THE CAREER COUNSELOR'S GUIDE TO TWITTER

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Twitter is a micro-blogging communication tool that many students may already be using. However, they may not understand its power in a job search. Results from a recent study by Jobvite indicated that 55 percent of recruiters use Twitter to search for job candidates, while only 40 percent of job seekers use Twitter as part of their job search. Not only is Twitter a place recruiters and job seekers alike are starting to turn to, it was also found that:

> *Twitter is the most popular place to ask others for help and advice followed by the next three most popular activities: sharing a job opportunity with a contact, providing an employee's perspective, and sharing a job opportunity.*[1]

Twitter accounts can also be a powerful online presence for users, as tweets and pages are indexed by Google. Therefore, Twitter can provide possibilities to students such as:

Setting them apart in an applicant pool.

Keeping current with industry news, which is great for interview preparation and networking.

Finding job and internship opportunities of which they may not otherwise be aware.

Establishing themselves as burgeoning experts in specific fields or industries.

Discovering fields or industries of interest.

This guide will cover creating a strong profile, using Twitter to begin networking and connecting professionally, and sharing tips to help students find internship and job listings on Twitter.

[1] 2014 Jobvite Job Seeker Nation Study

CREATING A STRONG PROFILE AND PERSONAL BRAND ON TWITTER

This first step to creating a strong profile is setting an intention for Twitter. As with all social media, students would benefit from joining Twitter with a strategy in mind and ideas as to how it can help their job searches or career goals.

ELEMENTS OF A TWITTER PROFILE

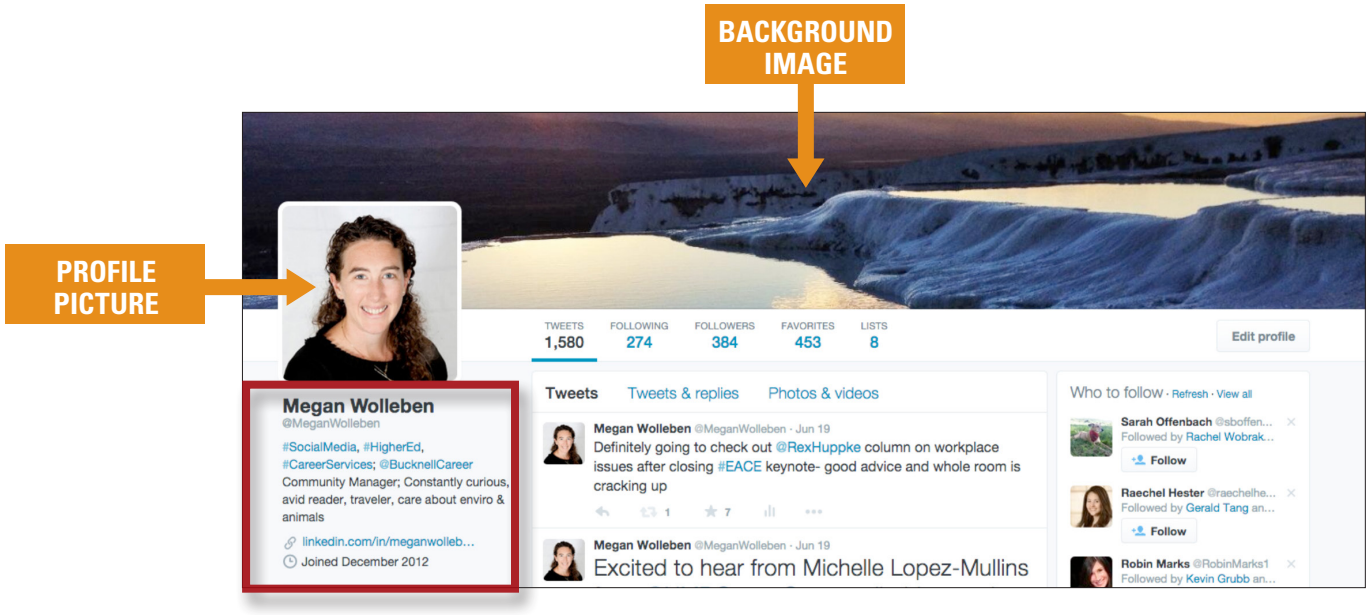
To create a strong profile, students should consider building it with their career or professional goals in mind. The red box above highlights the key elements on which to focus:

Name—In most cases, this is simply first name and last name. If a student goes by a nickname or by her middle name, recommend using the same name the student uses on her resume and/or LinkedIn profile.

