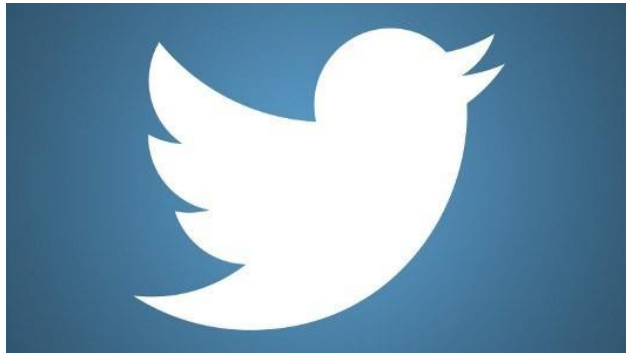


Building Your Tweet Cred

A How-To Guide For Nonprofits



Twitter doesn't have to be scary.

With over 300 million monthly users, Twitter has quickly become the platform of choice for many nonprofits seeking to reach their followers. By creating a well-designed Twitter account, organizations can tell their story, engage communities, enlarge their volunteer base, acquire donors, and keep their supporters up to speed on the latest events and campaigns. This post will outline how to 1) **set up your profile**, 2) **develop a strategy**, 3) **produce quality content** 4) **maximize your audience and impact**, and 5) **track and monitor your results**.

Part 1: Set Up Your Profile

A magnet for first impressions, your Twitter profile will be one of the most visible descriptions of your organization on the Internet. So you have to make it count.

Step 1: Create a Twitter and fill out your profile entirely. An estimated 5% of Twitter profiles are fake, and oftentimes they are easy to spot. No profile picture, no bio, and few to no followers. As you're creating an account, think of your profile as your first chance to make an impression on a potential follower, and make sure you give them a good reason to start following along.



Don't leave your profile picture looking like this.

Step 2: Write your Twitter bio. After you've created an account with an identifiable handle (e.g. @SkollFoundation), it's time to write [your bio](#). The *New York Times* has called the Twitter bio a "[postmodern art form](#)." In only 160 characters, you must communicate your organization's mission, incorporate relevant keywords, mention its location, and include a link to your website or blog, all the while being intriguing, accurate, upbeat, and irresistibly charming.

Easy enough right?

Here are a few examples of organizations that do a great job in their bios:



Ocean Conservancy's bio is engaging yet concise.



The Ford Foundation's bio gets right to the point.

Notice that these bios mention location, contain a website url, and use **powerful action verbs** to tell their organization's story. Notice also how @FordFoundation's bio links to [Darren Walker's](#) Twitter, humanizing the organization and providing another useful connection.

If you're having trouble writing your organization's bio, think about using language that would allow someone to find your profile in an Internet search. That means as long as you avoid jargon, it's okay to employ keywords that your followers associate with you.



Sightsavers makes the most of 160 characters.

[@Sightsavers](#) does a great job here of using keywords and a hashtag (more on this later) to enhance their bio. But even better than that, their bio includes a call to action: "join our campaign."



Resource Media's profile picture.

Step 3: Choose a profile picture and a background photo. Twitter, like most social networks, is a visual medium. Users see your profile picture when looking at your Twitter page, but they also see your profile picture as a thumbnail next to all of your Tweets. Given that many users check their Twitter notifications via phone, where your profile picture will appear even smaller, having easy to see visuals and recognizable images that say who you are is important.

Many organizations use their logo for the profile picture, and display the organization or their work somehow in the background photo. Where [Human Rights Watch](#) uses images of people, the [World Wide Fund for Nature](#) has an image of a panda. For many nonprofits, a

behind the scenes image of the office, volunteers, or employees can be very effective. Rule of thumb: feature the people you work with and the daily impact you make.

Step 4: Learn the Twitter basics. Once you've set up your profile, you'll want to make sure that you customize the settings correctly. Make sure your account is public so that everyone can see it. Manage your notification settings in order to receive notice when someone interacts with your content.



Twitter is nothing to freak out about.

Now, there are a few basic **terms you need to know**:

Tweet: A piece of content a user has posted on Twitter.

Hashtag (#): A way to categorize conversations on Twitter and make them more searchable. Your Tweet will show up in any search of the term.

Retweet (RT): A reposting of the author's Tweet that appears on your timeline. This can be done in three ways. First, by clicking the Retweet icon. Second, by writing RT @username followed by the original Tweet. This allows users to leave a comment of their own *before* the RT. Third, Twitter's "quote Tweet" function embeds the original Tweet (and link) within your Tweet, allowing you 116 characters to leave a longer comment. To use a quote Tweet, click the Retweet icon and add a comment.

Direct Message (DM): Twitter allows you to send private messages to anyone who follows you. However, some users decide to receive [DMs from anyone](#).

