerMaster.com](#). What happens five or ten years later when you've started working with Oracle or MySQL, or when Microsoft changes the product name?

This recommendation isn't a hard and fast guideline. An online persona like [SQLAuthority](#) or [SQLAgentMan](#) works for some guys too. Other guys start up a different blog for each of their technology focuses - Dmitry Sotnikov took this approach when he started [CloudEnterprise.info](#), for example, and I follow all of his blogs too because they happen to coincide with my interests. If you're passionate about that, go for it, because a big part of long-term blogging is to...

Be Yourself

I've talked to a couple of startup bloggers who've asked about what they should or shouldn't include on their blogs. If you want to talk about it, you should blog about it. If you're worried that your potty mouth will cause people to avoid your blog, I give you [TheBloggess.com](#), one of the [funniest blogs I know](#). She is gut-bustingly funny and censor-bustingly nasty. If she tried to clean up her act, I'd unsubscribe.

Would you want to go out to lunch with somebody who only talked shop, constant shop, and nothing but shop?

Nah, me neither. I like knowing that the person on the other end of the intertubez is a real human being with a real life that has great days and crappy days. I know other blog readers who say they don't want any of that personal stuff, and I point those readers toward sanctioned, cleaned-up blogs hosted by corporate sites. If you're writing a personal

site, it should have personal stuff. Not too much stuff, though - I want to know you have kids, but I don't want to know when they did their first #2 in the toilet instead of the diaper. Save a little something for the family reunions.

I've also been asked what to write about in terms of SQL Server content. The big rule of writing is to write what you know. The more you know about the topic, the easier the words will come out. If you try to write about a subject that you don't already know, even if it's CLOSE to something you already know, you're going to have to spend time learning it



and getting it right before you can write about it. You don't have that kind of time, because you need to...

Blog At Least Once a Week

If you're not expecting to spend an hour a week updating your blog, hang it up. Look at your calendar right now and point at where you could work in that hour a week. If you can't do it, throw in the towel. Or maybe consider blogging for one of the commercial sites that I talked about early on, because they'll be thankful to get your blog entries whenever they get 'em, and they have enough other bloggers to make up for your periods of quiet.

In reality, blogging sucks up a lot more than an hour a week, and you can't just budget a single hour on one day a week to do it. You'll be responding to comments as soon as they come in, answering questions, tweaking your blog look and feel, etc.

I have a routine that makes it easier: I'm hard-wired to wake up at the crack of dawn, and Erika sleeps in for a few hours. On the weekends, I still can't sleep in, and if I'm in a writing mood, I'll spend that time writing blog entries in advance or checking up on my web site metrics. Sounds vain to look at your own metrics, but I'm not doing that to find out if I'm in the "in crowd" yet. I like to find out where my users are coming from, because people will write articles on their own blogs or web sites, and those articles might include a link to me. I can see in [Google Analytics](#) when people are coming to my site from another site, and then I can go look at that other site to see what they said. (Brent Ozar is a narcissistic as-HOLD ON A MINUTE....)

Just because I'm writing on the weekends doesn't mean my blog entries come out on the weekends, though, because you need to...

Post Your Entries on Weekdays

In terms of blog traffic, weekdays are high, and weekends are low. It sounds creepy to say that you should only post blog entries when people are looking, but here's the sad fact: some of us get in on Mondays, look at an avalanche of blog posts that hit over the weekend, and we just hit Mark-All-As-Read. If your blog comes in during the day while we're working, on the other hand, it stands a better chance of getting read. That doesn't mean you have to be sitting by the computer waiting to hit Publish: good blog software like WordPress will let you schedule posts ahead of time.

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Use Self-Hosted WordPress

There's a bunch of ways to get your domain name up and running on the interwebz, and I think [WordPress](#) is the best because:

- It's open source, so it's likely to stick around for a while
- It's absurdly popular, so there's a ton of documentation on it

- There's a bazillion [plugins](#) to extend it in cool ways

The easiest way to get started is to use a hosting company. [BlueHost](#), [GoDaddy](#), and [Hostgator](#) offer one year of web hosting for around \$100. (There are many more hosting companies, but I've used these two for a couple of years and been very happy.) Between this and your domain name, we're talking about \$110 per year, which is a lot more than a free hosted solution, but this is an investment in your career.

After setting up your blog, it's tempting to start working on the way it looks so that it suits your personality. Hold off on that particular topic for now because it's a monster, and it involves designing and building a personal brand. First, just dip your toes in the water and decide if blogging is for you. Good luck, and enjoy!



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