



## UNIT 9

## Using Social Media for Networking

### Learning Outcomes

**By the end of this unit the learner will be able to:**

- ✓ Leverage the availability and usefulness of the Internet, including LinkedIn and Twitter



## Unit 9

### Using Social Media for Networking

#### Leveraging the Internet

##### Using LinkedIn

LinkedIn is a business-focused social media site. Its aims include helping people in business connect, helping businesses do business with each other, providing services to business people, and networking within your industry (as well as related or complementary industries).

Within the LinkedIn network (found at [www.linkedin.com](http://www.linkedin.com)), you can establish a profile, create a company profile, and engage in communities that already exist, while considering the benefits or establishing your own community there.

LinkedIn has several ways that you can locate other people. You can search for them from the home page of the site before you even join and see if there are like-minded people there that you want to connect with. LinkedIn is a consistent, content rich, place to find people and information. It is a site that has focused on what it is good at, so you won't find games or chat. They do, however, offer an enormous network of groups where you can find blog posts and articles, connect in conversations, and expand your own network.

LinkedIn does have the ability for you to enter a status update that will show in your news feed on your profile page and the news feeds of people you are connected to. In order to save you a bit of time, you can update your status on LinkedIn and have it feed to your Twitter update. Since both statuses are restricted to a concise 140 character limit, things that you say in LinkedIn do not get cut off in Twitter.

However, Twitter announced in June 2012 that users will not be able to automatically post their updates to LinkedIn. You can still send your LinkedIn updates to twitter, but not vice-versa. Be judicious in your LinkedIn updates and people will be more likely to be curious about what you do so and follow you along.

## Getting Connected

### Connecting to Others

LinkedIn is all about connections, and as with any social media platform, those connections help you to build and/or connect as a community. When you log into your LinkedIn profile, you can then add connections from the Contact tab. You can look for connections by selecting schools you attended (to connect with classmates), companies you've worked with (to connect with colleagues), and so on. There are also plenty of helpful how-to links on LinkedIn to get this working for you.

When you are logged in and you want to search for a connection, you simply enter the person's name in the LinkedIn search bar. You can also search for them quickly if you know their e-mail address. If you want to connect to someone you do not actually know, LinkedIn encourages you to connect to people that you know and people who are connected to someone you know (a second-degree connection) and that they know (a third-degree connection).

You can connect to second- and third-degree connections by sending them a request directly (and you should mention who you know in common if you do so), or, you can request that your friend (the first-degree connection you have) introduce the new person to you. This sounds more complicated than it is, but helps to stop people who don't know each other at all from connecting and simply building huge lists of connections that they really have nothing in common with, and don't wish to have in their network.

LinkedIn also provides HTML code for you to add a LinkedIn button to your website or blog so that people can find you on LinkedIn easily. This is especially handy if you have a pretty common name!

### Using Groups

LinkedIn groups are also a great way to get connected. There are plenty of them to try out. We suggest that you visit, read, connect to, and start communicating with some of the groups that are already there. You can adjust your settings with the groups so that each day or once a week you get a digest of conversations that are underway, resources that have been made available, etc. Some groups will have to give you permission to join.

If you are connected to groups that are right for you, join in the conversations and see what is happening. If you don't enjoy being a part of a particular group, you can always leave and disconnect yourself.

When you have been part of these groups for a while and are getting involved in some conversations, it may be time to consider whether it makes sense for you, your company, or an association you are connected to, to start a group. You'll want to have plenty of conversation starters as part of your plan. You also need to devote time for visiting the group regularly – (once a day at least) to engage in the conversations there, answer questions, provide links to resources, or to connect people together. If this sounds like a lot of work, it can be.

Get as involved as you would like and have time for, and see what kind of information and value you get from particular groups in your industry or other areas of interest. If you do set up a group, you need to be dedicated to it to ensure that it thrives.

## Using Twitter

Twitter is another large and very popular social networking platform. It has amassed millions of users around the world who are sometimes referred to as Twits.

Twitter allows you to build a profile centered around you personally or your business. As with other social media networks, it encourages people to organize in communities as you connect with people you know, do business with, or who find you randomly.

