Twitter for Business

It's not all play on Twitter — there's serious business being done as well, and this guide will teach you how to put Twitter to work.

Finding a job using Twitter

Twitter tips for executives

Twitter best practices for brands

40 of the best big brands on Twitter

Using Twitter for customer service

The media maker's guide to Twitter

tweet this chapter

Finding a job using Twitter by Sarah Evans

Tough economic times call for innovative approaches. An estimated 51 million people internationally are expected to lose their jobs in 2009, and with the unemployment rate on the rise, how does one find career opportunities fast? One great option is Twitter.

Twitter is evolving as another resource, in addition to traditional methods, for both job searching and recruiting.

Get the most out of your page

• Make your Twitter presence "employer-friendly"

- o Put your job pitch in your Twitter bio (which is 160 characters)
- o Use a professional looking avatar
- o Tweet about your job search

• Utilize your Twitter background. There's lots of space you can use to promote yourself. Don't know how to create a professional-looking Twitter background? Use this free template to design your own.

• Include a link to an online CV or resume in your bio. Use a tool like VisualCV. (For more information on building an online resume, see Dan Schawbel's post HOW TO: Build the Ultimate Social Media Resume)

• Establish yourself as an expert in your field on Twitter. It's important to note that you should not misrepresent yourself. If you're not a medical doctor, don't play one on Twitter. As those on Twitter become interested in your content, when employers are looking at you, you'll have more than just your resume to back up your knowledge and experience.

"It's about who you know"

How do you get to know the right people? It's not always about who you're looking for, some people on Twitter are actually looking for YOU.

There are many job recruiters who use Twitter to look for potential candidates. Before contacting a recruiter via Twitter, check out:

• Their bio
• Follower/Following ratio (Have they been around a while? Do they follow people back?)
• Click the link to their website
• Ask others in your network whether or not the recruiter is a credible source

Here are a few recruiters representing different professions and industries on Twitter:

Christa Foley a.k.a. @electra – Christa is the recruiting manager and recruiter at Zappos.com. Christa gives followers an inside look into her career at Zappos. She tweets out examples of negative recruiting interactions with potential clients, outreach she does with high school and college students, and ultimately looks for potential Zappos candidates.

Craig Fisher a.k.a. @Fishdogs – Craig is an IT and executive recruiter who co-founded A-List Solutions staffing firm. On Twitter he offers tweets on how to find a job in the web industry, hiring tips and tricks, along with professional career advice.

Jim Durbin a.k.a. @smheadhunter – A social media recruiter, Jim is active on the Twitter scene. His goal is to partner "social media gurus" with the right companies. Jim responds to followers' questions, offers general recruiting advice and sends out "teaser" tweets for positions he thinks followers might be interested in.

Jennifer McClure a.k.a. @CincyRecruiter – Jennifer is an executive recruiter/coach. She often tweets out specific advice for job seekers, including words not to use on a resume. Jennifer is accessible to her followers and tweets about non-recruiting topics as well.

Laurie DesAutels a.k.a. @biotechjobs – Laurie recruits a specific niche, looking for senior level leaders in the biotech and pharmaceutical industry. Her tweet stream includes links to other job search resources and lots of Twitter information.

Job search tools & resources

A reactive job search on Twitter probably isn't the best way to find a job. There are many new Twitter tools and applications to assist with a proactive job search.

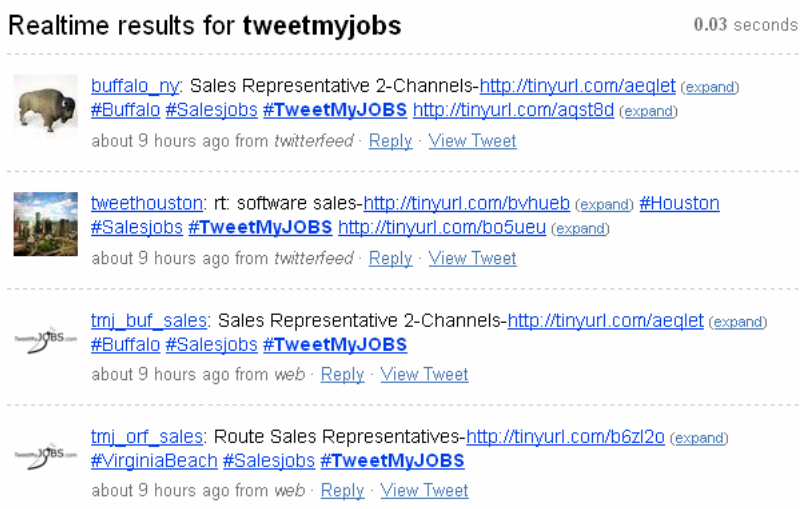
@Microjobs

Started by well-known PR professional, Brian Solis, @Microjobs was developed to bring together job seekers and recruiters through tweets.

How does it work?

Recruiters begin their tweets with @Microjobs, and then submit. The @Microjobs account automatically tweets out requests to its growing network of job seekers.

TweetMyJobs



Another tool born out of Twitter for job seekers and recruiters. Follow the hashtag #Tweetmyjobs and visit the website. This is a very simple (and free) tool for job seekers. You can subscribe to desired job channels and even have new openings automatically sent to your mobile phone. Even better? You can specify which cities you want notifications from.

Job search accounts

There are a variety of Twitter accounts dedicated to providing job listings by field, company, region, and more. Once you've decided which best match your job search, consider turning on mobile alerts for these accounts to be among the first to receive messages (if your mobile phone plan includes SMS messages).

