B2B Marketing™



BEGINNER'S GUIDE

Beginner's Guide to Twitter

B2BMARKETING.NET

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Introduction

The increasing significance of social media – in particular Twitter - for B2B marketers is now undeniable. However, it can be hard to 'get Twitter right'. Condensing your ideas and brand proposition into 140 characters is no easy task, especially if you've a complex product offering. Don't let this put you off though – Twitter can be a hugely exciting and versatile platform, offering the potential to reach untapped audiences, see a snapshot of what people are saying about your brand and the opportunity to have your voice heard regarding trending topics within your industry.

This *Beginner's Guide to Twitter* is the first in a series of guides focused on specific social media platforms. It's designed to help you if you've yet to use Twitter as a platform for your brand, although you may also find it useful if you want to improve your use of the social network. In addition to a number of basic guidelines, it will outline areas such as the tone you should adopt and how to determine how frequently you should share different types of content.

In this guide you'll find a useful reference to the basics of Twitter, how to create a Twitter strategy, 10 everyday Twitter tips, a Twitter strategy template, a summary of key takeaways and a list of further reading if you're seeking additional advice to help you get started.

"Condensing your ideas and brand proposition into 140 characters is no easy task, especially if you've a complex product offering"

Twitter: The basics

There are a few basic things to be aware of before you start tweeting. Here are some practical pointers to help get you started:



Profile picture	In-stream images	Header photo
400x400 pixels (recommended) Maximum file size: 100 KB JPG, GIF or PNG	440x220 pixels (minimum to appear expanded, 2:1 ratio) Maximum file size: 5 MB JPG, GIF or PNG	1500x500 pixels (recommended) Maximum file size: 10 MB JPG, GIF or PNG

Handles

Your username, always preceded by the '@' symbol (e.g. @marketingB2B). Others can mention you in tweets, send you a message or link to your profile. Ensure yours reflects your business.

Bio

This is a short description (up to 160 characters) of your business, products or services. This is your chance to tell people why they should follow you.

Followers

Your followers are Twitter users who receive your tweets. You can grow your number of followers by being active and sharing content and information your audience will find valuable.

Hashtags

Any word or phrase preceded by the '#' symbol. Clicking on a hashtag will take you to more tweets on that subject.

Trends

Usually in the form of a hashtag, these provide a snapshot of the most popular topics on Twitter at any given moment. The trends you see can be tailored according to your chosen location and followers.

Lists

In order to read tweets from a specific group of Twitter users, you can create lists or subscribe to lists created by others.

How to create a Twitter strategy

KATIE CANTON
HEAD OF SOCIAL MEDIA
BIRDDOG



There's no denying Twitter's impact and growing efficacy in the world of B2B marketing. Twitter is the second most popular social media platform among B2B marketers, and those who actively use Twitter generate twice as many leads as those who don't according to Social Media Today. The trick for B2B brands is establishing how to use this channel in a way that enables them to achieve their overall marketing goals.

B2B brands need a Twitter strategy

The digital age has made us impulsive. The Twitter age has made us careless. In the past, if you were going to put your logo on something, you would have had a plan that would fit into a larger brand strategy. Because using Twitter as a marketing channel is still very much in its infancy relative to the more tried, tested and true marketing activities, B2B organisations seem to be happy to 'suck it and see'. Nothing lost, nothing gained. The problem with that very non-committal attitude is that for social media marketing to achieve results, it actually requires commitment and planning. A well thought out, documented strategy is imperative to your brand's success on Twitter.

Best practice Twitter strategy

So you're going to develop your brand's Twitter strategy. Where do you start? Staring at a blank page and a blinking cursor is intimidating. In order to quell the inevitable blank page-induced panic attacks, here are a few Twitter strategy best practices – the key things to consider when writing your strategy – what works and what doesn't.

1. Measurable objectives

First things first, a Twitter strategy must have defined objectives. You need to know why you're using Twitter and where it fits in to your wider marketing strategy. If you are unsure on either of these points, then a Twitter strategy is not what you need. You need to step back, conduct audience and competitor research across the social and digital landscapes and review your brand's overall marketing plan.

Once you've established why you are using Twitter, you must decide how you are going to measure success against those objectives. If it's increased brand awareness you're after, will you be tracking brand mentions? If it's improved customer engagement you're trying to achieve, what types of engagement will you be tracking? Too many companies become distracted by trying to track every metric possible. It's important to consider what data is valuable to your brand and your goals, and then measure it.

