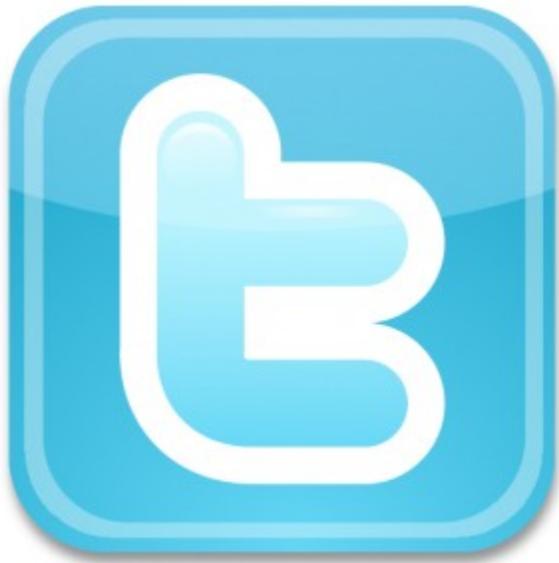


A Guide to Proper Twitter Etiquette

Posted by [Martha Newman, J.D., PCC, TopLawyerCoach, LLC](#) • April 27, 2010 • [Printer-friendly](#)



PROTECT Your ONLINE REPUTATION by Familiarizing Yourself with the Unspoken Rules of TWITTER

Much like any other social networking site, [Twitter](#) operates under its own set of "unofficial" rules. These rules have been established and upheld by the Twitter community for years.

Yet professionals who are new to Twitter, or dabble in it just a few times a week, may not know these rules - and, they're putting their **reputations and personal brands at risk!**

Brush up on proper Twitter etiquette!

Here's a guide to using Twitter the *right* way.

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1. Always give credit.

Giving credit is an important part of the Twitter community. It enables your followers to see whom you're keeping up with, and exposes them to potentially great new people to follow.

Here are two ways to give credit.

- **Retweet (RT):** This is used if you want to repost something word for word that another person has already tweeted. Twitter has a built in function that gives the original poster credit, and so you don't have to worry about the attribution. However, like many users, sometimes you want to put your own spin on the tweet and so you rewrite it. If you rewrite it, do not use the RT. I think most would assume it is word for word from the previous poster.
- **Via:** A lot of people will simply rewrite a tweet and put "via [@gainyourgoals](#)" at the end to give credit. The misuse here is that many people often are taking the tweet word-for-word and reposting it. Really, that's a retweet. **Via should be used if you have changed the tweet to your own liking.**

2. Don't self promote excessively.

It's alright to promote something that you're affiliated with every now and then, but if that's all you're posting then it becomes spammy. Sure, Twitter has been labeled as a micro-blog, but even with regular blogs people will only read you if you have something interesting to say or some insight or expertise to offer.

3. Link appropriately.

Don't cite a piece of information without linking to an article or a source. If you've linked once to an article in a conversation, then you don't have to do it every time. But remember that you are sharing with a network of folks, many of whom might want to get more information on the topic you're tweeting about.

4. Respond to followers. SUPER IMPORTANT!!!

Stop and talk to your community!

It is courteous to respond to those who send you direct messages or replies (unless it is spam, of course).

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5. Know when to send a direct message or a reply.

There are simply some things that are meant for the public sphere and for the private sphere. To decide when to reply to someone or direct message them, stop and think, “Is this something that I want other people to know and would the people I am replying to be okay with my messaging them something publicly?” It takes some common sense. If someone direct messages you, don’t @ them publicly. Direct message them back.

6. Follow people who add value.

Don’t follow people just to get more followers. Ultimately, the more people you follow, the bigger the stream of information and the louder the noise – even with filtering tools and Twitter lists. The best filter against the noise is you, so make sure that who you follow adds value.

7. Don't overuse hash tags.

Hashtags are meant to be helpful to other users who want to find tweets around a similar topic through Twitter Search. Some users, however, think that if they use a hashtag for every word they will get more exposure because their tweet will be more likely to show up in search. Considering that Twitter now showcases the popular tweets, this isn’t really true.

Also, multiple hashtags make your tweets hard to read. Use hashtags when it makes sense (conference hashtag, breaking news event, etc.). It should still be easy for a reader to read what you’re saying.

8. Don't retweet yourself.

In general, if you are going to tweet something twice it should be because you are correcting an earlier tweet or got a link wrong. Don’t do it just because you want more clicks.

Whether you're new to Twitter or a veteran tweeter, take the time to familiarize yourself with these unofficial rules of etiquette. In doing so, not only will you be following influencers - **YOU'LL BECOME AN INFLUENCER!**

Adapted from article [10 Commandments of Twitter Etiquette](#) by Adam Lavrusik.

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