By company

@attjobs – Jobs at AT&T
@mtvnetworksjobs – Jobs at MTV
@TRCareers – Jobs from Thomson Reuters

By field

@alldevjobs – Developer jobs
@ArtDirectorJobs – Art director jobs
@cwjobs – Copywriter jobs
@jobsinhiphop – Jobs in Hip-Hop
@journalism_jobs – Jobs in journalism
@juicyjobs – Green jobs
@libgig_jobs – Library Jobs
@mediabistrojobs – Media job listings from mediabistro.com
@medical_jobs – Medical jobs
@media_pros – Jobs for media professionals
@narmsjobs – Retail marketing jobs
@PRSAjobcenter – Jobs in public relations, communications and marketing
@reflectx – Physical Therapy jobs
@seojobs – SEO job listings
@socialmediajob – Jobs in social media
@travelmaxallied – Healthcare jobs
@travelnursejob – Jobs for traveling nurses
@usmusicjobs – US Music Jobs
@web_design_jobs – Web design and other graphics jobs

By job type

@findinternships – Internships and entry level jobs for college students
@freelance_jobs – Freelance jobs
@heatherhuhman – Entry level jobs and internships
@Project4Hire – Freelance and temporary jobs
@jewish_jobs – Jewish job listings

By region

@MyBristolJobs – Job listings from mybristoljobs.co.uk
@chicagowebjobs – Web-related jobs in Chicago
@ChicagoTechJobs – Technology jobs in the greater Chicago area
@ITJobsLondon – IT jobs in London
@ITJobsSydney – IT jobs in Sydney, Australia
@JobsBoston – Jobs in the greater Boston area
@jobshawaii – Jobs in Hawaii
@NewYorkTechJobs – Technology jobs in the greater New York area
@PDXJobs – Jobs in Portland, Oregon
@sdjobs – San Diego technology jobs

@sfmobilejobs – Mobile Web and Digital Media jobs in Silicon Valley
@mtltweetjobs – PR/marketing/social media/tech jobs in Montreal
@TopJobsInLondon – Top jobs in London, UK
@web20jobs – UK-based web 2.0 jobs

General

@JobAngels – Helping the unemployed find jobs
@indeed – One search. All jobs.
@jobshouts – General job postings
@simplyhired – Job search site
@StartUpHire – Jobs at VC backed companies
@twithire – Job board service

To find additional Twitter job resources, use the Twitter search function and type in keywords important in your job search. For example, "job openings," "looking for a job," or "healthcare career." Additionally, you can search out others in your desired career field on sites like Twellow, Just tweet it, and TwitterTroll.

Your next job could be just a tweet away.

Twitter tips for executives by Bruce Philp

When company executives speak publicly, they become part of their customer's brand experience, and that's especially true when those executives venture into the Twitterverse. Probably to the horror of their handlers, many corporate leaders are starting to ask questions about Twitter, and some are already using it and speaking directly to customers. That's great, but it can also be potentially perilous, at least in terms of the brands they represent. If you're a CEO, President, VP or other executive, stepping out from behind the curtain exposes both you and your brand to intimate scrutiny.

Yet there are a few corporate tweeters who instinctively get it right, and when they do, they add tremendous value to their enterprises. Those that do it the best authenticate their brands, and add to the bank of customer goodwill every business depends on. Executives that have mastered Twitter have pioneered a new way for people to connect with the companies that want their business.

Of course, when they get it wrong, it can be damaging to the brand experience their company works to cultivate. Whenever I see executives using Twitter detrimentally, I'm reminded of a time I boarded a plane and a dapper fellow strolled on behind me, fired up the PA system, and introduced himself as the president of the airline. He thanked us for our business — which was cool — and he proudly informed us that his airline was the most profitable in the world and shopping for expensive new jets — which was not. Whether he realized it or not, he became part of the passenger experience that day, and talking about profits and capital expenditures didn't reflect the customer focused brand we'd all put our faith in. Corporate leaders on Twitter face the same potential pitfalls as that airline exec.

Those who know how to use Twitter well consistently demonstrate five truths about how a CEO –- or any leader — should speak when they step into the Twitter spotlight. Emulating how they do it can help other executives get a huge return on their investment when using Twitter and avoid doing any damage to their brand.

1. They are their brand's conscience

For most consumers, an ideal CEO is someone who uses their power to make sure a brand keeps its promises. As a business leader on Twitter, that should be your platform. What people sense in an effective company executive on Twitter is not the echo of marketing, but the principles by which they lead the company behind it, and their passion for the job. Skip the brand rhetoric. Your brand will thank you for it.

CEO_INGDIRECT Financial literacy is a huge issue for us all. Responsible spending, borrowing and saving are things that are too important not to teach.

9:19 AM Apr 22nd from web

2. They don't sell – They share

Twitter isn't advertising, it's a conversation. Great executive tweeters don't try to sell to their followers, they try to engage them in a personal way. They share things about their company's corporate culture, their leadership values, the great people around them. They help followers with problems. They make business competition personal, and sometimes even funny. Each tweet should be a window into the life of the company behind the marketing, which will make the marketing stronger as a result.

richardbranson Arianna Huffington and I chatting on Virgin America's inaugural flight to OC. Have put my trousers back on.

5:11 PM Apr 29th from web

3. They are real human beings

On Twitter, what you talk about is who you are. Every Twitter user's update history paints a true portrait of their character and what matters to them. So, the best executive tweeters are real people and sound like real people — always. They know the responsibility to keep their brand honest is a duty they owe their customers, but they also know that baseball practice, Saturday errands and that great burger they had at their favorite local eatery last night are the things that make them human. In moderation, share some of those things, too. People will be able to relate to you on a personal level and as a result, they will like and trust you more.

