



# Twitter for Recruiters:

How To, Help and Hype

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### Introduction

Are you on Twitter? If you aren't, you may be wondering if you should be. If you are, you may not be sure if you are getting the most out of it.

Twitter may be the only tech business that gets more buzz than Google. It seems that you can't log on to the Internet without hearing something about the microblogging site that limits posts to 140 characters. However, Twitter is not as ubiquitous as the media would have you believe; a recent Harris Interactive study showed that 69 percent of adults don't know enough about the site to have an opinion.<sup>1</sup>

Many recruiters are still trying to decide for themselves if Twitter really helps them or if it is just hype. There is no one-size-fits-all answer to this question, but Twitter has the potential to be a beneficial tool for those with the inclination and the patience to master it. As one recruiter wrote recently in the Fordyce Report, "From a long-term perspective, I can't think of another single service that can deliver this caliber of value."<sup>2</sup>

How can recruiters benefit from Twitter?

- **Twitter's a recruiting tool:** Just like your ATS or Google or LinkedIn, Twitter is a database that can be searched to find candidates and jobs. You can also use it to build relationships with candidates and customers that could lead to placements and job orders in the future.
- **Twitter's a branding tool:** Whether you want to build your personal brand among candidates and potential customers, Twitter is a tool that you can use to set yourself apart and keep you in their minds.
- **Twitter's an industry barometer:** Building a community of candidates, customers and industry thought leaders both in recruiting and in your industry niche can help you understand the mood of the marketplace.

To remove some of the mystery surrounding Twitter, Bullhorn created this paper to show recruiters how to get started with it and use it effectively in your work.

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1 Ostrow, Adam. What is Twitter? 69 Percent of Adults Don't Really Know. Mashable.com. July 28, 2009. <http://mashable.com/2009/07/28/twitter-adoption/>

2 Epstein, Boris. Twitter for Recruiters: Value Your Tweets, Part 1. The Fordyce Letter. May 26, 2009. <http://www.fordyceletter.com/2009/05/26/twitter-for-recruiters-value-your-tweets/>

### Getting Started with Twitter

Twitter was created in 2006 to help people communicate and stay connected through the exchange of short 140 character messages. Twitter asks one question, “What are you doing?” Answers must be under 140 characters in length and can be sent via mobile texting, instant messages, or the web. To get started with Twitter, follow the step-by-step guide below or [watch a short video](#).

- **Create your account.** Go to [www.twitter.com](http://www.twitter.com) and set up your account. Click the green **Get Started** button on the home page, then enter your name, user name, password and email address to create your account.
- **Public vs. private accounts:** Protected accounts receive a follow request each time someone wants to follow them, and only approved followers are able to see the profile page. **If you want to interact with everyone on Twitter, you should not protect your account.**
- **Decide what you want to say:** On the Twitter homepage, enter your message in the **What are you doing?** box at the top of the screen and hit the **Update** button to post it. If the message is intended for one user in particular, use an **@ reply** (@ + user’s screen name.) Use a casual, friendly tone in your messages.
- **Choose your followers:** Click the **Find People** tab at the top of the Twitter page, then select **Find on Twitter**. You can search for individuals, organizations or groups. People may be listed under a screen name rather than their real name. To follow them, click the **Follow** button to receive their updates. If you have a Gmail, AOL, Hotmail or MSN account, you can import contacts that have a Twitter account or invite email contacts to join.
- **Fill in account details:** To help people find you, fill in the account details in **Settings** on Twitter’s top navigation.
- **Create a short bio:** You can enter a 140-character description of who you are and what you do, a URL and a location.

#### Twitter terminology

- **At (@) Reply:** A tweet sent directly to another user. If you put the user name in front of your message, the person you address will see your tweet whether they follow you or not.
- **Direct messaging (DM):** This is a way of sending a message to someone so that only they can see it- like sending a txt message.
- **Followers:** Following someone allows you to get their updates in your personal timeline.
- **Hash Tag (#):** Allows users to group and search tweets by topic.
- **Link:** You can use a URL in your tweet. To reduce the number of characters, visit [TinyURL.com](http://TinyURL.com) to make long URLs shorter.
- **Nudge:** Reminding a follower to update their status.
- **Retweet (RT):** If you read someone else’s tweet and you want to share it, put “RT” before copying and pasting the whole message in your tweet, including the original tweeter’s username into your tweet.
- **Tweeps:** Twitter users.
- **Tweet:** A Twitter message.
- **Twitteratti:** Leading Twitter users that have tens or hundreds of thousands of followers.
- **Twitterverse:** The cyberspace of Twitter.

