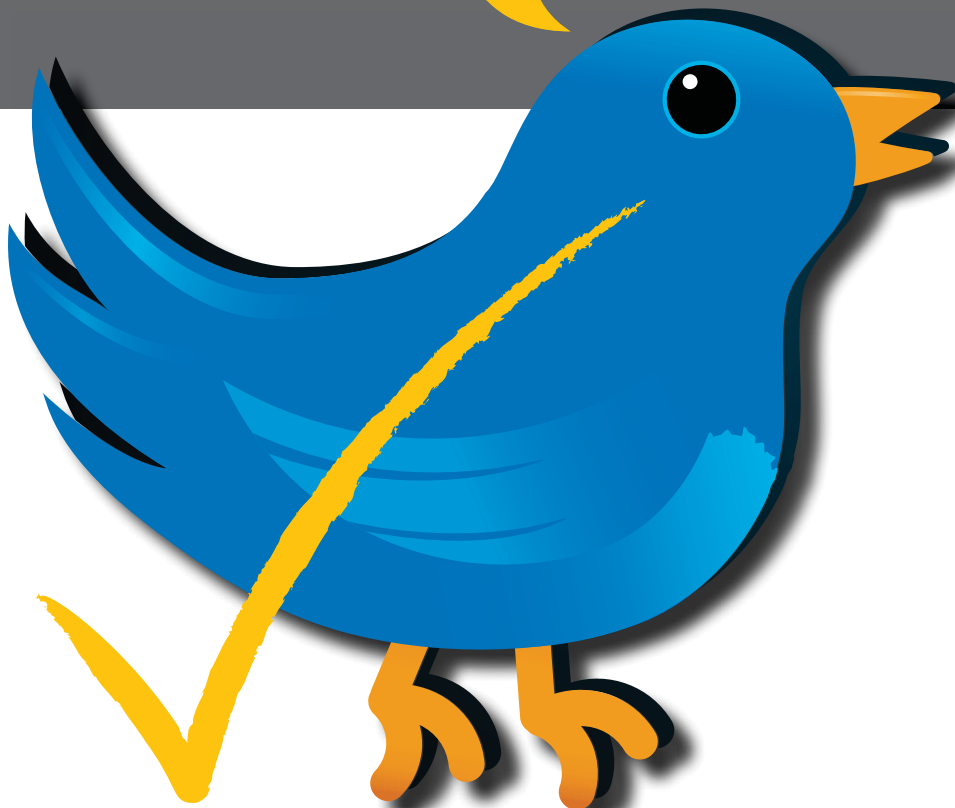


# It's Time to Start Tweeting

Laurie Steiner



It's the era of the iPad. The Kindle, Internet browsing from the sky, Pandora, YouTube, Evite and Twitter have penetrated each and every aspect of our lives—and the workplace. If you haven't jumped on the digital media bandwagon, you're simply going to be left behind.

The question is—how does your company, product or service remain relevant? How do you stay at the top of your industry? What tools and resources will help you retain the attention of your audience?

You're not the first person who heard about social media and wondered where to begin. It can be overwhelming and even scary for those who haven't yet taken the plunge, jumping in with two feet first. So here's your chance—it's time to start tweeting.

## What is Twitter?

Twitter is a microblogging site that allows you to update your status with short messages limited to 140 characters or less. With Twitter, you are the content provider.

Not sure where to begin? These steps will help you get started.

- Create an account at <http://www.twitter.com> by choosing a Twitter name and password.
- Provide some general profile information under the “Settings” tab, upload a profile picture and customize your background.
- Post messages in no more than 140 characters.

## Terms to remember

- **Handle** – The username you choose for your Twitter profile is your Twitter handle.
- **Avatar** – Your avatar is the image you upload to your Twitter profile.
- **Tweet** – A posted message is referred to as a tweet.
- **Follow** – When you wish to subscribe to another user's tweets, this is called following. Subscribers are the “followers.” If you like the tweets another user posts and would like them to show up on your Twitter homepage, simply follow them.
- **@ reply** – An @ reply is used when you want to talk to or refer to someone in a tweet. By including the @ symbol

before a user's handle, it becomes a link to a Twitter profile. For example, if you want to say hi to IFMA and are okay with others seeing the message, you could say, "Hello @IFMA!" and others would be able to click on @IFMA, going to their profile directly.