Zappos CEO

zappos Dropped my laptop on floor this morning. I usually drop my phone, so good to know I'm moving on to bigger and better things.

3:28 PM May 28th from txt

4. They write well

Nobody will say so out loud, but believe me: Bad grammar and punctuation, or hasty abbreviations to get the character count down to 140, are just a little too humanizing. Great leaders are characteristically great communicators, and it's no different on Twitter. Sure, informality is fine, charming even, but confident prose is one way people recognize leadership in this forum. Nobody wants to do business with a sixteen-year-old CEO, and the best executive tweeters don't write like one.

SteveCase Back home from ho-hum Elvis Costello concert. Respect his versatility, and there were moments, but overall was disappointing.

about 13 hours ago from TweetDeck

5. They commit

The best executive tweeters are people who have decided to join the party. They tweet a few times a day, and do so at least a few days a week. They build a community and become familiar with their followers. They establish relationships, running jokes, and a personality that defines them. Corporate leaders on Twitter that don't tweet often can seem distant, or worse, when they do. We don't feel like they've joined the party. We just feel like they walked into the room to make an announcement, and then left. I won't go so far as to say that you shouldn't be a Twitter user if you're not prepared to commit. But almost.

Joining the Twitter community as a leader makes your voice inseparable from your company's reputation and its brand. What effective CEO tweeters understand, though, is that this doesn't mean you are that brand. People will follow you, initially at least, because they're curious to understand who your company is in a deeper way than traditional media allow. But they'll stay with you only if they like, respect and trust what they discover. Which, as any leader will tell you, is what leadership is all about.

Finding executives on Twitter
Though it is actually a marketing vehicle for Microsoft, ExecTweets is a great resource for finding executives on Twitter. The site categorizes executives who use Twitter and lets users vote on their favorite tweets from those corporate leaders. The WeFollow directory is another good resource, just search for tags like "CEO" and "executive" to locate executive tweeters.

Disclosure: ExecTweets is a Federated Media program. Federated is an ad partner of Mashable.

Twitter best practices for brands by Michael Brito

Having a Twitter profile doesn't mean you're a social media master, but it is a great tool for conversations, building community and finding the latest industry news. That's why Hollywood is on Twitter, athletes are on Twitter, your competitors are on Twitter, and hopefully you are on Twitter too.

But for brands, there's an art to using Twitter, and the most successful at it follow an unwritten set of rules. The following are 10 important practices for brands to follow on Twitter; these are lessons that I have learned while working in the enterprise.

1. Do your research before engaging customers

Know how your customers use Twitter. It takes only a minute to go to Twitter Search and find out if there are any conversations happening about your brand, product, service or industry. Know what your customers are saying about you.

If your search yields zero results, don't worry: there may still be an opportunity for you and your brand to establish a presence and start a conversation on the service. However, Twitter may or may not be the right tool for you to engage your consumers.

2. Determine organizational goals

Not all brands utilize Twitter in the same way. Some, like @ComcastCares, use Twitter to provide customers with support. Other branded Twitter accounts, such as @DellOutlet, have utilized the service to sell products.

It's important to think about what you are trying to achieve using Twitter before devoting your time and resources to it. You're likely to get more out of it that way.

3. Utilize either a branded or personal profile

You have two options: you can either use a branded profile with your company's logo, or you can opt to create a more personal profile that unites your own personal brand with that of the company.

If employees are using Twitter to primarily engage with people on behalf of the company, they should have a branded profile. A branded profile is one that clearly identifies the user as an employee of the company; usually through a username (i.e. @Intel_Eric, @synopsys_roy, @MelfromSymantec, @AMDOpteronPhil, @RichardatDELL to name a few) or has a branded background picture and bio.

Whichever option you choose, there has to be a level of balance. Branded profiles are great for certain things – for example, industry news, contests, investor relations, etc. Personal profiles are more benefi-

cial if your organization wants to leverage the employee's personal micro-community or wants to have a more human presence.

4. Build your Twitter equity and credibility

To be a successful brand on Twitter, you have to build credibility and equity. That doesn't necessarily refer to the number of followers, tweets, or retweets you may have, although these are important factors. Rather, it's more about developing a reputation as a trusted source of information or being seen as an expert in a particular subject.

You won't succeed in building your Twitter equity by pushing out one way marketing messages about your product. Instead ask questions, be personal, and engage people naturally within the Twitter community. Otherwise, customers won't listen to what you have to say.

I usually follow the 80/20 rule: 80 percent of my tweets are conversational and personal, 20 percent are about the company I work for. I've found that this has really helped build customer engagement and link click-through rates.

5. Track metrics and conversation trends

Any enterprise or medium sized business should invest in a paid tracking service like Radian6 or Nielsen to better track Twitter conversations, identify trends, measure sentiment, and to get a quantifiable picture of what is going on in the social web.

One metric you absolutely must track: how much money Twitter has saved your brand. How many issues did you solve, leads did you create, and dollars did you save through Twitter engagement versus traditional resources?

If your goal is to handle customer support issues via Twitter, it's wise to check if there is any decrease in the call volume to your support center. And if you are selling products via Twitter (as Dell is doing), you should of course measure your sales via that channel.

6. Don't go overboard; less structure is better

Your Twitter use can appear disingenuous and inhuman if you're too structured with your approach, to the point where your community may be turned off. Treat your Twitter relationships the same way you would any other relationship. Honestly, how much planning or structure is needed before spending the evening out with friends?

Your Twitter experience will change and evolve over time, because the community that follows you will help shape what you say and how you respond. Remember to always use the 80/20 rule, but be flexible with your approach.

