

## MARKETING GUIDANCE NOTES FOR BIKEABILITY SCHEMES

### Note 1: Getting your Scheme on Twitter



### Introduction

Originally the preserve of the media and tech crowd, Twitter is now far more broad-ranging, as increasing numbers of celebrities and press coverage spread its appeal to a wider audience. It has increasingly become a scheme to scheme platform and is widely used in the public sector across education, health and transport.

This guide will give you an introduction to Twitter, and what it can do for your scheme. We are not in an industry that is about hard selling but we are trying to increase the presence of #Bikeability within our communities, ensuring that councillor's, head teachers and MP's value the impact it has on young people, schools and families.

## What is Twitter and how does it work?

- Users of Twitter provide regular 140-character updates, called 'tweets', of what they are doing or something they find interesting.
- It's known as 'micro-blogging'.
- Your tweets can include links and pictures (by linking to pictures you can upload Twitpic). Pictures no longer count in the 140 character limit so it is much easier to get your message across.
- Users 'follow' each other - if you follow someone, you see their most recent tweets on your homepage. You can follow anyone and don't need to be approved by them.
- Once you're following a few people, their most recent tweets appear in chronological order on your homepage - which is why Twitter is so useful for keep abreast of the most up-to-date news stories, industry news and what other people in your industry are doing.
- You have a profile page where other people can see all your most recent tweets and a one-line bio about you (plus hyperlinks to your scheme's website).
- View other people's profile pages to decide if you want to follow them.

## How and when Twitter can help your scheme

- But before you do anything, use Twitter's search to see how many people are talking about Bikeability, Cycle Training, schools, active travel or anything that may be relevant to you, and how often, to work out if it's worthwhile creating a presence.
- It may be worth signing up just to follow industry news.
- Used correctly, Twitter enables you to:
  - Get the attention of people specifically interested in our industry, cycling or some other aspect of Bikeability
  - Publicise your scheme by gaining followers, driving them to a branded profile page that includes links to your website
  - Make contact with people you don't know offline, increasing your reach
  - Cold-contact and market to people without annoying them (as they can always stop following you)
  - Share interesting news stories and opinions, and so position you're scheme as an expert - or at least in the know
  - Track what other people think about our industry, scheme or Bikeability (using search)
  - Get the latest up-to-date industry news and events
  - Position your scheme as relatively up-to-date on trends in media and technology for being on Twitter
  - Particularly good for schemes whose clients depend on regular updates - such as schools, education authorities or private clients
  - Get a presence on phones with internet technology (especially iPhones)
- Do all of this for free.

- Twitter is, however, limited for:
  - Schemes whose customers aren't using it (although following industry news may still be of use)
  - Giving in-depth descriptions of products, events or news
  - Hard selling

## Creating an account on Twitter

- Create your account as an individual rather than as a scheme, CEO, senior instructor, or other
- Choose a photo of you smiling and looking relaxed.
- Use the background of your profile page to display your scheme's logo or, if you have one, a brightly coloured and interesting photo of products.
- Fill in your one-line bio with something snappy that explains your scheme and include links to your website.

## How to get the most out of Twitter

- Avoid just banging on about your own scheme or things you've been doing.
- Keep it industry-relevant - comment on industry news or, occasionally, compliment competitors (this is a much more friendly space than traditional business).
- Keep track of what your followers have found most interesting by seeing what gets RT'd (retweeted - search your own twitter name to see).
- Tweets with links in them are generally more popular than those without (use a link shortening site such as [www.po.st](http://www.po.st) which allows you not only to shorten a link but track open rates)
- Provide new information, insight or opinion.
- Engage in conversations by writing @username:
- Respond to people saying something industry relevant.
- Definitely respond to anyone saying anything about your scheme or products - thank them for their feedback and give them massive thanks if they say something positive.
- Always respond to any criticism of your scheme quickly, positively and helpfully - pick up on it by searching for your company name.
- Regularly @ your followers with the most followers - the more often they retweet you, the greater chance you have of reaching their audience too.
- After you've spent a month or so establishing yourself and some good relationships on Twitter, start subtly, and occasionally, introducing your scheme or products.
- Tweet about offers rather than just existing products so people always feel like they're getting some benefit rather than just being sold to.
- If you are going to talk about a new product (Bikeability Plus), do it in a way that conveys your personal excitement about it rather than in sales speak - this makes it an emotional thing that people can relate to rather than a sell they will turn off to.
- Don't overdo it - mention products and your scheme only as often as you would to your normal friends. You wouldn't email them every week trying to sell them your wares, so don't do it on Twitter.

## Managing your account

- To up your number of followers, start by searching for keywords relevant to your scheme and following those who seem interested in your industry - some of them will follow you back.
- Use [Twitter Karma](#) or [Friend or Follow](#) (both free) to purge your account of people who aren't following you back - they show you who's following you back out of the people you follow.
- As you're limited to following 2,000 people at first, this will allow you to maintain the highest quality of followers (those who follow you back and remain part of your audience).
- Spend time scoping out your followers to see who are the most influential and popular.
- Use \*Tweetlater to manage your account, with functions including: keyword alerts for industry-relevant things you can comment on and to notify you of mentions of your scheme; tracking how many people have clicked on links you've posted (snipurl.com also does this); and scheduling tweets.
- [Twhirl](#) and [Tweetdeck](#) are insider faves for keeping track of key people you want to follow, rather than being swamped by hundreds of tweets constantly.
- Crucially, you need to use the above tools to monitor your success. It's all about how many results you see compared to the effort you put in.
- Use search to see what gets retweeted. Focus on producing more content like that.
- See what provokes the most conversation with followers too - in a proactive way - by checking your @.
- It takes a while to start seeing your follower numbers grow, but if you're still banging away fruitlessly after three or four months, this probably isn't the best channel for your scheme at the moment.

## Jargon buster

**Tweet:** 140 character update on Twitter saying what you're doing or something you've found that's interesting.

**Follow:** to subscribe to someone else's tweets.

**DM:** Stands for direct message. A private, 140-character message you can send to anyone who is following you. More personal than an @, it's best left for people you have met offline as well and for things you don't necessarily want all your followers to know about. However, many people DM someone when they have started following them to say thanks for following, and occasionally people DM all followers to let them know about the launch of a new initiative or special event - this is best reserved for very rare instances though, as otherwise people will start ignoring your DMs.

**[Twitpic](#):** Used to upload photos - you then link to the photo in your tweet. Photos are a great way to make your stream more interesting.

**Trending topics:** When you see a # joined onto a word, it signifies a subject that a group of

people are talking about. The purpose of this is that anyone searching for info on the subject can type the hashtag (the #subject) into search to see all the latest updates, regardless of whether or not they're following the people talking about them. Trending topics (in the right hand column on your home page) indicate the most popular hashtags at any given time.

So help us to grow the presence at [#Bikeability](#) and [@TABSBikeability](#)

## Resources

- [Mashable](#) is an invaluable resource for all things social media
- How to [customise your Twitter background](#)
- [Twitter Karma](#)
- [Friend or Follow](#)
- [Twhirl](#)
- [Tweetdeck](#)
- [Twitpic](#)

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