2. Tone and personality

A Twitter strategy should outline the tone your brand is to use while tweeting. Many B2B companies make the mistake of thinking 'Twitter is fun, so we should be fun too' even if it goes against their brand's well-established personality. Twitter is fun, but it's also informative, serious, emotional, entertaining and inspiring. Don't let Twitter set your brand tone, that's your job. Your tone should take into consideration your overall brand personality and your online audience's preferences. If your audience research has indicated that it prefers a more light-hearted tone, then be light-hearted, assuming it doesn't conflict with your brand's voice.

3. Frequency of tweets

There is an optimum number of tweets to publish per day, depending on your industry, objectives and audience. The problem is, you won't know what that is until you experiment. A newly developed Twitter strategy should therefore outline these frequency experiments. Using a timeline, the strategy should state how many tweets per day you'll be posting in the first week, second week, third week and so on. It should also state how long this experimentation phase will last and how the data will be analysed. Once you've decided what the optimum tweet

frequency is, include it in the strategy and share that with your team. This isn't an exact science so you may tweet more or less than the optimum frequency when required but having an ideal amount helps to guide activity.

4. Engagement

Assuming one of your objectives for having a brand presence on Twitter is to improve engagement with your current customers and to begin to engage new prospects, then your strategy needs to outline exactly how to achieve that engagement. There are simple things you can do to actively engage people on Twitter. One of these is to identify thought leaders, influencers, customers and prospects' Twitter accounts and follow them with your brand account. This is most effective if that account follows you back or interacts with something you've tweeted, but they will only do that if you are sharing interesting and relevant content.

A successful Twitter strategy must be integrated with the content strategy. Twitter is not a broadcast channel. It's not good enough to simply tweet a link to every piece of branded content you produce. Share content on Twitter that will help to achieve your Twitter objectives. We all know by now that long-form content does not generate engagement on Twitter. Images and memorable quotes are more likely to be shared, and now, due to recent changes to the platform, videos are becoming the most engaging content asset on Twitter. If your content strategy doesn't include videos, change that now.

5. Listening

Listening to your audience is imperative to achieving any real success on Twitter. Listening to what's being said about your brand can provide valuable insight into how it's perceived, giving you the opportunity to address any issues or, more positively, further engage with brand advocates. Listening to what your audience is talking about also allows your brand to have its finger on the pulse of what's important to your market. That type of insight can be fed back to your content marketers to ensure you are creating content of value and tweeting about the issues with the largest impact. A Twitter strategy should outline which tools will be used for listening, which tweets should be flagged as important and what action those tweets require.

There are other activities to consider, of course, when developing your B2B Twitter strategy, but if you give enough consideration to the elements listed here then you should be in a good position to make a positive impact for your organisation.

Ten everyday Twitter tips

JESSICA MCGREAL
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B2B MARKETING



Once you've got the basics covered and created your strategy it's time to get tweeting. However, using Twitter to market your business on an everyday basis is easier said than done. Follow these 10 tips to ensure your updates resonate, drive traffic and, ultimately, increase sales.

1. Be human

First and foremost remember to show your brand's human side. This means avoiding robotic-style updates and jargon.

Some organisations simply do this by signing off tweets with the initials of the employee running the account. Others highlight the handles of their social media managers in their bio. But being human on social media is more than this; it's about drawing attention to your company's personality. There are loads of ways to do this: commenting on news and events outside your industry and sharing photos from an away day or a behind-the-scenes video of a product brainstorming session are just a few examples.

2. Keep it short

You can use 140 characters, but this doesn't mean you have to use them all. Just focus on what really matters. Updates shorter than 100 characters have a 17 per cent higher engagement rate, according to Buffer. This means being clear and concise will pay off.

3. Post pictures

Twitter has made it easy for users to ignore tweets that do not include images. This is because images now automatically appear in feeds and pages (rather than just a link). This increases the size of the update by more than double and makes it a lot more eye-catching. And people like them: Twitter has revealed that tweets including photos receive up to 35 per cent more retweets.

