

Twittering, from a business perspective.....

Why in the world would a business set up a Twitter site? For that matter, what in the world is social networking, and what does it have to do with business? Before giving a direct answer, I will simply say that a lot of business and professional people send tweets for a variety of reasons and those who receive (follow) those tweets also have different reasons to want to know what others are saying.

For a quick overview of Twitter, go to www.twitter.com and click on the Watch a Video selection at the top right hand side of the page. Some Twitter originators use this service only to create better rankings in search engines. Celebrity types use Twitter to keep fans informed of their activities. We use Twitter for business!

Unlike email, or even text messaging; Twitter limits the number of characters to 140 per message. This means that your PC or cell phone will not be overwhelmed with excessive message content. It also means that the sender has to be pretty creative in generating informative messages briefly.

I can't speak for everyone else – only for myself, but in the most basic form, tweeting is another way of communicating to others who you are, what you think, and what you may know that may be of interest to them. Accountants and Lawyers use Twitter to keep their clients up to date on regulatory and/or legal changes on a timely basis. Doctors use Twitter to keep patients up on items of interest. Politicians use Twitter to keep voters advised on information of interest. A local newscaster uses Twitter for sending instant weather alerts, and the list goes on.

In the business world, Twitter is used to announce special pricing, closeouts, new product announcements, deal of the day, facts about the business and other items of interest. In the case of Falcon Direct, our Twitter site was established for the purpose of sharing topical information relating to our industry (wireless electronics – communications, monitoring, and security).

To a lesser extent, we share information that may be of interest to our followers that may be off our primary topic but of general interest. Lastly, we post tweets that are educational and entertaining (at least from our point of view). Lastly, we use Twitter to compliment our traditional Web site (www.falcondirect.com) and our Blog site (<http://falconinfo.blogspot.com>). The more exposure we have on the Internet search engines, the more viewers to be introduced to our products and services, and that is what good business is all about.

Admittedly, Twittering (which is an advanced form of texting) is generally considered to be the domain of the very young. Those who believe that are in for a big surprise as life goes flashing by. Things are changing, and they are changing fast! We have chosen to be in the lead rather than to follow or get out of the way. Our attitude is that *If you want something better tomorrow, you'll have to change what you are doing today!*

The receipt of Twitter messages, or tweets, can be as fast as you wish. If you have text messaging capability of your cell phone, you can receive tweets within seconds after they are posted. Otherwise, you can periodically check the desired Twitter Web site (ours is www.twitter.com/BurchOne), on a daily basis or other interval as you choose. If you are on our eNewsletter list, we will automatically send you a listing of all tweets posted for the prior month with our newsletter (generally sent around the 1st of each month). If you are not on our eNewsletter list, you can sign up at www.falcondirect.com/SignUp. You can also sign up to receive our Blogs at this same site.

For instant notification by text messaging, or for the ability to periodically check in, you will need a Twitter account. Here's how to set one up:

Go to www.twitter.com. Click on the *Get Started – Join* block in the center of the page. Fill in your first and last name, and then insert your *User Name*. This can be any screen name you choose.

If you have any problem picking a name that hasn't been used, try the word *ergo* followed by four random numbers. Then add your *Password* (Be sure and keep a record of your User Name and Password). Type in the *Security Word*, and then advance to the next screen. This is where you look for other users, etc. Most first time users of Twitter will skip this screen and move directly to the *User Settings*.

If you don't want to receive instant text messages, or to use Twitter to post your own messages, you can hit the *Save* button after entering your basic *Account Data* and you're done. You can then go to any Twitter site, such as www.twitter.com/BurchOne to review the postings on that site at your convenience. If you do want instant notification by text messaging to your cell phone, you will need a cellular airtime service plan that includes text messaging as part of your package, preferably, unlimited text messages. Those pay as you go plans or limited message plans can cost you a lot of money. On average, unlimited text messaging adds about ten dollars per month to the typical voice only or voice plus web/email plans.

If you have text messaging as part of your plan, go to www.twitter.com. Sign in with your email address supplied when you originally set up your Twitter account, and your Twitter password. Click on *Settings* in the upper right hand corner after your Twitter page opens, and then select *Devices* in the center of the page under your Twitter Name. Enter your phone number with your Country Code first (+1 for the USA). A correctly entered US phone number looks like this - +12054222011. Additional instructions for setting up your cell phone to receive text messages are at <http://help.twitter.com/forums/23786/entries/14589>.

Once you have set up your account to follow our tweets, our messages will instantly appear on your text message enabled cell phone as they are posted.

As mentioned previously, you also have the option of just checking in as you wish at www.twitter.com/BurchOne or signing up at www.falcondirect.com/SignUp for either our eNewsletter or Blog.

I was reading the other day that Twitter is the fastest growing social media networking service on the Web. There are some truly amazing applications of this technology. Maybe one of them may be suitable for YOUR needs. I know this - So far, over fifty five million dollars of investor funds have been used to develop Twitter into a profitable enterprise. Somebody thinks there is a future for this service! Unfortunately, the company has yet to turn a profit, but for that matter, neither has You Tube. I'll bet they will, how about you?

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