I'm not saying that you should let your employees run wild on Twitter, though. Planning, training, coordination and integration with social tools is imperative — just don't go overboard and create a social media policy that is too restrictive.

7. Listen and observe before engaging

Don't just start tweeting assuming that the Twitter community is going to accept you with open arms. It's important that you spend some time just listening and observing the behavior of those who are talking about you or your company. Understand how your customers behave and adjust accordingly.

You don't have to follow everyone that mentions your company to listen in on the conversation. In fact, this may irritate some people. Instead, when you're ready to start answering questions, @reply them. In my experience, nine times out of ten, they'll end up following you. Let the relationship grow from there.

8. Be authentic & believable

Authenticity is the golden rule in social media. We've known this for years, but there is another, related rule that is just as important: you and your brand need to be believable. This means spending time listening to your community, observing it, and learning about the dynamics of that community.

Your will become believable only after you have established trust among those in your community. Because I am trusted by my followers, if I tweet that my new netbook is amazing and fits my mobile lifestyle, people will believe me and perhaps even buy one (it is amazing, by the way).

9. Track, measure, and iterate

If there's one thing that bugs me about working in the corporate environment, it's the amount of time needed to execute. Sometimes it's better just to launch a product or initiative, track it, measure the re-

sults and then iterate.

I learned this concept working at Yahoo for Mike Speiser, who was the VP of Community Products (and founded ePinions and Bix). This was his philosophy at Yahoo, and it worked, especially in the competitive landscape of social networks.

The great thing about the social web is that it's not difficult to track the results of Twitter engagement, assuming you have determined what your organization's goals are. It's even easier to change course if you find that your efforts aren't working according to plan.

10. Don't just strategize: execute!

Multiple daily conference calls are the norm in corporate America. Strategy sessions and meetings to plan strategy sessions are also constants. While this may be fine when planning a new product launch or corporate initiative, it is the wrong approach to using Twitter.

We spend too much time strategizing with little to no execution. When you have too many ideas and not enough people who are willing to roll up their sleeves and get stuff done, you are going to find yourself late to the game. Or, in the case of Twitter, late to the conversation.

By spending too much time trying to think of the best strategy, you are going to miss priceless opportunities to fix problems, answer questions, turn sour situations around, and create brand affinity with customers.

With Twitter your mantra should be: just get out there and try it.

40 of the best big brands on Twitter by Jennifer Van Grove

We all know brands are using Twitter — whether or not you want them around. Some of them don't quite get the medium and just tweet self-serving links or marketing speak, but you won't find any of those brands here. We've handpicked 40 of the best brands experimenting with the micro-blogging platform, and asked them a few short questions about how they're using Twitter.

If some of their responses seem short, well that's because they are. I asked each brand correspondent to answer our queries in 140 characters or less. Most of them got the point, a few rambled on a bit too long, and only asked me if "u" was acceptable in lieu of "you." All in all, we've found some amazing people, doing some pretty powerful things at big companies, and all via Twitter.

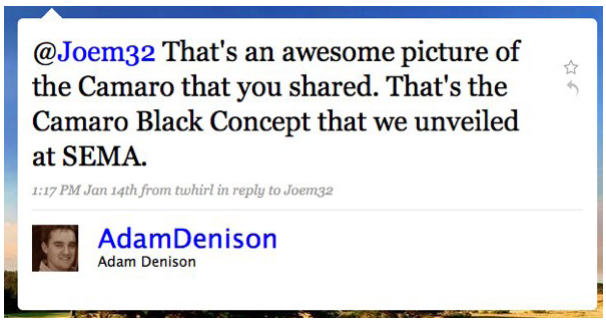
Smart brands use Twitter in meaningful ways, and most of them use their brand name as a way to make sure customers can find and recognize them. This piece, and the knowledge I learned from the incessant hours invested, demonstrate why brands do belong on Twitter. No other medium gets you inside a business or brand quiet like Twitter.

And if you're a brand that didn't make our list, let us know why your tweets deserve consideration in the comments.

Cars

Who cares what a car company has to say in 140 characters or less, right? Well, think again. Some of the biggest car manufacturers are using the medium to connect with customers, fight misconceptions, and convince people to give their vehicles a test drive. The brands, and the people behind them, highlighted here are engaging with their biggest fans and critics, and they're doing it all via real-time tweets.

Chevrolet



Twitter Name: AdamDenison

Chevrolet Official Tweeter: Say hello to Adam Denison, the PR guy for Chevrolet Corvette, Camaro, Impala and HHR. On top of managing media inquiries on these cars, he also tweets about them; updating

with cool news and exchanging tweets and pics with car enthusiasts. He's on Twitter because he wanted to be a part of the online dialogue around Chevrolet saying, "People especially love to talk about their cars: good or bad."

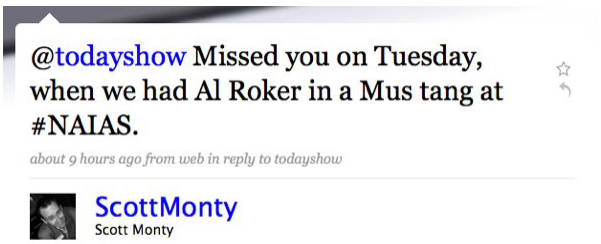
Stats: 156 following/573 followers

When asked about a great Twitter story: "I could talk for a long time about how I Twittered for hours on end helping to clarify misconceptions about GM during the loan hearings! (That's a hard one to answer in 140 characters or less)."

On whether or not he gets overwhelmed: "Not yet, but I sometimes get overwhelmed when I open my Twitter Search RSS feeds and see how many people are talking about any of my cars."