Handle—This is a Twitter username—how people will refer to you, mention you, and talk to you. This does not have to be the same as a real name, but it should be close. If a student's full name is long, he goes by a nickname, or he doesn't want to use a full name, play around using initials, middle name, or a variation. Examples: @mawolleben or @megwolleben. The key is to create a handle that is not too long (remember, tweets can only have 140 characters) as well one that is recognizable.

Bio—Think of this section as a version of one's 30-second elevator speech in 160 characters or less. Encourage students to use it to help tell their professional story; include university, class year, major, and career interests. It is important to incorporate keywords relevant to career interests in a Twitter bio; using keywords here will help profiles appear in searches. If students would like to, encourage them to allow their personality to come through. You will see that I include several of my interests.

Link—The easiest link for a student to use may be a LinkedIn profile, and students should make sure that the profile is complete. If a student has a personal website, blog, or online portfolio that it would make sense to use, encourage him or her to do so here. My recommendation would be to point it to a LinkedIn profile. From there a student can add any auxiliary sites he or she may have that would make sense professionally.

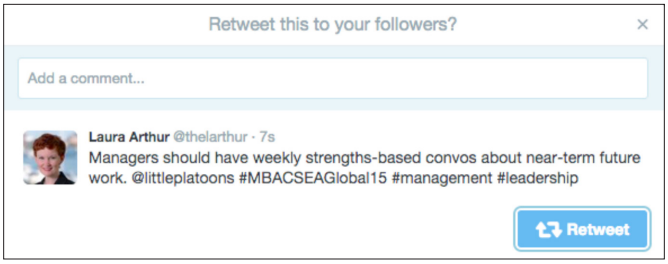


Like most social media platforms, Twitter has its own jargon and abbreviations. Key terms include:

Twitter Feed—A running list of tweets by people you follow.

RT—A retweet is when you share the exact tweet from one user with all of your Twitter followers.

You can also RT while adding a comment about the content of the tweet.



MT—A modified retweet is a tweet that has been slightly modified or edited in some way.

Reply—A direct response to a specific user that begins with their username.

DM—A direct message—or DM—is a private message directed to a specific user. You can only direct message someone you follow.

Follower—A follower is a user who sees your tweets on Twitter. Following is not necessarily reciprocal; you can follow users and they may or may not decide to follow you back.

Hashtag—A hashtag—or #—is a word or phrase preceded by the # symbol. Hashtags help you find tweets about a specific topic.

NETWORKING AND CONNECTING PROFESSIONALLY ON TWITTER

WHAT TO TWEET

Once a Twitter profile is set up, the next big question is what to say on the network. I like to evoke the 80/20 rule here and advise keeping 80 percent of tweets professional in nature. These can consist of promoting skills on one's resume, highlighting past or present internship experience, or sharing interesting articles and news relevant to the industry. The other 20 percent of tweets can showcase the student's personality, while keeping it professional just as one might in an interview. These tweets can also highlight the soft skills that many employers look for in new hires, such as self-motivation, dedication, teamwork, and strong communication skills. Recommend students share updates about extracurricular activities, interests, and other things they do that will set them apart.

To help, here are some ideas for students. Students can tweet:

› Questions they may have about their fields of interest. This will show dedication to the topic and a desire to learn.

› About something interesting in their targeted fields. This demonstrates knowledge and expertise.

› About a job or position they are seeking.

› About some of their skills and experiences; encourage them to be confident self-promoters.

› Images that illustrate skills, professional development, or personal (but appropriate) interests, such as posting a group shot of the extracurricular club, group project work, or a beautiful nature shot to showcase a hobby.

› Blog posts that they find, or write about news or issues that relate to a field of interest.

› About whatever might make them unique. Encourage them to think: What can I do that would make me valuable to potential employers?

Some other tips students should keep in mind when they start tweeting:

› **Be authentic.** Let their skills shine through naturally.

› **Engage with their followers.** Retweet and share information in a professional manner.

› **Don't spam.** Tweeting every five minutes might make them look desperate for attention.

