

How To: Get Started on Twitter

A Guide for Restaurants

30th June 2009

Getting Started on Twitter

What is Twitter?

Twitter is a free social networking and micro-blogging service that enables its users to send and read other users' updates known as tweets. Tweets are text-based posts of up to 140 characters, displayed on the user's profile page and delivered to other users who have subscribed to them (known as followers).

Think of Twitter as a pond of fish. There are fish out there (Twitter users) that you want to attract, and so you need to sprinkle a little food on the surface so that they congregate around your corner of the pond. The "food" is your Twitter updates, and if it's tasty they tell their friends and come back for more. Your following will grow. People will follow you for a reason, so make sure that you are consistent in your updates. Keep feeding your fish and your shoal will grow.

A Few Questions to Ask Yourself

First of all, ask "why?" How do you want to be perceived by your followers? Who do you want to be? Your Twitter presence should be a natural extension of your brand. Think about how you portray yourself elsewhere and make sure that your Twitter identity lives up to those ideals.

Getting Started

First of all, you need to create a Twitter account: <https://twitter.com/signup>

A couple of things to consider when choosing an account name:

- i) Keep it short. Twitter space is limited (140 characters), and so if someone were to forward your message to their followers, and they were to include your name, then every character that you use for your name limits the character space left for the message.
- ii) Keep it meaningful. If your Restaurant name is "Benares", then simply having an account name of "Benares" is perfect. Then for your first name and last name, simply choose "Benares Restaurant".

When you create a Twitter account you need to also create a "Bio". This is a short description of who you are and what you're all about. Why would someone want to follow you? Do not underestimate the importance of getting this right. Include your location (e.g. London, Mayfair) and also include your website address.

Be sure to select a good image for your logo and don't use the default image. Make it yours.

Sending Out Tweets

Once you set up an account you can start 'Tweeting' straight away. You can do this from Twitter and make sure of course that your updates give some kind of extra value. This could be to highlight special offers and events, but often it might be an insight into what going on within the restaurant, or with some members of the team. Show a personal touch, but think "what would my customers LIKE to know?", not just what you want them to know.

If you have a Blackberry, be sure to download Twitterberry (<http://www.orangatame.com/products/twitterberry/>) so that you can Tweet on the move, away from your desk. This means you can quickly drop in a discreet message from the bus, on the train or from inside the restaurant.

If you have an iPhone, a good application for the same purpose is Tweetie (<http://www.atebits.com/tweetie-iphone/>)

Scanning the Airwaves

From your desk computer, you can really start to use Twitter even better by installing "Tweetdeck". It's a Twitter browser that you can really customise. Tweet deck is free (<http://www.tweetdeck.com>) and allows to perform a number of really neat tricks:

- i) You can set up a column for searches that contain your brand name. You could for example set up a search for "YOURNAME" (which might show you some results of people tweeting your restaurant name). If you find them, follow them, they're your customers (maybe) and if you follow them, they might follow you back. This by the way is what people are saying right now: <http://search.twitter.com/search?q=YOURNAME>
- ii) You can shorten URLs. If you want to provide a link to your website (<http://www.YOURLONGNAME.com>) that's a lot of characters (out of your limit of 140!). In Tweetdeck you can shorten the URL so it looks something like this; <http://bit.ly/RANDOM> - that's now only 19 characters, so you have more characters to play with
- iii) You can monitor what's going on with competitors. Set up searches to see what people say about your competitors
- iv) You can create groups of people that you follow (e.g. just view people from in the hospitality industry, or your known customers, or chefs)

Generating Traffic

A few tips on how to get people to follow you:

- i) Start following them! If you follow people that interest you and your restaurant, they might follow you back.
- ii) Look at who other people are following and see if there's anyone on those lists that you might find interesting.

- iii) Once you have some followers, follow MrTweet. Based on your followers' recommendations, MrTweet makes recommendations to others.
- iv) Advertise your Twitter address in the restaurant, e.g. when you pass out your bill, on your card, on your website, on your email footers

List yourself on Twitter directories. Here's a list to get you started:
http://news.cnet.com/8301-17939_109-10199077-2.html

Suggestions of Who to Follow in the Hospitality Space

All of the below are <http://twitter.com/NAME> where the name is the first name listed below

Consumer websites

- BookaTable
- tastelondon
- TimeOutEatDrink
- SquareMeal
- TimesFood

Selected restaurants / restaurant groups

- GRamsayHoldings
- Sweetmandarin
- Prohibition
- RainforestCafe
- gauchogroup
- giraffetweet

Chefs

- hestonblumenth
- jamie_oliver

Industry bodies or specialists

- Livebookings
- caterersearch
- BigHospitality
- QMG
- CatererNews
- hospitalityhub
- Thecaterer
- intuteh1st
- hospitalitynet
- IoH_online
- FishbowlInc
- Manne

Further Reading and Resources

Using and Measuring Twitter

http://adage.com/digital/article?article_id=136662

How to Twitter like a Pro

<http://www.gissisim.com/2009/03/how-to-twitter-like-a-pro>

How to TweetDeck Like a Pro

<http://www.gissisim.com/2009/03/how-to-twitter-like-a-pro>

Twitter Tools

<http://www.onlinebestcolleges.com/blog/2009/100-twitter-tools-to-help-you-achieve-all-your-goals/>

Twitterquette - Good Manners for Twitter Users

<http://www.david-norris.co.uk/2009/03/twitterquette-good-manners-for-twitter.html>