

Chapter 1

I Tweet, You Tweet, We All Tweet: Twitter and Your Business

In This Chapter

- ▶ Discovering Twitter
 - ▶ Marketing your business on Twitter
 - ▶ Throwing out traditional marketing methods
-

Imagine a world in which over 100 million potential customers are talking, sharing ideas, and shaping new realms of communication. This online platform has blasted through traditional marketing and communication concepts and created a world in which collaboration and customers are king. This world exists as Twitter (www.twitter.com).

Twitter has exploded, with growth rates of 585% year-over-year and over 100 million members as of this writing. All those Twitter users are potentially waiting for you to communicate with them. When you start using Twitter for your business, you're entering a new phase of Internet marketing in which you discuss your brand on a daily basis and send out your thoughts in bursts of 140 characters or less. You're on the leading edge of a communication and cultural transformation in the business landscape of the world. Isn't this exciting?

Twitter has disrupted the traditional marketing process and placed the customer in control of the marketing message. But don't fret! The future of marketing is bright — never before have you had such possibilities for growing your business. Twitter enables you to find potential customers quickly and easily and communicate with them with only a few keystrokes.

This chapter introduces you to the key concepts of marketing your business and products by using Twitter. (For help signing up with Twitter, see Chapter 2.)

Understanding How Twitter Works

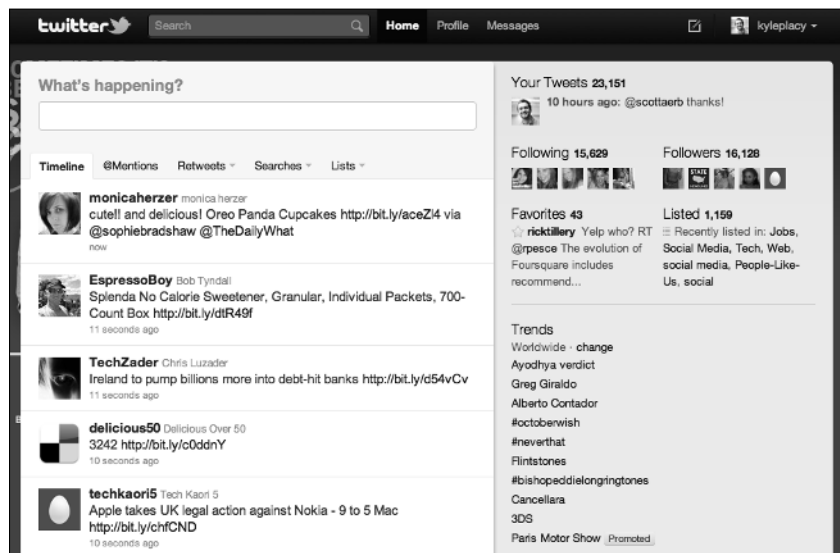
Twitter is a social network that gives you the ability to post messages of 140 characters or less. Twitter is a network with members throughout the world, and when you send out a message, Charles in London and Mary in California can read it at the same time. Imagine the possibilities for your business!

If you understand the concept of sending a text message from phone to phone, you can pick up Twitter easily. The same rules that apply to texting also apply to the world of Twitter, with one exception: On Twitter, you're limited to 140 characters to communicate a concrete thought.

Micro-blogging (tweeting)

Twitter is built on the concept of *micro-blogging*, in which people write short, frequent posts (often by using a cell phone) that don't exceed 140 characters. Those 140-character posts are known as *tweets*. Figure 1-1 shows a few tweets from several Twitter users.

Figure 1-1:
Twitter
users tweet
about what
they're
doing, what
they care
about, and
whatever
they feel like
communi-
cating.



Tweets are a form of micro-blogging that have enabled users to share massive amounts of content in the form of short text messages that they send to unique sets of people or entire groups. Twitter is one of the original

platforms for micro-blogging, and it has ruled this space since its creation in 2006. Micro-blogging has increased the speed of information ten-fold, in contrast to writing a blog post or writing an in-depth consumer report.



Blogging is a more elaborate approach to information sharing and marketing on the Web. Micro-blogging is a short-term approach that's ideal for quick and thoughtful communication. Blogging and micro-blogging should work hand-in-hand to create a platform that you can use to spread your business ideas to your customers and potential market.

Following others and being followed

When you *follow* somebody on Twitter, his or her tweets appear on your Twitter timeline (much like you can see your friends' status updates on your Facebook feed), as shown in Figure 1-2. The big difference between Twitter and Facebook is that you don't need other people's approval before you can follow them on Twitter, as long as they've set their Twitter accounts to public status.