On interesting (good and bad) replies: "There were many during the loan hearings with Congress. It was amazing to see how passionately people were either for or against us."

Ford



Twitter Name: ScottMonty

Ford Official Tweeter: You probably already know Scott Monty, but if you don't you should. He's the super friendly and super social head of social media at Ford. According to Monty, Ford made the jump to Twitter when he came up with the "idea to tweet on behalf of Ford and to harmonize all of our accounts; i.e., every account starts with @Ford."

Stats: 8,425 following/8,494 followers

Why Ford tweets: "It's part of a larger social media strategy to humanize the Ford brand and put consumers in touch with Ford employees."

On what's great about using Twitter for Ford: "Keeping up with the many people who are passionate about Ford vehicles and educating people who might not be aware of all of the great products and progress we're making."

On what's coming in 2009: "I'll be getting other Ford employees up and running on many of our accounts, so it's more than just me representing the company on Twitter."

General Motors

Twitter Name: GMblogs

General Motors Official Tweeter: There are a few people behind the GMblogs account, but Robyn Henderson in social media communications was kind enough to give us 140 characters worth of answers and opinions even though she was busy at an Auto show with limited email access via her BlackBerry. You can also find Robyn tweeting as robnh.

Stats: 1,514 following/2,052 followers

Why they tweet: "Experiment at first, but now for feedback, to clarify misconceptions, hear from and talk to customers/observers who may not comment on our blogs"

On interesting experiences via Twitter: "It's surprising how many GM employees and alumni find us here and introduce themselves. I like hearing personal stories about cars too."

Most frequent tweet replies: "We get a lot of 'cool, thanks,' and 'where can I get more information on that car. "

Honda

Twitter Name: Alicia_at_Honda

Official Tweeter: Meet Alicia Jones, she works in Corporate Affairs and Communications for the American division of this big shot car brand. She says that she's using Twitter for Honda as "another communications tool, one that allows for a direct connection to engage and respond in a way that I cannot otherwise."

Stats: 985 following/936 followers

On how she manages the account: "Twitter is a small part of my job, so I try to respond when I can, as soon as I can. I don't automate responses or auto follow."

Why her tweets are unique: “I’m in a unique position to talk about all of Honda, not just one product line or area- from new cars, to ASIMO robot to Rose Parade, lots!”

Two awesome replies: “@kickingtires said I was a rockstar for getting to work w/ ASIMO-have to love that! @jimmyfallon about seeing ASIMO in person-still hoping!”

Travel

This is a big category and it’s growing every day. We’ve include airlines, hotels, a cruise ship, and even a rental car service under the travel umbrella. We admire these big brands for being bold on Twitter, and we hope that their ground-breaking efforts lead to better service for all of us who travel and know just how stressful it can be.

Jet Blue

Twitter Name: JetBlue

Jet Blue Official Tweeter: Meet Morgan Johnston, manager of corporate communications with Jet Blue. Morgan’s high flying Twitter philosophy is to tweet as the community sees fit saying, “our role on Twitter is driven by the requests of our followers. Twitter is a great way to talk to many, but even better for listening.”

Stats: 10,771 following/10,076 followers

So why is JetBlue tweeting?: “Our goal would be to make ourselves available, help whenever possible, and to show that our brand is built by real people who care about our customers.”

Most interesting Twitter discussion: “Probably being asked what our policy was on furries following an exchange http://is.gd/f1k8.” [I’m not sure what furries are, but I think it’s a Comic Con thing, and vaguely reminds me of something I saw on Entourage.]

On plans to promote the account to passengers: “Short answer: no, we want to grow naturally with the Twitter audience, long answer: We know we’re guests of the Twitter community. Inviting our own guests who might not understand how Twitter works, and only see it as a tool to talk to us is a bit presumptuous.”

A follow-up to the above question: “There are some rules and practices on Twitter that aren’t immediately obvious to new users. (following, DMs, replys) It’s hard to help when people sign up and simply say, ‘hey, when’s my flight?’ assuming we see an unaddressed tweet.”

Southwest Airlines

Twitter Name: SouthwestAir

Southwest Airlines Official Tweeter: Meet Christi Day, the emerging social media specialist at Southwest Airlines, and the gal behind the famously low fair offering and customer-friendly twittering airline. According to Christi, Southwest, an early Twitter adopter, "had been blogging for more than a year when we discovered and joined Twitter in July 2007. We were intrigued by its possibilities."

Stats: 6,085 following/8,287 followers

On 2009 promotional opportunities via Twitter: "We will do announcements on Twitter from events... posting pics/vids. And whatever else unfolds, we're open to ideas :)" [Twitterers take note - I think she's hinting that they want good ideas from you]

On lessons learned: "Be honest, be real, be quick, be FUN"

When asked about internal awareness re:Twitter: "Hard to say for sure, but we promote our activity internally and encourage Employee participation."

Luxor Las Vegas

Twitter Name: LuxorLV

Official Tweeter: If you're ever in Vegas make sure to stop by the Luxor and introduce yourself to Brandie, their interactive marketing manager. She's tweeting a pyramid full of Twitter-size nuggets including customer recommendations to help guests make the most of their stay, and offering special Twitter deals.

Stats: 1,786 following/1,422 followers

On how they're promoting the account to guests: " Twitter, fb & blog are on every pg of our website as well as 2 dedicated pages w/where we are throughout the social."

Why they're tweeting: "Customer insights, customer service & educating guests about the new Luxor and all our new offerings and/or special promotions."

