

The Twollars Charity Guide to Twitter



This guide was written by Eiso Kant, co-founder of [Twollars](#). It is the first draft of what will hopefully become a comprehensive resource for charities looking to raise awareness and funds on Twitter.

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Introduction

This is a guide to help charities build a strong foundation on Twitter. If you would like to get involved and help us expand this guide or make a quick recommendation please send a tweet with the hashtag #charityguide (a tag you place in a tweet for people to find it via search) or email me at: eiso@twollars.com

If you don't have a Twitter account yet, start by registering an account (at <http://www.twitter.com>). This guide will be specifically useful for those charities that are new to Twitter.

If you're more experienced with Twitter there are probably a lot of steps in this guide you can skip. However since this first edition is a short guide we recommend you to read everything because you never know where you'll pick up a useful tip.

Always be authentic

The most important thing to realize with Twitter is that you're a person first, representative of a charity second. Think about it, do you want a conversation with an organization or with a person? People really appreciate to know that there is a human face to a charity. Building meaningful relations becomes far easier this way and people feel more comfortable engaging with you on Twitter and elsewhere on the web.

Follow Me, Follow you - Use the Twitter follow feature

The follow feature on Twitter allows you to get someone's updates in your Twitter stream but it also notifies the other person that you are now following them.

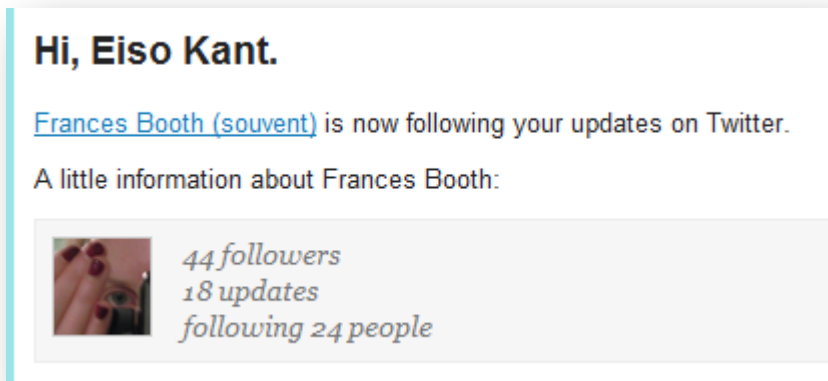
This notification is incredibly valuable when you are trying to build a Twitter following of your own. Since a Twitter user who you choose to follow can now see your details and make the decision to reciprocate the follow or not.

Follow a person by simply clicking the 'Follow' button on their profile page



When you press the follow button, Twitter sends an email to that person telling them that you are now following them, and asking them if they would like to follow you back.

An example of an email Twitter sends you when someone follows you:



When you receive the email, you can either click the link to their profile to ‘Follow’ them or you can also ‘Block’ them if you don’t want them to follow you. The block feature is rarely used since Twitter is about sharing with everyone.

As you can see there are 3 things mentioned in this email:

44 followers - this is the number of people that follow @souvent’s updates

18 updates – this is the number of tweets @souvent wrote

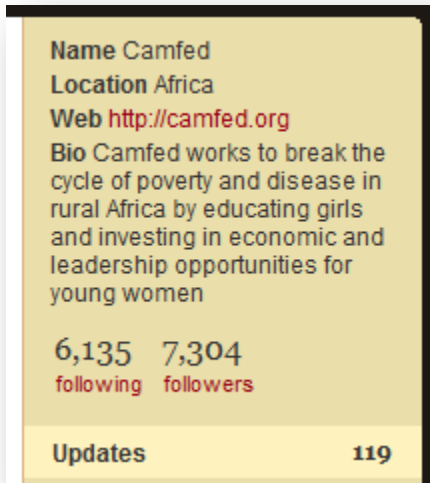
Following 24 people – this is the number of people @souvent is receiving updates from

What is important for you but also for most Twitter users is the ratio between these 3 factors. If someone is following thousands of people but only have several hundreds following him/her back they are most likely using automated tools to get more followers and their tweets aren’t too interesting. So even when you’re trying to get more followers on Twitter always make sure that you try and not go above a 1:1 ratio (for each follower, follow one person). Initially when you’re trying to get more followers it’s okay to go over this but just make sure that the differences don’t become too large. It will discourage people from following you back.

Follow back the people who choose to follow you but have a look at their bio and ratios beforehand to not fall victim to an account which is automatically following thousands of people every week. There are some tools out there which auto-follow people back. I personally don’t use them but if the time spent following everyone back becomes too long, I can understand that people choose to use them.

