

Northwestern | ENGINEERING

Social Media:

What, Why, and How to Join the Conversation

*By the McCormick Office of Marketing and
External Communications*

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Purpose

So, you've decided that your department/office/student group should be using social media tools to promote your work. That's a great first step, but you'll need some more information to really take advantage of what's out there. This guide will help to explain the options at your disposal and offer tips for putting them to best use, including...

- How to set up an account on various platforms
- Glossaries of key terms
- Strategies for building an audience
- Ways to track your progress

Note that this is not a comprehensive guide by any means – the social media world moves way too fast to guarantee something like that. Instead, this document is meant to arm you with the knowledge and confidence you'll need to start out. We've also included handy pages at the end on our basic social media guidelines and best practices – you're encouraged to print these out and keep them close to your computer for quick reference.

If, after reading this guide, you have specific questions about how to administer a new or existing social media account, contact Ben Rubenstein (b-rubenstein@northwestern.edu) in the McCormick Office of Marketing and External Communications.

Facebook



Why Use It?

Facebook offers a number of great incentives and opportunities for University users, including:

- **Ability to post information quickly.** Like most social media platforms, Facebook is all about rapid communication, which means you can get your message out to a lot of people with minimal daily effort.
- **Ubiquity of the platform.** Almost everyone has a Facebook account now, which means most of your target audience will be familiar with how to use the service and how to find you on it. This is especially true of current and prospective college students.
- **Ability to track engagement.** This is a feature that's somewhat unique to Facebook. You can measure who is looking at and interacting with the content you post to Facebook, an important feature for when you're deciding what to post and how often. Note that this is only applicable to Fan Pages.

Basic Terms

- **News feed** – This is the regularly updated information that any user sees when logging onto Facebook. The feed will include all posts from any friends and/or pages that you are a fan of; users can hide posts from their feeds at any time.
- **Wall** – This is what you see when you visit a user's (or organization's) page. It includes a profile image/logo and all Status Updates made by that user/organization, along with comments and "likes" from fans/friends. Wall settings can be changed.
- **Fans** – These are the people who "like" your page and who will see your posts in their news feeds.

Fan Pages vs. Groups

As you look to create a presence on Facebook for your organization, you have two choices: a fan page or a group (note: creating an individual profile for this purpose is not recommended,

though you will need a personal profile to be able to administer a page or group). The following table should help you decide which is right for your needs:

| | Visible to non-registered users? | Tracking available? | Ability to send messages to all members? | Event promotion? | Ability to limit access? | Ability to add applications? | Custom URL? |
|-----------------|----------------------------------|---------------------|--|------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|-------------|
| Group | √ * | | √ | | √ | | |
| Fan Page | √ | √ | √ ** | √ | √ | √ | √ |

*You can choose whether a group is Open (members/content are public), Closed (members public, content private) or Secret (members/content private).

**Only via status updates; any actual messages will have to be sent from the administrator’s personal profile.

In general, we recommend using Fan Pages for long-term promotional purposes, due to their openness and flexibility. Groups are best used when you have a defined set of people you’re trying to reach (for example, current students in a program).

Account Creation/Administration

To create a new Facebook Fan Page:

1. Go to <http://www.facebook.com/pages> and choose “Create Page.”
2. Under “Official Page,” select “Brand, product, or organization” and choose “Non-Profit” from the drop-down menu.
3. Choose your **Page Name** carefully – this cannot be changed.

To create a new Facebook Group:

1. Go to <http://www.facebook.com/groups/> and choose “Create Group.”
2. Choose a Group Name and enter the members you want to invite (you’ll need to have their Facebook accounts or e-mail addresses) and choose your privacy setting.

Fan Page Tools

Once you’ve created your Fan Page and gone to it, you’ll see a link that says “Edit Page.” This link is visible **only to page admins**. Click on it, and you’ll see a variety of options:

- **Manage Permissions.** This allows you to change the page visibility (who can see it by age/country), determine what is displayed on the Wall (e.g., posts by only you, or posts by visitors to the page as well) and decide what page you’d like users to see when they first visit your page (the default is the “Wall,” but you may want to send users to “Info,” “Events,” or another tab that you create).