- **Direct message** – A direct message (DM) is a private message between a sender and recipient.
- **Favorite** – See a tweet that you like and want to come back to later? You can mark any tweets as a favorite by clicking on the yellow star next to the tweet. This will save the marked tweet as a favorite and will then appear under your "Favorites" on the right hand side of your homepage.
- **Hashtag** – The # sign can be used to indicate and mark keywords or topics of interest in a tweet. By placing the # symbol before a word, it becomes a clickable link. That link with the # sign before it is referred to as a hashtag.
- **Lists** – Group together and categorize the users you follow by creating lists. Displayed on the right side of your homepage, the lists you create allow you to view specific groups of those you follow at one time.
- **Retweet** – If you like what another user tweeted and want to tweet it yourself, you can retweet (RT) their content. Retweeting is when you forward another user's tweet to all of your followers.

For a more detailed list of Twitter terms, search the glossary at <http://support.twitter.com>.

### What's next?

Once you've set up your account and are ready to interact on Twitter, start tweeting. You can post information about your offerings, industry news and company announcements, and links to news articles and resources.

Use Twitter as a way to connect with current and potential customers, buyers, other companies and organizations. Many also consider it their go-to news outlet, following @CNN, @USATODAY, @Reuters and the like for updates on local, regional and world news. You can even find and share special offers and deals on your favorite products and services, host or participate in contests, and win prizes via Twitter.

**There are now more than 100 million Twitter users worldwide—a true indication of the possibilities and opportunities it can provide.**

### Maintaining transparency

As with all social media, Twitter is about merging your professional and personal lives into one and remaining as transparent, real and honest as possible. Every tweet you post will be publicly visible, unless you set your updates to private. If your updates are private, you will receive a request whenever someone wishes to follow your tweets. This allows you to maintain complete

control over who views your content but can limit transparency—a key component of the social media sphere.

One way to maintain your privacy while also remaining transparent is through the use of direct messages. If you want to send a message to someone without others seeing it, a direct message will only go to a specific user and will not be seen by anyone else who subscribes to your content. However, in order to direct message a user, the relationship must be mutual and both parties must be following one another.

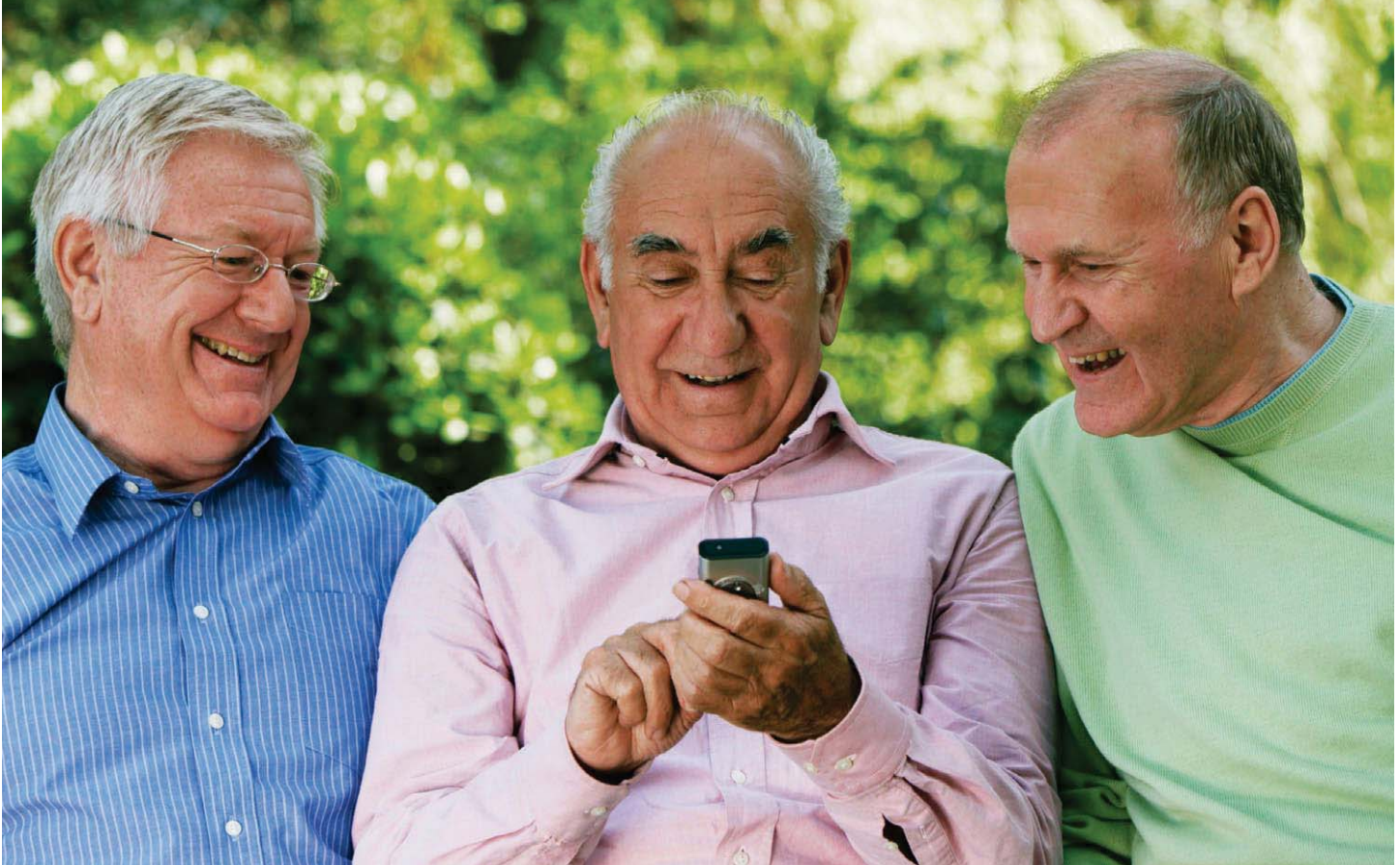
In addition, keep in mind that it's okay not to follow everyone who follows you. Unlike other social media sites where you must accept someone's friendship, Twitter allows users to follow and unfollow as they please. You have the freedom to follow users who post content you are interested in seeing; don't feel obligated to follow someone back when they follow you. The same is true of those you follow, as they may not necessarily follow you back.

