

Today's Successful Networking



As social media continues to grow and evolve, so do the rules of social media etiquette. Having top-notch social media manners allows you to build a following on Twitter, drive more traffic to your website, locate new prospects and strengthen relationships with past and current customers.

By Walt Denny

In-person and social media etiquette go hand in hand

Do not fret if you are not sure what proper social media etiquette entails. Online and in-person etiquette are more similar than you think.

To deepen your connections, host an event to gather the increasing number of digitally-aware customers, prospects and influentials your business interacts with regularly. Twitter-initiated and inspired gatherings are known as TweetUps. They connect Twitter users with similar interests in one physical location. With a Twitter-based gathering you can build buzz, engage prospects and familiarize them with your business, products and services face to face.

Before you can host a successful TweetUp, you need to build a loyal base of fans and followers. Do this by positioning yourself as a knowledgeable and helpful thought leader. Establish a reputation as an interesting contributor and you will cultivate a following. To make the most of your digital connections, follow this one simple rule: "Treat your online interactions as if you are in a room full of real people."

According to reports, 38% of individuals that follow and "like" businesses or brands do so for product news and updates. Many businesses harness TweetUps to drive sales and meet customers and prospects. For example, if your business launches a new product or offers a new service, turn to Twitter to maximize impact with your

followers. Host a TweetUp at a popular industry trade event to generate excitement and attract new prospects. Offer free samples of your products or demonstrations to familiarize prospects with your business at the TweetUp. The benefits are threefold. You gather immediate feedback; attendees share their experiences of the event with their online peers and you attract new leads.

At a business networking event, it would be unfair to stand in the back of the room only to later call the event a failure. The same idea applies to social media, and especially TweetUps. Interact with guests. Be conversational, but focused. Take time to build your relationships with your followers and guests. Encourage attendees to tweet photos, quotes and interesting information from the get-together.

While it is extremely tempting to use the TweetUp to promote your business only, ask yourself, "Would I just talk about myself if I were in a room full of people?" Remember, social media is meant to build and reinforce relationships. Take advantage of the face time to collect feedback and talk with attendees. Your TweetUp guests are more likely to take an interest in you if you take an interest in them.

TweetUps generate valuable word-of-mouth buzz. Your guests are active social media users and a TweetUp is a great way to discover brand evangelists. As an added benefit, your fans

and attendees will spread the news of your event, products and services—before, during and after the TweetUp. Guests will tweet their experiences, photos and may even go further with blog posts about the event. To make the most of the attendee-generated content, establish a hashtag for guests to use with their tweets.

Provide a steady stream of content prior to, throughout and following the event. This content can encourage authentic testimonials spreading in real-time to the multitude of each attendee's Twitter followers and those following the hashtag. Tweet and retweet alongside your guests. Just like introducing colleagues at a traditional networking event, retweeting can connect industry enthusiasts, forming a community built around your business.

Remember, social media etiquette favors real conversations. The content you share should add value to the conversation.

Businesses turn to TweetUps to help fuel demand for their products or services. If you have a new display in your showroom, or a newly launched service, unveil it with a TweetUp. While endless self-promotion on Twitter is frowned upon, attracting visitors to your business can be as easy as presenting an opportunity to meet in real-time. Your Twitter followers are already vested and interested in your business' updates. *wqp*

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