Twitter 101
for Nonprofits

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What is Twitter?

Twitter's self-definition from a May 24, 2010 Facebook blog post:

Twitter is an **open, real-time introduction and information service**. On a daily basis we introduce millions to interesting people, trends, content, URLs, organizations, lists, companies, products and services. These introductions result in the formation of **a dynamic real-time interest graph**. At any given moment, the vast network of connections on Twitter paints a picture of a universe of interests. We follow those people, organizations, services and other users that interest us, and in turn, others follow us.

How can you use Twitter?

- as a microblogging platform - Write very short posts of 140 characters or less (via web browser, SMS, desktop apps or mobile devices).
- as a social network - Connect with others worldwide who have common interests, communicate to get the word out about your organization and create an extended community for your organization.

Focus on the 3 C's:
- **connection**
- **communication**
- **community**

Why use Twitter?

- News breaks *first* on Twitter! It's hard to beat for immediacy and has become the go-to source for breaking news. What news would YOUR organization like to break?
- Instant P.R. - No waiting for items to appear in newspapers, websites, newsletters -- you control the message to your community in real time.
- Generate enormous goodwill for your organization by engaging directly with those who support you.
- Drive users to your Facebook fan page and website.
- Get instant feedback on what you're promoting.
- It's one more tool in your fundraising tool kit. It's free and has worldwide, immediate reach.

Twitter's Reach:

- In 2007, there were 5,000 tweets per day worldwide.
- In 2010, there are 55,000,000 tweets per day worldwide!

That may sound like a lot of 'noise' if you're not using the platform...but for organizations, it's turning out to provide a lot of value.

For a list of many nonprofits that are using Twitter, go to:

http://wefollow.com/twitter/nonprofit

Twitter Tips for Nonprofits:

- Don't try to use traditional marketing methods and thinking. Tweeters like an organization's Twitter feed to have an authentic, real voice. Tweets are not the same as press releases. Don't be detached -- connect.
- Keep it professional and engage respectfully with your followers. Use correct grammar and spelling, stay cordial, and always say please and thank you.
- Follow back everyone who follows you. Save selectivity for your own personal Twitter account. If someone cares enough to subscribe to your organization's Twitter feed, follow them.
- Use hashtags! They're a primary Twitter search tool. Utilize them. They're one more way to promote your organization.

Twitter Tips for Nonprofits (cont'd):

- Don't tweet only about your own organization. Tweet articles or blog posts that you think are good reads. One of the main ways to build value for your Twitter feed is through the Retweet function. Don't be afraid to retweet and you'll soon find that others might retweet your original tweets.
- Utilize the power of Lists. Create lists for groups, categories, events, etc.
- Favorites can be an organizational tool by tagging favorite tweets and/or tweeters.
- Don't use auto-follow messages! There are programs that send a Direct Message to all of your new followers. Most people don't like them and consider them spam.

Ways Your Nonprofit Might Use Twitter:

- Relay information, share links, ask and answer questions.
- Don't just be a news feed -- think of ways to inspire and motivate your community.
- Use Search to find conversations related to your field. Who's having the conversations? What are they saying? What's missing? How can you contribute?
- Host a live chat using hashtags. It's a great way to engage with your followers.
- Ask your followers to sign a petition. Act.ly (http://act.ly/) is one Twitter petition platform.
- Integrate tweeting into your organization's other existing programs. You might ask your followers to use tweets to monitor, respond or report.

Ways Your Nonprofit Might Use Twitter:

- Generate new memberships; find new supporters.
- Recruit volunteers.
- Expand idea generation for strategic planning. Ask your followers to share their ideas on how you can better serve them.
- Cross-promote your Twitter feed on your Facebook page and your website.

Your Organization's Account:

- User Name - Twitter ID
- Real Name - organization name
- Bio - description of your nonprofit -The website URL will appear as a link just above the bio in the sidebar.
- Profile - public page viewable by all
- Following - number of accounts you follow
- Followers - number of accounts that subscribe to your Twitter feed
- Home Timeline - a chronological, real-time stream of every tweet posted by the accounts you follow - Click refresh to see new tweets.