When you use Twitter, you will get used to speaking in very concise terms, because each update that you post on the site is restricted to just 140 characters. (That's not 140 words, but characters, as in the individual letters and spaces that you include in your message. You can link your message to a photo that represents a thought or particular moment, a blog post, an article, or provide a link to your website. As you develop fluency with Twitter, you will find it easier to create short, snappy comments that compel people to read your messages and make them want to know more about you and your company.

When you start to use Twitter, you will find that you can get bogged down in the number of other people's messages. Make sure that what you are doing on Twitter fits with your plan. One of the weaknesses of Twitter is that people post whatever they are thinking about or doing at that moment, so there are pages and pages of banality to filter through as you look for people to connect with. Then there are people who post links to nonsense you won't be interested in, spam, and hours that you can sit and simply read streams of information.

However, Twitter has some excellent features, which we'll talk about below.

### Hashtags

Do you remember not that long ago when we called the # symbol a number sign? Twitter has re-branded that symbol and it is now commonly called a hashtag.

When you add a hashtag to your message, you can track, organize, and communicate with other people who use the same hashtag. In order to communicate with their communities directly, a business owner can start a "meeting" and everyone there answers or asks questions that end with the same hashtag. People following along with the hashtag can see the conversation going on within its own stream, and outside of everyone else's conversations.

Say that you represent a business that sells smartphones and you'd like to get people talking about it and answer their questions before the next release is due out. You could set up a status update that says: "Join in on new I'm Smart phone apps Tuesday at 7 P.M. Eastern. Use #smarter." That message tells people what you are talking about, when to be on Twitter, and which hashtag to use.

If you send the message out and change the wording slightly to catch people's attention, you can host a virtual conversation that helps you connect to your community. You might try something like this: "New I'm Smart phone is out in two weeks. Come ask questions Tuesday, 7 P.M. Eastern. Use #smarter."

## Re-Tweets

By keeping your status updates short (the example above about #smarter is 98 characters), you leave space for people to forward your messages along to their followers by re-tweeting. The space that you left allows them to add a brief comment like "Great idea," "A must see," and so on. A re-tweeted status update also starts with the abbreviation RT. If your status is long, people can use MT in front, which stands for "modified tweet," where they will edit your message so that it fits alongside their own.

If someone re-tweets the #smarter message, they might say something like this: "RT @helper New I'm Smart phone is out in two weeks. Come ask questions Tuesday, 7 P.M. Eastern. Use #smarter. <--Great idea! I'll be there!"

Initially, your staff and friends can re-tweet messages if you ask them. You'll soon see that if you are offering something of value to people, and your message catches their attention, that your messages will spread.

By looking under the "Interactions" tab and selecting "mentions," you will be able to see who re-tweets your messages. By searching for your hashtag, you can also see who is using that moniker to connect.

As well, Twitter courtesy is to thank people who spread your messages by sending them a message via a status update, like this: "Thanks for the RT @helpful, @helper, @moniker."

## Your Name

Your name on Twitter needs to be a reflection of your brand, so choose wisely. Most people use their name, or their initials if their name is long. You need to use something so that people can find you. If your name is Martin MacDonald Smyth and people don't really know if you are a Mac or Mc, or a Smyth or Smith, they won't be able to find you and they may not look too hard. Make sure that you include a link to your Twitter name in all the obvious spots, like on your website, your blog, your Facebook page, and so on.

If you are using your business name as your Twitter name, remember to select something that represents your brand. Keep your name short but meaningful. In status updates such as a re-tweet, or when someone wants to mention you in a status update, your name and the @ symbol get counted as characters!



## Using Lists on Twitter

With the running list of updates on your screen, it can be very difficult to find information that is addressed to you or that you should be keeping an eye on. Fortunately, you can organize people that you follow into lists. That way, you can check for direct messages, mentions, and hashtags to see if there are messages directed to you or your organization. You can also check into the lists you are most interested in to see what people are saying that might catch your eye.

As an example, my personal Twitter account (which represents my business) has about 1300 followers right now. Some of those people tweet frequently, so it is not possible for me to keep up with what everyone is saying. To organize things, when I follow someone new, I put them into a list if I want to keep an eye on what they are saying. All of my lists are private so that other members of Twitter cannot see how I organize them, but you can make your lists public if you think other people might be interested in them or sharing the lists benefits you in some way.