› **Tweet first and then follow.** If it doesn't seem like a student is active with a Twitter account, others may not follow back.

› **Give to their networks.** Help others to promote themselves, too. Job hunting as a community can have a much bigger impact.

› **See the big picture.** Look for trends in their desired industries while reading tweets.

› **Add their voices.** Join in conversations that relate to their fields of interest (see more on this in the "Chats" section). They may be scared to do this, but it's important for them to make their voices heard. Remind them they can start small—even asking a question in the conversation is a good idea.

› **Conduct searches.** Use Twitter search to look for jobs that are tweeted using keywords pertaining to what they are looking for (see more on this in the "Hashtags" section).

WHO TO FOLLOW?

Who to follow is inevitably the next question for students when getting started or professionally acquainted with Twitter.

A student's first follow should be your career center and institution's Twitter profiles, if there are any. From there, they should move on to companies they want to work for or have worked for, top leaders in the industry, recruiters, and trade journals. Encourage students to look around to see whom people with similar interests to theirs are following. Here, too, one can let his or her personal interests come through. Is the student also an athlete? If so, he or she can follow the team, the school's athletic department, and the league's account.

Once students start looking, they will discover that there are many accounts to follow on Twitter; sometimes hundreds or thousands. Here is where I would offer a word of caution: Students should follow as many people as they find comfortable. There is no universal magic figure that everyone should observe or should strive to meet. If a student never looks at his or her Twitter feed because there are too many tweets, or they feel forced to have everyone in their network broken down into lots of lists, they are almost certainly following too many people. No one is under any obligations to follow another user, nor does anyone have to keep following people. Encourage students to strive to find their Twitter equilibrium—that pleasing balance between too much and not enough. They can try following people and determine if that individual makes sense in their Twitter network. Unfollowing is okay.

FINDING JOB AND INTERNSHIP LISTINGS ON TWITTER

HASHTAGS

The # symbol, called a hashtag, is used to mark a keyword or topic in a tweet. Any Twitter user can use or create a hashtag. I think of hashtags as "file this under," and they are used to help categorize or follow topics. By clicking on a hashtag, or searching Twitter for a certain hashtag, a Twitter user can see all of the tweets that contain the phrase. Using hashtags for the job search is a great way to get a tweet to appear in search results or a discussion that many are watching.t.

The example below shows the results for #hesm (Higher Ed Social Media):

Search results will include a headline list of options to help you sort the results by: "Top" (most popular), "Live," "Accounts," "Photos," and "Videos."

"More options" allows you to select a few more criteria.

Here are some examples of hashtags for job searching:

› **#resume**—Suggest students use the hashtag #resume with a description of themselves or a link to their resumes.

› **Topics**—Following keywords around a certain topic of interest, such as #STEM, #TedTalks, #bigdata, or #HigherEd, can help students stay informed of what is happening in a specific industry or field. Following topics can also offer a chance to discover companies or knowledgeable people within the field.

› **Job Listings**—Find general job advice and lots of listings through hashtags like #jobs, #recruiting,

#jobadvice, #jobposting, #jobhunt, and #jobsearch. To narrow it down, though, seek out more specific hashtags, such as #prjobs or #salesjobs. Students can even search for hashtags just by college major, such as #biology or #accounting, and job listings as well as conversations relevant to the topic may appear.

› **Industry Conferences**—Most conferences these days have their own hashtags (such as #NACE16, #EACE, #MPACE). When a relevant industry conference is approaching, get active with attendees using the hashtag. Whether students are attending the conference or not, they can contribute to the conversation. Many conferences also have live streams, so it's as if one is attending anyway! Suggest that students "live tweet," which means to tweet while at the event. They can do this at panels and speeches that they are attending or interested in, and connect with other tweeters along the way. By using Twitter for networking within an industry, students can increase their chances of getting hired down the road.

If you discover a hashtag that you like and want to remember you can save the search. Saved searches will show up when you put your cursor in the "Search Twitter" bar.

