

# **PART 4: TAP INTO TWITTER**

**SOCIAL MEDIA FOR SMALL BUSINESS**

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## OVERVIEW

[Twitter](#) is a social networking and microblogging service that allows users to send and read short, text-based posts. Each “tweet” is limited to 140 characters and typically answers the question, “What are you doing?” You can choose to “follow” the tweets of other people and allow them to follow you.

Twitter is fairly new to the social media scene, but many companies have already found ways to use it for business, from announcing new products to helping out customers in need. Like blogging, Twitter allows companies to have fast, direct conversations with customer (presuming, of course, that they are using Twitter) or reach a new base of prospects. In this section, we will share ideas and best practices to help you get started.

## THE OPPORTUNITY FOR SMALL BUSINESSES

Over the past 12 months, [companies of all sizes have started to experiment with Twitter](#) as a communications and marketing channel. Here are a few interesting applications:

- Tweet company news in short, manageable pieces – an effective strategy for reaching multi-tasking customers with ever shortening attention spans.
- Tweet special offers or discounts for your Twitter “followers” to drive sales. Some companies do this to unload excess inventory. At Dell, for example, we’ve generated more than \$1 million in sales by posting [consumer, SMB and Dell-Outlet offers on Twitter](#). Be sure to create separate Twitter accounts for sales-generating activities and general company or employee news. This way, your customers know exactly what to expect when they agree to follow you.
- Tweet from company and industry events to provide real time updates.
- Tweet questions or ideas about your business to get immediate feedback from customers following you.
- Seek out customers tweeting about good and bad experiences with your company. Thank your happy customers and try to resolve negative issues.
- Tweet about things that interest you, and have fun with it! Your customers might appreciate getting to know you as a real person, not just a brand.

Twitter is a free tool, so the cost of entry is low. The primary investment required is employees’ time.

## GETTING STARTED

It’s easy to get started with Twitter in a few simple steps:

- Set up a Twitter account. You can either create one central account that is used by multiple members, or preferably, create an account for each employee at your company with differentiated names, yet a common theme. For example: [Firstname\\_Lastname\\_atDELL](#).
- Build your network. Start by following users that mention your brand or product. You can find them by using a tool called [TweetScan](#) to search for recent “tweets.” If you have a database of customers who have agreed to receive your e-mails, you might also contact them directly to let them know that you’re experimenting with Twitter as a way to communicate with them more effectively. You can also add a link to your Twitter profile to your e-mail signature so people know they can follow you there.

## GETTING STARTED (cont.)

- Start tweeting. Introduce yourself with an inaugural tweet that explains your purpose for being on Twitter.

## BEST PRACTICES

Based on our experience at Dell and conversations with small- and medium-size business owners, we've identified several best practices for using Twitter, such as:

- Tweet regularly, but don't over-update. If you post too frequently, followers could consider your updates an annoyance and stop following you. Aim for at least one or two tweets per day, but no more than 15.
- If multiple employees are using Twitter, try to assign a specific role or subject matter focus for each person. This will help to ensure that multiple people aren't tweeting on the same topic.
- If a person chooses to follow you, follow them back. This is common courtesy and a good way to build your network.
- Remember that you don't have to log-in to Twitter.com to use the service. You can send and receive updates via your mobile phone, RSS, email or an application like [Twitterrific](#) or Facebook. You can learn more and download these applications at <http://twitter.com/downloads>.

Also, check out Chris Brogan's recent post on "[50 Ideas for Using Twitter for Business](#)" for many other helpful tips.

## CASE

At a young age, [Gary Vaynerchuk](#) took over his family business, a liquor store in New Jersey. Over a period of six years, Gary and his father rebranded it as a Wine Library and grew sales from roughly \$4 million to \$50 million annually. In February 2006, Gary launched [Wine Library TV](#), a daily video blog in which Gary tastes and reviews wines. To extend his reach and influence, Gary has employed a host of social media strategies, including [Twitter](#). Gary tweets multiple times daily about wine and everything else on his mind, and he has attracted 14,265 followers in the process.

## ABOUT SOCIAL MEDIA FOR SMALL BUSINESS

Visit [www.facebook.com/dellsocialmedia](http://www.facebook.com/dellsocialmedia) to read all eight guides written by Dell's Small Business and Communities & Conversations teams:

- Part 1: Learn to Listen
- Part 2: Join the Conversation
- Part 3: Start a Blog
- Part 4: Tap into Twitter
- Part 5: Crowdfund Your Next Big Idea
- Part 6: Harness the Power of Facebook
- Part 7: Share Photos and Videos Online
- Part 8: Measure Your Success Online

We hope you will join this Facebook community, share your own ideas, and continue the conversation with Dell and small businesses around the world.