

# Book IV

# Twitter

The 5<sup>th</sup> Wave

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"I'd respond to this person's comment on Twitter, but I'm a former Marine, Bernard, and a Marine never retweets."

# Chapter 1: Getting to Know Twitter

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## In This Chapter

- ✓ Getting to know Twitter
- ✓ Finding people on Twitter
- ✓ Deciding whether Twitter is right for you
- ✓ Getting started with Twitter

**T**witter began as a simple concept: Keep friends up to date on what you're doing. Using Twitter, you can send a message from anywhere you can access the Internet — whether it's a computer or a portable device such as the iPhone or BlackBerry. From your Twitter page, or a desktop application, you can instantly post information that is received by people following you. But there's a catch: When you tell people what's on your mind, you have to say it in 140 characters or fewer — hence the term *microblogging* (a system of short text updates). Twitter users have come up with some interesting methods of saying more with less.

Twitter has evolved into a major social media hot spot. As a business, you can use the power of Twitter to attract potential clients. Think of Twitter, similar to other social media outlets, as breadcrumbs to your other content on the Internet. We introduce you to Twitter in this chapter.



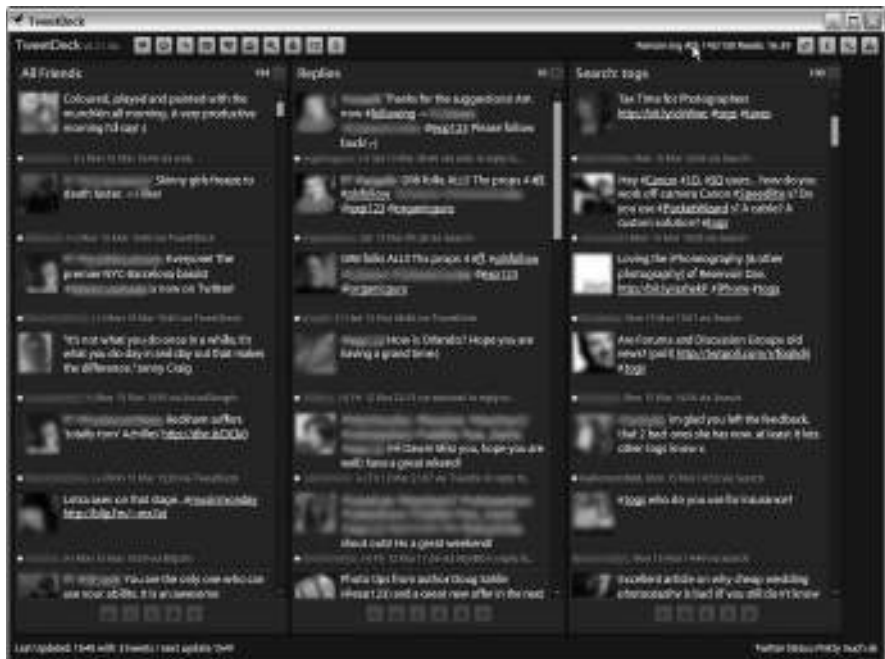
For more information, check out *Twitter For Dummies*, by Laura Fitton, Michael Gruen, and Leslie Poston, or *Twitter Marketing For Dummies*, by Kyle Lacy.

## Saying What's on Your Mind, 140 Characters at a Time

Twitter is an intriguing concept: Say what's on your mind, and use no more than 140 characters when you do it. People who follow your posts (known as *tweets*) can see them on their Twitter pages, as shown in Figure 1-1, or by using a desktop application such as TweetDeck, shown in Figure 1-2. Tweet Deck lets you manage your Twitter usage, do searches, and use columns to segregate searches, users, and much more. You can also use the TweetDeck on a mobile device such as a BlackBerry phone, iPhone, iPod touch, or iPad. We show you how to use TweetDeck in Book IV, Chapter 3. Your followers see your tweets, and so does anyone who searches for the specific topic you're tweeting about. So unless you send a *direct message* (the Twitter equivalent of a private message) to a follower, your messages are public.