Have a strong biography and profile

There is one more crucial factor which people will look at before they choose to follow you. It's the information you can list about your charity and yourself in the profile. You can change your profile by logging into Twitter and going to 'Settings'. Let me give a quick set of comments on the profiles of several charities.

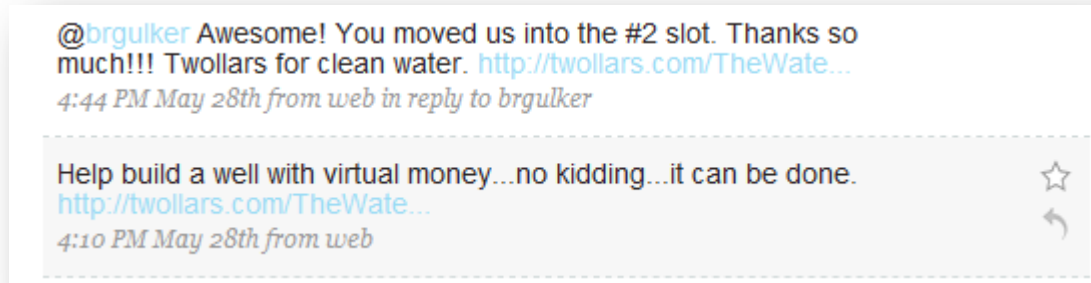


As you can see Camfed has chosen to put the name of their cause in their profile. This makes sense. What's very interesting about Camfed is that their location is set to Africa. I've spoken with Camfed and found out why they did so. People on their account are tweeting from the ground in Africa while providing aid. This is a fantastic initiative because it's authentic. As a tip for their one line bio, I believe they should mention this; it's a great incentive for people to follow them. The current text in their bio though is good because it's descriptive. To keep it authentic I would list the names there of the people who are updating that account.

You can see that Camfed is keeping a great balance between whom they are following and who is following them. They most likely are following back most people who follow them. One last thing I'd like to mention is that on their profile it seems Camfed is only updating their Twitter status a few times a day and often not on weekends. I would recommend using it more frequently, especially as a conversation tool (more about that, further down in this guide).

Engage with People using the @reply convention

Twitter's @ reply feature makes it incredibly easy to get in on conversations and start your own. The way this feature works is incredibly simple.



As you can see over the tweet I decided to hover with my mouse it shows an arrow on the right hand side. If you're tweeting from Twitter.com, you can click on that arrow and it help you write your reply tweet. It will fill in the following in your status update form: *@thewaterproject*

The @ sign before a Twitter username is used to reply to someone when used at the beginning of a tweet (you can see that in the first tweet in the image above) or used to reference someone in the middle of a tweet.

Find people to engage with

To do this you will have to start creating a list of keywords around your cause. What words trigger you to talk about your charity, if you were in line at Starbucks and you heard the people behind you talk about... Think of conversations you have around your cause to help find some of these terms. The importance of this list will become clearer.

Does your charity exist to end hunger in Africa, fight AIDS, stop global warming or any topic which resonates with a large audience? Or is it a smaller and more local charity like an animal shelter in a small town?

