Get More Twitter Followers
By
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Platform: Get Noticed in a Noisy World

I rarely meet a Twitter user who doesn’t want more followers. A few argue that the numbers aren’t important. They are only concerned with “quality followers.” I’m not sure it is either/or, but I’ve noticed most of the people making this argument have very few followers.

Why would you want more followers? Three reasons:

- **More followers provide social authority.** Like any other ranking system, the higher your follower count, the more people assume you are an expert—or at least someone interesting. It may not be valid, but that’s the way it works in a world in which there is a ranked list for everything.

- **More followers extend your influence.** Twitter is a great tool for spreading ideas. If you have ideas worth sharing, why wouldn’t you want to spread them to as many people as possible? Twitter makes it ridiculously easy. The larger your follower count, the faster your ideas spread.

- **More followers lead to more sales.** You’re likely on Twitter for one of three reasons: to be entertained, to network with others, or to sell your stuff. Whether it’s a brand, a product, a service, or even a cause, more followers provide the opportunity to generate more leads and more conversions.

Before I tell you what I have learned about how to get more Twitter followers, let me tell you how *not* to do it.

Don’t try to cheat the system. If something sounds too good to be true, it probably is. Unless you are a celebrity who has built a vast audience in some other media channel, attracting followers will take time and effort.

What about buying followers? (Yes, you can do this. Just Google it!) For starters, this is contrary to Twitter’s rules. Worse, followers obtained in this manner have no affinity for you. They are like sending direct mail to an untargeted, generic list. Worthless. What about using special software that promises to increase your follower count? In the early days of Twitter, I used one of these programs. It did increase my follower count—dramatically. I thought I’d hit the jackpot. However, it didn’t last.

These programs all rely on “aggressive following” and “follower churn”—which means you follow people solely in the hope they will follow you back. If they don’t, you dump them and follow additional people.

My joy was short-lived. Twitter caught on and implemented a policy against this. In fact, I know several people who had their Twitter accounts shut down for engaging in this behavior. It annoys other Twitter users and degrades the Twitter experience for everyone.
So instead of using illegitimate ways to build your follower count, I want to share with you twelve proven ways you can get more Twitter followers. With the exception of my brief experiment with aggressive following, this is how I have built my own follower count to more than 115,000 followers in the last three and a half years.

1. **Show your face.** Make sure you have uploaded a photo to your Twitter profile. I will not follow anyone without a photo. Why? Because the absence of a photo tells me that the user is either a spammer or a newbie. Use a good head shot.

2. **Create an interesting bio.** Don’t leave this blank. It is one of the first things potential followers review. Explain who you are and what you do. If you were a brand or a product (crass, I know), what would be your tagline? Include that in your bio. Also, be sure to include a city name. By the way, Twitter will not include you in search results unless you fill out your user name, full name, and bio.

3. **Use a custom About page.** Your Twitter bio can only include 160 characters. It’s not much room to tell your story or introduce people to all you offer. Consider creating a custom About page on your blog and linking to it from your short Twitter bio. Then, when a prospective follower clicks on that link, he or she will find a page you have created just for Twitter users.

4. **Make your Twitter presence visible.** I can’t tell you how often I have read an interesting post and wanted to tweet the link, but couldn’t find the author’s Twitter user name. So I gave up and moved on. Make it easy for people to follow you—and for others to promote you. Display links to your Twitter account in your e-mail signature, your blog or website, business cards—everywhere.

5. **Share valuable content.** This is probably my most important piece of advice. Point people to helpful resources. Be generous. Be inspiring. Use lots of links. Create content that other people look forward to getting and want to pass on to their own followers. This is the key to getting retweeted. (I think it’s why, on average, I get mentioned in other people’s tweets 173-plus times a day.)

6. **Post frequently, but don’t flood your followers.** I do most of my blog reading early in the morning. I scan over 220 blogs and love to share the gems I find. I used to do this as I found them, which often meant a flood of eight to ten posts at a time. Now I use Buffer to spread these throughout the day so I don’t overwhelm my followers.

7. **Keep your posts short enough to retweet.** Retweets are the only way to get noticed by people who don’t follow you. Therefore, you must make it easy for your followers to retweet you. Keep your tweets short enough for people to add the RT symbol and your username (“RT @MichaelHyatt”). For me, that takes up seventeen characters, including the space. This means my tweets can be no longer than 123 characters (140 – 17 = 123).

8. **Reply to others publicly.** I used to reply to people via direct message (DM), thinking my message was irrelevant to most of my followers. Because I wasn’t replying in public, this made me look unsociable. So now I reply almost exclusively in public. The only people who see those messages are those who follow both me and the person I am replying to—a small subset of my followers. So it’s sociable but not annoying.
9. **Practice strategic following.** This is not the same as “aggressive following” (which I condemned earlier). By this I mean, follow people in your industry, people who use certain keywords in their bio, or even people who follow the people you follow. Some of these will follow you back. If they retweet you, it will introduce you to their followers. For example, I could use Twitter’s advanced search feature to find everyone within a fifty-mile radius of Nashville who has used the word *leadership* in his or her bio or a post.

10. **Be generous in linking and retweeting others.** Twitter fosters a culture of sharing. The more you link to others, the more people will reciprocate. And that’s precisely what must happen for you to grow your follower count. You need others to introduce you to their followers. But don’t ask for a retweet; simply post content worth retweeting.

11. **Avoid too much promotion.** Yes, you can promote your blog posts, products, events, and more on Twitter, but be careful. There’s an invisible line you must not cross. If you do, you look like a spammer—or just clueless. Not only will you not get additional followers, you will wear out your existing followers and many of them will unfollow you. This is why I advocate the 20-to-1 rule.

12. **Don’t use an auto-responder.** I used to use SocialOomph to thank everyone who followed me and provide a link to my blog post “Beginner’s Guide to Twitter.” I thought I was being courteous and helpful. As it turns out, I was being annoying. This is just more clutter in people’s Twitter in-box. Avoid it. (By the way, I do thank people when they subscribe to my blog. However, this is primarily to let them know they have successfully subscribed. You don’t need this with Twitter.)

Finally, don’t worry too much about the numbers. If you follow the advice I have given above, the numbers will take care of themselves. Like most things in life, slow and steady wins the race. Don’t underestimate the power of incremental growth over time. I didn’t build my following overnight and neither will you.