**Figure 1-1:**  
A user's  
Twitter  
page.



**Figure 1-2:**  
The  
TweetDeck  
application.



You can also find Twitter messages by using a search engine. Unlike in Las Vegas, what is spoken on Twitter doesn't stay on Twitter.

In the beginning, people used Twitter to tell followers what they were having for lunch or when they were going to the gym or other mundane proclamations. Other than that Twitter user's mother or significant other, who cares? Then savvy Twitter users began to get wise. They realized that a vast network of people were using Twitter, a vast network of people who were potential clients or customers. Your mission is to tap into that vein and find gold.

### ***Twitter demographics***

Before you dip your toe into the shallow end of any swimming pool, it's nice to know who's swimming there. In other words, do the demographics of Twitter match the demographics of your ideal customer? Table 1-1 shows the Twitter demographics.

<b>Table 1-1</b>		<b>Twitter Demographics</b>	
<i>Demographic</i>		<i>Percentage</i>	
Female		55	
Male		45	
3–12 years old		4	
13–17 years old		13	
18–34 years old		45	
35–49 years old		24	
Over 50		14	
Caucasian		69	
African American		16	
Asian		3	
Hispanic		11	
Other		1	
No Kids 0–17		53	
Kids 0–17		47	
0–\$30K		17	
\$30–\$60K		25	
\$60–\$100 K		27	
More than \$100K		30	
No college		48	
College		39	
Graduate school		13	

### *What's in it for you?*

WIIFM are the call letters for What's-in-it-for-me? — every businessperson's favorite radio station. There's not much in it for you if you don't work it. If you post the content that people want to read, potential clients will follow you. After you draw a few followers who hang on every word you post, they share your posts (*retweet*) with people who are following them. Chances are good that many people who receive the retweeted message aren't your followers, but would be if the retweeted message piques their curiosity or they think your post is the greatest thing since sliced bread. This is how you get followers.



Twitter followers can become customers. Think of Twitter posts and other forms of social media as breadcrumbs you sprinkle on the Internet. The breadcrumbs lead a trail to your other social media sites, your Web site, and your bricks-and-mortar business (if you have one). Therefore, you *must* plan your campaign and create quality posts that garner an ever-increasing horde of loyal followers.

You don't create a band of loyal followers overnight. Just as Rome wasn't built in a day, neither will your Twitter empire be built in a day. Tweet by tweet, follower by follower — that's how you measure your success on Twitter. The quality of your posts and your consistency and persistence are the keys to success on Twitter.

### *Major brands and Twitter*

Many major brands are represented on Twitter. You can find major car manufacturers and computer manufacturers and many other major brands on Twitter. Why are they on Twitter? This list describes a couple of reasons, which you can apply to your business:

- ◆ **Twitter can facilitate excellent customer relations.** Companies post information about their products for their followers, solve problems, provide customer service, and more, which can lead to increased sales.
- ◆ **A presence on Twitter helps avoid bad customer relations.** Doug had a problem with a computer and was getting no resolution from the standard support team. He posted on Twitter and within half an hour received a tweet from the company's representative on Twitter. The issue was resolved, and the company avoided any further bad press. A Twitter presence can also be used to squelch false rumors.

This list describes why some major brands use Twitter:

- ◆ **Best Buy:** Posts company information and information about new products.
- ◆ **Dell:** Manages multiple Twitter accounts, including customer relations and customer service.
- ◆ **Fender:** Posts information about its guitars and other interesting musical facts.
- ◆ **Home Depot:** Offers customer service to its Twitter followers and responds to customer queries about product needs.
- ◆ **JetBlue:** Provides online service to its Twitter followers and posts travel tips.
- ◆ **Lowes:** Offers customer service to its Twitter followers and posts information about discounts.
- ◆ **Starbucks Coffee:** Posts specials and answers questions from its followers.

These major companies are just a few that are keeping in touch with customers by way of Twitter.



Sometimes Twitter can be confusing. You can always click the Help link on your home page. Type your query and find an answer in the Twitter Help database.

## Creating a Twitter Account

Before you can explore the wonderful world of Twitter, you need to set up an account. You can set up one for free — all you need is a valid e-mail address.

