

GETTING STARTED WITH TWITTER – DON'T EVER FEEL DUMB!

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I'm a member of a group on LinkedIn called Social Media Marketing. In that group, someone started a discussion by asking a very basic Twitter question, and even stating he felt dumb to ask such a question. I wrote an answer to him, and thought I might as well share it with you too!

Important Note: Please keep in mind these are just the very basics. There is much more I can share between the lines, do many steps, but this is a good start.

Don't ever feel like you're dumb, or uninformed, about Twitter. Every single person who uses it started exactly where you are! There is no right way, and no wrong way, to use it. There's only the way each person decides to use it. The wonderful thing about Twitter is that we, the users, are the ones defining how it is to be used. The only restriction is that you have 140 characters to talk about what's on your mind.

Twitter needs proper care and feeding to turn in to something you really enjoy and find useful. This is no different than any other networking tool or practice you use. If you join an organization in hopes of meeting great contacts, it takes a while to work through the ranks to a position of leadership, or at least takes a while to prove your worth and value by your constant and solid contributions. Relationship-building is not a passive marketing tool. It's very active, and one of the most rewarding efforts you will embark upon, so give it your time and energy. Don't give up! It's too important to the future of your practice. You might even find you like it somewhere along the way. I know I did!

Twitter is the same way as the relationship-building example I mentioned above. When I conduct training on Twitter, I recommend that professionals go in with the following stages in mind:

1) Connection:

Get started on Twitter.

a) Reserve your personal name, or as close as you can get, with no underscores, no clever names that will be hard for your friends and followers to remember, and no tricky monikers or logos. Reserve your name now on Twitter.com before someone else does, even if you aren't ready to use it.

b) Build a good profile. You only have so many characters to describe yourself, so be direct so people know what you do when they click on your profile. Make sure to give your real name so people know what to call you, where you live, with whom you want to work, etc. Give a good link to a blog or website where your followers can go to learn more about you, and to find out how brilliant you are!

c) Start looking for people that you want to: learn from, teach, have fun talking to, have as clients, or hire, depending on your goals. You can do this by conducting a search using very specific search terms just as you would on Google. When you find people who you think fit in to these categories, then look at their followers, and whom they are following. You will definitely find more people to follow.

For a while, observe how they do what they do & how they do it, but also remember it is just their way, not necessarily the only way. You will learn trends and methods; some you like, some you don't. This is where you begin to form your own method and style for using Twitter. I don't necessarily recommend my method of using Twitter to my clients because it completely depends on their situation, and what they become comfortable communicating over time.

2) Communication:

This is where Twitter begins to become fun and useful. Once you have watched for a bit, jump in and say something. You can do this in a variety of ways...either by commenting on something someone has Tweeted, a conversation between others (yes, this is okay, and expected on a medium as public as Twitter), or by simply making periodic statements about what you are working on.

You can also begin doing one of the most important things you can do on Twitter, and that is to ReTweet, or RT, or share, what others have said. In TweetDeck, a 3rd party application that I think is a must for using and managing Twitter, ReTweeting is very easy. It is one of the options given to you so you don't have to type RT in front of something as you do when you reply from the home page on twitter.com.

You can also communicate by asking an opinion about something you are working on, or by Tweeting a link to an interesting article or blog post you are reading, or one you have written. This is where we enter the next point, which is....

3) Education:

This is not only educating your Followers, but also being educated by those you follow. There is an incredible amount of information shared on Twitter. You will be amazed how much you learn that you never knew before, or how much MORE you will learn about topics with which you were already familiar. This is one of the richest, most amazing growth tools available to us...our growth and that of our followers.

4) Collaboration:

This is where all of your efforts begin to pay off. When you begin to develop relationships, and often close friendships, with some of your followers, you will become comfortable enough referring business when you might not have ever met them in real life, or IRL as some say. You might even get to the point where you partner with your followers to do business.

As I mentioned at the onset, there is so much more to understanding Twitter, and Social Media overall. I could go on for pages, but I know you are busy, so I won't right now.

Nancy Myrland, President, Myrland Marketing, is a Professional Marketing Advisor with more than 20 years experience in partnering with clients to build their business by strengthening their relationships with their clients. She started Myrland Marketing in 2002.

Nancy has spent a great deal of time immersing herself in the worlds of Social Media and Traditional Marketing, and understands how to wisely and efficiently blend the two areas to help you accomplish your goals.

Nancy is innovative, passionate, loyal, strategic, wise, and has a depth of knowledge to share with her clients that comes from working in sales/business development, in management and marketing in corporate America with Time Warner and L. M. Berry, and in law firms and other professional services firms.

To find out more about Myrland Marketing, or to hire Nancy to come to your firm to speak or train, or to read Nancy's blog, please visit <http://myrlandmarketing.com/about-us>, or email Nancy at nancy@myrlandmarketing.com. She also invites you to follow her on Twitter at <http://www.twitter.com/nancymyrland>. You may also reach her by calling 317-370-9684.