- **Change your picture:** Use a nice color headshot of yourself. Nothing cute, keep it professional. Your picture can be up to 700k, and Twitter supports JPG, and PNG formats. To change your picture:
  - **Log in** to Twitter
  - In the upper navigation bar, click **Settings**
  - Click the **Picture** settings tab
  - Click **Browse** and select one of your pictures.
  - Click **Save** at bottom
- **Design your profile page:** In the settings menu, select **Design**. You can customize your profile page with one of 12 profile templates or create a custom profile of your own.
- **Connect by phone:** Under the **Devices** tab, you can receive tweets on your mobile phone. Be aware that standard rates apply to send text messages to your phone. However, many smart phones can also connect to Twitter via third-party apps. Apps are available at [www.twitter.com/downloads](http://www.twitter.com/downloads).
- **Replying to tweets:** The **@reply** is any Twitter update that begins with @username. This allows you to see when people are talking to you and lets you answer them. If you see a tweet that you would like to **retweet (RT)**, Twitter courtesy is to include "RT @username" with the message. A **hashtag (#)** is similar to other web tags: it helps add tweets to a category, such as #recruiting, #followfriday, #jobs. Hashtags can occur anywhere in the tweet. Some people just add a # before a word they're using. You can **favorite** a tweet you want to remember by hovering over the update and clicking the yellow star that pops up at the end.
- **Direct Messages (DM):** Use Direct Messages for private communication. For messages you don't want the whole world to read, click **Direct Message** in the right navigation, use the pulldown to select the recipient, enter your 140-character message and hit the **Send** button.
- **Searching:** At the bottom of a Twitter page, you can select **Search** to look by name or topic. To find people in a specific geographic region or industry niche, you can use an external site, [www.twello.com](http://www.twello.com), to search easily.

### Should I Use a Twitter Client?

Although about 30 percent of Twitter users use the web interface, many other use third-party applications called clients that make it easier for you to find and sort tweets. Some clients are for desktop use, other are for mobile phones and some are for both.

- **Tweetdeck:** Allows you to sort followers into groups to make tweets from large numbers of followers more manageable.
- **Twitterfeed:** Allows you to send RSS feeds from blogs or websites directly to Twitter.
- **Seesmic:** Allows you to follow friends on Twitter and Facebook in one place and share text, links, photos and videos all in one screen.
- **Other clients:** For users looking to streamline their social network use, **Digsby** allows you to manage all your existing IM, email, and social network accounts including Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook from one easy to use application. **Ping.fm** also allows you to update all of your social networks at once.

## What are the Advantages of Twitter for a Recruiter?

Many recruiters are finding Twitter to be as essential to their work as LinkedIn and job boards. However, there is a learning curve involved, but patient recruiters can use Twitter to:

- **Source top candidates.** Using Twitter searches, Twello or Twitter clients, you can build searches in the same way you construct Boolean search strings for Google searches. Unlike other social networks, contact with candidates can be almost instantaneous through private direct messages or public @replies.
- **Build relationships to nurture candidates.** Unlike LinkedIn, which improves your search results by building a larger network, recruiters want to build a network of the right people. Concentrate on building a network of high quality followers. Find candidates to follow, read their tweets and use traditional recruiting methods to contact them. Build trust by retweeting them and commenting on what they have to say. Remember to give relationships time to develop.<sup>3</sup> Want to reach passive candidates? This is how you do it.
- **Develop niche communities.** Regardless of your location or industry niche, Twitter makes it easy to build a community of candidates. You can follow leading recruiters such as [the ones on this list from blogger Jim Stroud](#), or thought leaders in your recruiting niche.
- **Screen candidates.** By following a potential candidate, you can get to know the person and know whether or not they will be a good fit for a position.
- **Post jobs.** This one may seem obvious, but in the Twitterverse, tweeting a job to your network can lead to quick retweets and a powerful echo effect. Recruiters can post a job on [TwitHire.com](#) or [JobShouts.com](#), tweet about their job opportunities and use a third party, such as @JobAngels, to tweet for them.<sup>4</sup>
- **Limited disclosure.** Communication on Twitter is very time efficient. With a limit of 140 characters, you have to get right to the point. Unlike Facebook or LinkedIn, there is far less disclosure and background needed to build your profile.
- **It's free.** Price is not a barrier to entry, but knowing how to use it is. Twitter will be what you make of it.

### How Should Your Firm Use Twitter?

Twitter can be a powerful sourcing tool for individual recruiters, and it can also be a powerful branding tool for firms in the staffing and recruiting industry. If you want to create a Twitter account for your firm, many of the processes are the same as for individual use, but you can use applications such as **Twitterface** or **Tweetfunnel** to share responsibility for tweeting.

As one recruiter explained in a recent article in HR Magazine, branding initiatives requires patience. "Twitter is much more about farming than it ever will be about hunting. Bombarding people with sales is taboo. But if you become known as someone who is knowledgeable, then followers are much more apt to work with you," mentioning that he gets his best leads from people who follow him for his nonrecruiting tweets.<sup>5</sup>

3 Epstein, Boris. Twitter for Recruiters: Value Your Tweets, Part 2. The Fordyce Letter. May 27, 2009. <http://www.fordyceletter.com/2009/05/27/twitter-for-recruiters-value-your-tweets-part-2/>

4 Fox, Adrienne. Newest Social Medium Has Recruiters All a-Twitter. HR Magazine. June 24, 2009. <http://www.shrm.org/hrdisciplines/staffingmanagement/Articles/pages/RecruitersandTwitter.aspx>

5 Ibid.

## Best Practices for Recruiters on Twitter

Twitter is simply a tool, and you will have to find how to use it in a way that is comfortable and makes sense for you. However, following this list of best practices can help you develop a level of proficiency a little faster.