- **Basic Information.** Here you can fill in information about your group/organization. Especially important is the “About” box. The sentence you write here (there is a character limit) will show up on the main page below your profile image.
- **Profile Picture.** This allows you to update your profile image/logo. The standard size for a profile image is 200px wide, though you’ll want to keep any text/logos to a “title safe area” of 176px wide to allow for automatic cropping. Also, keep in mind that this image will show up in a smaller square thumbnail format whenever you post a status update. Make sure your image looks appropriate in this size/shape as well..
- **Marketing.** If you want to invite people to view your page, or purchase a Facebook ad, this is the place to do it (see “How to Get Fans” for more on your options).
- **Manage Admins.** Want someone else from your group to be able to edit the Fan Page? Enter the person’s name (if you are already a Facebook friend with the person you want to add) or email address and he or she will be given access. You can also delete admins from this page.
- **Apps.** You may want to add some applications to your page to increase its functionality. The basic ones are listed here:
 - **Photos.** Gives you the ability to post photos. You can also control whether administrators or users (or both) can post photos.
 - **Discussion Boards.** Allows you to create discussion topics for your users to contribute to.
 - **Links.** Collects all the links that you post to your Facebook page (and give you the ability to control who can post links).
 - **Video.** Gives you the ability to upload video and post to your page.
 - **Notes.** Gives you the ability to share written entries (like blog posts) that might not make sense as status updates. You can link this application to a blog’s RSS feed, and it will automatically import posts from that blog into your Facebook page each day.
 - **Events.** Gives you the ability to post events to your page (and control who can post them). If you have an upcoming event you’d like to share with your page’s fans, go here and add your event’s title, location, and time. Once this basic information is added, you will be taken to a page where you can add more descriptive text and links (for tickets or more information). If you choose to, you can then share this event with all your page’s fans on your wall. This event will now have a dedicated page that you can go back to to check how many people have RSVP’d.
- **Mobile.** This gives you the ability to update your page via email or text message using your mobile phone.
- **Insights.** This section (also visible to admins on the main page) will give you information on who your page’s users are, how the page’s popularity is trending, how much users are interacting with the content you post and more. You can drill down into this data and export it to an Excel document. Page administrators will also get a weekly email with information about the main metrics regarding the page. Note that by clicking on the “interactions” option, you can get detailed information about the number of Impressions (views) and Feedback (comments, likes and shares) of each Status Update (this information will also be visible below each Status Update after a period of time).

Tip: Static FBML

More advanced users should consider the Static FBML application. With this, you’ll be able to create **custom tabs** on your page to feature things like posters and sign-up forms.

- **Help.** Hey, we may not have answered every question. Here you'll find more detailed guides on everything from apps to bugs.

Updating Your Status and Adding Content



Northwestern University McCormick School of Engineering and Applied Science

"We are as good as the reach and influence of our ideas. By this measure, Don Norman has been exceptional." - Dean Ottino



Don Norman Elected to National Academy of Engineering

mccormick.northwestern.edu

Don Norman, professor emeritus of electrical engineering and computer science, has been elected to the National Academy of Engineering. Norman was recognized "for development of design principles based on human cognition that enhance the interaction between people and technology."

868 Impressions · 0.46% Feedback

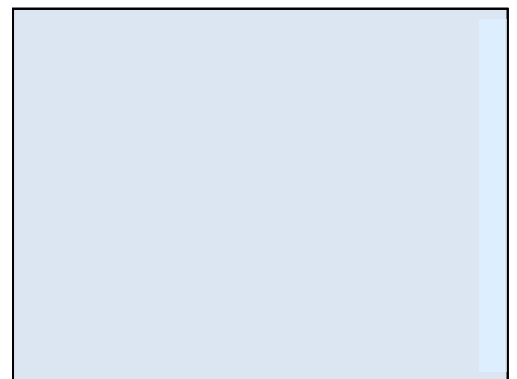
February 8 at 9:29am · Like · Comment · Share · Promote

4 people like this.

Write a comment...

