

Are you in the Twitter Conversation?

Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, MySpace, Ning, and many other social media websites are the hub of many online conversations.

My favorite is Twitter.

According to a recent article at Mashable.com there will be over 18 million Twitter users by the end of 2009. (<http://mashable.com/2009/09/14/twitter-2009-stats/>) When I wrote this article originally in August there were just over 2.5 million registered Twitter users.

I joined Twitter on January 17, 2009 and since then it has helped me stay on top of world events, learn new things and meet new people.

When you join, you first need to choose an online name. It can be your real name, the name of your business or a descriptive name. Next you need to upload an 'avatar', a picture of yourself or a picture that represents who you are. You are also encouraged to share your location (State or Country) and post a 160 character bio.

If you want to be taken seriously you need to do all of these things. I do not follow people who do not have an avatar or a bio. And, I know many people who feel the same way.

Once you are registered you can start Tweeting. You can then post and answer the question "What are you doing?" You only have 140 characters to answer, so you need to learn to be brief and concise. Many people share news, links of interest and participate in conversations.

Then you have to choose people to follow. It takes time to find people you want to follow and for people to find you. But, after a few months you will connect with some amazing people.

The people I follow fall into six general categories:

1. entrepreneurs
2. writers/bloggers
3. artists
4. vegetarian/vegans
5. web designers/programmers
6. local NJ entrepreneurs, writers, and social media fans

Since Twitter is global, many of the people I follow are from all over the world. I have connected to people in New Zealand, Australia, the United Kingdom and Slovakia to name just a few.

Staying abreast of local and world events is one of the things I like about Twitter. I learned of the Air France 447 crash and the DC Metro Line crash hours before it hit Yahoo! or MSN. The same thing happened when Ed McMahon and Michael Jackson died.

I have discovered numerous interesting and fascinating articles and news links from Twitter posts. It has cut the time I spend 'surfing' the net by about 50%.

Then there are the many fascinating people I have met. I have introduced you to many of them here under the New Friends section. But, it goes beyond just meeting people. By getting in the conversation you have a real opportunity to build relationships.

For instance, I am in the process of redesigning The Dreaming Café website and I need a new header graphic designed. I put the request out on Twitter and within 24-hours had over six responses. After reviewing the designers' websites I liked two of them enough to believe we would be a good fit. I contacted them both by email and will be talking to one of the designers Monday night.

This designer is also organizing an event in Asbury Park, NJ, AsburyPop, the 140 Second Film Festival. It is an event where artists, writers, musicians, filmmakers, merchants, foodies, and people who have connected through Twitter can share their talents and experience through exhibitions, performances and workshops. Through this connection I received an invitation to present a short segment on journaling.

What is so cool about this event is first, it is in New Jersey where I live. Secondly, I would have never known about it if it wasn't for Twitter and finally, I may have an opportunity to teach a short journaling workshop at the festival. Isn't that awesome?? And it is all because of Twitter.

Another recent example of finding help on Twitter is when I was looking for a lowfat, vegan recipe to cook greens (collard greens, kale, escarole, etc). I love greens but have failed to cook an edible version. I asked a fellow vegan on Twitter if she had a recipe and immediately received a response. Two days later I made a perfect 'greens and garlic' soup.

I also use Twitter to promote The Dreaming Café and share interesting things I have found online and off. It is a great way for me to share my message and connect with people who are interested in what I have to say.

Overall, if you want to meet people, build relationships, promote your business, stay on top of world events, sports or entertainment news, and/or learn from people who share similar interests, Twitter is the place to be.

Join Twitter today and you can follow me, [@SandyDFromNJ](#).

One more tip...when you join send me a message by '@'ing me. This means use [@SandyDFromNJ](#) in your message. I'll respond to you and all my followers will see me tweeting with you.

Hope to see you online and in the conversation.

Twitter = Relationships and Communities

I LOVE Twitter and the unlimited opportunities it offers to build relationships and communities.

I hate Tweets that say “300 followers in one day, follow this link xxxxxx” or “thousands of followers if you xxxxxxxx”.

I do NOT want 300 or 1000 followers in one day or ten days.

I want to know the people who follow me and I want the people who follow me to know who I am.

Twitter is about building relationships – personal and professional.

Twitter is not a mass marketing toy to blast your message to thousands of unknown people and spam them all day – or it shouldn't be in my opinion.

Twitter is an amazing way to connect to people. It is one of the best ways to find a community of people, regardless of geography, that have similar interests, goals, and dreams. It is a unique and wonderful way to support others and find the support you need. You have the equal opportunity (and obligation) to contribute to, and benefit from, this community.

There are no magic Twitter formulas to find followers, not if you are sincere about creating meaningful relationships with others.

Joining Twitter is like moving into a new neighborhood. It takes time to meet people, connect with people, and figure out where all the best places to hang out are and to find your way around.

The more time and sincere effort you put into your Twitter experience the more you will get out of it.