Follow these steps to set up a Twitter account:

1. **Launch your favorite Web browser and navigate to `http://twitter.com`.**

The Twitter home page appears, as shown in Figure 1-3.

2. **Click Sign Up Now.**

The page refreshes and Twitter wants to know who you are and all that good stuff, as shown in Figure 1-4.



**Figure 1-3:**  
The Twitter home page.



**Figure 1-4:**  
Sign up,  
please.

### 3. Fill out these sections:

- *Full Name:* When you enter your full name and username, Twitter checks the availability of each one.
- *Username:* Use your own name with no spaces. If you feel compelled to add your company name, use something like JoeatCompTech. But the company name gobbles up lots of your 140 allotted characters per post. If you pique people's curiosity with your posts, they can always find out which company you work for if you include it in your bio information on your Twitter page.



Use all lowercase letters. People on portable devices will thank you. If you choose a username with letters and numeric characters, users of portable devices have to switch screens and entering your username takes longer.

- *Password:* Even though it's unlikely that anybody would want to hack your account, you can never be too sure. Don't use an obvious password that anybody could guess. Use a combination of alphabetical characters and number, but don't use your initials and birthday. An example of an excellent password is ymB!\_375Z.
- *Email:* You must use a functional e-mail address. Use one that's connected to your Web server. The e-mail address joe@mybusiness.com sounds much more professional than joe@aol.com.



Accept the default option to let other people find you by using your e-mail address. Then existing contacts and customers who have your e-mail address can easily find you on Twitter.

### 4. Click Create My Account.

A screen with captcha images appears. You have to enter the phrase to prove that you're human and not a computer robot setting up Twitter accounts.

### 5. Type the weird-looking letters and then click Finish.

After you click Finish, the Find Sources That Interest You page appears, as shown in Figure 1-5. We talk about that topic in the next section.





**Figure 1-5:**  
Find  
sources that  
interest you.



If you wear more than one hat, or your company has more than one division, you can set up multiple presences on Twitter. Each Twitter account must have a unique e-mail address. If your corporation has a director of sales, a service manager, and a customer relations rep, each one can set up a unique account, which increases your company's presence on Twitter. If you're a one-person show, you can also create multiple accounts — you just need multiple e-mail addresses.

## *Finding People to Follow*

You have an account on Twitter. Now it's time to find some Twitter folks who are of interest to you. Start by following people in your industry and see what they have to say.

Starting on the Find Sources That Interest You page (refer to Figure 1-5), follow these steps:

### **1. Click a category name on the left side.**

Choose a category related to your business. After you click a category of interest, the page refreshes and you see a list of Twitter account users for that category. Figure 1-6 shows Twitter users in the Art & Design category.

**Figure 1-6:**  
Finding  
interesting  
folks to  
follow.



2. **Scroll down the list. When you find a user who piques your curiosity, click the Follow button.**

The category you choose may have lots of Twitter users. In this case, you see a More button at the bottom of the page.

You can follow as many people as you want from this page. You may find other Twitter users from your industry, and maybe even competitors.

Be sure to follow your competitors and other Twitter users from your industry to develop a feel for what other people in your industry are tweeting about.

3. **Continue choosing people to follow. When you're finished, click the Next Step: Friends button.**

The page refreshes and you have options to look for friends from your e-mail address book, as shown in Figure 1-7. This trick works only if you have a Gmail, a Yahoo!, or an AOL e-mail address.





**Figure 1-7:** Choosing people from your address book to follow.

- 4. If you have an e-mail account with a service listed in Step 3, click the service. If you don't, click the Next Step: Others button to skip to Step 10.**

You're prompted for your username and password.

- 5. Enter your e-mail address and password.**

Twitter connects with your account server, scans your address book, and posts a list of your e-mail contacts who are on Twitter. You see a Send Request button next to the name of each person who is on Twitter but can't be found by e-mail address. Click the button to have a request sent to your contact indicating that you want to follow them. If an e-mail contact can be located on Twitter by using their e-mail address, a Follow button appears next to the e-mail address.

- 6. Choose the contacts you want to follow.**

You can choose as many contacts as you want from this list.