You may want to let your fans know about news, events or interesting links. You can do this using the Status Update box at the top of the Facebook page (which works in the same way as in a personal profile). Be aware that these updates will show up in the News Feed of all of your page's fans. You have several options here:

- **Basic status message.** You can type any text in the box labeled "What's on your mind?"; this text will appear as a Wall post and also remain next to the name at the top of the page until you delete it.
- **Attach link.** The first option in the Attach menu below the status box allows you to paste and share a URL. You will be able to edit the link title and add/edit short descriptive text (recommended) as well as choose the thumbnail image that applies with the link (if there is one). You can also add a comment in the status text box, which will appear along with the link.
- **Attach photo.** Allows you to post a photo that you've uploaded, or to share an entire album.
- **Attach event.** You can post basic event info (title, location, time) here to post to your wall. If you want to include more event information, you can use the Events application.
- **Attach video.** Allows you to post video you've uploaded. If you want to add external video, use the "attach link" option.



How To Get Fans

You've created your Facebook page in order to get the word out about what you're doing. That means you need fans (or group members, if you've chosen that direction). You could just beg your friends to "like" your page, but if they're not part of your target audience, that won't do much good. To reach the people you actually want to reach, here are a few ideas:

- **Add a "Find us on Facebook" [badge](#)** to your website or newsletter, linking to your new page.
- **Add "[Like](#)" boxes to your site.** If you're especially active on Facebook, these boxes can give users a preview of what you're up to, and who else is a fan of your page. Then they can choose to "Like" your page without even going to the Facebook site.
- Cross-promote with other Pages ("Add to my Page's Favorites"). If there are other pages at Northwestern or peer schools that offer similar content to yours, you may want to add that page to your favorites and some of those pages' fans may come your way.
- **Buy a [Facebook ad](#).** Unless you have a specific goal for your page, it probably won't be very useful to purchase ads, but it is an option.
- **Promote your Facebook presence on other platforms.** This may sound obvious, but if you want to get Facebook fans, you need to let people know about your page when they visit your website, read your e-newsletter or check up on your group on Twitter or LinkedIn.

Tracking

In addition to using Facebook Insights to learn how people are interacting with your content, there are other ways to measure your progress. These include:

- <http://pagedata.insidefacebook.com/>
- <http://www.facebook.grader.com>
- <http://www.quantcast.com>

If you use a tool such as Google Analytics on your website, you can also track referrals from Facebook.

Best Practices

- Always add some kind of **comment** along with any links or other content that you post to your Wall, as this will help users to know that there is an actual person updating the page, and not simply a robot/RSS feed.
- **Monitor your page regularly** to see if users are responding to your content and adding comments to your page. If you do see comments (especially if they are questions), try to **respond to them in a timely manner**.
- **Update consistently**- attempt to add something to your Facebook page **at least twice a week**. The best times to post content to your page is when the most users will be around to see it in their feeds. Prime hours are typically **9 a.m.-4 p.m. during weekdays**.

Links/Resources

- Facebook Pages Manual: <http://www.box.net/shared/9e5jivl843>
- Facebook Pages Fan Page: <http://www.facebook.com/FacebookPages>
- Mashable Facebook Guide: <http://mashable.com/guidebook/facebook/>

Twitter

Why Use It?

- **Ability to post information quickly.** Like most social media platforms, Twitter is all about rapid communication, which means you can get your message out to a lot of people with minimal daily effort – and it's easy for your audience to share.
- **Ease of customer service.** Want to interact with your audience and help them through a particular process? There are few better places than Twitter to do it, as users of the service are accustomed to having conversations and sharing information.
- **Great way to monitor reputation.** If you're wondering what prospective and current students really think about you, Twitter is a great place to eavesdrop on (and participate in) the conversation.

