

Intro to Twitter

Interactive News - JR 408

Emerson College

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Basics

- Twitter is a social networking site where members can post 140-character messages to be seen by the public (or in the case of a locked account, the user's selected network).
- Users can only post text.

Terms

- Tweet: A post on Twitter
- Following: Designates a user you have elected to follow. This user's tweets will appear on your home page.
- Followers: People who are following you. You will not see their tweets if you do not follow them.

Page Basics

- Home - This is your personalized landing page for the site, where you will see all messages you post as well as the messages of anyone you follow.
- Favorites - You can mark tweets as favorites.
 - This does not usually mean this is a favorite tweet. It's often used to mark a tweet you want to come back to.

Linking

- Because space is so valuable in a tweet, you want to shorten your links as much as possible.
 - To do this, use a URL shortening site.
 - A number of sites exist for this purpose.
 - » Tiny URL, bit.ly, is.gd
 - Some news sites offer this as a share option.
 - » ESPN - es.pn, NY Times - nyti.ms, Yahoo - yhoo.it

Upload Pictures/Video

- Twitter was designed with mobile in mind so tweets can only contain text.
- However, a number of third-party sites exist where users can upload photos, videos, etc., and get links to post to their Twitter account.
 - i.e. Twitpic, Lockerz, TwitVid

@Mentions

- An @mention designates addressing someone, specifically, much as you would in a group conversation.
 - You don't have to follow someone to @mention that user.

@Mentions

- Clicking on your @Mentions, lists all @mentions directed toward you on Twitter.
 - You do not have to follow someone to see an @mention directed toward you in your @mentions.
 - However, @mentions from people you don't follow won't show up in your timeline.

@Mentions

- The common uses of @mentions:
 - When you are “Retweeting.”
 - RT @sarahrtotto: Obviously, the Triple-A team would not be called the Portland Beavers here.
 - When you want to reply directly to someone’s post. Click on the “Reply” option.
 - @sarahrtotto Will they definitely be playing in Tucson?

@Mentions

- The common uses of @mentions:
 - When you want to alert someone to a tweet.
 - @sarahtrotto Are you covering AFL this year?
 - When you're mentioning them like you would in conversation.
 - Covering the Portland Beavers game w/ @sarahtrotto.

Retweet

- Copying/reposting what someone else has tweeted.
 - This spreads the tweet to a broader audience.
- Retweets are indicated by typing “RT @originalposter” before the message.
- You can retweet as is or add your own two cents.

Retweet

- When writing a tweet, think about whether others will be able to retweet your post.
 - This means leaving enough characters that someone can post “RT @yourname” before your post.

Retweet

- You ideally want to leave characters for them to add a response. (“120 is the new 140.”)
 - Why not stick with the Toros? RT @sarahtrotto Obviously, the Triple-A team would not be called the Portland Beavers here.

Retweet

- You can tweak a person's tweet slightly to retweet.
 - Usually for length.
 - Make sure you don't change the meaning.
- You may see MT - modified tweet.
 - People have fixed feelings on MT.
 - Try to avoid.

#Hashtags

- Via Twitter:

Because Twitter provided no easy way to group tweets or add extra data, the Twitter community came up with their own way: hashtags. A hashtag is similar to other web tags- it helps add tweets to a category.

#Hashtags

- Usually at the end of the post, but can be anywhere.
 - Usually all lowercase.
- If you add a hashtag to your tweet, anyone who does a search for that hashtag may find your tweet.

#Hashtags

- If the word a phrase or word is unique, you don't necessarily need a hashtag.
 - ALDS vs. #alds
 - Obama vs. #obama
- For more common terms, you want to use a hashtag for search purposes.
 - Lost vs. #lost

#Hashtags

- If the word is already in the text, you don't necessarily need to hashtag it.
- If you search a term with a hashtag, only terms with the # will show up in search.

#Hashtags

- Sometimes Twitter will be run a “promotion” where using a hashtag will place an image into your text.
 - Example: 2010 World Cup
- Hashtags often go viral and get picked up across the Twitterverse.

#Hashtags

- Hashtags can add key search terms to a tweet that might not fit in the context of the post.
 - Tom Brady Ranked No. 21 on NFL Network List. <http://bit.ly/ci1Q7s> #patriots
- If you're adding terms at the end of a tweet, always hashtag the term.

#Hashtags

- Avoid using vague hashtags.
 - Use: Bud Selig rules out increased instant replay this year.
<http://es.pn/cwyqLW> #mlb
 - Avoid: Rangers-Giants in World Series. #mlb
- Literally anything can be a hashtag.
 - #lakers2010, #yankeessuck, #twitterislame, #ithinkjr408isthebestclassever
 - But hashtags that are too long can be hard to read.

#Hashtags

- Do not use spaces in Hashtags.
 - Correct: #redsox Incorrect: #red sox
- Do not Hashtag every word.
 - Correct: #redsox Incorrect: #red #sox

#Hashtags

- Like with linking and blogs, do not overuse hashtags.

Direct Message

- A direct message is a tweet between you and one other person.
- It cannot be seen by the public.
- Comparable to posting a status update on Facebook vs. sending a message.

Other

- There are a number of third-party sites that you can use to manage your Twitter account.
 - Some users do not like the standard Twitter site.
 - TweetDeck and Hootsuite are the most popular of these sites.

Other

- There are also various mobile applications for Twitter.
 - You can text updates to Twitter if you authorize your phone number to your account.
 - Text your tweet to “40404”
 - Keep in mind that you can text 160 characters, but only 140 will show up as a Tweet.

What to Tweet

- News and Information
 - News updates, on-site reporting, general information
- Links
 - Interesting stories, top stories, your stories
- Photos

What to Tweet

- Commentary/Opinion
 - As a reporter, make sure you should be offering commentary/opinion
- Pretty much anything

What to Not Tweet

- Useless information.
 - I'm waiting in line at Starbucks.
- Don't link Twitter and Foursquare or other geolocation app.

What to Not Tweet

- Video
 - Not a steadfast rule. Just not common at the moment.
- Just make sure you're not tweeting anything that would make your boss or mother unhappy.

Tweet Delete

- Even if you delete a tweet, it can live forever.
- If you delete a tweet, it won't delete retweets.

More Twitter Tips

- Engage. People don't just want to be spoken at. With social media, they want a conversation.
- Don't get into Twitter wars.

More Twitter Tips

- Focus your tweets.
 - This is the best way to build your audience.
 - Use Facebook for keeping up with friends.
- Use it to promote your work - but not only to promote your work.

More Twitter Tips

- Craft your tweets.
 - Avoid typos
 - Use proper grammar (as much as possible)
 - If you're using shorthand or abbreviations, make sure they're clear to your audience.

More Twitter Tips

- Make sure you read the stories/content you are linking to.
- Keep it to 140 characters.
 - Avoid deck.ly or other tweet longer options.

Sourcing

- Try to source when possible,
 - Sometimes length constrictions won't allow.
- If you're getting the information from another Twitter user, you should acknowledge that.
 - Either via retweet or H/T (HT)
 - H/T (HT) can stand for “hat tip” or “heard through”

Live Tweeting

- Events can be live tweeted.
- Similar to being live blogging.
- Good for breaking news.
- Lends itself to the second screen experience.

Twitter for Journalists

- Use it to follow sources, other outlets, etc. that are important to your beat.
- Great story ideas can come from Twitter.
 - Trending topics.
 - People breaking news.
 - Comments.

Twitter for Journalists

- Be careful of breaking news on Twitter.
 - Most outlets want to break the news on their own site/platforms.