Ten tips for setting up a Twitter page

Twitter is a useful way for individuals and organisations to interact. It’s take-up in Australia is rapid, and it is has proved especially popular for professionals to engage with each other on areas of interest. As such, it’s a great tool for researchers, colleges and centres to communicate with very engaged audiences.

This document is intended to help you think through the issues, challenges and potential rewards for setting up a Twitter page. It is intended as a guide only.

The Communications and External Liaison Office is able to provide advice and guidance on using social media effectively. For more information contact Martyn Pearce at CELO on x55575.

1 – Know your audience
Who is going to read what you’ve written? Before you jump in to setting up a Twitter page, look around at what others are writing on similar subjects, and which individuals and organisations might be interested in what you’re writing. Having a clear idea of who is out there, and what they're interested in, will save you time and make your page more worthwhile.

2 – Be good looking
How many Twitter pages have you seen ruined by ‘busy’ designs, or user photos that don’t look good? Think carefully about what you want your page to look like and look around at those of others. If you are using the ANU logo, or linking to an ANU webpage, you will need to make sure your design meets the guidelines of the Marketing Office – contact publications@anu.edu.au

3 – Plan your messages out
Social media, and Twitter especially, require frequent updating. To ensure that you do this consistently, think ahead about your messages. Keep a few up your sleeve so that you can keep up the pace of updates.

4 – Think about resourcing
Because social media requires individuals to update and respond frequently, it can be labour intensive. Think carefully about how you’re going to ensure that your online commitments are met, without impacting too heavily on your normal work. Consider who is going to responsible for updating and responding – if it’s an official ANU page, it should be done by staff, not students.
5 – Understand both reward, and risk
Twitter can be an amazing distributor of your news and information. Even if your network is relatively small, the people that are connected to that network through other members can be a very high number. So if you post something interesting, the potential audience can be huge. Conversely, posting something incorrect or regretful can have enormous consequences.

6 – Be interactive
Social media is about talking with people, not at them. Think about how your audience might want to engage with you on Twitter, and the kinds of questions they are likely to ask. Respond to these promptly and politely.

7 – Add value
People increasingly use social media as a primary method of information gathering. What information do you have that is useful to share? If using a website that allows ‘tagging’ of information – such as Twitter – do so with tags that are already in use. Don’t go overboard with your tags – restrict yourself to one on each update.

8 – Find your voice
What image do you want to project on your social media website? The tone that you write your updates in should be a reflection of your centre’s values. It should also be consistent.

9 – Join a network
All around the University work is happening on Twitter. That means that many of the questions you have, or will have, have already been addressed by others – use that experience. Additionally, it makes sense to link up to other ANU social media websites. When you’re setting up your Twitter page, let the Communications and External Liaison Office know, so that they can put you in touch with others using Twitter.

10 – Trial, not error
Before you go live with your Twitter page, trial it in private. Spend time getting used to the type of information that you’re going to put up there, assessing who the audience is and addressing issues like resourcing. Only when you feel confident that you’ve addressed these issues should you go live. Don’t be afraid to ask others around the University to give you feedback.