

# Tweet success: It's easy to lose interest in Twitter, but there are reasons to stick with it

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You've created an account and started following some users. You may have even sent a few tweets out into the world, expressing how you feel about the economy or the weather or the season finale of your favorite TV show.

But you still don't get it, and you're ready to dismiss [Twitter](#) for good.

You're not alone: Recent research from Nielsen found that about 60 percent of people who sign up for Twitter abandon the service after a month. That measure includes those who tap the Twitter community through about 30 Web sites and applications, including TweetDeck, TwitPic, Twitstat, Hootsuite, EasyTweets, Tumblr and others.

"The drop-off will be due to people dipping their toes in ... they log in, get a user account, use it for a few days, maybe they don't see the utility in it or they don't have enough friends on it," said Dave Martin, vice president, primary research, for Nielsen Online.

The applications of Twitter are different and varied, and using it effectively doesn't always come easy to people dabbling with the tool, he said.

Some companies have had great success using Twitter to launch viral marketing campaigns, and there are other success stories from professionals who network with those in their field \_ a practice that can even lead to a job offer. Not everyone, however, is convinced that the

site has real relevance in the business world.

About 40 percent of those surveyed in an online poll said they saw business relevance in Twitter, according to Doremus, a global communications agency. The same percentage said they did not see its relevance for business, while 20 percent were undecided. The firm sought to find out whether Twitter was a viable business-to-business communications and business-building tool; the results indicated respondents thought it was a tossup.

But perhaps people who don't see the benefits aren't putting in the time needed to get the site's full benefits. The site isn't just a collection of people broadcasting when they're taking a nap or reading about Ashton Kutcher's day.

"The way I describe it to people: If you think of analog television, the old kind with the rabbit ears, the picture is unclear and fuzzy and you don't know what you're watching," until you're able to tune it, said David Parry, assistant professor of emerging media at the University of Texas at Dallas. "If you put in that effort, then it does get a high rate of return," he said.

At its best, Twitter can be a way of keeping up to date with the latest news \_ and reaction to that news \_ in real time. In your professional life, you can network and search for jobs, while building a reputation in your industry. It can also operate as a customer-service channel and provide a way to search for sales.

Here are five reasons you might give Twitter a long look, or a second chance:

## 1. IT'S A REAL-TIME OPINION AGGREGATOR

Some people use Twitter solely for following breaking stories and reading reaction posted by users as news unfolds, Parry said. Posts on Twitter can be searched immediately after posting; a search engine takes longer to find information.

Get started by taking a look at the "trending topics" links on the right rail. Here you will find the most popular topics being discussed on Twitter at that moment; it's a place where there was nearly instant feedback after Sonia Sotomayor was announced as a Supreme Court nominee and quick reaction to the latest iPhone announcement.

Customized searches, however, help users listen in on developments in a particular field of interest. Conduct a Twitter search on, say, mortgages, and recent tweets with mentions of mortgages will appear, from the first-time buyer who writes about applying to the lender trying to drum up business or commiserating with colleagues about rising rates—all of which may be useful to someone trying to get a read on the housing market at a particular moment in time.

"In the listen mode, there's a lot of chatter on Twitter about every conceivable topic in the world," said Michael Young, senior vice president of Access Communications, a public-relations firm. Downloadable software can help people sort the information more easily. "Following" particular users will funnel their comments to your home page.

## 2. IT'S A NETWORKING TOOL

Get others to follow you, and you're building a network that connects you to people ranging from the executive you'd like to work for some day to the blogger who often has useful graphs that help you understand trends in your field.

Those with the most followers often are people who tweet regularly and post useful information. In addition to searching topics, find people to follow using directories like We Follow and Twellow.

The true power of Twitter as a networking tool lies in the loose connections users have with other users, and the ease with which you can expand that network\_something that can help someone cast a wide net of people to contact in a job search, for example. Unlike Facebook or LinkedIn, Twitter users often follow and are followed by people who they don't interact with in person, said Denise McVey, president of Boonton, N.J.-based S3, a publicity firm that works with companies on social networking.

Plus, job recruiters are beginning to lurk on Twitter, an important reason to post items and comments that favorably build your professional reputation, as well as connect with influential people. Jobs also are being posted there and can be tracked down using keyword searches; these listings are preferable because they're presumably fresh.

"If a company has tweeted about a job a minute ago, then they probably mean it's there\_it's an open and available job," said Dan Finnigan, CEO of Jobvite, a recruiting application for social networking sites.

### 3. IT'S A WAY TO CONNECT WITH PEOPLE OFFLINE

Given the ability to use Twitter on a mobile phone, it can also be a place to connect with people in the real world, sometimes called "tweetups."

At a convention, for example, there might be several of your professional Twitter contacts in the same building; by tweeting that you are onsite, someone in your network who is also in attendance might be up for a cup of coffee or to exchange notes on a seminar. You can also find tweetups in your area by using Twitter's search function.

Track down a stream of feedback about an event or a topic by using hashtags, which helps group comments into topics. On Monday, real estate professionals attending the RE Barcamp event in Chicago included #rebcchi in their posts. Information about an event isn't restricted to conventions or concerts, however; the hashtag #sandiegofire, for example, grouped Twitter updates about wildfires in San Diego, offering a useful service for those in the area.

#### 4. IT'S A CUSTOMER-SERVICE CHANNEL

Instead of writing a strongly worded letter to a customer-service department, politely complain on Twitter. Chances are, the company is listening.

Comcast reportedly uses Twitter, searching for references to the company to learn about service issues. Eight O'Clock Coffee listens and tweets as well; customers sometimes even ask where they can find a certain variety, said McVey, whose firm works with the coffee brand's social networking presence.

If you're a small business, it might not hurt to give Twitter a try too.

McVey said that even a small boutique owner might broadcast on Twitter when a new shipment comes in or when a sale is launching. The information would help customers and "give them that inner circle feeling" of being kept in the loop about the store.

#### 5. IT'S A PLACE TO TRACK DOWN SAVINGS AND VALUE

Dell, for one, posts deals on refurbished computers, and there are others who also post deals. Searching the names of stores before you shop can turn up discounts you might not have known about otherwise, said Kim Danger, family savings expert for Coupons.com and founder of

MommySavers.com.

When your network is large enough, it's possible to tweet a question to your followers and get feedback. Out of town? Ask your network for restaurant recommendations or entertainment suggestions. People in your network may respond with ideas.

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