- 7. After choosing contacts from your e-mail list, click the Next Step: Others button.**

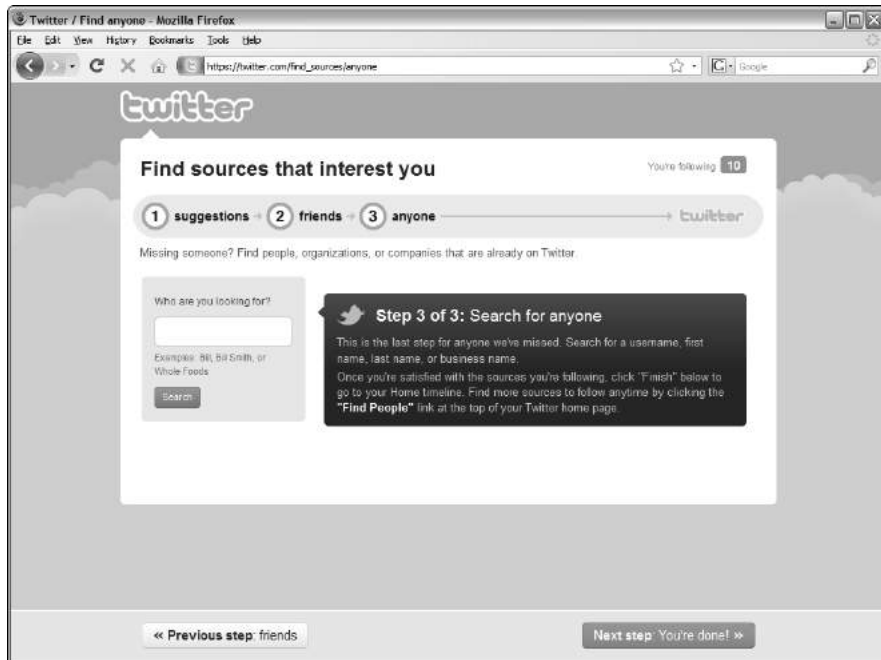
A list of e-mail contacts not on Twitter appears.

- 8. Click the radio box next to the contact's e-mail address to send an invitation to join Twitter.**

You can invite as many people as you want.

9. After inviting contacts to join Twitter, click the **Invite These Contacts** button.

Alternatively, you can click **Cancel**. After you choose either option, the **Search for Anyone** page appears, as shown in Figure 1-8.



**Figure 1-8:**  
Search for  
anyone.

10. Enter the name of someone you want to follow.

Search for businesses or people in your industry.

11. Click **Search**.

A list of Twitter users appears. The list may or may not be the person or business you're looking for. Look at the list carefully to make sure you choose the right person.

12. Click the **Follow** button next to the people you want to follow and click the **Next Step: You're Done!** button when you've selected everyone.

You're transported to your Twitter page. But you're not quite done yet — you receive an e-mail from Twitter requesting verification. You already see some tweets from people you follow, as shown in Figure 1-9, but your Twitter page is bereft of information about you and your business. (You know — plain Jane Vanilla.) We show you how to fix that problem in the next section.



**Figure 1-9:**  
You've got  
tweets.

## *Setting Up Your Twitter Page*

You have a Twitter account, and you know what you want to tweet, but nobody on Twitter knows anything about you. You can rectify this dilemma by setting up your Twitter page. When you set it up, you add bio information or the URL to your Web site, upload a picture, or change the design.

To set up your Twitter page, follow these steps:

- 1. Click Settings from your Twitter page.**

The account settings for your Twitter page appear. In this section of the settings, you can change your e-mail address, username, enable geotagging, and more. You can also protect your tweets from the public. (Your goal, of course, is to have your tweets seen by as many people as possible.) The settings on this page are self-explanatory, as are the settings on the Password page, so in Step 2 we move on to Mobile settings.

- 2. Click Mobile.**

The Mobile settings appear, as shown in Figure 1-10. You can change settings in this section to use Twitter with text messaging from your mobile phone.