4. Get a hang of handles

You'd be surprised how many users haven't quite got the hang of using handles. When you want to highlight another person's profile in a tweet, don't begin the update with their '@' handle as this will just send the tweet as a 'reply' and hide it from your main profile page. Instead add a full stop in front of the handle so everyone can see the tweet.

5. Avoid the hype around hashtags

The '#' hashtag plays a powerful role on Twitter as a way to follow conversations on specific topics. Unfortunately, many users tend to abuse this feature by attempting to jam popular hashtags into one tweet in a bid for attention. Do not do this. Instead, research popular hashtags in your industry to join valuable discussions with thought leaders (like #B2BChat).

6. Make your call-to-action clear

Make the point of your tweet clear – do you want your followers to download a new whitepaper? Register for an event? Or retweet? Then ask them to.

Additionally, place links at the beginning or middle of the tweet to ensure maximum clicks. You can add more information or an opinion after the URL.

7. Forget about time zones

Updating your profile 24 hours a day allows your company to reach people across the world, and is essential if you are a growing or established international brand. Consistent tweeting will increase your monthly click-through rate and drive further engagement. However, don't stress out and stay up all night monitoring social media. Schedule updates (perhaps every hour or so) when you have time and see what effect it has.

8. Experiment with paid-for options

It's becoming increasingly difficult to be heard 'organically' (without paying for it) on social media. As a result, it's worth looking into your paid-for options to see if they really could boost success.

Twitter offers a range of opportunities: Promoted Tweets display an update to a wider target

audience, Promoted Trends allow you to advertise a branded hashtag, and Promoted Accounts highlight your account to a specific audience.

But don't go overboard. Experiment with a small budget over a week or so to see if any of these paid-for options really 'pay off'.

9. Don't use Twitter in isolation

Twitter activity should complement an organisation's online presence. So, use your profile to draw attention to other social networks and forums your brand is part of. For example, showcase a new video on your YouTube channel to show why it's worth subscribing; or share popular discussions happening on your LinkedIn group to increase membership.

10. Keep an eye on stats

As well as compiling monthly reports to find out what's working and what's not, you should keep a keen eye on your social updates on an everyday basis. You can do this by monitoring Twitter's own analytics platform throughout the day. The easy-to-use site offers information on your tweets (such as engagement and retweets) as well as follower demographics. Using analytics on a daily basis will allow you to optimise updates and react quickly to build on success or overcome failure.

Twitter strategy template

Social media strategy - questions you need to answer:
What are the main objectives of your social media strategy? How do they align with your wider business objectives? What social networks is your brand currently active on? What type of content will you be posting on different sites? Where is your online target audience? Who is managing your social media accounts?

Twitter strategy		
Twitter aims	How does Twitter fit in with the overall objectives?	
Target audience	How will you define and target your potential customers on Twitter?	
Content	What type of content will you be sharing on Twitter?	
	How frequently will you share your content?	
Tone and personality	How will your brand's tone be reflected on Twitter?	
	What does your online audience react best to?	
Paid-for Twitter activity	What is your budget?	
	Which advertising tools do you plan to use?	
Evaluation	Which metrics will you use to track success?	

Key learnings

1. Start with **measurable objectives**, and make sure you are clear about how Twitter fits in to both your social media strategy and your wider marketing objectives.

2. How are you going to **evaluate your success?** Make sure you focus on tracking the right metrics according to the goals you have for your brand.

3. Make sure you **set a clear brand tone**, taking into account your overall brand personality and your online audience's preferences.

4. **Experiment with a timeline** to figure out your optimum frequency, so that you know you're tweeting the right content at the right times.

5. Outline how you're going to use Twitter to **better engage** your current customers, as well as new prospects.

6. Make sure you generate excitement and actively engage your audience by **sharing images and digestable quotes**.

7. **Videos** are becoming one of the most important forms of content on Twitter, so include them in your content strategy.

8. **Listen to and act on** what's being said about your brand, as well as what your audience is talking about, in order to achieve real Twitter success.

Further reading

- *Social media glossary of terms*, Katie Canton, Birddog
- *The B2B social audit*, Scot Mckee, Birddog
- *9 things I wish I'd known about B2B social media before I started*, Scot McKee, Birddog
- *How to: Use Twitter for business*, B2B Marketing, Gavin Hammar, Sendible
- *How to: Get Started with Twitter advertising*, B2B Marketing, Alan Miller, The Crocodile
- *Twitter Power 3.0: How to Dominate Your Market One Tweet at a Time*, Joel Comm and Dave Taylor

About Birddog

For your brand to be distinct or different you need to 'be creative' but everything seems to conspire against you – time, money, knowledge, risk, policies, politics, history – everything. At Birddog, we fix all that. Birddog creates valuable brands by telling compelling stories, producing engaging content, building digital experiences and growing social communities that help your business to stand out from the ordinary.