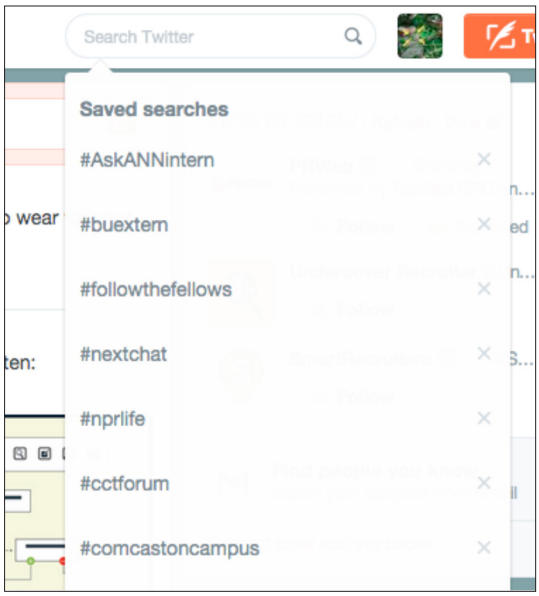
CHATS

A Twitter chat, also known as a tweetchat, is an organized event, sometimes occurring at regular times, in which Twitter users tweet using a pre-arranged hashtag. It is similar to a webinar or live event, but while these may only occur once or twice, Twitter chats frequently recur at the same time weekly or monthly. Chats generally have moderators and are centered around specific topics.

For example, NPR is hosting a chat called "Job Hunt and Social Media," using #NPRTwitterChat. If I wanted to "join it," I would search the given chat hashtag on Twitter at the prearranged date and time. That would allow me to follow the conversation. If I wanted to actively join in the conversation, I would use #NPRTwitterChat in my tweets.

A tip for tweetchats: Some people recommend to "warn" followers before the chat begins. Sometimes a quick tweet saying "I'm going into #xchat for a while. Pardon the tweets" or something similar helps to alert a network to this. It may also bring new people into the conversation.

Here is a screenshot of a search for the tweets in the #careerchat tweetchat, a weekly conversation on Twitter covering different career topics:



CHATS USE HASHTAGS TO HAVE CONVERSATIONS AT A CERTAIN TIME AROUND A CERTAIN TOPIC OR THEME.

Students can also view a list of tweetchats on this Twitter Chat Schedule website. To find a chat by keyword or phrase, students can hit Ctrl + F (or "Find" in a web browser) to search the text of this site.

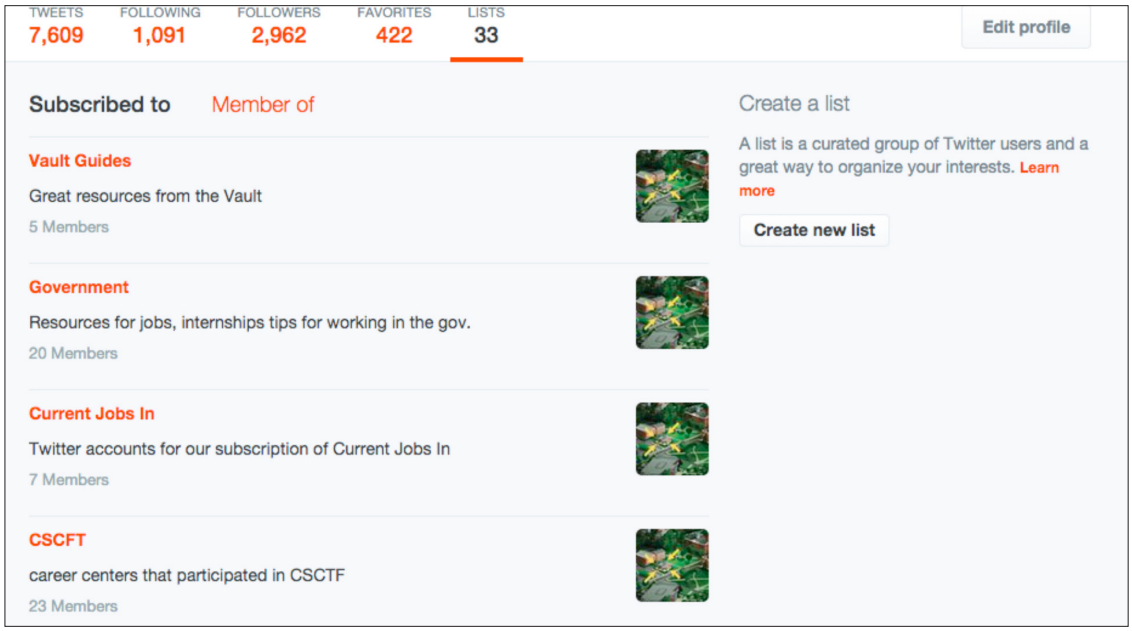
LISTS

There are hundreds of millions of tweets per day, so using Twitter lists can help students focus on certain topics.

