



twitter

The best way to

TWITTER 101

By Kyle Brown

New to the world of social media? Our guide shows superintendents how to get the most out of their feeds.

Whether you're constantly updating your feed or completely unplugged, social media like Twitter has definitely found its place on the golf course. Superintendents use it for weather and play updates for club members, as well as a connection to other turf professionals. But for all its benefits, Twitter can seem overwhelming for a beginner.

Here's how to get started using Twitter:

First, keep your team in consideration when signing up for an account. Choose a username

and password that could also be used by assistants or other crew members. Keep the username brief and easy to say when telling course members about it.

During the process of signing up, you can allow Twitter to take a peek into your online e-mail address book (such as Gmail) to send e-mail letting your contacts know you've started an account. If your account is intended to reach just other superintendents or members, you may want to skip that step.

Once the account is created, it's time to start adding content

to your feed – which is made up of the Tweets posted by people you follow, with the newest Tweets at the top. Search for people you know using the Search bar – we suggest starting with @GCIMagazine – but be sure to check the profile or a few Tweets to make certain you've found the right profile. The "@" symbol in front of a name indicates a username, which can be very different from a person's actual name. Another easy source of people to follow comes from looking through the feed of someone you already follow. If you share

interests, chances are good that person will know others you'll find interesting.

But for many superintendents, the real usefulness of the Twitter feed is in reaching colleagues and players with course updates. Once an account is created, it's time to get the word out and start gathering followers in your membership. Even with just a few in tow, make it a point to start regular updates – maybe just one each day, to get in the habit and establish a routine of posting information like weather or course conditions. The 140-character

limit on Tweets is ideal for an immediate, short update that needs to reach your entire membership quickly.

Composing a Tweet is easy enough. The simplest form is just a straightforward phrase or so, used as a quick note. There's no required length to a Tweet, and nothing is less or more important than anything else.

But here are a few things to keep in mind:

- Want to get someone's at-

tention? Use their @username in your Tweet. Twitter collects these as "mentions" under the "Connect" tab, where users can see who's talking to them. When a @username begins the Tweet, it will only show up in feed of the person mentioned, and users who follow both accounts.

- You can attach photos, locations and links in your Tweets. Having trouble with some turf and want to ask colleagues about it? Take a photo with your smart-

phone. If you Tweet from your phone, you can upload it as well.

- When you've got several Tweets about the same topic, or are part of an event, hashtags – any phrase with “#” in front of it – are especially useful. Whether a single word in the message, or a separate phrase at the end of a Tweet, a clicked hashtag will collect all the Tweets from about the past two weeks that use it. Many Twitter users also use hashtags to make quick afterthought jokes,

since one of the main uses of Twitter is humor.

- It's easy to ReTweet (or RT) someone else's information if you think your followers will find it useful, but don't get into the habit too much. A stream of ReTweets clutters others' feeds. But adding your own comment to a Tweet is just as easy – try a Reply to their Tweet instead, beginning with your note and then copying most of their original Tweet with “RT @username”.

HOW DOES A TWITTER FEED WORK?

This is where you can find your feed: the stream of Tweets from all the people you follow.

The Connect tab shows you how others are interacting with you. This is where you find when people mention or follow you.

The Discover tab lists popular stories and activity on trends.

This column is your feed, a continuously-updating collection of new Tweets from the people you follow.

Clicking a Tweet, like this one by our pal Chris Tritabaugh, will bring up options to reply to it, ReTweet it in your own feed or mark it as a favorite. You can also view the entire conversation, if a Tweet has connected messages.

Clicking here will let you see who all you're following, and who's following your feed.

Use this box to compose your Tweets, and the buttons underneath to include a photo or location – both useful tools on the course!

Twitter guesses who else you might like to follow based on who you already follow. It's a good idea to take a look at these occasionally.

Trends are picked out by repeated mentions of hashtags, and can be listed locally or promoted by companies. Clicking one will bring up the highest-rated Tweets in that topic.

A hashtag - when a # is placed directly before a word or phrase - is used to collect Tweets on a topic, like notes on a central event or idea. It can also be used for an afterthought joke to a Tweet.

Using a @username anywhere other than the beginning of a Tweet is a "mention", and shows up in all of your followers' feeds. Your mentions are collected in the Connect tab at the top.

Starting a tweet with an @username the way Randy does here is an "@reply", which only shows up in your feed, the person who's mentioned, and users who follow both of you.

When someone you know wants to share a Tweet they've come across in their own feeds, they "Retweet" it. You can show or hide Retweets by people you follow.



• Web links get shortened when posted to Twitter, and most people won't click on a link without knowing where it leads. When posting a link or photo, be sure to add a description of your own, even if it's just a few words.

THE KITCHEN SINK

Of course, there's more to social media than just Twitter. Here are a few of the other networks your crew or members might use, and how useful we think they are for superintendents:

facebook



Facebook: Chances are good you already use Facebook, but have you thought about using it for course updates and helpful links to educational pages for your colleagues? Updating a status can include those, photos and videos, all of which can be easily uploaded from a smartphone. Facebook has been working hard to catch up to G+ in quick selection of who sees what content.

LinkedIn



LinkedIn: Keeping things professional is what LinkedIn is all about. It's a solid communication tool for keeping channels open for career movement and advancement, since connections will be on a professional level.

Google+: What Google+ brings to the table is an unmatched ability to select who sees what you're posting by gathering your followers into Circles. If you're posting a weather update, it would be a perfect fit for your "Members" Circle; posting some turf photos to try and diagnose dollar spot? That's more apt for your Colleagues and Turf Researchers Circles. Google+ also gives you the ability to do instantaneous group chats with friends through Google+ Hangouts.



Pinterest



Pinterest: The newest kid in class, Pinterest has gotten a following by creating a purely visual way to collect interesting content on the Web. So it's not the right place to post your daily weather updates – but it's perfect for the before and after photos of the renovation, or shots of happy golfers at your most recent event.

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