Favorite: Like a Facebook "like," a favorite—represented by a small heart—is used to show appreciation for a Tweet.

Reply: A public response to a Tweet containing the hyperlinked username of the person to whom you are replying. Note that if you begin a Tweet with @username, only you, @username, and the people who follow you both will be able to see it. To make a Tweet public that starts with an @username, begin with a period ([.@username](#)).



This Tweet can be seen by everyone.

Part 2: Develop Your Twitter Strategy

You've created a profile with a robust bio and stirring visuals, and now you know the lingo. It's time to think about what you want to accomplish.

Step 1: Identify your goals. Organizations use Twitter differently. Some set out to build thought leadership and engage community. Others seek donors and volunteers, promoting their fundraising campaigns, educating followers, and calling supporters to action.

Step 2: Identify your target audience. Who are you trying to reach and why? The answer to this question will determine the content you post and the way you use Twitter to tell your organization's story.

Step 3: Evaluate your resources. It may take some time to decide how exactly Twitter fits into your overall organizational strategy. But in the meantime, it helps to be able to answer a few **key questions**:

Who will be in charge of your organization's Twitter? Will there be one voice or many? How much time can you realistically devote to Twitter? Will you spend that time researching, building your follower base, or engaging in conversation? Is there going to be an approval process for new Tweets? (Many of these questions come from a great post at [Echo & Co.](#))

Once you evaluate the energy and resources your organization has, you can begin to forge a Twitter strategy around that.

Part 3: Produce Quality Content

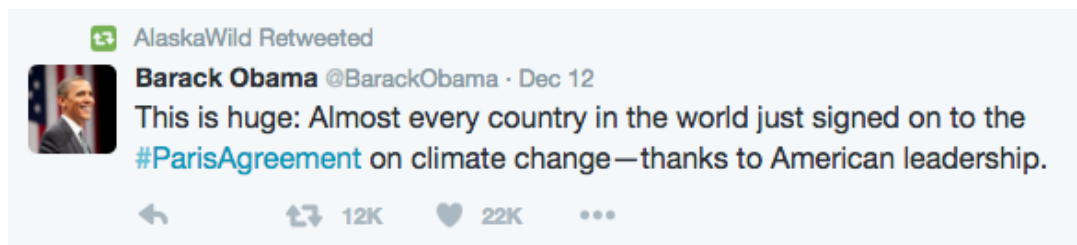
Regardless of your goals, a successful Twitter is one that gains followers. And the only surefire way to get people to follow you is to produce content that is interesting, retweetable, and consistent.



Twitter can be informal, casual, and fun! Would you want to watch this?

Step 1: Begin creating content. Make your Twitter timeline a place that your followers want to visit for information, for inspiration, and for content that only you can offer. Tweet about things that are newsworthy. Tweet about what matters to your supporters. If you can't answer the question, "Would *I* want to read these Tweets and click on their embedded links?" with an affirmative, it needs some work.

There are various theories about the type of content one should produce, but the general consensus is that it should be a combination of content from others (Retweets, links), your own content (blogs, updates, links to information or articles on your website), and calls to action (fundraising, calls for volunteers).



Retweets are a great way to populate your Twitter timeline.

Step 2: Craft engaging Tweets. With only 140 characters to work with, taking the time to format an easy to read, simple tweet with a link, image, or video can make all the difference. And research shows that you can increase engagement with a few [simple tricks](#).

Insert image links. Tweets with image links are 2x as likely to be retweeted. So be sure to adorn your timeline with compelling photos that make your followers want to click on the links they illustrate. Use an image of your own, grab one from a Creative Commons site like [Flickr](#), or create a meme with a tool like [Canva](#) or [PicMonkey](#). Before you upload your images, you can [format them](#), although photos can now be [viewed in any size](#) on Twitter.com.

Keep it short and sweet. Tweets between 120 and 130 characters get the most engagement. Make your Tweets short enough that someone can Retweet and add their own comment. Stop your links from taking up too much space with [free url shorteners](#).

Be authentic. Twitter is a place for personality. Don't be afraid to share things that are humorous, casual, and maybe even exciting. Use your Twitter to build anticipation for your events, and give people a reason to rally behind your cause.

Step 3: Use hashtags intelligently. This one is essential. Hashtags can be used to start a conversation, as [Sightsavers](#) did with their #MillionMiracles campaign. Once you've created a hashtag, you can track the number of Tweets, Retweets, and favorites you receive along with the number of times your hashtag is used.



This Tweet uses a hashtag in the text as well as the photo.

Hashtags can also act as connectors from your content to conversations-in-progress, especially when certain hashtags are “trending,” meaning many people are currently using

them. Tweeting with a hashtag that is already trending can increase the attention it gets, but depending on its popularity your voice might be drowned out by the crowd.

