Twitter 101: Q&A

Why should I use Twitter?
Twitter is useful for many reasons:
- News & information
- Professional networking
- Meeting others in your community (geographic or interest)
- Keeping in touch with people or businesses you already know
- Helping others & providing useful information (customer service)

What should I do when I set up my account?
As you launch your Twitter account, consider these best practices:
- Choose a memorable, short username. Your own name is often a good choice, but it
doesn’t have to be. Keep in mind that people might identify you later (online or in person) on by
your username, so nonsense or offensive words shouldn’t be used.
- Upload a profile photo right away. We always suggest an easily identifiable photo of
yourself or something that symbolizes your area of expertise. It doesn’t have to be a professional
headshot; just a nice photo that clearly identifies you or your department.

What should I tweet about?
Generally, you should tweet about things you’re interested in and information that would be useful
to others. As general guidelines:
- Tweets with links (to articles and events of interest, for example) are generally
preferred over simple statements.
- Ask questions of your followers — things that will invite feedback and conversation.
- Pictures make for interesting tweets. If you use Twitter on your smartphone, for
example, try taking a photo and posting it with a caption. Photo apps like Instagram also have
options to publish to your Twitter account.

How often should I tweet?
Twitter can seem time-consuming when you first start out, but it doesn’t have to be. Since the
Twitter stream moves quickly, we’d recommend 3 times per week to start (Monday,
Wednesday, Friday, for example). If you find you have more to talk about, try once per day.
Tweeting several times a day can become overwhelming both for you and your followers, though
some are successful at it after developing the habit and the audience.

How many followers should I have?
There is no “right” amount of followers. We recommend trying to keep a balance between the
amount of people following you and the people you follow back. Generally, the more you
participate on Twitter and the more valuable information you share, the more followers you will
gain. You should never have to ask for more followers (or buy them.)
Facebook Pages 101: Q&A

Why should I use Facebook professionally?
Facebook is useful for many reasons:
- Sharing news & information
- Following industry leaders and media outlets
- Joining groups with shared specific interests
- Providing customer service

Should we have a profile or a page?
Facebook's Terms of Service specify that profiles are for people, and pages are for businesses, brands and public figures. Most of the features of profiles (private messaging, "liking" Facebook content) are also available to pages.

What should I do when I set up my page?
As you launch your Facebook page, consider these best practices:
- Reserve your short URL. If you can, try to keep your short URL consistent with other usernames you might have, for ex: facebook.com/BUalumni & twitter.com/BUalumni
- Upload a profile and cover photo right away. We always suggest a photo of yourself or something that clearly identifies your department or center. Try not to use too much text (if any), as Facebook will scale it down.

What should I post about?
Generally, you should post about things you're interested in and information that would be useful to others. As general guidelines:
- Posts with photos (with proper credit/permissions) are generally preferred over posts without photos.
- Ask questions of your fans -- things that will invite feedback and conversation.
- If you post links, make sure to take advantage of the preview. Facebook automatically builds a preview of the URL you're sharing. You can change the title, description and thumbnail to make it more appealing to click on.

How often should I post?
Facebook posts generally last in the news feed only a few hours. If you're just starting your page, we'd recommend 3 times per week (Monday, Wednesday, Friday, for example). If you find you have more to talk about, try once per day. Think about when your audience might be most likely to have down time to read (lunch; after dinner) and try posting then.

How many fans should I have?
There is no "right" amount of Facebook fans. Generally, the more you participate on Facebook and the more valuable information you share, the more fans you will gain.
Boston University’s Guidelines for the Use of Social Media

Boston University supports the use of social networking websites, blogs, micro-blogs, and other online communications media (“Social Media”) to promote the University to the broadest possible audience. The University maintains an official presence on several popular social media tools, including Facebook and Twitter, and members of the University community use social media to stay connected with the University, connect with one another, communicate about University programs and events, share campus news and information, and announce activities and campus events.

These Guidelines provide general guidance to those who may be unfamiliar with the use of social media at the University. In large part, these Guidelines are addressed to employees who use social media as part of their jobs to promote their schools, programs, and departments. However, these Guidelines include general considerations for social media use that should be important to everyone.

Using Social Media for the University

1. Plan ahead.
   If you will be using social media in connection with your work for the University, it’s a good idea to think in advance about how you will use social media to achieve your department’s objectives. Develop a plan that addresses such issues as how frequently you will review and update content, and monitor and respond to comments from visitors to your site.

