

## **Twitter**

### **What Is It**

Twitter is a “microblogging” social media service that allows people to post short messages of up to 140 characters, including links, photos or video. Users can “follow” one another, which means you will see that person’s updates. People often follow their friends as well as celebrities, organizations, and media outlets. Unlike Facebook, following does not need to be mutual, and is often seen more as a signal of interest in someone’s content rather than a sign of friendship. The primary way content is shared on Twitter is through the “retweet” feature, which allows a user to share another user’s content with their own followers (similar to sharing on Facebook). Twitter also offers a reply option which allows you to engage in a conversation with the original “tweeter”. In addition favoriting a tweet is also another way of engaging with content that you agree with.

### **Who Uses It**

Twitter is a critical tool for reaching all types of people important to a campaign. It is especially vital for reaching the media and influential leaders on your issue or topic. While Twitter is not as large as Facebook in terms of number of users, it is a great tool for getting your campaign noticed by the right people.

Many journalists spend a lot of time on Twitter, and it can be a great avenue to reach them with information about your campaign. The same goes for decision-makers and grassroots leaders. Decision-makers often pay attention to people tweeting at them -- and even a small number of tweets on one topic can get their attention. This is also true for the media, even a small sample of activists tweeting about a campaign can trigger interest and coverage.

### **Resources to Maintain a Presence**

#### *Staff Time*

The time necessary for managing a Twitter presence depends on how engaging of a feed you wish to have. For a minimal presence that simply shares updates, only a few hours per week is necessary. For a feed that actively engages with users -- which includes replying to questions, retweeting things relevant to your campaign, find new people to follow -- more time and dedication is required.

#### *Money*

Managing a Twitter account can often be done with little or no spending. Building relationships with followers can be done organically. Twitter advertising can be successful for growing your follower count, and this can be done with small and large budgets alike. It’s also possible to promote tweets, which lets them reach people who are not following your account.

#### *Expertise*

Twitter has a rather steep learning curve. Building a successful presence will require investment in learning some Twitter-specific slang (RT, MT, DM, etc.) and best practices.

It's also critical to know who in your issue/campaign space to follow, e.g. decision-makers, key activists, and members of the media.

### **Uses in an Advocacy Setting**

#### *Grassroots*

Twitter can be useful in reaching new grassroots activists. By searching for people tweeting about your issue, you can find people who are already interested and primed to take action. Also, leaders in your campaign and in your issue area can reach and recruit new grassroots supporters by retweeting your campaign or tweeting calls-to-action on your behalf.

#### *Grasstops*

Twitter shines in its ability to connect with members of the media and decision-makers. Journalists make up a key demographic of Twitter, and often news stories break on Twitter before anywhere else. Your feed can be an excellent avenue for providing information to the media -- both to broadcast press release but also target specific journalists with pitches, suggestions, or corrections. Twitter can also be used to target decision-makers, especially by encouraging your supporters and followers to tweet at them. You can also build a list of influential tweeters who you can share press releases and calls-to-action with.