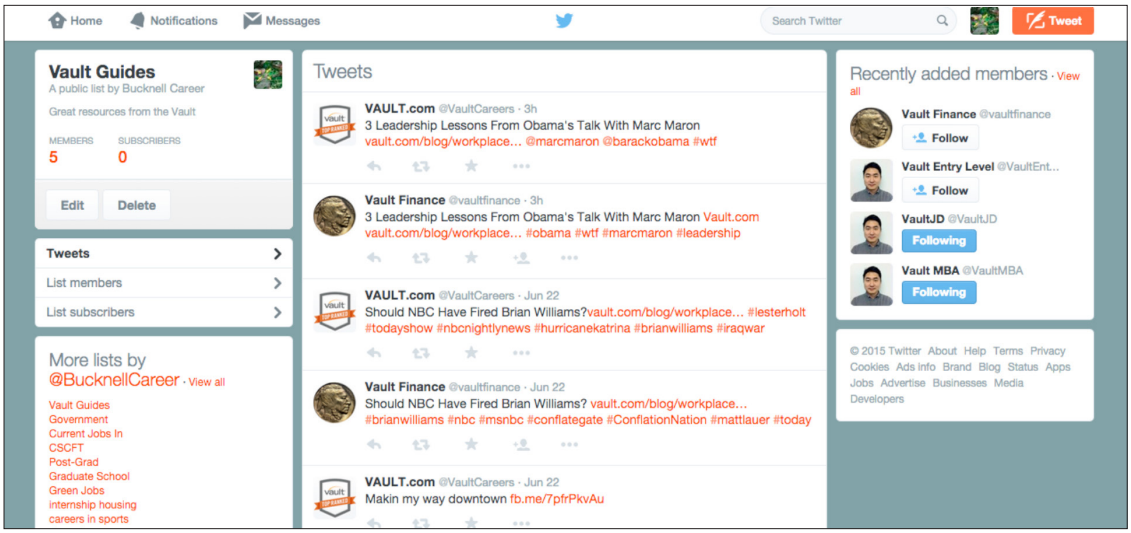
Depending on how many people one follows and how often they tweet, Twitter can get overwhelming and it is easy to miss things. I use lists to help organize and segment my followers, and I suggest students do the same. For instance, I have a "news" list so I can easily view all the headlines from the news sources I like on Twitter, whether I am actually following them or not.

Here are some basic concepts to understand about Twitter Lists:

- A list is a self-created group of Twitter users.
- Viewing a list timeline will display a stream of tweets from only the users on that list.
- Lists can be used for reading tweets only. If a student wanted to read a Twitter user's tweets, but did not want to follow that user, the student could simply add the other user to a list.



USERS CAN CREATE THEIR OWN LISTS AROUND CERTAIN TOPICS



VIEWING A LIST TIMELINE WILL SHOW YOU A STREAM OF TWEETS FROM ONLY THE USERS ON THAT LIST.

My last two tips for students for using lists are to encourage them to make a Twitter list of companies or thought leaders in their fields of interest. This can help them stay on top of the news and trends in the industry in real time. Students should also consider creating a list of Twitter users and organizations that post job openings, as well as subscribe to other lists about job and internship searching.

Twitter is a popular, powerful network that is increasingly a source for breaking news and information that can help a job-seeking student get a leg up in their pursuits. As with all social media, students need to be aware of what they are presenting. On Twitter, privacy settings are straightforward—either private or public.

Anyone, anywhere can see public tweets, while private profiles require that one must be an approved follower to see tweets. If a student is using Twitter for a job search, I would recommend the public setting. Teach students to employ the "grandmother test" when using Twitter, in other words, have them ask themselves if they would be okay having their grandmother read what they are tweeting. If students follow the 80/20 rule and consider all of the ways Twitter can be used for career gain, they are likely to find success in creating a strong identity, networking, and job searching in 140 characters or less.

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