- **Build a Twitter identity.** Twitter is not just for broadcasting jobs. You need to tweet some level of personal information to create a friendly, approachable image. To build your network, you need to build relationships. Include innocuous personal details. Hate mowing the lawn? Are you watching the Red Sox play the Yankees? Include details that help create a sense of who you are. See the sidebar “What to Tweet and How Often?” for more pointers.
- **Know how to search.** Use the Saved Searches feature within Twitter. You can easily track mentions of your firm or keywords you want to search. From your Twitter home page, simply run a search, and then at the top of your results page, click “Save this search.” A link with your search term will appear on the right side of your page, and whenever you click it, you’ll get real-time results for that query. To delete a search, just head to the top of your results and click “Remove this search.” Also, learn [useful search operators](#) seen below in red:

- **“IT jobs”** – Search contains the exact phrase “IT jobs.”
- **Java OR PHP** – Search contains “Java” or “PHP” or both.
- **Mechanical -electrical** – Search contains mechanical but not electrical.
- **#jobs** – Search contains hashtag “jobs.”
- **From:bullhornlive** – Sent from “@bullhornlive”
- **To:bullhornlive** – Sent to “@bullhornlive”
- **@bullhornlive** – User referencing @bullhornlive.
- **“hiring” near:“boston”** – Containing the word “hiring” near Boston.
- **near:NYC within:15mi** – Sent within 15 miles of New York City.
- **engineer since:2009-08-09** – Containing the word “engineer” sent since Aug. 8, 2009.
- **hiring until:2009-08-09** – Containing the word “hiring” sent before Aug. 8, 2009.
- **hiring Filter:URL** – Containing the word “hiring” linking to a specific URL.
- **Hiring?** – Asking a question using the word “hiring.”

### What to Tweet and How Often?

Even though you can write about anything, many recruiters follow a 50/50 mix of professional and personal. You can post job openings, ask for leads on candidates, repeat interesting or funny things that have happened and link to relevant industry and recruiting news.

From a personal perspective, you write about what you are reading or watching or other things that cross your mind. Avoid political or religious discussions and vulgar language. Stay positive and be friendly. Respond and react to followers so you build relationships.

Because you can easily spend all your time on Twitter, be sure to block your time and don’t let it be a distraction. Try to tweet two or three things a day, but limit your time to 20 minutes at the beginning and end of the day.

Your firms can also use Twitter to monitor what people might be saying about you. Automating searches using keywords that use your company name can help your firm pick up on sales opportunities, PR coverage, and happy customers to use for testimonials.

- **To follow or not to follow?** One school of Twitter etiquette believes that you should follow everyone who follows you. In practice, this could lead to a large and unwieldy community of followers that offer no value and many distractions. Don't feel compelled to follow everyone. Check out their bio and their website link to see if they are worth following first. If you want to auto-follow everyone, use [Twollow.com](http://Twollow.com) to auto follow users based on keywords.
- **Don't buy followers:** You will see many services that offer you thousands of followers overnight. Remember, these schemes don't do you any good. You need specific followers: potential candidates and customers. Don't take shortcuts. Build a network of high-value followers.
- **Set up email notifications:** Use [TweetBeep](#) to send email notifications of key phrases when they arise. Great for sourcing both candidates and job orders by searching keywords such as company names, job titles, skills, industry conferences, and words such as "resume", "job fair" and "hiring."
- **Create a Twibe.** A Twibe is a group of Twitter users interested in a common topic. To create a Twibe, just choose a name and tweet it. For example, if you want to build a community of candidates interested in aerospace jobs, your might create: <http://twibes.com/aerospacejobs>. Although this is more work, this is another example of using free existing tools to build communities of interest.

## Conclusion

Used correctly, Twitter can be an effective recruiting and branding tool for both individual recruiters and firms. As with any tool, it takes time to master. Learn how to use it and make it work for you by building networks of potential candidates and using automated alerts to bring valuable information back to you. You can also use Twitter to build and maintain relationships that can lead to job orders and placements.

Are Twitter users better candidates? Not necessarily, but for certain positions, it could be a leading indicator of a quality candidate because it demonstrates an understanding and awareness of social media.

Follow Bullhorn on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/bullhornlive](http://www.twitter.com/bullhornlive) and get the last best practices and research reports from the staffing and recruiting industry.

### About Bullhorn, Inc.

Bullhorn is the global leader in On Demand, front office staffing and recruiting software, providing the only completely integrated front office solution for staffing and recruiting firms. Bullhorn's customers achieve the highest placement rates in the industry. By enabling recruiting, sales and management to live and work together, Bullhorn synchronizes sales and recruiting to generate, source and fill job orders in real-time, at anytime and from anyplace. Delivered through software as a service, Bullhorn continually meets the evolving business needs of its customers. More than 1,400 firms and 14,000 users worldwide, including some of the largest global staffing firms, partner with Bullhorn to meet the employment demands of the global economy.

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