



A Starter Guide to Building & Managing Your Twitter Community





Twitter has more than 230 million active users per month and generates more than 500 million Tweets per day.* Worldwide, users are constantly connected to Twitter—in over 35 languages—and take to the network daily to discuss everything from entertainment and news to brands and businesses.* A real-time, information network that connects people to the latest stories, ideas, opinions and news, a significant number of Twitter users (76%) access it on their mobile device.*

The rapid shift and growth in social participation offers significant opportunities for businesses to build and manage customer relationships via social networks. While many brands have laid the groundwork by creating handles, staffing social teams and starting to utilize technology and tools that help attract new audiences, opportunity abounds when it comes to proactive and ongoing engagement.

In this Twitter-specific guide, we'll explore themes and share tips around:

- What Twitter means for your business.
- Ways to know the social customer.
- Engaging your Twitter community.
- Responding to positive, neutral and negative Tweets.
- Setting social goals and growing your presence.

As you embrace Twitter for your business, think not only about the social network as a channel for marketing, but also as an ever-present communication layer that spans the entirety of your business.

* <https://business.twitter.com/whos-twitter>

WHAT TWITTER MEANS TO YOUR BUSINESS

As a growing business, your Twitter followers have a great impact on sales and recommendations, especially as your audience increases interaction with your business. Engagement opportunities go beyond just marketing, promotions, and entertainment, and extend into sales, customer service and more. In this age of ultimate connectivity, customers are now using social networks to reach businesses in the moment and on their terms—at home, at work and on the go via mobile devices.

Consider these statistics about what Twitter means for your business:



* <https://blog.twitter.com/2013/survey-how-small-and-medium-sized-businesses-benefit-from-their-twitter-presence>

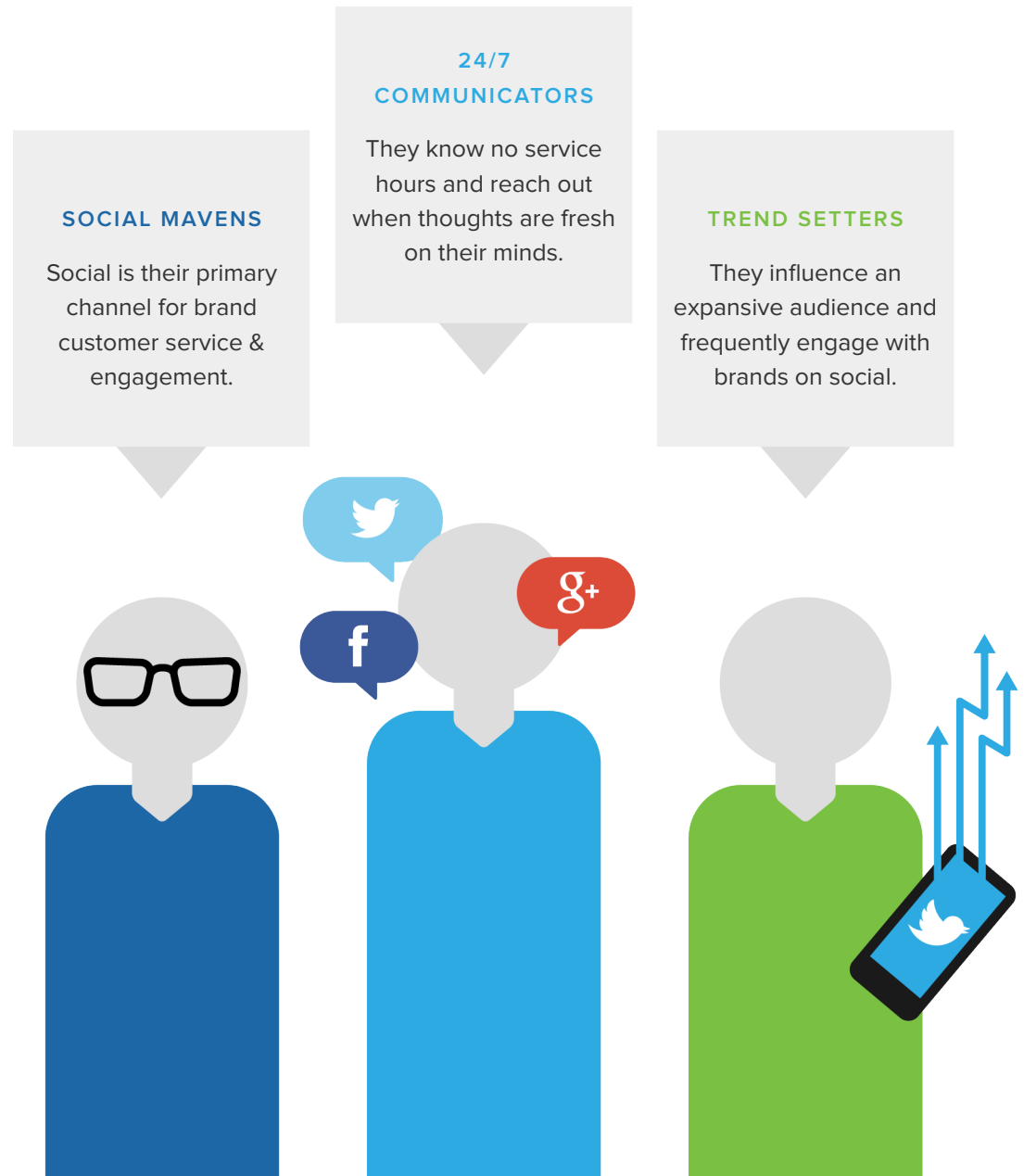
† http://downloads.sproutsocial.com/The-Sprout-Social-Index_December-2013.pdf

