

## The benefits of Twitter

If Twitter is the second most popular social media platform used by not-for-profit organisations, why aren't more Learn Local organisations using it to raise their profile and drive traffic to their website?

Given the answer may have something to do with not knowing enough about the benefits of using Twitter, we thought we'd respond to some of the more frequently asked questions asked about Twitter from staff working at Learn Local organisations.

### What is Twitter?

Twitter is a social media platform that enables users to send and read short 140-character messages called "tweets".

### Who has a presence on Twitter?

A range of community and not-for-profit organisations have a presence on Twitter. Some community and not-for-profit organisations use Twitter to promote their programs and activities while others use Twitter as an advocacy/campaigning and/or fundraising tool. Twitter is frequently used to engage influencers – community leaders, community organisations, journalists and/or members of the business/philanthropic community – who may be interested and passionate about a particular cause, campaign and/or program.

Diversitat and Morwell Neighbourhood House are two Learn Local organisations currently using Twitter. An example of each of their tweets is shared below:

#### **Diversitat**

Diversitat @DiversitatGee Jun 23

One common dream 'to have a safe place call home' #RefugeeWeek  
#refugeeweekdiversitat

#### **Morwell Neighbourhood House**

Morwell NH @ MorwellINH June 17

The @MorwellINH Official 2016 Term 3 program is now available to download.



<http://morwellnh.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Morwell-NH-Official-Program-Term-3-2016.pdf> #Gippsnews

## **What can Twitter offer my Learn Local organisation that other social media channels cannot?**

Twitter can offer:

- Access to and relationships with organisations. Not all organisations have a presence on Facebook but they may be on Twitter. Individuals within organisations may use Twitter as a tool to connect with stakeholders for the first time.
- Viral ability can be leveraged to the maximum through Twitter. Twitter helps online content go viral in a way that Facebook generally cannot. Twitter is an open platform whereby anyone can view the tweets of an individual, business or organisation, giving content the opportunity to be seen by more people. In contrast, communication through Facebook tends to be more private.
- Focussed and succinct communication. As 'tweets' via Twitter are limited to 140 characters, communication via Twitter is focused and to the point.

## **How can Learn Local organisations use Twitter?**

Learn Local organisations can use Twitter to:

- Build relationships with individuals, community organisations, local businesses and other relevant partners
- Maintain relationships with individuals, community organisations, local businesses and other relevant partners
- Promote programs, services and initiatives and raise their profile.

## **Why would my Learn Local organisation use hashtags?**

A hashtag –written with a # symbol – is used to index keywords or topics on Twitter. This function allows people to easily follow topics they are interested in. The hashtag symbol (#) is inserted before a relevant keyword or phrase in a tweet to categorise those tweets and help them show more easily in Twitter search. Clicking or tapping on a hashtagged word in any message shows other tweets that include that hashtag.

A Learn Local organisation may use a hashtag that represents the area they are located in. For example, if a Learn Local organisation is based in Gippsland, as Learn Local organisation Morwell Neighbourhood House is, they might use the hashtag #gippsnews. This is a hashtag commonly used by people, organisations and businesses operating in the local Gippsland area.



If a person types '#gippsnews' into the search function of Twitter, they will be provided with a list of tweets using this hashtag. This can help them identify and become familiar with events, initiatives and news in the local area. If Morwell Neighbourhood House did not use the hashtag '#gippsnews' (see below for an example), their tweets would not appear in the results for a search for '#Gippsnews' which would mean a person searching for tweets using this hashtag would not become aware of Morwell Neighbourhood House when undertaking this search. In this way, hashtags can play an important role in raising awareness of a Learn Local organisation. For example:

### **Morwell Neighbourhood House**

Morwell NH @ MorwellNH May 5

There is power in collective stories. Empower the communities you serve. @NHouses\_Vic #gippsnews

### **How can 'tagging' individuals, organisations and businesses in tweets assist your Learn Local organisation to meet its goals?**

Tagging individuals, organisations and businesses in tweets can assist your Learn Local organisation to build relationships on Twitter. When an individual, organisation or business is 'tagged' in a tweet, they receive a notification on their Twitter profile to inform them that they have been 'tagged' in a tweet. In some situations, being 'tagged' in a tweet may prompt some individuals, organisations and businesses to retweet/share the tweet to their followers, and/or comment and like the tweet. As a result, the reach of the tweet (the number of people that view the tweet) increases significantly. For example, in the tweet below, Diversitat 'tagged' two local politicians who were present at one of their events. The act of 'tagging' the politicians supported Diversitat to build a stronger relationship with the politicians and demonstrated to the greater community that they have a relationship with these politicians. Both politicians then retweeted the content to their followers. As a result, a larger number of people/organisations on Twitter would have seen the tweet.

For example:

### **Diversitat**

Diversitat @Diversitat Aug 10

Thanks to @SHendersonMP and @johnerenmp for supporting Diversitat's Healthy Living Centre, turning the sod today.

### **How can my Learn Local organisation get started on Twitter?**

Any activity on Twitter undertaken by your Learn Local organisation should be aligned with the goals of your organisation, along with the marketing,



communications and promotions strategy and plan. Twitter, like your website, is an online tool to help your Learn Local organisation meet its objectives which may include to increase the number of people attending the courses and activities offered; increase revenue through fundraising; and/or increase the number of volunteer.

Keep your Learn Local organisation's goals front of mind when deciding what content to post. If the content seems relevant to your Learn Local organisation's vision and mission and supports the achievement of its goals, we suggest 'tweeting' (posting) it!

1. Sign up for a Twitter account! You can sign up here: <https://twitter.com/signup>
2. Make a list of all organisations, local businesses and individuals your Learn Local organisation has a relationship with and/or would like to have a relationship with. These could include other community organisations working in the area your Learn Local organisation is based in, as well as local businesses, local papers, the local council and councillors and local politicians.
3. Search for these individuals and organisation on Twitter. You can search here: <https://twitter.com/search-home>
4. Post your first tweet! It might be something as simple as: "We've just joined Twitter. Looking forward to connecting with everyone!"

## Twitter best practice

### Tips on how to use Twitter effectively

1. **Strategy.** Develop a Twitter strategy. The Twitter strategy will outline:

- Your organisation's overall goals
- How Twitter will support your organisation to reach the goals
- Who your organisation is trying to reach
- Relevant organisations and individuals you wish to engage with
- Your organisation's 'voice'
- The type of content your organisation will tweet.

Whenever your organisation goes to post something on Twitter, consider the following questions:

- Does this content appropriately represent our organisation? Is it relevant? If the answers to these questions are yes, tweet the content.
- Is this content likely to be of interest to our target market segments? If the answer is yes, tweet the content.

2. **Images.** Try to include images in your tweets. It will help your tweets to stand out more.

3. **Weblinks.** Where possible and applicable, include weblinks in your tweets for further information. Ideally, these weblinks will drive traffic to your organisation's website.
4. **Hashtags.** Identify three to five hashtags you can use on a regular basis. For example, if your Learn Local organisation is based in Carlton, #Carlton might be one of your hashtags. If you are promoting courses for adult learners, #adultlearners or #lifelonglearning might be appropriate hashtags to use.
5. **Follow.** Follow organisations, local businesses and individuals with a presence on Twitter that are based in your local area. This could include your local council and councillors.
6. **Engage, engage and engage!** Engage with relevant organisations and individuals on Twitter.  
Like, comment and/or retweet their content – you'll probably find they will do the same in return!
7. **Say thanks.** Thank individuals and organisations who comment or tweet your content by sending them a 'thank-you' tweet.