Basic Terms

- **Re-Tweet (RT)** = share another user's message with your "followers" (people who subscribe to your feed)
- **@reply** = reply to another user's message (your followers can read it)
- **DM** = private message to another user
- **hashtags** = additions to messages that allow users to search for/follow a topic as it evolves (they start with the # sign)
- **Shortened URLs** – save characters by using services like <http://bit.ly> or <http://tinyURL.com>
- **Lists** – groups of users with a common theme (e.g. engineering schools)

Account Creation/Administration

To create a new Twitter account:

1. Go to <http://www.twitter.com> and click on "Sign Up."
2. Choose a username that is 15 characters or less (don't make people guess too much about what it means).
3. Create a password.
4. Associate the account with an email address.
5. Create an avatar (logo). The available size is 73x73 pixels, so you don't have a lot of room to work with.
6. Add in profile information – name, location, website and bio. This information will be displayed on your Twitter page and when anyone searches for your account using a third-party application. Keep it short, but also make sure that people understand who you are and why you will be a valuable resource.

You may also want to create a custom background for your page. This is available via the Settings > Design menu. Be aware that because many users view Twitter content through third-party applications, they won't go to your page directly – so focus on the content first.

What/How to Tweet



In the dialog box at the top of your home page, you'll see the prompt: "What's happening?" This vague question offers a lot of opportunities to reach out to your Twitter audience. "Tweeting" is simply answering this question in **140 characters or less**, which will then show up in the home page feeds of everyone who follows you.

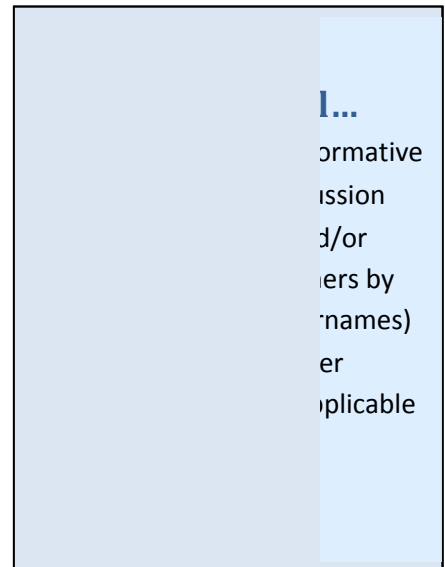
Tweet things you think your followers care about – upcoming events, awards, news. Not everything has to be about you, but it should be relevant to your industry and not too controversial.

If someone else has already Tweeted what you want to say, re-Tweet it instead of saying the same thing.

How to Get Followers

No matter how great your Tweets are, they won't matter if you don't have followers who appreciate and share your messages. But how do you get them? There are a number of ways, but the first is perhaps the most important:

- **Follow other people.** The term "follow" means that you choose to receive Tweets from a certain user. These Tweets will show up in your feed, with the most recent message at the top of the page. To find users you might want to follow (e.g., other engineering departments/programs), type a name or keyword in the search box at the top of your Twitter homepage. You can also search your address book or browse lists of users by



topical interest. Once you find a user you want to follow, click the “follow” button on his or her profile page. More often than not, that person/organization will follow you back, and your audience will grow.

- **Put a button or widget on your website or e-newsletter.** Details here: <http://twitter.com/about/resources>
- **Use a third-party application** such as TweetAdder to automatically sign you up to follow (and be followed by) lists of users based on certain parameters. Note that many applications charge a fee.

Tools

There are many tools that allow you to get considerably more functionality out of Twitter (this is probably because just going to the Twitter homepage does not allow you to adequately monitor and interact with your followers). Popular third-party applications that allow you to both post and track content include **CoTweet**, **TweetDeck** and **HootSuite**). We recommend using TweetDeck (pictured below) for its simple interface – you can monitor the Tweets of people you’re following, any mentions of things you’ve Tweeted (so you can respond quickly), direct messages and any search terms you’re interested in (e.g., biomedical engineering). The service will automatically shorten links that you add to your Tweets, leaving you more room for description. You can also monitor your Facebook and LinkedIn accounts through TweetDeck.