2. Coordinate and get off to the right start.
   Take advantage of the University’s resources and expertise concerning social media. You should coordinate internally with Public Relations to learn the ropes before starting to use social media. Contact Mary Tunney, Director of Public Relations, at mtunney@bu.edu or Jenny Mackintosh, Community Outreach & Social Media Coordinator, at jemack@bu.edu for information. Schools and departments should designate a social media communicator who will be responsible for social media use. In addition, Public Relations has established policies about the use of the University’s official logos. These policies and additional guidance about website branding are available at http://www.bu.edu/brand/websites/socialmedia.

3. Follow the rules.
   Social media websites have terms and conditions that users must follow in order to use the sites. You should read, understand, and follow these rules. Also remember that University policies, such as the Conditions of Use and Policy on Computing Ethics (available at http://www.bu.edu/tech/policies/computing-ethics), apply to your use of social media as an employee. Employees should be mindful of these generally applicable policies when using social media.
4. Be honest about who you are.
If you are promoting Boston University and its programs and activities, be honest about your identity and affiliation with the University. Do not hide or misrepresent your identity if you are posting on behalf of the University.

5. Be accurate and correct mistakes.
Have the correct information about programs and events before you post. If you are quoting sources, cite and link to them whenever possible. If you make an error, acknowledge and correct it as quickly as possible.

6. Develop and maintain your presence.
Post news, events, and information that is relevant to your target audience. You may find that it's a process to develop the right "online voice" for your program or department. Don't be reluctant to change course if you are not achieving your marketing goals. Cross-promote your social media presence in other channels/materials to drive traffic to your social media (and vice versa). While your department's use of social media will depend upon a number of factors, such as objectives and time available, you should understand that, once you establish a social media presence, parents, students, and others will find you and expect to engage with you via social media. Establishing a social media presence that you do not maintain will reflect poorly on your department and the University.

7. Be professional (think before you post).
For employees using social media as part of their jobs, the same good judgment, common sense, and discretion that applies to using more traditional forms of communication should be followed. Moreover, on social media, employees should be guided by an even heightened concern for protecting their own reputations, the reputation of the University, its schools and departments, and the reputations of others, such as co-workers and students. Online posts are permanent and uncontrollable. Try to be mindful at all times that you are representing the University when you post or comment on a University-related website. If you have questions or concerns about whether it is appropriate to post certain material, speak with your department's social media communicator or your supervisor before you post.

8. Have a plan for responding to negative comments.
If a blogger or other online commenter posts an inaccurate, accusatory, or negative comment about the University, feel free to correct the inaccuracy but do so in a positive and polite way. If you find yourself in a position where the communications become antagonistic or deal with sensitive topics, ask Public Relations for advice before responding.

9. Maintain confidentiality and respect copyright law.
Do not discuss confidential or sensitive internal issues online without authorization. Be conscious of the laws and regulations governing the privacy of student education records.
(FERPA), protected health information (HIPAA), personally identifiable information, and private information about colleagues. Do not post confidential information about faculty, students, alumni, or other employees. Also be mindful of copyright and trademark protections that may limit what materials you may use online. This is especially important with pictures, which may require you to confirm that the people in the picture consent to the use of their image and to determine whether it is clear who owns the picture. Information about copyrights and fair use may be found at http://www.bu.edu/tech/security/incidents/copyright/basics.

Maintaining the security of your social media profile can be a complicated and ever-changing effort. Educate yourself on the security issues and options on your chosen social media outlet and set up your profile appropriately. Be aware that social media outlets can—and frequently do—change their privacy policies. So something that may have been private on your profile yesterday may not be protected tomorrow. If you have questions or concerns, contact Public Relations at 617-353-2240.

10. Escalate Serious Issues.
If you identify issues related to health, safety, or security while using social media, bring them to the attention of the appropriate resource within the University immediately. Information security issues should be addressed to BU Information Security (ithelp@bu.edu). If you become aware of material online that prompts concerns about student health or safety or that someone in the BU community may present a danger to themselves or others, you should contact the Dean of Students at 617-353-4126 or BUPD at 617-353-2110, or review the information available at http://www.bu.edu/helpinfo.

Using Social Media for Your Own Purposes
When using social media for yourself, consider the privacy issues involved. Although some websites have privacy settings, you really cannot rely on such settings to guarantee that your online conduct and postings will be kept private. In general, social media tools are provided to you for free, but that is because you pay admittance with your personal information, which websites use for marketing to you. Many social media sites are continuing to develop their security features and even the best information security features can be compromised. Before you post, consider that you will potentially be sharing it with an audience of millions.

If you identify yourself as a member of the Boston University community on your website or blog, please state that you are sharing your views as an individual, not as an official representative of the University. For example, include a disclaimer on your website or blog that states: “The views expressed on this [blog/website] are mine alone and do not necessarily reflect the views of Boston University.” Even with such a disclaimer, remember that inappropriate postings may reflect poorly on the University and you as an employee.