**Figure 1-10:**  
The settings  
for tweeting  
from a  
mobile  
phone.



### 3. Enter your mobile phone number.

You also have the option to let other people find you by using your mobile number, but unless you have an unlimited data plan, this strategy can lead to some costly phone bills.

### 4. Click Start.

Twitter verifies your phone number.

### 5. Click Notices.

The following options are selected by default:

- *New Follower Emails*: Be automatically notified by e-mail whenever you have a new follower.
- *Direct Text Emails*: Be automatically notified by e-mail whenever someone sends you a direct message.
- *Email Newsletter*: Receive the Twitter newsletter by e-mail.

### 6. Accept the default e-mail notifications or deselect the ones you don't want and then click Save.

### 7. Click Profile.

This page gives you the option to add information to your profile (see Figure 1-11), which is woefully blank now.



**Figure 1-11:** You can create a compelling profile.

**8. In the picture section, click Browse.**

Browse for a photo on your computer. You can upload an image in GIF, JPG, or PNG format. The file size of the image must be less than 700K. (The image looks small on your Twitter page.) Use a head-and-shoulders image of yourself or a close-up of your smiling face.

**9. You should have already entered your real name. In case you didn't, do it now.**

Use your real name. People on Twitter will find out who you are, anyway. If you use an alias and you become popular, someone may set up an account in your own name.

**10. Enter your location.**

This step is important, especially if you have a bricks-and-mortar business. Local Twitter users may follow you because you live in the area, and they may become customers.

**11. Enter the URL of your Web site.**

You do want Twitter users to find your Web site, don't you?

**12. Enter a bio.**

Twitter now becomes generous, and you can use 160 characters for your bio rather than the 140 allocated for a tweet. Put on your thinking cap



and create a bio that tells as much about you and your business as possible while keeping within the character limit.

Check out the Twitter bios of other people in your industry before taking a crack at writing yours.

**13. Click the Save button and then click the Design tab.**

The Twitter Design page appears, as shown in Figure 1-12. This is your chance to trick out your Twitter page.



**Figure 1-12:**  
It's time to give your Twitter page the essence of cool.

**14. Choose a theme you like.**

Your choice isn't cast in stone. If you don't like a theme, you can change it later. We show you how to tweak your page in Book IV, Chapter 3.

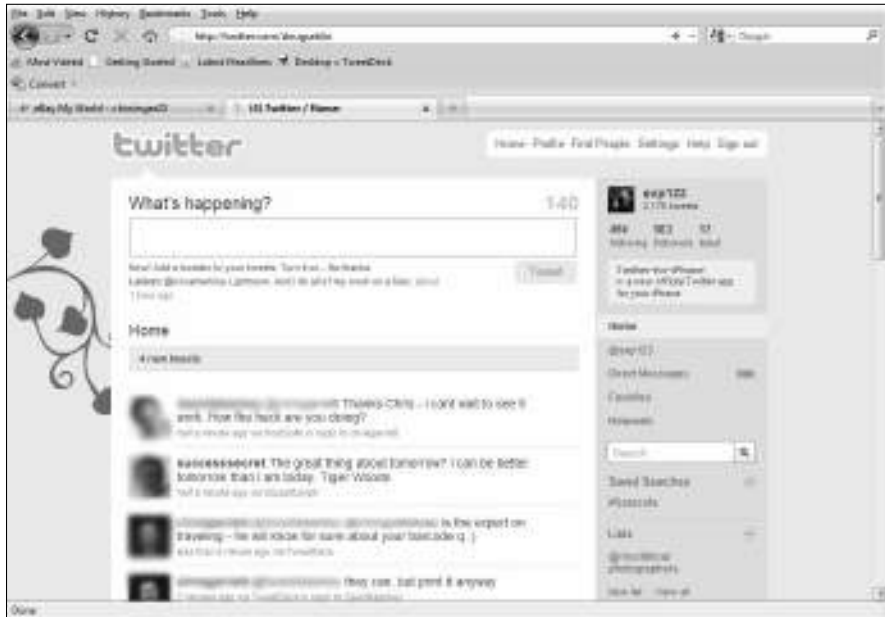
**15. Click the Save Changes button.**

After you set up a Twitter account, you have a very basic page, as shown in Figure 1-13. With a basic Twitter page, you're ready to start communing with tweeples (see Book IV, Chapter 2).