You can create lists very easily and give them any name you want. Currently, I have lists for:

- Folks to watch
- Local businesses
- Media
- National businesses
- Training and education

The big advantage of lists is that you can check into Twitter quickly and see what's most important to you. When you have some extra time, by all means click on the Home tab and see everything in your stream. Lists are handy, however, to keep an eye on people you are most interested in.



## Using Facebook

Can Facebook help you grow? Can it connect you with your network so that you can deepen relationships and meet your networking goals? The answer is multi-faceted and will depend on where your contacts are as well as what you have to offer.

Facebook is an internationally successful social media platform that, in 2011, had amassed over half a billion users. This is an enormous market for any business; if your prospects or customers are on Facebook, you need to establish a presence there too.

Businesses are not allowed to sell directly on Facebook. Instead, they can offer information, make connections, develop relationships, and share news by creating interesting posts, notes, and so on. We refer to this process as **building a community**. Some contests are allowed, but you need to check their terms of reference (which change regularly) to make sure your approach works with their site. Otherwise, your page could be shut down by Facebook administration.

### First Steps

Before you set up any kind of business page on any social media site, review your networking goals. This will help you to make sure the page fits with your plan, supports your business, and is not going to take you in a different direction.

### Next Steps

Visit [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com). If you don't have a personal account, you cannot set up your business page. You might not want your personal information shared with all of your employees or customers, naturally, and you have the option to adjust your privacy settings so that people can see only what you want them to. This means you can set up your personal page along with your photo (perhaps a way to contact you), and that's all anyone else has to see. It's really up to you.

An important note about Facebook is that from time to time they change their privacy and visibility settings. This means it is essential that you keep an eye on their terms of service and that you check your account and privacy settings. As an example, in June 2012, Facebook changed every person's e-mail contact information to a Facebook e-mail address. This outraged some subscribers and people were rapidly making adjustments so that their information reflected their personal e-mail addresses. You simply have to be ready (or assign someone on your staff to be ready), alert, and flexible.

## Due Diligence

Before you get too far, visit Facebook's terms page at [www.facebook.com/policies?ref=pf](http://www.facebook.com/policies?ref=pf) and make sure that you agree with the rules and are able to follow them. You may also want to check out the rules for promotions, which are at this link: [https://www.facebook.com/page\\_guidelines.php#promotionsguidelines](https://www.facebook.com/page_guidelines.php#promotionsguidelines). (Note that these links were accurate at the time of writing. Velsoft takes no responsibility for the accuracy of these sites or the content within.)

## Now You Can!

From your personal Facebook page, you can set up a business page that visitors can visit. If they want to see your updates in their own news feed, they can click "like" on your business page.

Your updates need to be interesting and capture attention. If they don't, even people who have "liked" your page may hide your posts and not see them. This means that you are not trying to gather numbers. Instead, you must focus on developing relationships and interacting with your community.

## Know Your Tools

There are plenty of options to help you maximize the benefit of networking through social media. Programs like HootSuite can help you read, organize, and post updates on all your social profiles, and to know when someone messages you directly. TweetDeck can help you to organize, sort, and update your Twitter profiles.

Pinterest is another social media site that works well for businesses with a strong visual component.

Research, investigate, and measure the different social networks available to see where your target market is, and whether your customers are there.



## Personal Action Plan

**I am already doing these things well:**

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**I want to improve these areas:**

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**I have these resources to help me:**

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<b>As a result of what I have learned in this workshop, I am going to...</b>	<b>My target date is...</b>	<b>I will know I have succeeded when...</b>	<b>I will follow up with myself on...</b>

### Further Reading:

- ✓ Konrath, Jill. *Selling to Big Companies*. Kaplan Publishing, 2005.
- ✓ Misner, Ivan. *Networking Like a Pro: Turning Contacts into Connections*. Entrepreneur Press, 2010.
- ✓ Morgen, Sharon Drew. *Dirty Little Secrets: Why Buyers Can't Buy and Sellers Can't Sell and What You Can Do About It*. Morgen Publishing, 2009.
- ✓ —. *Selling with Integrity: Reinventing Sales Through Collaboration, Respect, and Serving*. Berkley Books, 1999.