Twitter-only giveaways: “We’ve done exclusive promotions & I’ve given tickets to special events (I.e. Fantasy Calendar release party, CRISS ANGEL Believe gala party.”

Marriott International Hotels and Resorts

Twitter Name: MarriottIntl

Official Tweeter: John Wolf is the senior director of public relations and your Twitter concierge on behalf of the Marriott hotel chain. He says that the Twitter account was a natural extension from the Chairman’s blog, started in 2007. John does admit that he “had been following the emergence of Twitter and at first wasn’t convinced how it would support our strategic communications, until I decided to test it.” And from the looks of it, the Marriott has an extended stay planned for Twitter.

Stats: 1,017 following/1,441 followers

On attracting an audience organically: “If we have something compelling to say, people will find us. With that said, inclusion in regular mailings to Marriott Rewards members is one publicity tool we have used to get the word out.”

Regarding senior staff’s awareness of the account: “They’ve become much more familiar with it over the past few months. It was a stealth launch. Now I am kidded that I can’t get through a conversation about communications without mentioning Twitter.”

Twitter’s response after Islamabad hotel was attacked: “We used Twitter to send out updates because it was the big news story. (Something we would do again in the future but hopefully won’t ever have to.) The replies and direct messages of sympathy from followers and non-followers from around the world were truly uplifting and reminded me just how positive a force social media can be.”

Carnival Cruise Lines

Twitter Name: CarnivalCruise

Official Tweeter: Say bon voyage to Carnival Cruise Lines Twitter captain, Stephanie Leavitt, the gal

manning the Twitter seas and keeping things afloat at CarnivalConnections.com. She says that "Carnival uses twitter to connect with online guests. We try to provide quick and helpful updates on platforms that people are comfortable with (i.e. on their terms). "

Stats: 97 following/691 followers

On how they promote their Twitter account: "...it's not in your face. Our online guests visiting carnival.com, our Facebook page or one of our blogs find links to the acct. We let word of mouth do the rest."

Most unique reply received: ""You took my cruise shirts! Give back my shirt you son of a b**tch!" From Frank_Costanza about #festivus. We did follow up. His t-shirt is in the mail "

On '09 goals: "We're expanding our efforts by bringing new "features" in 09, but you'll have to follow us to find out the answer."

Hertz

Twitter Name: ConnectByHertz

Official Tweeter: New kid on the Twitter block, Vish Malige is the director of internal audit, and he's tweeting on behalf of the company to create more community and awareness around their car rental service and sharing club, Connect. From the looks of the account, Hertz is genuinely interested in being a smart brand on Twitter (that's why they made our list), but they've still got a lot to learn. For example, Vish, the who guy who tweets, wasn't able to respond to our questions, so you'll be hearing from Paula Rivera from their PR department.

Stats: 87 following/82 followers

What is the Connect car sharing club?: "...it's an environmentally-friendly, economical alternative to car ownership that can save members hundreds of dollars a month in car ownership costs. When using Connect by Hertz, everything is included in the hourly fee: gas, maintenance, insurance, and parking."

About offering promotions via Twitter: "The free promotion has been going well and we have had many inquiries about it and, more importantly, have had numerous people join from twitter."

On senior staff's awareness around Twitter: "Hertz's senior staff is familiar with Twitter and supportive of our using this outlet as a real time way to develop relationships and build dialogue with our customers."

Sports Teams

Yep, some of the most recognizable and historic sports teams are tweeting. Not all of them get it right, but these four certainly know how, when, and why to tweet. Each of the guys behind these fantastic four accounts was a joy to converse with even though I'm pretty sure I came off as a crazy twittering sports fan girl. You'll have to keep reading to find out why.

Chicago Bulls

Twitter Name: chicagobulls

Chicago Bulls Official Tweeter: Tweet a friendly fan hello to Jeremy Thum, director of interactive marketing. He really gets the medium and says that they're hoping to "increase interaction w/ fans in a new way, mainly hope to create a mechanism for 2-way conversation instead of just 1-way marketing from us."

Stats: 314 following/429 followers

On whether or not the players tweet: "I'll say not 'yet' (they may be aware of twitter overall, but I don't think any of them are using it like say @the_real_shaq)."

What he loves: "I love it when fans @ reply with game observations and complaints about the reffing during games (most of which are spot-on)."

A reply that's stuck with him: "How bout this: You think they may want to stop shooting from behind the arc, if you are 1 of 10? How difficult could it be to drive the ball?"

Detroit Pistons

Twitter Name: DETPistons

Detroit Pistons Official Tweeters: In Twitter-speak, the account is managed by @Tomshea and @dougwernert. They work for Weber Shandwick, the Piston's agency, and are trying to boost fan engagement with the team. They're using Twitter as a "part of a larger social media strategy- includes a social network (PostingUp), team blogs, video, etc. It's all about dialogue."

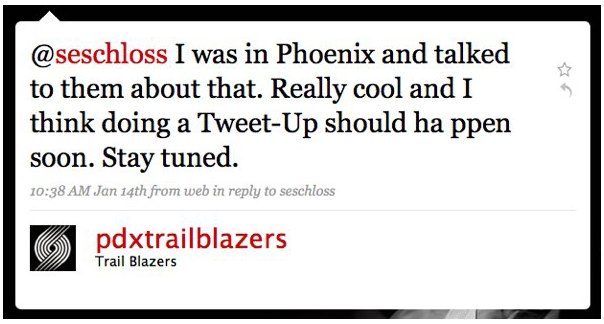
Stats: 449 following/454 followers

Tweets they see alot of: “Fans like to vent about the team’s performance and their favorite players, so we get comments on that. We also ask for feedback on topics.”