KNOW THE SOCIAL CUSTOMER

As you begin to devote time, resources and energy into Twitter, it is imperative that you understand your social customer. How they think, how they act and what they need from your company's social media presence.

As you identify ways to utilize Twitter, research and analyze how your current customers, brand advocates and even your competitors engage on the platform and with their audiences. The role of social continues to shift for everyone, so not every customer will utilize it in the same fashion or have the same set of expectations.

Think about these types of social customers as you map your Twitter engagement strategy:



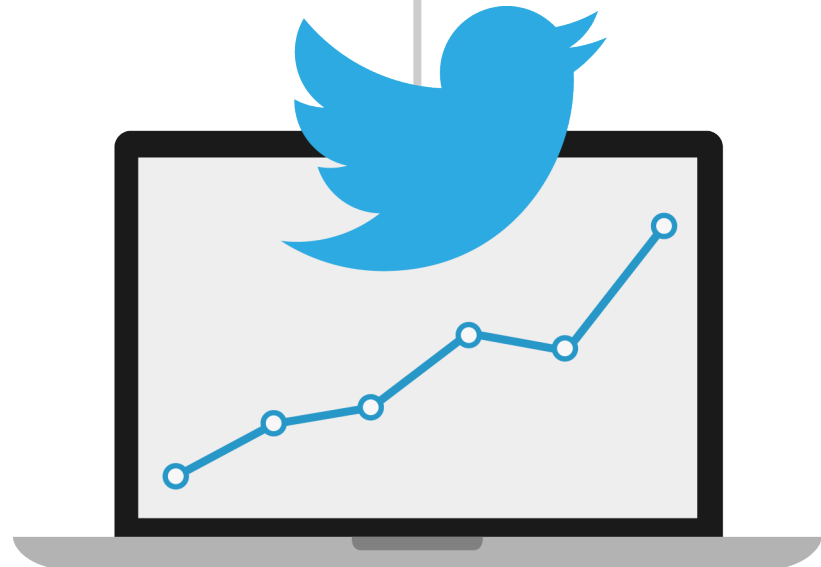
SETTING SOCIAL GOALS & GROWING YOUR PRESENCE ON TWITTER

As you set goals and grow your presence, take the opportunity to define and evangelize your engagement strategy across your business. Think about what your customers want on social—what type of communication are they looking for when they engage with you via Twitter? What content is helpful? Also remember that your engagement and social strategy will vary based on the type of conversations managed through your different Twitter handles.

In the context of setting goals, it is also important to create a social media policy for engagement. As a team, strategically decide who handles different types of incoming questions, develop an escalation process, and set desired metrics around response rates and times.

Take these tips into account when setting your company's specific growth goals for Twitter:

- 1 Identify near term goals like sales, customer care or brand presence, and make a plan.
- 2 Create promotions and Tweets specific to Twitter.
- 3 Integrate Twitter into traditional campaigns like product launches and holiday sales.
- 4 Identify metrics to measure success like Retweets, site traffic or message response time.



