

Twitter for Authors

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An author friend of mine spoke at a book signing recently. Thirty enthusiastic people attended and bought a couple dozen books, after which he loaded up his car and headed for the next event. I have another friend who was booked for speaking engagements the entire length of California over one month.

It's what authors do. Like traveling salespeople, we prepare and polish our speech; we pack, dress, and drive or fly; we haul our little carts, set up, interact, pack up and leave. We return home and calculate sales vs. cost, both in terms of money, time, and energy.

Traveling and speaking is a necessary part of our business, but there's another way to market, and that can be done in one's pajamas. I can even automate my tweets ahead of time and go relax on my patio while my books sell themselves.

Using social media, including Twitter, I can match my friend's sales with far less time and expense. On Twitter, I have almost three thousand followers. With more, sales would probably increase. By the way, when I talk about followers, I don't mean the kind you buy. I mean the kind you earn by tweeting and retweeting relevant, interesting stuff, not marketing very much unless I'm doing a campaign, not responding to flame throwers, and by behaving at all times like a friendly grownup.

That's your first tip. Here are ten more.

1. **Your Twitter profile** should feature a photo of you, not your dog, RV, or a flower. Also include a short statement reflecting your personality and niche, one shortened link to your book or Amazon.com Author Page, and one to your website. For example, here's mine: <http://www.Twitter.com/LynneSpreen>.
2. **Find people to follow.** The easiest way is to locate the Twitter page ("profile") of a celebrity or VIP who reflects your interests, reader demographic, etc. Then:
 - On their profile, click "Lists." If she has any, click on the list title. Click "Subscribe." Now, go back to your own profile, and click Lists. You will see the latest updates from all those people on your VIP's list just as if you'd

developed it yourself. You can then retweet or favorite their tweets, or click their name to follow. (This leads to them following you back.)

- On your VIP's profile, click "Following" to see who the VIP follows. Clicking any name yields that person's Twitter profile, which you may then opt to follow. How do you then make the decision as to whom you should follow? Look for those who have lots of followers themselves, and choose those who have recent and frequent activity. Avoid those who post only about their books or products, or who only post quotations, or who just sound creepy.
3. **Interact.** On your profile page, click the "house" icon. The resulting list consists of tweets and retweets by people you are following. Scroll down for tweets that look interesting. Retweet and "favorite" these. This is said to be more effective than tweeting original material, because a retweet or favorite is brought to the attention of the person who posted it. They may then follow you, retweet your tweet to their followers, or click on the book link on your profile.
 4. **When tweeting,** use one or more hashtags in tweets. This helps people find you by subject. Google "how to use hashtags" for more information.
 5. **When tweeting,** you might want to include another person's Twitter handle (@JaneDoe) in your message. Jane is then notified of your tweet, and may choose to follow you. This is true also when you RT (retweet) people. It's flattering. Warning: do not begin the tweet with your target's handle; place a period, word or phrase in front of the handle or it will only be visible to Jane.
 6. **Niche:** Stay true to your niche most of the time.
 7. **Compelling:** Make your tweets as interesting as possible. Bring items of value to the Twitter feed so others will retweet YOU to their followers. (This usually means linking to news items of interest.)
 8. **Frequency:** Visit often. Make a schedule (for ex., 15 minutes a day, 5 days a week) and stick to it.
 9. **No spam:** Don't constantly promote your book. Nobody likes junk mail. Go for a 20/80 mix (20% promotion).
 10. **Automate** tweets if you're going to be away from your Twitter account. The easiest way to do this is by using Hootsuite.com.