

## Basic Marketing and Promotion with Twitter

Twitter (<http://www.twitter.com>) is an exciting and quirky social media tool that's especially popular with techy, nerdy types. But it is gaining more mainstream attention [CNN news host Rick Sanchez now shows his Twitter page on live TV, for instance.] At last count there are over 2.5 million Twitter users, and a fair number of those visit the site and update regularly.

Twitter is essentially a way to send instant messages to groups of people who have chosen to "follow." You, in turn, can follow the same (or different) people yourself. You may follow 200 people and read their "tweets" all day. Maybe 35 people follow your tweets. If you want to reach a large community of people on behalf of your station, you'll need to build your Twitter "posse."

To start building your posse you'll need to let people know you have a Twitter feed. Try putting links to your Twitter "timeline", as it's called, in your email signature, on your web site or blog, mention it in your email newsletters and updates, etc.

A good way of showing that you're involved and want to have a conversation with your community is to reach out to other people who have Twitter accounts and are talking about you specifically, or things in your market. Go to <http://search.twitter.com> and try out a few searches. You might look for "Austin" or "St. Paul Restaurants", or "Watching" (then you could reply to these people with recommendations or resources that you have available.) Follow some of the people who appear in your searches, and hope they'll follow you back.

The old friends/family/coworkers trick also works well to get started, don't try to have "fake" conversations, Twitter users will see right through it. But sometimes you need to show a little activity and interest to seed the conversation.

Just be sure to get your feed up and running before you try to promote it too hard. People don't like seeing someone, especially a company, following them and not already providing valuable content or conversation.

In order to cut through the clutter on Twitter, you have to make your tweets (also known as "updates") valuable to followers and potential followers.

If you need help getting started on Twitter send an email to [engage@pbs.org](mailto:engage@pbs.org) and we will send you our step-by-step instructions for creating an account and setting up your profile.

**Twitter users respond to two major things: a personal touch and 2-way communication.** Simply piping in headlines from your blog or the latest Web features on your primary site just isn't enough. As with most social media efforts, you can't just send out marketing announcements and expect people to respond. Using social media for straight PR is a recipe for failure.

To really reach Twitter users you need to have a mix of both announcements (you're debuting a new program, or just posted new photos on your station's Web site, or just published a blog entry, for example) plus genuine conversations with your followers. A presence on Twitter can build a "personality" for your station and represent your brand, without doing any kind of hard-sell. (Or fund-raising! Don't try to raise funds with Twitter!)

Some companies and organizations are doing a great job of connecting with their customers and communities via Twitter. Here are a few examples:

**@comcastcares** (<http://www.twitter.com/comcastcares>) is a Comcast employee who is empowered to engage and interact directly with customers. He can troubleshoot TV or Internet connection problems, and even deploy service trucks to people who ask for help via Twitter.

**@thehomedepot** (<http://twitter.com/thehomedepot>) is also authored by an employee who helps out Twitter users in an official capacity. She even finds DIY instructions for people working on projects.

**@jetblue** (<http://twitter.com/jetblue>) provides travel tips and information to the Twitter universe. This builds brand recognition, provides real value and stimulates conversation.

**@kevinrose** (<http://twitter.com/kevinrose>) Kevin is the founder of the Internet company Digg. He is also a top 5 Twitter user with over 59,000 people following his updates. He provides a mix of news about his company and personal views and opinions.

**@PBSengage** (<http://www.twitter.com/pbsengage>) We try to practice what we preach by reaching out to people who are talking about PBS programs and directing them to resources and help when they need it. We also announce major site updates across PBS and new entries on our blog.

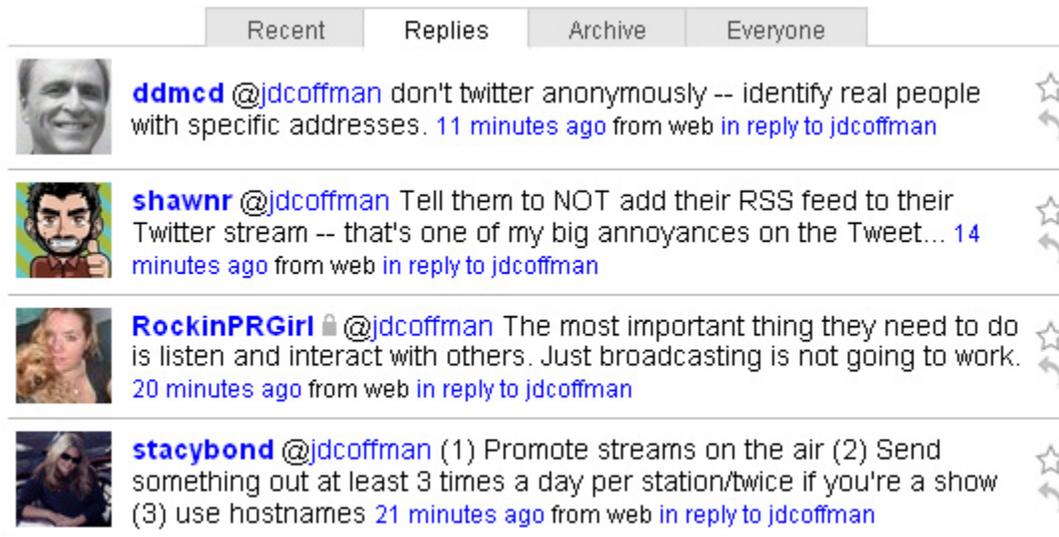
### **Some companies take the 'lazy' route, often frowned upon by the community:**

**@wsj** (<http://twitter.com/WSJ>) The Wall Street journal may have over 1,000 Twitter followers but the value they are adding is very little. Headlines are a good baseline and provide a continuous stream of content, but it's not a conversation and Twitter users really appreciate a good conversation.

**@NYTimes** (<http://twitter.com/NYTimes>) While their headlines aren't automatically fed into Twitter, it's still a one-way street for them. Imagine the good-will and promotional power the New York Times could gain by actually interacting with the public and taking their opinions into consideration.

Worse, some people create fake personas whose updates contain nothing but Web addresses for a site that sells products.

While writing this best practices document I asked the Twitter community what they thought companies just starting out on Twitter should know. Some great feedback came in immediately:



Engage also has a Twitter Toolbox document that has additional resources and information for “Advanced Tweeting”. Send an email to [engage@pbs.org](mailto:engage@pbs.org) to receive a copy.

Take a glance at the following blog posts to learn more about great ways to use Twitter for your organization.

- **Twitter in Plain English (YouTube video)**  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ddO9idmax0o>
- **50 Ideas On Using Twitter For Business**  
<http://www.chrisbrogan.com/50-ideas-on-using-twitter-for-business/>
- **Business Uses For Twitter**  
<http://www.conversationagent.com/2008/08/business-uses-for-twitter.html>
- **How to Listen for Opportunities on Twitter**  
<http://www.chrisbrogan.com/how-to-listen-for-opportunities-on-twitter/>
- **Twitter Best Practices So Far**  
<http://www.davidleeking.com/2008/06/25/twitter-best-practices-so-far/>
- **How To Use Twitter: Tips for Bloggers**  
<http://www.problogger.net/archives/2008/01/25/how-to-use-twitter-tips-for-bloggers>
- **35 Tips From 35 Twitter Users**  
<http://www.problogger.net/archives/2008/01/25/35-twitter-tips-from-35-twitter-users>