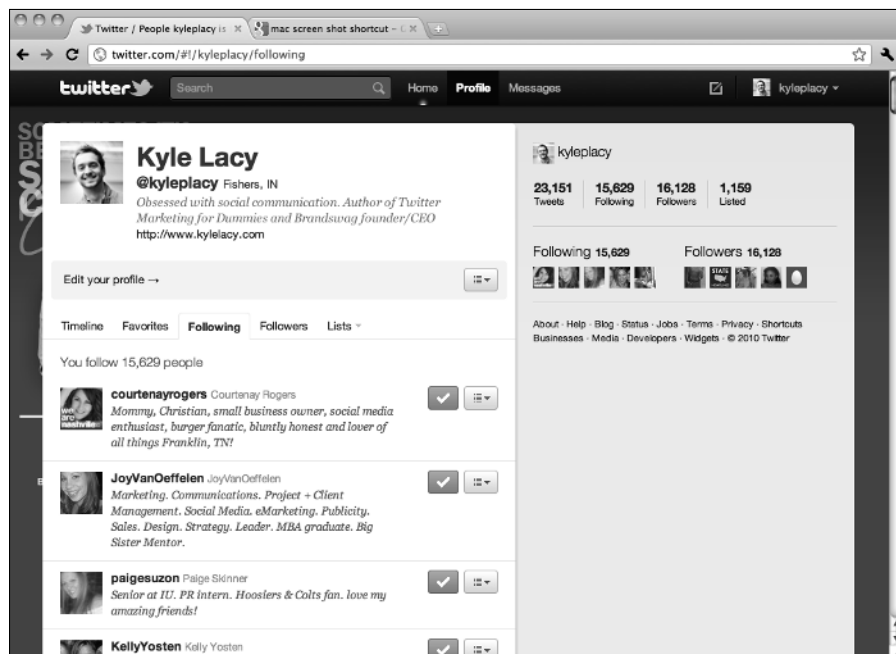


Figure 1-2: You want to follow many people, but you also need to be sure that you follow the right kind of people.

Being followed on Twitter has very little to do with being followed in real life, when you feel like someone is shadowing your every move. Every time you post a tweet, it appears on the Twitter timeline of all the people who are following you. If you're posting on Twitter as a business, you need followers on Twitter so that you can get your message out about your company, products, and services. Twitter also gives you the ability to have conversations with current and potential clients using the promotional tweets system.

So, you just need to follow as many people as possible and start tweeting about your products like there is no tomorrow, right? Not so fast. You need to have a plan, a strategy to make the most of Twitter, before you start following a bunch of people (or *tweeple*, as they're sometimes called in the Twittersverse).

Sharing with your followers and retweeting

When you start following others on Twitter, you need to share useful information with them so that they want to follow you, too. The information that your followers are interested in may vary depending on their focus and interests. But they're probably not dying to read a ton of tweets in a row in which you praise your products and services: If you take that approach, prepare to be *unfollowed* massively on Twitter.

You need to strike a balance between your marketing message (naturally, you want to promote your company, products, and services — otherwise, you wouldn't be reading this book), useful information about your industry, and some personal elements to give people a feel for the human side of your company. Along with all these elements, you also need to share useful tweets that others post on Twitter. Sending your followers a tweet that you've received is called *retweeting*, and it's considered part of the social currency on Twitter. You can see an example of a retweet in Figure 1-3.

Retweeting goes well beyond giving credit to whoever shared something: It indicates that you respect or like this person's opinion, thoughts, or whatever he or she tweets about. Also, when others retweet something you've posted, you can start to get your message out in the Twitter world — but you have to start by retweeting messages posted by other people before you can ask them to retweet your messages. For a more in-depth look at using retweeting in your marketing plan, check out Chapter 8.

Twitter community demographics

People who use Twitter for marketing purposes include marketing experts, celebrities, public-relations professionals, writers and authors, business owners, and employees. More importantly, the majority of Twitter users are your customers and peers. A popular myth is that Twitter is made up predominately of Generation Y Internet users (ages 18 to 34). However,

Pingdom (<http://www.pingdom.com>) has placed 64% of Twitter users at the age of 35 or older: The estimated average age of Twitter according to the website is 39.1.

What does this statistic mean for your business? It gives you insight into the kind of people who are using Twitter.

Figure 1-3: Retweeting what others post on Twitter shows respect and helps extend their messages.



Using Twitter in Your Business

You can use Twitter as a valuable marketing tool for your business, whether you have a small, medium-sized, or large business. Also, Twitter can help complement your company's current PR and customer service efforts. The following sections describe several ways that you can use Twitter for your business.