Here are some Twitter Tips that can make your Twitter experience better, regardless if you are a newbie or old-school veteran:

- ✓ **First things first...** Who are you? Post a bio, tell us a little about yourself-the important stuff. Where are you located? You don't have to be exact, but give some idea of where in the world you are located. And, include a picture of yourself, it makes you real.
 - My Twitter ID: ([@SandyDFromNJ](#))
 - My Bio: Writer, artist and entrepreneur using the written word to communicate, teach, share, and help heal the world, one word, one idea, one person at a time.
 - Location: Southern New Jersey

- ✓ **Next...**What are your interests? What kind of communities are you interested in participating in? What do you want to know more about? What do you want to share? These answers will help you find people to follow. And, if you share some common interest, people will have a reason to follow you back.
 - People who follow me and people I follow – artists, writers, entrepreneurs, film makers, web designers, and other ‘creatives’; vegans and vegetarians and people interested in healthy, natural holistic living.
 - Don’t know who to follow? Pick a few people you find interesting and see who they are talking to. Click on their Twitter ID, read their Bio, read some of their Tweets and choose to follow or not.
 - Once you do start following people, remember it is about community and relationship building, it is about communication – two way communication.
 - Share what you are doing.
 - If you have a website or blog, share links to your site when you have something new or interesting to say.
 - It’s okay to share links to your products and services, just don’t make this your only reason for being on Twitter.
 - (Think of it this way – if you were out with your friends and you were selling a new product, or teaching a new class, you’d probably excitedly share your good news with them, but this would not be the basis of your entire relationship, just a small part. It’s the same on Twitter.)
- ✓ **ReTweet (RT)** what others are doing and sharing-things you personally enjoyed or found interesting.
- ✓ **Reply** to someone, say hello, make a comment, ask a question. Be sincere, be interested in what the other person is doing, saying or sharing.
- ✓ **Balance your Tweets** – Sharing, ReTweeting and Replying
- ✓ **Don’t crowd the airwaves.** Space your Tweets. Don’t Tweet twenty times in two minutes.
 - Twice I tried to follow and support an aspiring writer, but she Tweeted every 30-seconds, all day, about every single thing she was doing and thinking. You can only offer so much support. Unfortunately I had to ‘unfollow’ her – twice. Not all relationships work out.
- ✓ **Un-follow...**It’s okay to un-follow people and people will un-follow you. There are over 2.5 million Twitter users. You can’t expect to connect with them all, nor would you want to.
- ✓ **Block & report...**Block spammers, ‘nudies-xxx’, and other undesirables. If they are really bad, report them to Twitter.

I honestly believe that Twitter and other social networking sites like Facebook can play a huge role in developing relationships and communities that transcend traditional cultural, geographical and political boundaries. The opportunity to reach out and learn from one another in a supportive, open environment like Twitter is unlike anything we have ever seen.

Some people will vehemently disagree with me. They see Twitter and the other social networks as pools of fish to be caught, like giant marketing oceans. Well, good luck to them. I won't be following them, and when I find them following me, I will block them.

To read more about the positive benefits of Twitter and how you can make the most of your experience the next article will focus in Twitter time management techniques.

Twitter Time Management Techniques

Here are some time management Twitter tips that have worked for me.

- Remember Twitter is about communication. Interact with others.
- Develop a routine and repeat 2-3 times per day. I try to log early am, midday and late evening.
- Use Tweetdeck or some other app to help manage your tweets. Tweetdeck also works with two other social media sites: Facebook and MySpace
- Tweet your own links and other links of interest.
- Re-tweet often. This exposes your followers to some of your favorite people and helps spread interesting and helpful, as well as, inspiring information.
- Check your @ replies to see how is talking to you or about you.
- Right above the reply button in a tweet box is a star. Click this to add people and tweets to your Favorites. Favorites are listed in profile box to the right.
- Use your Favorites and @ replies to keep up with the tweets of your core Tweeps. Click on their avatar and see everything they have tweeted recently.
- You can find many more new friends by watching who communicates with who.
- Don't play catch up and try to read every single tweet from every single person during the time you were offline.
- Turn off email notification of followers. Once or twice a week click on your followers button. Your followers are listed in order from most recent to oldest. You can fairly quickly review your new follower profiles and decide who you want to follow back. Note the last person you looked at so you know where to pick up next time.
- You don't have to follow everyone who follows you.
- If you get repeated tweets that seem outside the community you want to interact with, Un-follow.
- You don't have to DM (direct message) everyone who follows you. This can be time consuming for you and annoying for your followers...especially when it is automated.
- Use DM's to connect directly with someone you have a special message for or will be establishing a communication offline with.

If you have any questions about Twitter or Tweeting please email me:

Sandy@TheDreamingCafe.com

Or

@ me on Twitter [@SandyDFromNJ](https://twitter.com/SandyDFromNJ)

Or

You can also find me on Facebook my searching for my email address. Send me a message and request me as a friend.

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