Tweets with hashtags get 2x the engagement, but engagement is highest on Tweets with only 1 to 2 hashtags. Any more than two and engagement levels go down. So in choosing your hashtags you have to be selective.

That's why it's important to research a hashtag before you use it. Study up on [hashtags all environmentalists should know](#). Use [Trendsmap](#) to show which hashtags are trending in your area. Check out [Hashtagify](#) to see which hashtags are being used with one another and to see their relative popularity. Take a look at [RiteTag](#) for data on which hashtags can boost your reach. Use [Keyhole](#) for real-time hashtag tracking, to reveal the most popular Tweets with a specific hashtag and the influencers using that hashtag. Spend some time experimenting with these sites to find out which hashtag tools best fit your needs.



Washington Environmental Council makes a call to action with the #CrudeOilExportBan hashtag.

Step 4: Learn when to Tweet. There are [all sorts of theories](#) about what time of day, what day of the week, and how many times per day you should Tweet. As a general rule, think about when your followers will be looking at Twitter: during their commute, at their lunch break, in the evening, and on the weekend. Sure enough, Retweets and click-throughs are highest in the morning, at noon, and at 5 or 6pm. And on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays, engagement rates are even higher. (Check out this [cheat sheet infographic](#) for more stats.)

Also, remember that there can be too much of a good thing. Don't overtweet and clog your followers' feeds with 78 ducks covered in toxic algae. That's not fun for anyone. That being said, posting multiple times a day can reach followers in different time zones and folks who check Twitter at different times.

A great way to reach new followers is to “live-Tweet” a conference or fundraising event, posting pictures and quotes of notable moments. These short bursts of engagement can gain you a large concentration of Twitter connections in a short period of time.

Step 5: Auto-schedule your Tweets. It can save your organization a ton of time and energy to create a backlog of Tweets ready for posting at pre-set times. Using tools like [HootSuite](#) or [TweetDeck](#), you can set up a calendar to plan your posts ahead of time. Through HootSuite, you can also set up keyword and hashtag monitoring streams, and you can geolocate these streams to keep tabs on what’s trending close to home.



Women at the Center posts an effective image on #humanrightsday.

Part 4: Maximize Your Audience and Impact

When someone Retweets you, favorites one of your Tweets, or mentions you in a Tweet, they are seeking a connection with you.

Step 1: Be connected. Twitter is all about connectivity. If you want to build your Twitter following, you should start by tapping into the communication networks that already exist and seeing if you can contribute to those conversations.

For starters, follow people so that they follow you back. Local media outlets, reporters, producers, your partners, tastemakers, influencers, etc.—follow as many people as you can. And when someone follows you, make sure to follow them back. Following individuals with large audiences (and a high Klout score) on Twitter can help amplify your message if they Retweet your posts.

Retweet people who mention you, reply to people who ask questions, and thank your followers. Over time, being vigilant about connectivity will build your relationships with your supporters.



With this “quote Tweet,” the Skoll Foundation builds connectivity by congratulating Global Witness.

Step 2: Promote your Twitter. In addition to following your followers back, there are [other ways to promote your account](#). Put your Twitter handle on all of your correspondence and marketing materials—your email, your blog, your business cards, etc. Make the link to your Twitter easy to find on your website, and you can even display popular Tweets on your homepage. And don't be afraid to give out your Twitter account at conferences and other networking events.

Step 3: Repurpose and repost your content. In addition to Tweeting out original content, you can also repurpose content from your Facebook, blog, or website. If you have a new blog, write a Tweet linking to it with a different headline. And vice versa—if you have an overwhelmingly positive response to a Tweet, write a blog post expanding on it and share it on Twitter.

Additionally, reposting old content can allow you to reach your new followers, get more traffic, and hit more time zones. If you posted a popular Tweet a few weeks ago, you can repost it. Just change the hashtags, add a different image, or use a quote to replace the original headline.

Step 4: Track and monitor your results. By examining your Twitter analytics with a site like [Twitalyzer](#), which tracks and reports on your data, you can evaluate the success rate of your Twitter strategy and make sure your Tweets pack the biggest punch. This way, you can learn what's working and what isn't, understand your follower demographics, and improve your reach. Currently, the fastest growing demographic on Twitter is the 55–64 year age bracket.



Even this couple has a Twitter now!

As you can see, mastering Twitter is all about getting into the Goldilocks zone: not too long and not too short, not too many hashtags and not too few, not too often and not too seldom.

Once you've set up your profile and begun to produce quality content, be sure to reevaluate your strategy periodically. Twitter can be a powerful tool for good if you have the resources and the energy to maximize your audience and impact. Like anything, building your *Tweet cred* takes some practice.



Resource Media posts a perfect Tweet.