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## CHAPTER 7: SOCIAL, MOBILE, AND LOCAL ADVERTISING

### LEARNING TRACK 7.2 SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING: TWITTER

In just a few years since its inception, Twitter has evolved into a potent customer relationship management and marketing tool. Partially supplanting traditional means such as trade shows and networking events, it is used to follow leads and prospect for customers. By developing Twitter relationships with industry leaders, journalists, bloggers, and top customers, businesses can harvest product development ideas and develop brand advocates. Disseminating news, offering promotions, and responding to customer service requests, be they explicit demands or implicit calls to action, are all tasks that can be adapted to the Twitter format.

As with any new channel, there is a learning curve. While some advice is cross-channel, developing effective Twitter communications requires commitment and the adoption of clear policies and metrics for measuring success. Integration into your overall marketing and customer service strategies begins with creating an account that accurately captures the image you want to portray. Company and individual employee accounts can both be used to good effect. Your company account will publicize events and company news, provide product updates, promote blog posts, and deliver immediate feedback and updates at conferences and trade shows. Moreover, it will serve as your primary Twitter customer service center. A personal account for a key marketing person is better for liaising directly with the public, forming personal relationships with customers and business partners, and expanding your network of contacts. This person can reveal appropriate personality traits and discuss tangential events and topics that bolster your company's image as well as update the network about projects he or she is overseeing.

Company usernames, or handles, should simply be your brand name and should not include any underscores. Underscores are a breach of Twitter social norms and will make your company look uninformed and unhip. Likewise, including numbers in your Twitter handle imparts the impression that you are mired in turn-of-the-century Internet convention. Company representatives should use their full name, not an arbitrary handle. Rather than immediately choosing accounts to follow, after you create your company account your next task should be to construct the profile. The Who to Follow link can be accessed at any time later. Twitter is integrated with Gmail, Hotmail, Yahoo, AOL, and LinkedIn so that people in your address book or network of contacts who have a Twitter account can be automatically contacted and invited to follow you. To customize your profile, go to

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your Profile page (<http://twitter.com/USERNAME>) and use the Edit profile button to upload header and profile photos. Also on the Profile page, enter your full company name, location, and company Web site URL. If you do not have a Web site, you can enter the address for a company blog, Facebook page, LinkedIn page, or dedicated Twitter landing page. A dedicated landing page is designed to drive traffic to your company Web site. It can include information similar to the About page on your Web site. In the Bio section, you have 160 characters in which to sell your company to potential followers. Include what you sell, your position within your market segment, perhaps a brief description of your industry, and items of note such as company achievements, community service, or upcoming projects and special events. You can also pin a tweet to your Profile page.

In your Security and privacy settings, make sure the Protect my Tweets box is not selected. This would make your Twitter stream private, hiding your updates from everyone but your followers and defeating the purpose for creating your Twitter account. You want others to be able to see your tweets, become intrigued, and become your followers. Company updates are public announcements.

You should customize the background of your profile to visually trumpet your company persona and the product or service you sell. Keep in mind that attracting new prospects is your primary goal. When designing your background image, make sure to leave space at the top to accommodate the Twitter toolbar. The columns on the left and right hand side of the page adapt to the size of the browser window, so design the background for smaller monitor sizes and do not tile the image. The background image will be left-aligned. Links are traditionally placed in the left column, and you should have ample room for a company description and company logo.

You can also add a header image and cover photo. Because you can use a larger image, cover photos expand your ability to display your brand's personality. Your company description can be included here, rather than in the left column, along with your username and a bio for an individual account. Calls-to-action- (CTAs), links that send users to an action page, are often included in a header image along with text to educate followers about a specific social media campaign.

After you have set up your profile and inserted a background image, your account will no longer appear inactive. Now you are ready to send your first tweet. Having a professional-looking page set up before you begin tweeting and following people will ensure that you are not automatically rebuffed as a possible spammer. Initial tweet topics include links to special offers, recent company blog articles, or conferences or webinars your company is hosting. You can also tweet links to useful content from external sources, retweet some else's pertinent post, or simply post a status or picture from your workplace. After many years of being limited to 140 characters for each tweet, Twitter dropped the 140-character limit in November 2017, extending it to 280 characters in English and most other languages.