On whether team members and coaching staff know about Twitter: “Yes, and we’re working on making them a larger part of the strategy. @The_Real_Shaq has made an impression and we’re hoping others follow.”

Their goals for 2009: “We’re working on a social media meet up with Posting Up (the fan community) and Twitter fans and guest tweets from players, coaches, etc. We’ll keep you posted.”

Portland Trail Blazers



Twitter Name: pdxtrailblazers

Portland Trail Blazers Official Tweeter: Dan, also known as @danstwitter, is the director of interactive marketing and media for the trail blazing team. He says that they primarily want to “engage in conversation w/ fans & non-fans. (this can lead into pushing people to and from your site + get the pulse of your universe).” He’s also actively trying to build up the Twitter operation in 2009, and “working on Tweeting game-time info, from practice, and pix behind the scenes.”

Stats: 814 following/907 followers

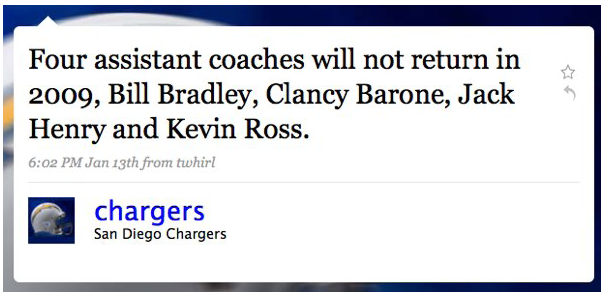
The questions he gets asked the most: “1) Where can you buy tix? (when we’re sold out), 2) Is Greg Oden coming back? (that’s when he was out last year). 3) How can I work there?

Replies he loves: “From @Jukent Blazers beating Boston w/out B-Roy. Wow. That win shut my mouth on any bad talk of what we could or couldnt do. Go Blazers!”

Right before I was about to ask for a date with a player: “People asking for dates from BlazerDancers. No joke. You’re thinking… really? Did you really just ask me that? Really… are we fling.com?”

On using other social media properties to get fans closer to the game: “We did some stuff with ustream.tv for live video chats (90k views). QIK needs to have an official iPhone app. I won’t jailbreak mine.”

San Diego Chargers



Twitter Name: chargers

Official Tweeter: Meet Joel Price (@joelprice), my personal favorite sports tweeting man (I'm a HUGE Chargers fan and he reads Mashable, which totally rocks). He works as the new media manager ("and part-time water boy") and tweets about the good, the bad, and even the ugly when it comes to team-related matters. He says they're using Twitter primarily to, "quickly communicate with the fan base," and he was kind enough to respond to my inquires immediately following the rough loss in Pittsburgh.

Stats: 482 following/775 followers

On Twitter awareness in the organization: "Some players know about it, never talked with the coaching staff about it."

On whether the players are tweeting: "No, LT and Rivers have fake accounts, just some fan, I guess. every athlete should do twitter just look at the success of @lancearmstrong"

Parting words: "Just about to take off from Pittsburgh. "

Entertainment

Twitter is a great place for entertainment venues, properties, and providers to create a presence. We chat about cable, internet, TV, movies, and all things entertainment-related while we tweet, so it only makes sense that these brands start talking with us (instead of just at us).

92Y

Twitter Name: 92Y and 92YTribeca

92Y Official Tweeter: Meet Amanda ReCupido, associate publicist, and twitterer behind the 92YTribeca account. Her cohort Andrew Krucoff, director of web content, tweets uptown for the 92Y version.

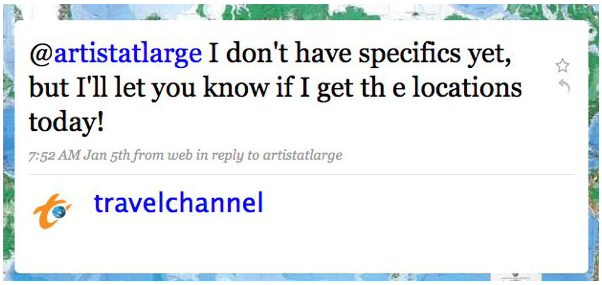
They're both using Twitter on behalf of the arts, educational, and entertainment venues because they "wanted to be where the conversation was happening, and tap into the immediacy of Twitter."

Why you should follow them: "Follow for breaking 92Y and 92YTribeca news: updated event info, added guests, live-Tweets of events, trivia, behind the scenes & more!"

On Twitter giveaways: "Yes, we have and plan to offer special promotions and ticket giveaways to events via Twitter."

A great Twitter reply: "A fan from WV asked us to say hi to Janeane Garofalo for them; someone else admitted to listening to the Labyrinth soundtrack on the subway."

The Travel Channel



Twitter Name: travelchannel

Official Tweeter: Take a Twitter trip with Pete Dorogoff as your tour guide. Pete works in Digital Marketing for the cable television channel and thinks that "Tweeting is a great way for us to connect fans directly with our talent. It allows us to reach our most loyal followers in a personal way."

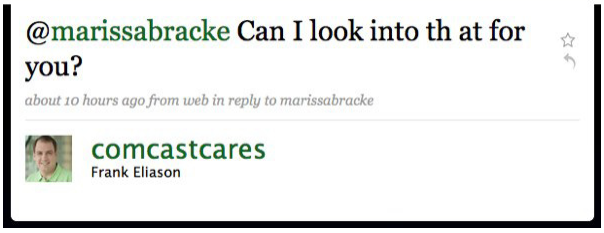
Stats: 819 following/1,213 followers

On whether they'll talk about Twitter on air: "We don't currently promote Twitter on-air; however, some of our most popular show hosts are tweeting from the field."