Your Organization's Account (cont'd):

- Blocking - If you block someone from following you, they will not be able to see your tweets or add you to a list. (Twitter is not spam-free - read streams carefully to make sure you want to follow back.)
- Listed - numbers of others' lists that include your account
- Lists - links to the public lists you have created and the lists created by others that you've chosen to follow
- Favorites - To mark a tweet (either your own or someone else's) as a favorite, click the star icon to the right of the tweet. It will appear on your Favorites page in the sidebar.
- Saved Searches - You can save a search results page and it will continue to update with real-time tweets.

Sending Tweets:

- Tweet - an individual post of 140 characters or less - Tweet is a noun and a verb (tweet, tweeting, tweeted). A person who tweets is a tweeter or Twitterer.
- Retweet (RT) - Sending another user's tweet to everyone who follows you. Click the Retweet link in the lower right corner of the tweet. It will appear in your followers' timelines exactly as it appeared in yours (under the original tweeter's user ID). On your Retweets page, you will see every retweet by you and every one of your tweets that was RT'd by someone else.
- Direct Message (DM) - a private message (limited to 140 characters or less) seen only by you and the recipient - Your Direct Messages page has both Sent and Received Tabs.

Receiving Tweets:

- Replies (@username) - Other Twitter users respond to your tweets by sending tweets with your user name (typically) at the beginning of a tweet. The user name must be preceded by @. A list of these tweets appears on your replies/mention page which is listed in your sidebar as @(username).
- Mentions - Every time someone includes your @(username) in a tweet -- whether they're replying, mentioning you or just want to make sure you see the tweet -- it appears on your @(username) page.
- Unfollow - If you would no longer like to subscribe to someone's tweets, you can unfollow them.

How to Connect & Build Community:

- Find People - Click Find People at the top of the page to search for individuals, organizations, businesses, etc. There are tabs for Browse Suggestions, Find Friends and Invite by Email.
- Search - Use the search box in the sidebar to search by name, keyword, subject, hashtag, etc.
- Lists - You can create lists specific to a group, common interest, event, etc. NOTE: You do not have to follow someone to place them on a list...but you can.
- Others' Lists - Any lists you follow that were created by others will appear below your self-created lists in the sidebar.
- Twitter Home Page - The log-in page has four options to find accounts: a search box, current trending topics, See Who's Here and Top Tweets.
- Retweets by Others - This tab on your Retweets page can be a good source for finding new accounts to follow.
- Trending Topics - Click any trending topic in the sidebar to see everyone's tweets about it.

Good to Know:

- Fail Whale - You'll know it when you see it -- the famous graphic that appears when Twitter is momentarily unavailable.
- Follow Friday (#FF) - On Fridays some tweeters like to give a shout-out to some of their favorite Twitter accounts. If you'd like to participate, tweet the @username (it's okay to list several in a single tweet) and include the #FF hashtag. It's customary to send a reply tweet to anyone who has #FF'd you to thank them.
- URL shortener - To shorten a link to fit into a tweet, use a URL shortener. Bit.ly is a good one (http://bit.ly/).
- Time Stamp - Each tweet has a time stamp below it. Click the time stamp to get that tweet's URL. This is handy if you want to send it as a link.
- Verified - The accounts of well-known public figures are often verified. Look for a blue checkmark and "Verified" above their name in the sidebar.

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- This class is designed to show you the basics and fundamentals of navigating the web application at:
  http://twitter.com
- There are many third-party Twitter applications and one or some may prove helpful for you. Many of them can be found listed at the Twitter fan wiki:
  http://twitter.pbworks.com/Apps
- Check "Settings" at the top of your Twitter page and then "Mobile" to set up your phone to use Twitter via text messaging.