Compared to the tired, the mundane and the ineffective options a client is usually faced with, Birddog actually achieves results by combining creative thinking and creative things. We recognise that you want to 'be creative'. You have other measures of success of course, but experienced marketing professionals still want to be creative. You just don't always know how. We do.

http://www.birddog.co.uk/
@BirddogB2B

About B2B Marketing

B2B Marketing is the comprehensive information resource for B2B marketers. Its mission is to provide practitioners with the information they need to perform better and achieve more, whatever sector of the B2B space they are operating in.

Launched in 2004 as *B2B Marketing magazine*, it has since evolved into a multi-faceted resource, delivering a broad range of content in a variety of different forms and formats.

Its key products are:

- Online community
- Magazine
- Awards
- Research and reports
- Training
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- Membership

For more information on any of these products or services go to b2bmarketing.net or call +44(0)20 7014 4920

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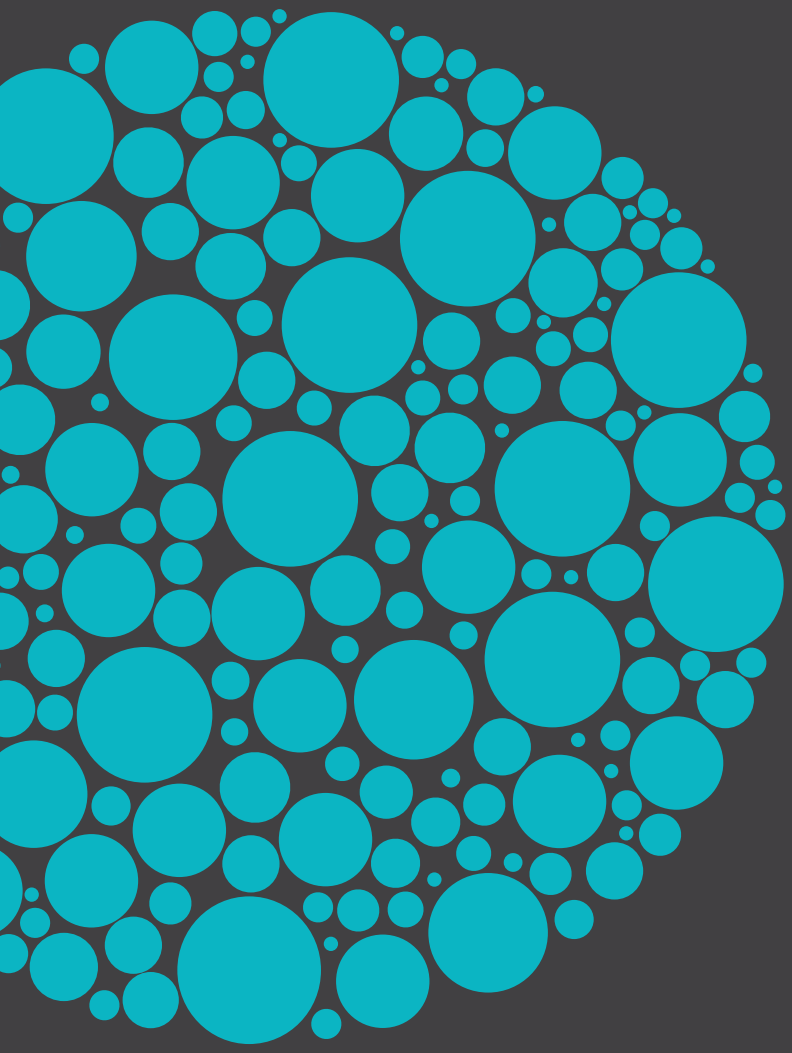
Corporate membership

B2B marketers have never had to be so multi-skilled, multi-tasked, and accountable to business objectives. Marketers need up-to-the-minute research, knowledge and insight to ensure they are not left behind.



Join us today

To find out more, contact our membership team:
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