



Twitter 101

Why social media?... And while we're on the subject, why Twitter?

First and foremost, **Twitter is a real-time, microblog service** that allows individuals or groups to post messages of 140 characters. It serves as a low-cost, high-impact advocacy, news, and listening tool.

Think of social media, and especially Twitter, as **an avenue to engage in an ongoing, 24/7 conversation** not only with your followers, but with the general public and many people who aren't watching traditional media.

Twitter can **build exponential reach and readership** for campaigns and policy issues, and links your organization to people traditional outreach methods would have never reached. Twitter allows you to connect with untapped and often surprising support bases for your campaigns. Twitter is also a great way to **monitor** which issues are gaining traction, and to establish your organization as an **informed listener and active participant** in the conversation.

Getting started on Twitter

Pick a twitter handle (your name on twitter). Your handle shouldn't be too long and it should identify your organization — this will be what everyone sees as your name on Twitter.

Customize your Twitter page. Twitter allows you to upload a profile image and background image and choose a color scheme for your homepage. Your profile picture should be your organization's logo, another easy way to indicate that this is your organization's voice on Twitter.

Tweeting basics:

- **Follow** the people and organizations important to you. Following someone means that you will see their tweets in your tweet deck (your continuously updated feed of tweets) and that they will see yours. When someone follows you, follow back.
- **Tweet.** Be a resource to attract more followers. Post at least four to six times a day. Be conversational in your tweets and omit needless word.
- Have a lot to say? **Link** to materials and keep it brief in your tweet. Use sites like ow.ly OR bit.ly to compress long links. They also allow you to track links.
- **Retweet** your partners/allies/audiences' tweets. Retweets (RTs) spread your message to an even larger audience.
- You can call other tweeps' (your followers) attention to your tweet by tweeting @ them. Simply add @twitterhandle to your tweet. Respond to tweets or answer questions by tweeting @ someone.
- **Use a hashtag (#)** to add context to tweets. Ex. #hcr denotes that a post is about health care reform. Follow hashtags to listen to conversations on a particular topic and join in!

Example Tweets

Here are some top tweets from @healthpolicyhub:

“Which is better: cutting coverage or cutting waste? New blog on solutions to states' [#Medicaid](#) fiscal woes:<http://ht.ly/44M16> [#hcr](#)”

“Health Insurers Adjust to Once-Scary Reform Rule <http://ht.ly/3TagV> MLRs are a good thing!”

“Tell it like it is... Stories are a powerful and important way to draw attention to issues <http://ht.ly/3P9sf>”

“Pres. Obama says access to quality, affordable healthcare is part of the security needed to achieve the American dream. [#ha2011](#)”

These tweets follow the basic twitter rules. They are snappy and conversational. **Clever, dramatic tweets get attention.** Including news articles establishes that you are monitoring what is going on and are a resource for others. Linking to blogs shows you have an opinion and are listening to others' thoughts. Tweeting at people increases the reach of your tweet. Using #hashtags puts tweets into context and connects them to a larger conversation.

Sample Tweets

*We are using the tagline **moving forward... protecting our care** around the anniversary and encourage you to incorporate it into your social media outreach. Groups are using the hashtag **#hcworks** for tweets surrounding the anniversary. Here are sample tweets you can tweak to fit your organization.*

Women:

I can no longer be charged more for my insurance just because of my gender. [#hcworks](#)

Insurers will no longer be able to deny women coverage for a “pre-existing condition” like a Cesarean section. [#hcworks](#)

Young adults:

The health care law helps recent grads like me by allowing me stay on my parents' insurance until I find work [#hcworks](#)

Small Businesses:

Small Businesses should be able to come together to get the same insurance rates as large companies. [#hcworks](#) let's keep moving forward

Seniors:

Let's save seniors money and strengthen [#Medicare](#) by cracking down on fraud, abuse and waste. [#hcworks](#)

Moving forward is free preventative care for seniors to keep them healthy BEFORE they get sick [#hcworks](#)