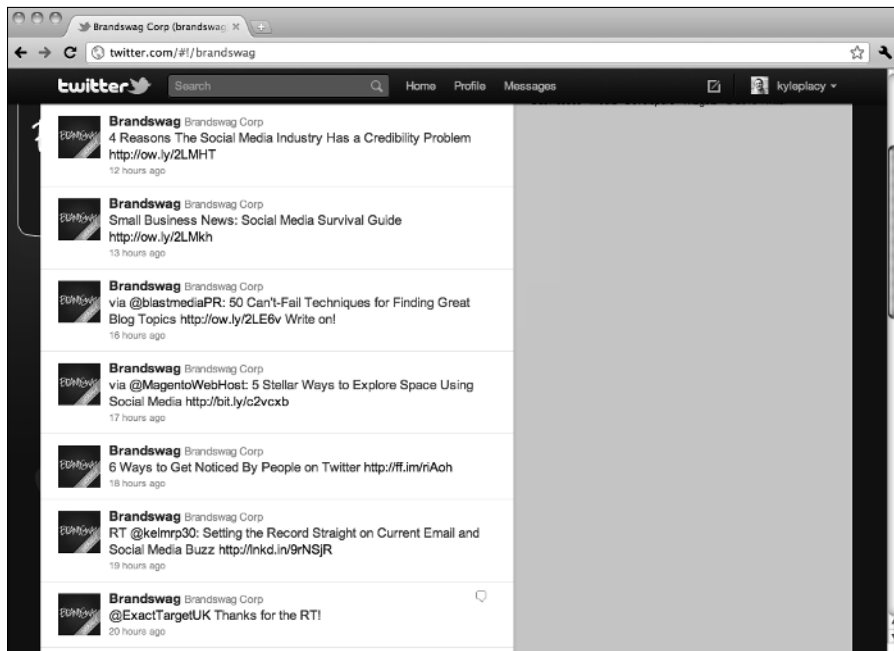
Sharing news and stories

Because Twitter gives you the ability to share 140-character thoughts in a split second, you can easily share links to PR releases and stories about your business, service, or product. But in order to make your tweets interesting and diverse so that you can hold on to and increase your followers, consider sharing news and stories about the industry that you serve. You can become a reference for people who are looking for information about the topic, and that status can ultimately gain you more followers who may become your customers.

You can also branch out into general news stories, keeping an eye on trending topics on Twitter, as described in Chapter 10. Tweeting about more than just your business and industry can help show the human side of your company; however, depending on what your Twitter marketing strategy is, keep your brand in mind when you use Twitter and consider what your tweets say about your brand as a whole. Make sure that you enhance and complement your brand's story through your tweets. The tweets by @brandswag in Figure 1-4 help tell the story of its brand, as summarized in the Twitter user's bio:

Ideas Infecting Business through Social Media, Marketing, and Design

Figure 1-4:
These tweets enhance the Twitter user's brand as a social-media branding expert.



Empowering your fans

Twitter gives you the ability to take a single thought and share it with millions of people. And your customer *evangelists* can spread your message, as well as their opinions about your company's greatness, to as many people as possible.

Your evangelists can help you get your message out, but you must first find out who they are and remember to give to them (by retweeting their interesting messages) before you ask for their support.

You can spot your fans and evangelists by keeping an eye on who retweets your posts most often. (Chapter 8 introduces some tools that can help you track that information.) Also, monitor Twitter trends in your industry so that you can spot the people you need to be listening to; see Chapter 10 for details.

Through a disciplined balance between listening to others and retweeting their useful contributions, eventually you earn the right to ask for their support in return. The reward may be as big as having your brand story go viral and getting picked up by thousands or millions of potential customers, as described in Chapter 9.

Customer service

Twitter can help you turn your company's customer service into a competitive advantage, as Comcast and Zappos.com have done through their highly personal and accessible customer service reps on Twitter. You can see an example of how Comcast offers customer service through Twitter in Figure 1-5.

If you involve the right people in your company on Twitter — and train them in time management and empower them to talk openly to customers — you can save both your customers and yourself time, money, and frustration: a true win-win situation.