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Adding accounts to follow populates your Twitter stream with their status updates. This in turn allows you to learn what people you are following are interested in and who they are following and interacting with. If you provide information of value to them, they will likely decide to follow you back, and you will begin to build your network. Use the Who to Follow link to find trending topics or enter keywords related to your business or industry to find pertinent businesses and individuals to follow. Use Twitter Search to find people who are tweeting about topics relevant to your company. After people begin following you, look at who they are chatting with by watching the @ replies. These may reveal people who would be beneficial for you to follow. You can also collect Twitter handles at conferences and events (attendees often prominently display them on their name tags) and follow hashtags (#) that have been created around an event. Hashtags are combined with words, acronyms, and phrases to create tags within tweets to aggregate a conversation around a particular topic. Prominent bloggers within your market segment may have a link to their Twitter account on their blog page. Following leaders in your industry is always a good idea.

Although you may be enthusiastic about building a productive network and cognizant of the fact that this will require an investment of time, do not be overhasty. Adding about 25-50 accounts to follow per day is a good practice in order to ensure that the people you select have time to reciprocate. You want viewers to see a favorable ratio of those you are following to those who are following you in your profile. Lopsided ratios with many less followers can be negatively construed to mean that others have decided you are not worth following. Your total number of followers is referred to as your Twitter reach.

In order to extend your Twitter reach, make sure your usernames are easy to find. If your company has a number of individual accounts, create a page that lists all of their handles. Twitter Follow buttons should be placed on your company website and company blogs. You can either use the Follow button generator provided by Twitter or you can create your own button and link it to your Twitter page. Gaining followers is dependent upon the value you provide. Do not rely solely on promoting your brand. Think of Twitter like a newsletter—provide useful links and items of interest. If you are following people who are not yet following you back, engage them and comment on their tweets. Giving positive feedback and compliments motivates people to follow you.

To reference another Twitter user and direct a tweet towards them, use @USERNAME anywhere in the post. These are the @replies that you should be monitoring from your followers. Each @reply is a link to that user's profile, making it simple to view and chat directly with that person. To send a direct message (DM) that will not be included in your Twitter stream, click the Messages link in the top navigation bar. DMs can only be exchanged between users who are following one another, are limited just like tweets to 140 characters, and are stored in the Messages tab on the Twitter toolbar.

In order to make Twitter an effective tool for driving traffic to your Web site you must offer unique content in addition to coupons or special offers. Monitoring your account will require time and

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almost certainly a third-party software tool. People tweeting about your products must be engaged. If your product can meet the needs or solve the problem of a tweeter, he or she must be discovered and contacted. Tweets complimentary to your company should be aggregated in the Favorites list (hover the cursor over the tweet and click the star, turning it yellow). Use Twitter Search regularly to mine for public posts to add. Create hashtags to promote company events and solicit signups. Share industry knowledge, advice, and guidelines to build your bona fides. Your customer service team must ensure that each tweet pertinent to their task is assigned a case number, a status, a priority level, and a dedicated representative. Negative tweets cannot be allowed to fester or multiply. Followers must observe that you are accessible, responsive, and desirous of building a satisfied customer base. All of this will require dedicated policies and procedures that are integrated with your marketing, customer service, and advertising departments as well as analytics systems to measure success. Only then can Twitter's full potential as a CRM and marketing tool be realized.

*SOURCES: "An Introductory Guide: How to Use Twitter for Business," HubSpot, accessed January 20, 2016; "Learn How to Attract Customers with Twitter and Vine," HubSpot, accessed January 20, 2016; "How to: Dominate Twitter for Customer Service," by Alex Hisaka, Salesforce @ Desk.com, accessed January 20, 2016.*