

## Small Business Owners Need Twitter and LinkedIn

By [Carrie Hill](#) , May 13, 2008

Small businesses have real opportunities for success using social media. Jeff Quipp, in his great article, "[Social Media Marketing for Small Businesses](#)," wrote that it can help generate links, forge relationships, generate direct sales, and build a company's authority in an industry.

However, Jeff missed two of my favorite social media sites: [Twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#). Consider this a companion piece to his great article, which you should go read as soon as you're done with mine so you'll be fully armed with some great social networking information.

### Twitter

It's all the rage lately -- and with good reason. [Twitter](#) offers the ability to connect with a ton of people you normally wouldn't have access to. I'll give you a real life example.

The other day, a popular blogger I follow on Twitter sent a "Tweet" calling for "top 10" or "list" type articles. I had written my "[30 Free Ways to Market Your Small Business Site](#)" so I sent the link back to him via Twitter. It took me less than a minute, and my article was chosen for inclusion in his daily "link finds." The traffic and link from that *one* interaction alone was worth the time I spend there, purely from a branding and "getting my name out there" standpoint.

Notice I said "traffic"? Traffic from your network on Twitter definitely has potential, especially if you're writing fresh and compelling content. [Jason Calacanis wrote](#) that Twitter was sending over 20,000 people a month to Mahalo, his human-edited search engine.

Karl Long also gave an example of [good Twitter traffic](#) on his blog. He received quite a bit of traffic in a short amount of time, and all it took was someone else talking about reading his blog and throwing in a link.

Twitter can be a time suck, and it's more than a little addictive for some. The key here is to follow those that can help you, be part of the community, and log in only as often as your schedule allows.

Here are some things a small business owner can accomplish with Twitter:

- Do you have a brick and mortar business? Connect with your local clientele by using [TwitterMap.com](#) or [TwitterLocal.net](#). These sites will show you all the Twitter updates happening in any given geographic area. Sign into your Twitter account and enter "L: city, state" and then visit TwitterMap or TwitterLocal to find "Twits" near you.
- Looking to hire employees? Send out a Tweet with what you're looking for. Followers who aren't necessarily in your geographic location might still know someone who is, and they'll re-Tweet the message for you.
- Build buzz for a future event. Having a blowout sale in two weeks? Let everyone know on Twitter. One person in your area with lots of followers has the potential to reach thousands of people, tens of thousands even.
- Looking for new ideas? Reach a broad range of like-minded businesses and use Twitter as a brainstorming platform.
- Building links to a small business Web site? Follow people who can help you out, engage in the community and when they call for help/suggestions, offer yours.

### LinkedIn

LinkedIn is a great tool for building a professional network in the virtual world. In the old days it was mixers and conferences; now it's e-mail invitations and connections. We still like [attending conferences](#), though. If you're running a small Web-based or brick-and-mortar business, "knowing" the right people and being able to answer and ask questions significant to your industry is going to help you build your network of contacts. Chances are someone you know in your industry is already on LinkedIn. Set up a profile and start introducing yourself around.

The LinkedIn Q&A section is an opportunity for you to participate in your industry by asking questions and getting answers from some of the best and the brightest. Users can vote on the "best" answer and this can sometimes help them be mentioned in other venues.

Here's another real life example. A few weeks ago, [Vertical Search columnist Elisabeth Osmeloski](#) asked a question on LinkedIn. She wanted to know what types of sites and tools travel search marketers used. She got some great answers, including mine. The end result? She used my answer in her column, "[What's in Your Travel Tool Bag?](#)" I spent less than five minutes answering a question and I received a link and some traffic to my Search Engine Watch profile. This is a great tool for brand building, even if that brand is you.

Once you (or your company) are a member of LinkedIn and are participating in the community, you can create a "group" for your business or industry and invite people to join (like the [Search Engine Watch LinkedIn Group](#)). It's likely anyone you've become connected to is interested in the same things you are, so having a group dedicated to your industry where you can send out mass messages, arrange get-togethers or keep members updated makes sense.

If you're really interested in Internet marketing and you visit the [Search Engine Watch Forums](#) -- I suggest you get started by joining the [SearchEngineWatch Forums Group](#) on LinkedIn.

Another great side benefit from both Twitter and LinkedIn? They both rank pretty well for a search of my name, which is technically what I'm branding with my participation in both networks.

Yes, it's a time investment. But something worth having takes time. Get rich quick and minimal-effort maximum-profit doesn't really happen in [SEM](#). Keeping up with what's going on in your industry and creating a community you can talk with are key factors that successful web businesses employ.