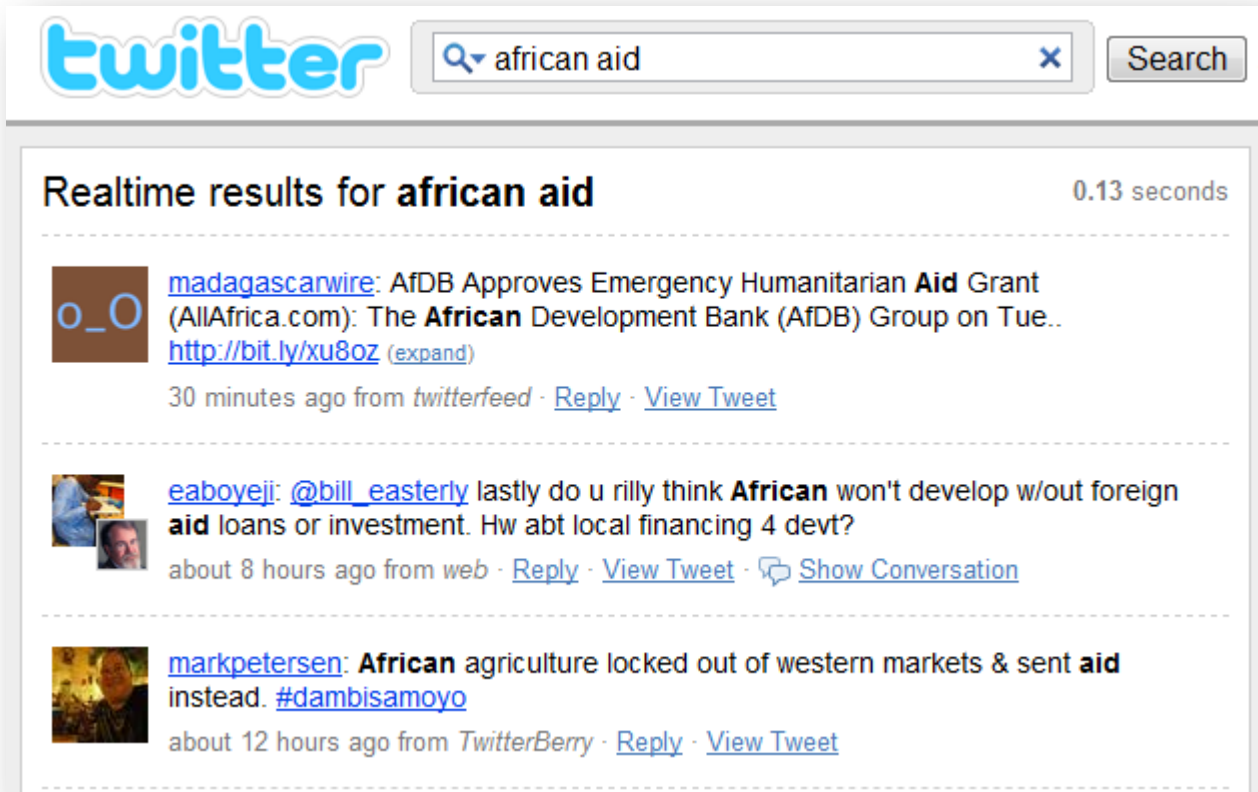
If you're the latter you can do two things, find out who in your community is on Twitter (I'll explain how to do that) or see if you can resonate with a large audience.

Don't forget! Location doesn't have to matter on Twitter. Even if you're a local dog shelter, your appeal is still global.

Use the Twitter Search tool


So you've created a list of terms which trigger conversation, now go to <http://search.twitter.com>. The Twitter Search Tool is going to be of incredible value for building your reach on Twitter. Start searching for them one by one or you can use the OR command e.g. "African Aid" OR "nutrition".


Here is a set of results from searching for: African Aid



The screenshot shows the Twitter search interface. At the top left is the Twitter logo. To its right is a search bar containing the text "african aid" and a magnifying glass icon. Further right is a "Search" button. Below the search bar, the results are titled "Realtime results for african aid" with a timestamp of "0.13 seconds". There are three tweets listed, each with a profile picture, the user's name, the tweet text, and interaction links.

o_o [madagascarwire](#): AfDB Approves Emergency Humanitarian **Aid** Grant (AllAfrica.com): The **African** Development Bank (AfDB) Group on Tue.. <http://bit.ly/xu8oz> (expand)
30 minutes ago from *twitterfeed* · [Reply](#) · [View Tweet](#)

 [eaboyeji](#): [@bill_easterly](#) lastly do u rilly think **African** won't develop w/out foreign **aid** loans or investment. Hw abt local financing 4 devt?
about 8 hours ago from *web* · [Reply](#) · [View Tweet](#) · [Show Conversation](#)

 [markpetersen](#): **African** agriculture locked out of western markets & sent **aid** instead. [#dambisamoyo](#)
about 12 hours ago from *TwitterBerry* · [Reply](#) · [View Tweet](#)

If I was tweeting for a charity focused around African Aid, you can now see that there are two people and one press wire I could have started engaging with. If you build a focused list of these keywords like "African Aid" for your charity you will be able to find hundreds of people you would like to follow and start a conversation with (using the @reply convention). Remember: "Follow Me, Follow you" applies very much to Twitter.

However just mutually following one another is an incredibly weak tie, it'll be very hard to call any of your followers to action with just a tweet. However if you've taken the time to start a meaningful conversation or jump into an existing one with someone on Twitter, you are no longer strangers, the tie has strengthened and next time when you ask them to for instance retweet a message, they will most likely do so.

Explore further with Advanced Search

For local charities there is a gem called 'Advanced Search'. It allows you to filter by language but also by location. *e.g.*

[Advanced Search](#)

Listen and engage in conversations

I think it's important to stress that you're not trying to advertise your charity or to get people to donate. You're having a conversation, one which should be honest, and one you enjoy having.

