

Why Even Academics Should Tweet

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Many academics think social media isn't something they need. After all, we are judged on the quality of our work, not our Tweets, right? Most academics can benefit from [using social media](#). In this article, I'd like to talk specifically about how academics can use Twitter to benefit their own careers and their field in general.

Keep in Touch with the Trends

Right now, how do you keep in touch with what's going on in your field? Do you wait for the next issue of the big journal in your field? Do you hope the grapevine ultimately supplies you with knowledge? These are certainly tried and true methods. But who doesn't want to be on the cutting edge? Follow the top publishers and academics in your field and you'll be the first to know about a new book, a new theory, a new method. Then, at conference, among your colleagues, or at interviews, you'll be sure to know what's up and that will help you create the image of being well-informed and active in your field.

Create the Trends

The Twitterverse often refers to "influencers." These people oftentimes aren't the top of the field or even famous in any way outside of Twitter but people on Twitter listen to them. That gives influencers the ability to, well, influence! Influencers are known for not only being in the know, but having the ability to shape the next trends. Influencers are the Twitter version of Oprah's Book Club. If an influencer mentioned a product, it flies off the shelf.

This can be parlayed into an academic setting as well. You'll want to do some reading on how to become an influencer, but once you're there, there are myriad ways you can use that influence. A labor historian I know used his influence among people in his field on Twitter to launch a boycott of a particular hotel chain that was abusing its workers rights. Or maybe you want to campaign to have your annual conference in a different city. Or why not promote yourself and your new book? Very few academics are given

substantial marketing support by their publishing companies, so why not become your own marketing team? Being able to create trends, even in academia, can be a powerful thing.

Make a Name for Yourself

[Twitter, at its most basic, is a marketing tool.](#) That may sound like something an academic doesn't need, but think about this scenario: you're up for a job and you're one of the final three candidates. The other two candidates are unknown to the hiring committee and while the hiring committee has never met you, one of them is on Twitter and has been following your Tweets for the past two years. They are familiar with your work, your interests, maybe even your sense of humor. They know you are active in research and that you are actively invested in [collaborating and conversing with colleagues](#), near and far, because your Twitter feed demonstrates this.

All other things being equal, this could absolutely be the thing that makes your application and you stand out among the others. The job market for academics is tighter right now than ever so you want to give yourself every chance to stand out. Twitter can help you do that.

These are just a few of the ways academics can use Twitter, but there are plenty of others: it can be a fun and handy tool to communicate with students, you can shape class projects around it and reduce paper usage, you can even keep in touch with grad school buddies after you've all graduated. So grab a how-to book and start Tweeting today!

Cite this article

Enago Academy, Why Even Academics Should Tweet. Enago Academy. 2015/09/22. <https://www.enago.com/academy/why-even-academics-should-tweet/>