How to be a better Twitter user

Twitter is not for everybody because it takes some time and skill to use it to its full effect. Since there are so many conversations and so much information being shared, its easy to get lost and not see any usefulness.

First, define what you want from Twitter. Do you want to follow like minded people? Are you a news junkie and want the latest breaking news? Do you want to get your name out there?

Once you have defined what you want, you can then choose to be a "lurker" or a participant. Lurkers just listen and gather information without adding anything to the conversation. They generally don't start conversations nor share ideas. Participants are more active—choosing to share links, engage in conversations, re-tweet content.

Obviously, you will get more in the way of real connection by participating actively.

Second, understand how Twitter works. Twitter is real time conversation. People are talking to each other right now. And they are talking to many people. Sometimes, newbies just respond to a question someone has posted hours ago, without any reference to the original question. That is confusing.

Third, get a Twitter client like Tweetdeck or Hootsuite. It is far easier to see what is going on using a Twitter client than it is to use the Twitter web interface. You can see your @ responses (responses that mention you) and you can create specialized feeds for different subjects or groups of people.

Fourth, monitor Twitter for @ responses or for Tweets mentioning your name or product. There is nothing worse than lack of response or super delayed response. I posted something

five months ago and someone is just getting back to me. That is not timely…and it shows a complete lack of understanding on how to use Twitter.

Fifth, understand and use hashtags wisely. Hashtags that define a topic are useful when conducting searches or grouping tweets into one heading. Some people love to make up hashtags and use many of them on a single tweet. I say choose one that encompasses the topic, if you want to have a greater presence around that tweet.

Sixth, interact! If you have chosen to participate in Twitter, make sure you are interacting with other people. If you see something that is interesting, re-tweet it. Answer people's questions, comment on their posts.

Seventh, don't just sell, sell, sell or self-promote. Nobody wants to see a sales message all the time or your bragging. Twitter allows you to unfollow people quite easily.

This is not the Twitter Bible. I am sure there are other things to keep in mind…what would you add?