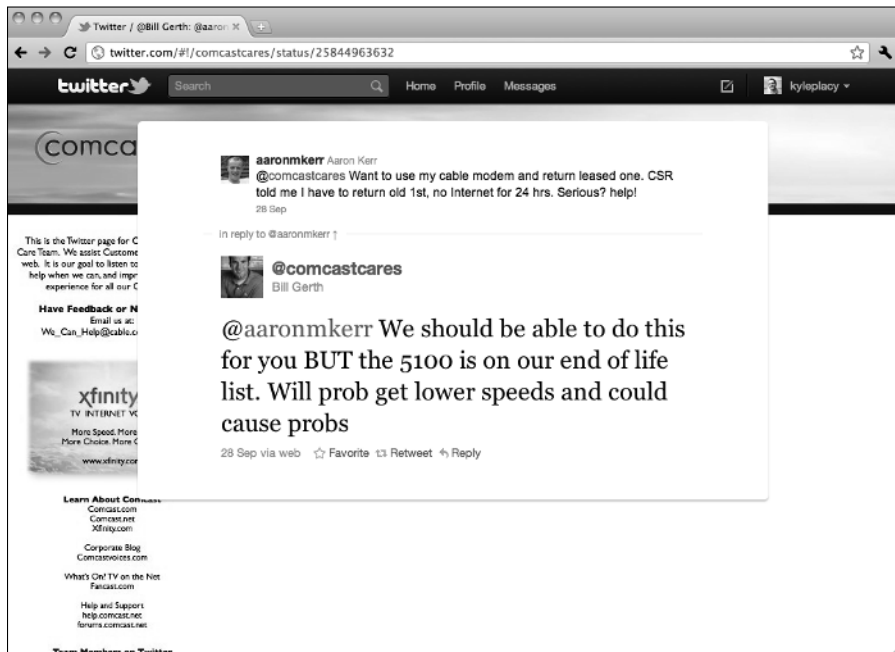
Finding a fit for your business



Examples of businesses that use Twitter can help you see how Twitter might fit with your business model. The following list describes just a few of the companies that have revolutionized the way businesses use Twitter customer service, business-to-consumer marketing, business-to-business marketing, and public relations:

- ✓ **Customer service:** Zappos.com (www.zappos.com), an online shoe retailer, is almost obsessed with customer satisfaction. Unsurprisingly, it adopted Twitter as a channel to communicate with its customers and offer customer service.
- ✓ **Business-to-consumer marketing:** Ford Motor Company is getting the word out about its new Fiesta model through the Fiesta Movement. If you visit www.fiestamovement.com, you can see how Twitter is a critical component of this promotional campaign.
- ✓ **Business-to-business marketing:** Duct Tape Marketing (www.ducttape-marketing.com) started several years ago as a book and blog aimed at small businesses. Today, it uses Twitter as part of its toolkit to deliver valuable information to its audience.
- ✓ **Public relations:** Old Spice (@oldspice) embraced Twitter as part of its social-media-centric PR strategy that was born by allowing Twitter users to ask questions of their Old Spice shirtless mascot guy, which in turn created huge amounts of traffic and positive brand awareness.

Figure 1-5:
@Comcast
Cares offers
Comcast
users
customer
service via
Twitter.



Marketing on Twitter

In old-school marketing, the idea was that the more you broadcasted a marketing message, the more your sales grew. Because of this idea, marketing departments of many companies ran much like machines. Yes, some creative thought was involved, but the communication model was more machine-like than most marketing professionals would care to admit.

They (the marketing machines) churned out hundreds of thousands of ideas in order to plaster on the public's minds the benefits of their products and services. More often than not, this approach worked because there was a more limited number of products and a more limited number of channels through which companies could market those products. So, you could more easily reach your audience. It was the age of broadcast, in which you sent the message in only one direction, and everyone on the receiving end consumed it.

In this age of social media (which Twitter is a part of), the machine is slowly morphing and giving way to a more sophisticated school of thought. The customer is now crafting brand messages. People are talking to other people. They share good and bad experiences, tips and tricks, and do's and don'ts — and you can only do so much in terms of pushing messages because everyone's attention has become incredibly fragmented. Millions of products compete for a slice of attention on a gazillion channels and Web sites, making it nearly impossible (and unreasonable) for a company to broadcast effectively anymore.



Instead of selling a message to a group of consumers, on Twitter you rely on your customers to talk about your product and help you reach others through word of mouth. Twitter is now at the forefront of the customer experience, where customers sell to customers. Companies no longer craft the thoughts and ideas of brands in the board room. Consumers create personal representations of brands in their living rooms, restaurants, and gathering places, and on their keyboards.

Marketing on Twitter works in a very different way than traditional marketing. Of course, you can help shape the dialogue: You certainly can (and should) participate in the conversations about your company, products, and services. But you no longer have absolute control over what gets said about them.