Tracking

While Twitter does not have embedded tracking tools like Facebook, there are plenty of ways you can keep track of how you’re doing (beyond just watching your Followers count grow):

- Sign up with bit.ly – the URL shortener service allows you to track the number of clicks a link gets, complete with charts and graphs of clicks, users, locations and referrers.
- Use one of the following Twitter content analyzers:
 - <http://www.twInfluence.com>
 - <http://www.twitteranalyzer.com>
 - <http://tweeteffect.com>
 - <http://tweetstats.com>
 - <http://www.twitter.grader.com>
 - <http://www.tweeterboard.com>

Best Practices

- Post a **variety of tweets**, making sure to **respond** to those who directly reference or tweet you.

While your Twitter account can be used to relay information, it's best used as a **form of dialogue and not just a one-way info stream**. You can see who has replied to you and sent you direct messages on the homepage in the right sidebar.

- When creating tweets, think of **what might interest your followers**. It might not pertain directly to your department/office/group, but it can start a dialogue and encourage others to follow you.
- **Monitor your page regularly**, as well as your replies and direct messages. Respond to others in a timely manner.
- **Tweet consistently**. If not every day, try to tweet **at least three times a week**. Try to tweet between 9am- 4pm.
- Take advantage of third-party applications that can help you organize your account. **TweetDeck** is great for tracking your followers, your replies, direct messages, and specific search terms. **CoTweet** is great for scheduling tweets in advance so that you don't have to log onto Twitter regularly.

Links/Resources

Mashable Facebook Guide: <http://mashable.com/guidebook/twitter/>

Twitter Basics: <http://support.twitter.com/>

Useful Twitter Applications: <http://www.squidoo.com/twitterapps>

Social Media Guidelines

(also available at <http://marketing.mccormick.northwestern.edu/web/socialmedia.html>)

1. **Know NU policies.** The [NUIIT “Acceptable Use” Policy](#) applies if you are a member of the Northwestern community and/or user of the University network.
2. **Link back to your sources.** Make sure any content you post includes proper attribution to its creator; linking to others’ work is common courtesy in the social media world. This applies to text and multimedia content alike.
3. **Identify your affiliations.** Make sure to accurately state your affiliation with McCormick in any social media profiles which you will be using to represent the school in any capacity. Anonymous accounts/pseudonyms are discouraged.
4. **Use disclaimers.** While your social media account may be affiliated with McCormick, it must be made clear that the postings on this account do not directly reflect the views and opinions of McCormick. Include a disclaimer somewhere on your page if possible. Remember that you are ultimately responsible for posts from an account under your name.
5. **Think before you post.** Aim to add value to the conversation, rather than just adding to the “noise.” Consider what you’re going to post, why it’s useful information, and how it will be received by the audience (which could be anyone). If you have questions about what is appropriate to post (especially when it comes to potentially private information), ask your manager or contact McCormick Marketing & Communications.
6. **Respect others.** While controversial posts may boost traffic and conversation, they can also reflect poorly on both you and the school. If you wouldn’t say something in “real life,” you probably shouldn’t say it in an online forum; this includes racial and ethnic slurs, personal insults and obscenities. Keep in mind, also, that sarcasm does not come across particularly well online.
7. **Be transparent.** If you make a mistake in a post, don’t just delete it. It is common practice in social media to correct mistakes publicly, not least because the original post may already have been shared by other users. Take advantage of the speed of social media to reverse the flow of misinformation quickly.
8. **Avoid spamming.** Using platforms such as Facebook and Twitter simply as automated news feeds is discouraged. Whenever possible, facilitate interaction with your followers by asking questions and responding to others’ posts. Also, keep in mind that while consistent posting is crucial for building and maintaining an audience, posting too frequently can turn off existing followers.
9. **Plan ahead.** When you sign up for a social media account, you are making a commitment to post regularly and to interact with your audience. Consider whether you have enough (and the right kind of) content, determine who will be responsible for maintaining the account(s), and know what you want to accomplish with your campaign. An account that goes idle after a few posts looks worse than no account at all.

Social Media Best Practices – Quick Reference Guide

Facebook

- Always add some kind of **comment** along with any links or other content that you post to your Wall, as this will help users to know that there is an actual person updating the page, and not simply a robot/RSS feed.
- **Monitor your page regularly** to see if users are responding to your content and adding comments to your page. If you do see comments (especially if they are questions), try to **respond to them in a timely manner**.
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