It's important to know how to get around on your Twitter page. When you log on to Twitter, you immediately see your page. Anybody can find your



Twitter page by entering the Twitter URL followed by your username: `www.twitter.com/myusername`.



**Figure 1-13:** Get your red hot tweets right here.

Notice the big “What’s Happening?” field at the top of the page? This is where you type your words of wisdom. Tweets from the people you’re following appear below the Home designation. Twitter does not update in real time, and you’re not notified when someone you’re following posts a tweet. You have to refresh the page to make that happen.

## *Getting Your Feet Wet on Twitter*

Before you start creating tweets, you have to familiarize yourself with Twitter:

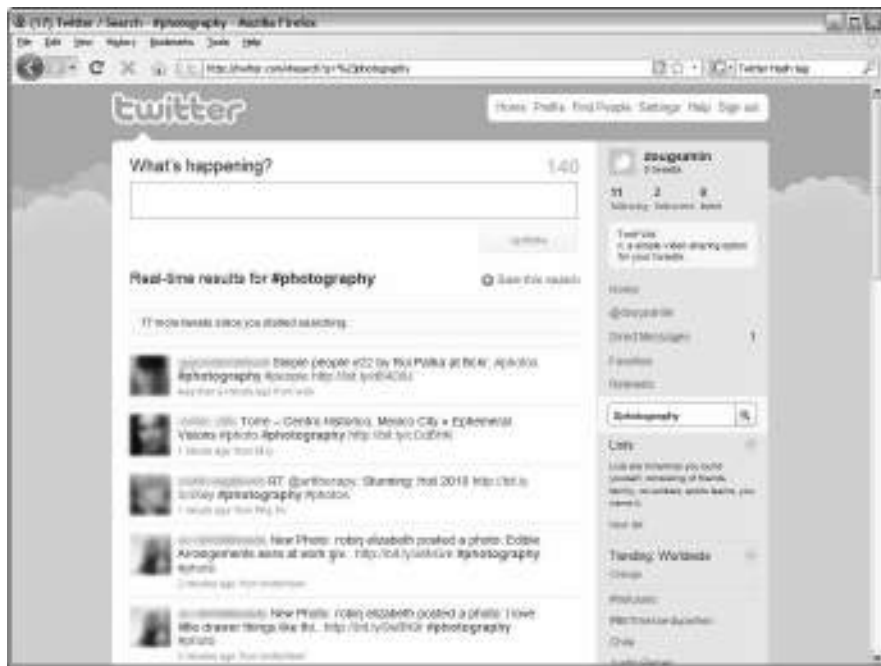
- ◆ **Take the time to watch the posts of the people or businesses you’re following.** This gives you an idea of what people in your industry are saying on Twitter. When you find a businessperson who’s sending tweets that pique your interest, this is the type of material you should be tweeting. When you send useful information in your Twitter posts, you get notices and garner a loyal tribe of followers.
- ◆ **Look at the number of Twitter users who follow the people you’re following.** If a Twitter user is followed by a large number of people,

chances are good that she has something good to say when she creates a post. How prolific are the people you're following? If they create only a few posts a day but are still followed by lots of people, analyze what they say. Perhaps they're sending links to useful information they've found on the Internet. If the information they're putting on Twitter is good, you've found a person you can emulate.

- ◆ **Look at the followers of the people you're following.** You can open a person's Twitter page by clicking the person's icon, which appears next to their tweet. If you're using an application such as TweetDeck, click the person's Twitter name to see their profile. You see their most recent tweets. If you think the person has something useful to say, follow them and learn.
- ◆ **Search for tweets about your information or service.** Type the information you're looking for into the Search field. For example, if you enter *photography*, you see tweets that contain the word *photography*.



Use a hashtag (#) in front of a keyword when you search. Figure 1-14 shows the search results for *#photography*. Note that the search updates tell you how many tweets have been sent since you started your search. Refresh your browser to see the newest tweets.



**Figure 1-14:** Searching for relevant tweets.