TIPS FOR ENGAGING YOUR TWITTER COMMUNITY

Questions often arise about what makes a good Tweet or the best way to interact with people on Twitter. Our primary recommendation is to be authentic when engaging with your followers. While it is important to always stay on message and accurately represent your brand, try to avoid “marketing speak” and connect with audiences using language, content and a voice that show you understand their needs without being overly formal.

Your Tweets should reflect the individuality of your business so, think about these best practices when engaging on Twitter:



RESPOND

Don't keep customers waiting. It's a real-time network so respond quickly.



STAND OUT

Tweet unique info about your business in addition to interesting content.



SHOW YOUR PERSONALITY

Convey your brand's personality throughout all your interactions with conversational Tweets.



COMPELLING CONTENT

Diversify the types of content you share and have fun with your Tweets.



INTERACT

Reply, Retweet, favorite and thank your customers for their loyalty.



STAY CONSISTENT

Your brand voice should remain consistent but your tone can change based on the situation.

TIPS FOR RESPONDING TO POSITIVE, NEUTRAL AND NEGATIVE TWEETS

Businesses should be thrilled to get positive—and even neutral—inbound Tweets that talk about their brand. While it may seem unnecessary to comment on positive or relatively neutral Tweets, it is a great way to start a more in depth conversation, get to know your followers, offer resources and gather feedback. So take the opportunity to respond with value-add information, friendly banter or a pleasant acknowledgment of the initial message—it goes a long way in building goodwill with your followers.

Most businesses have also had the challenging experience of trying to manage a negative incoming Tweet or conversation. Sure, they may seem scary or combative, but don't necessarily shy away from negative comments simply to avoid confrontation. Be confident and view negative comments as an opportunity to position yourself as authentic. Handling these type of messages can be tricky—but there are ways that you can prepare yourself make the most out of negative conversations, and even change the tone of the conversation entirely.

CONSIDER THESE OPTIONS WHEN RESPONDING TO TWEETS:



HAVE A PLAN

Establish a comprehensive engagement strategy for your social team.



SUPPORT INQUIRES

Acknowledge customers' concerns and provide info to solve their issues.



LISTEN

Pay attention to your customers' questions and concerns. Don't brush them off.



TAKE IT OFFLINE

Don't be afraid to take matters offline when a private conversation might serve better.



KNOW WHEN TO RESPOND

Review each message and reply when needed.



STAY CONSISTENT

You should remain consistent with your brand's overall voice when responding.

THE CHECKLIST: BUILD & MANAGE YOUR TWITTER COMMUNITY

As you amp up your presence, reference our 10-step Twitter checklist of best practices and tactical tips to get started:

- 1 SECURE TWITTER HANDLES**
Create appropriate and evergreen company Twitter profiles. Not only for your main business but any sub-groups or specific uses like customer service.
- 2 POPULATE PROFILES**
Give followers the information they need to interact with your business. Include info like your website, a brand description, store hours and contact information.
- 3 STAFF FOR RESPONSIVENESS**
Decide which team members will be active on Twitter and clearly define roles, responsibilities and escalation procedures for timely engagement.
- 4 SELECT A MANAGEMENT TOOL**
The right social tool enables you to engage, publish and analyze top performing content—on a web browser or mobile apps for easy on-the-go management.
- 5 SET YOUR SUCCESS METRICS**
Before you begin, set goals for Twitter engagement based on larger business goals, available bandwidth and desired actions from your Followers.
- 6 CREATE A CONTENT CALENDAR**
Keep your social team organized and on message with structured content, drafted Tweets and regularly scheduled posts.
- 7 INCORPORATE MULTIMEDIA**
Photos and visuals make for much more compelling content, so be sure to include related multimedia to enhance a Tweet and encourage sharing.
- 8 FORGET YOUR FOLLOWER NUMBER**
Bigger communities aren't necessarily better, so don't get caught up in total followers. Be authentic and your audience will grow naturally.
- 9 SCALE TO SEARCH**
Identify keywords related to your industry and search Twitter around those terms. You'll find new connections and opportunities to grow your follower base.
- 10 TEST & LEARN**
Monitor Tweets to see engagement levels, assess which messages are working and which are falling flat. Course correct to ensure you hit your goals.



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