### Common concerns

Of course, with transparency comes concerns. What if a spammer starts following you on Twitter? What happens when a user posts inappropriate content that you wish to report?

Twitter includes tools that allow you to block and report users who abuse the system. For instance, if someone begins following you and they are posting links to inappropriate content or sites, you might wish to a) block them from following you and b) report them to Twitter as spam.





To block a user, simply go to the profile page of the user you wish to block and click the block link under the “Actions” section. Twitter provides more detailed instructions on blocking at <http://support.twitter.com/articles/117063-how-to-block-users-on-twitter>.

If you wish to report a user to Twitter, visit the profile page of the user you wish to report and click on the report for spam link in the “Actions” section. This will alert Twitter directly that this user is misusing or abusing the site. More information on reporting spam can be found at <http://support.twitter.com/articles/64986-how-to-report-spam-on-twitter>.

### Tweet via your mobile

While users may log on to social media sites via their computer or laptop, these tools are also available on a variety of mobile devices including the iPhone, Google Android, Blackberry, iPad and more.

For devices that offer downloadable applications, you can download a number of Twitter apps from the App Store. Some of these include Twitterific, Twitter for Blackberry, Tweetdeck, Tweetie and Echofon. Many mobile devices even come with Twitter

already installed. For those who don't have an app-ready phone but have Internet capabilities, simply visit the site from your mobile browser and log in.

You might be asking yourself, “But why do I need Twitter on my phone?”

By participating in the conversation, making connections and networking through Twitter, you are entering a whole new realm of availability and customer service. This mobile capability allows users to send updates and tweet regularly—even multiple times a day. While content is of utmost importance on Twitter, it's also essential to remain part of the discussion by interacting often. It's about being present for your counterparts, stakeholders, current and potential customers, and maintaining relevancy in the midst of a continuously changing online conversation.



### Jump in

Twitter offers an affordable (free) way to interact with the growing markets you participate in. Since its creation in 2006, Twitter has grown exponentially and expanded to include Fortune 500 companies, non-profit organizations, national and international news outlets, and entrepreneurs. There are now more than 100 million Twitter users worldwide—a true indication of the possibilities and opportunities it can provide.

So go ahead. Jump in with two feet first and start tweeting. After all, it is the 21st century. See you online. **FMJ**



Laurie Steiner is the senior associate editor of the *Facility Management Journal* at IFMA. She also handles IFMA's social networking outlets and new media initiatives through Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and more.

Steiner will present “Social Media: What is it and How Does IFMA Use it Today?” on Oct. 28, 2010, at IFMA's World Workplace 2010 Conference & Expo in Atlanta, Ga.

If you would like to continue the Twitter conversation, find her on Twitter, @LaurieSteiner. She may also be reached directly at +1-281-974-5664 or via e-mail at [laurie.steiner@ifma.org](mailto:laurie.steiner@ifma.org).