

On Blogging Well

Friday Freebie No. 3

Taming the TwitterBeast — Managing Twitter in about 20 minutes a day

Is your TwitterBeast off the leash? Running amuck? There's hope! Instead of Twitter controlling your life, you can train the beast — even put it in time out if you want — and still maintain a great relationship with all your Twittermates.

How?

First, think of your niche — the topic you blog and tweet about. Whether it's real estate, hobby farming, cooking, or golf, you probably read a lot of blogs on the subject so you can keep up with trends to inform your own readers. So, before we get to taming Twitter, there are a couple of preliminary steps to take. These will take more than 20 minutes, so be prepared for that, but once you're set up, you'll see how easy it will be to handle your tweets without losing your sanity.

Set up a Google Homepage.

I read a lot of blogs. I subscribe to many of them (about 2 dozen) via email and save them in folders. Going back and forth in and out of folders to do topic research is a pain. And a waste of time. You can use an online reader, but I prefer Google Homepage. I set mine up to display headlines of the three latest articles from each blog I read. Here's a wikiHow article to show you how to set it up: <http://www.wikihow.com/Set-Up-a-Google-Personalized-Homepage>

Now, Subscribe via RSS to Your Favorite Blogs

Yes, this is time consuming, but it'll be worth it. One by one, visit all your fav blogs and click in the little blue RSS chicklet (right-hand side of your browser's address bar). When the next screen loads, giving you a choice of format, click "Add to My Google Homepage." You can drag them around to arrange them and even add some other gadgets if you want. I keep only my Gmail updates and my blog feeds displayed so I don't get sidetracked.

Next Step – Sign up for an account at bit.ly.

What is bit.ly? It's an automatic URL shortening that tracks clicks and gives you a bit of info on who clicked. Signing up for an account now will save you time when we get to the next step. Trust me. Oh, yeah – it's free!

Now, join a (free) service that allows you to schedule tweets.

I use SocialOomph, formerly known as TweetLater. I like it, but there are others. You can search around if you want or just join SocialOomph. It will ask for your bit.ly username and API key (found in the left sidebar on your bit.ly "Account" page). Once you're signed up, there's one step left.

Repeat this final step every day (morning or night – whichever is best).

Browse through the blog headlines on your Google Homepage and click on the ones that interest you and that you think will interest your readers. Open another browser window and log into SocialOomph. Go to "Accounts" and click on "Tweets." Click on "New Tweet" from the navigation bar in the middle of the page. Make sure your time zone is set correctly, then copy & paste the headlines you wish to tweet and schedule them one at a time using SocialOomph (or whichever tweet scheduling application you chose to use). You can have your tweets post throughout the day.

Why post headlines from other blogs?

Remember – "social" media is all about relationships. If you only Tweet about you and your blog and your products, no one will care and you will lose followers. Most Twitter gurus suggest tweeting about your stuff once for every 7-10 tweets. And those other tweets should be informational content, not, "Hey, buy my brother-in-law's eBook!" Tweeting about your BIL's eBook is fine – just make sure you provide something useful to your followers in between the promotional tweets.

One last tip for taming the TwitterBeast:

Label all those so-and-so is now following you emails and filter them into a folder instead of your in-box so you won't be tempted to stop and view each profile as the notifications come in. Schedule a few minutes a day to check your new followers and decide whether or not to follow them back.