Twitter Tips: How to Gain and Keep Followers

The Golden Rule for Twitter

Twitter, as simply an alternate communication touchpoint, should be subject to the same common sense and social protocols as other, more familiar forms of communication. Respect and courtesy are appreciated everywhere and will win you a wider social networking audience.

Some people find Twitter to be unfamiliar, intimidating, or even unnerving. Although it may seem a bit confusing from afar, using Twitter is simply about using common sense and applying the same rules of behavior you would in one-to-one interactions. It's simply another channel of communication that, when used effectively, can yield impressive results in both your personal and professional life. This applies not only to Twitter but also to any other social network, such as Facebook, LinkedIn, or Google+. This brief provides you with tips for using Twitter and other social media. With them, your company can easily gain and keep followers.

What to Do

By following certain social networking protocols, you can grow your audience and keep audience members' loyalty. Here are some of these protocols:

- **Provide Value.** Provide informative, valuable content. Make it genuine.
- **Retweet (RT) someone with a nice comment added.** Be sure to credit them, and add a nice two- or three-word comment.
- **Start a conversation.** See someone you want to engage with? Start a conversation! Many people are on Twitter because they want to have a social relationship. Don't be repetitive about it, but relevant conversations may boost your Twitter credentials.
- **Be entertaining.** Bring some entertainment and humor to your stream, and people will gravitate to you and share your tweets. Funny is not easy, though. Be careful to use common sense and avoid offending, or it can backfire on you.
- **Tweet useful information.** When you come across it, tweet it! Twitter is a great way to get useful resources into the air. Use the great information and articles you find as content for your brand. You'll get credit for the tweets when you share. Remember to credit the authors.
- **Be human and real.** Show emotion, compassion, interest, excitement, and/or humor, and people will want to engage with you on social networks.
- **Ask a question.** You will be shocked at how quickly you will find out the answer and probably make a new friend or follower.
- **Answer a question.** This is even better than asking a question. You can quickly get thought leader status if you consistently help people in your niche.

- **Follow Friday.** It's simple to tweet #FF plus a few user names, and it makes people feel special. When that happens, you usually are in good graces with that tweep. It's a nice gesture and a good weekly habit to get into.

What to Try or Test

Some practices can be effective only at certain times or when used sparingly. Test the waters before jumping in. When in doubt, use common sense.

- **Ask for an RT.** This is a debatable practice. Don't ask for an RT as standard procedure—some people may grow tired and drop you—but it can work on occasion.
- **Tweet a deal.** If you have something to gain from it, you should be careful how you do it. If you are sharing someone else's deal (and have nothing to gain), you'll fare much better. Make sure there are no hoops to jump through that will annoy people.
- **Use short message service (SMS).** Try it only with obvious words in a few parts of a tweet. If short code enables you to save about 16 characters at the end to give people room to comment when retweeting, that's a gr8 use for it.

What to Avoid

Certain habits on Twitter can scare away followers and friends. Look out for these pitfalls.

- **Use @ spam.** Avoid using long lists of attached usernames as spam alerts. Instead, use the Twitter function to report all spam and also block any users who spam you.
- **Tweet blatant ads or promotions.** If you are on Twitter simply to sell, you will be sniffed out and shunned by many people. Twitter can be a great selling aid, but you have to be smart about it.
- **Tweet in all caps.** It's ok to ACCENT words here and there, but don't yell the entire conversation.
- **Spew hate and negativity.** There is no faster way to lose your followers and friends than by being negative.
- **Be self-serving.** Talking about yourself and promoting your products all the time is a sure way to shrink your audience.
- **Use a hashtag for rogue promotion.** If you jump in on someone's hashtag (#) and start using it heavily, prepare for negative reactions. Some large brands have taken hits to their reputation by trying this one.
- **Beg.** Whether for an RT or a Follow ... it's unprofessional.

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