After three or four weeks, of actively talking to people, finding people to follow, people will you find interesting; you will have been building a substantial following of your own.

People chose to follow the tweets you write because they're interested in what you're saying.

The Tweet Stream is a record of your conversation on Twitter – keep it interesting and open

@adam_shaw hi, thanks for the post about the grants program.
We also work 2 fight malnutrition by providing women and children
with vitamins

about 13 hours ago from web in reply to adam_shaw

POTD: <http://twitpic.com/6hqym>

about 13 hours ago from TweetDeck

@lzziland thanks for retweeting our video! What did you think?
<http://bit.ly/1aiV9C>

about 13 hours ago from web in reply to Izziland

@political_queen Awesome!! thank you! You are leading our
Vitamin Angels twitter outreach- keep up the good work!

about 14 hours ago from web in reply to political_queen

still need 90 twollars to help us reach our goal!

about 14 hours ago from TweetDeck

@SirPopper we work to fight malnutrition- Please RT
@vitaminangels 10 Twollars to save lives! Each RT is 10tw = \$1
donation!

about 15 hours ago from web in reply to SirPopper


How important are followers?


There are a lot of Twitter users out there who have built a following of over 10,000 followers. Don't feel you have to get there next week, or even next year. Don't measure your success by the number of followers you have. I personally believe it's a mistake that many people make.


How many conversations have you had? How many people can you message asking them to take action, how many will do so? You can have a hundred followers, each willing to retweet your tweets (sending your tweet to their follower) or ten thousand followers with only a handful willing to do so.


Retweets are a powerful way to really get noticed on Twitter – encourage you followers to do so

Realtime results for RT @thewaterproject 0.29 seconds

 **JennCEllis:** RT @TheWaterProject: Every day we don't learn how we could do it better is a wasted day. The people we serve demand our humility.
about 8 hours ago from web · [Reply](#) · [View Tweet](#)

 **reneemarie1213:** RT @TheWaterProject: Every day we don't learn how we could do it better is a wasted day. The people we serve demand our humility.
about 8 hours ago from TwitterBerry · [Reply](#) · [View Tweet](#)

 **bparkerhouse:** RT @TheWaterProject: Every day we don't learn how we could do it better is a wasted day. The people we serve demand our humility.
about 9 hours ago from TweetDeck · [Reply](#) · [View Tweet](#)

 **TriciaHOgden:** RT @TheWaterProject: Every day we don't learn how we could do it better is a wasted day. The people we serve demand our humility.
about 9 hours ago from web · [Reply](#) · [View Tweet](#)

Use Twollars to raise awareness and funds on Twitter

If you enjoyed this guide and are interested in how you can use Twollars to call your followers to action, go and read:

Twollars for Charities (<http://twollars.com/twollars-for-charities/>)

Helpful resources:

Here are some good introductory articles on using Twitter:

- <http://news.cnet.com/newbies-guide-to-twitter/>
- <http://www.fourhourworkweek.com/blog/2009/02/25/how-to-use-twitter-without-twitter-owning-you-5-tips/>
- <http://www.prologger.net/archives/2008/01/25/how-to-use-twitter-tips-for-bloggers/>
- <http://mashable.com/2009/01/18/how-to-use-twitter-on-the-go/>
- <http://www.doshdosh.com/ways-you-can-use-twitter/>

And some Videos on how to use Twitter are here:

- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OYHUEESHpVk>
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ddOgidmax0o&feature=related>

Here is a good presentation on how charities can use Twitter

- <http://www.slideshare.net/AhaYourself/10-ways-to-use-twitter-and-facebook-to-boost-awareness-raise-money-and-rally-advocates>

Some further blog posts about charities on Twitter

- <http://www.edwalker.net/blog/2009/02/26/how-twitter-could-be-used-for-charity-fundraising/>
- <http://econsultancy.com/blog/3267-list-of-uk-charities-on-twitter>

Some independent posts about Twollars

- <http://mashable.com/2009/05/26/twollars/>
- <http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2009/jun/03/twitter-twollars>
- <http://philanthropy.com/news/prospecting/index.php?id=8408>
- <http://www.guardian.co.uk/money/blog/2009/may/27/twollars-twitter-currency-charity>
- <http://www.wildapricot.com/blogs/newsblog/archive/2009/05/29/is-your-charity-tweeting-for-twollars-dollars.aspx>