An interesting show idea pitched via Twitter: "Oh, we've heard it all! One of the most interesting tweets we received was someone suggesting Andrew do a Bizarre Foods episode in Prison."

What Pete finds challenging about the medium: "There's a balance in what is valuable information to our audience. We strive for connection & engagement – without overloading anyone."

Comcast



Twitter Name: comcastcares

Comcast Official Tweeter: Meet customer service and Twitter celebrity, Frank Eliason, the man who is single-handedly changing the way we think about cable service providers. His twittering ways have garnered attention from all media, new and old, including a feature story in the New York Times. We exchanged more than a few DMs about Comcast and Twitter, and it's clear that Frank is passionate about his work on the service.

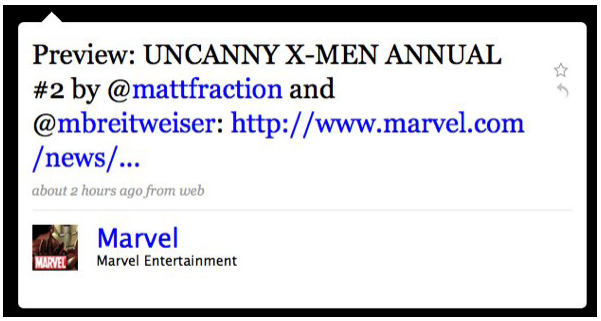
Stats: 7,612 following/7,378 followers

Expanded operations to manage the load: "We have multiple users on Twitter so we could easily have them log in at the same time. They are @comcastbill @comcastgeorge and others."

On Comcast HQ's awareness around Twitter: "This may require a few tweets. I would imagine most of the organization is aware of our activities in social media. Twitter is just a part," and, "This has 2 benefits. First it is meeting Customers where they are. It is a natural progression of Customer Service," and, "2nd – As we strive to improve the Customer experience, feedback in social media is the story in the Customer's words. This is powerful," and, "We share feedback via a newsletter to many leaders in the organization each and every day."

Great customer service story: "@hardaway is one of those. She had trouble with her Airport Extreme & internet…Tweets moved to phone as we worked to figure out what was going on. We talked about other stuff and became true friends.."

Marvel Entertainment



Twitter Name: Marvel

Marvel Entertainment Official Tweeter: Meet Ryan Penagos, editor at Marvel.com and all around awesome guy who's spreading the Marvel love to comic book lovers everywhere. According to Ryan, the Twitter account was born out of his own Twittering hobby (he tweets as agent_m); "I'd been Tweeting for a while and thought it was the perfect way to interact with our fans on a more formal level. All Marvel, all the time."

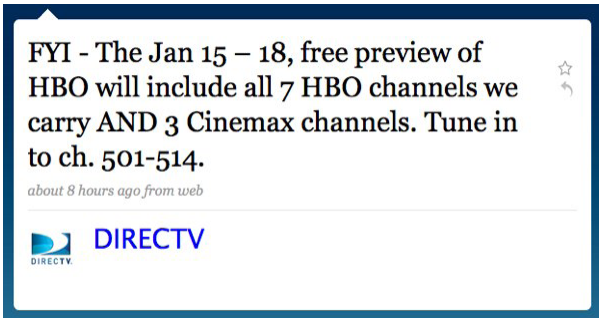
Stats: 115 following/4,435 followers

How Twitter is affecting the day to day: "Well, it's an important part of our day to day activities for Marvel.com and our staff & creators have gained more exposure."

What fans think of Marvel on Twitter: "They love it! We've always been a company with a great relationship to fans, but now there's more of a presence for them to interact with."

Favorite replies: "Oy, that's tough! We get a ton of replies and the best are usually when we ask people what they're doing, eating or reading. Fun stuff."

DIRECTV



Twitter Name: DIRECTV

DIRECTV Official Tweeter: Meet Charles Miller, director of inbound e-mail operations and social media strategy. Charles is tweeting up a storm, getting the word out, and really connecting with customers online. He says that DIRECTV is using Twitter "primarily to listen but also engage. Twitter is unique for its real-time understanding of your challenges and fans. Very concise and real." Looking to connect with him personally? He also tweets as chasmiller.

Stats: 311 following/787 followers

Great quote: "I am used to keeping it to 140 or less "

Why Twitter matters: "You can forget that even with all these great features that have been around for awhile, it can still be new, fun and overwhelming to some"

Funniest Reply: "What freaks me out most is the DVR! I have to go flip laundry-pause; kids screaming & I can't hear-pause; gotta p**-pause."

PopCap

Twitter Name: popcap_games

PopCap Official Tweeter: Meet Xuyen Nguyen who works as their community manager and manages social media marketing efforts. The popular game company, that produces online titles like Bejewled 2 (a personal favorite), is using Twitter "to actively engage with customers in the casual & accessible way that only social networks can do."

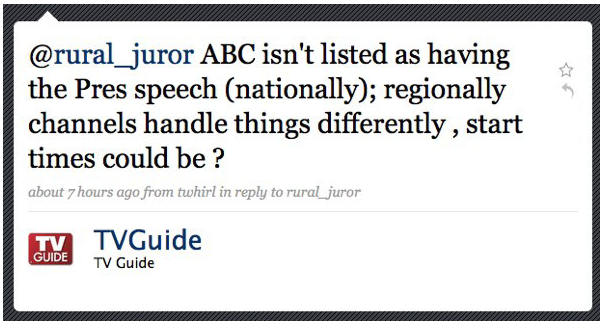
Stats: 482 following/569 followers

What they've learned from Twitter: "How to communicate in 140 characters or less! i.e. lose the business lingo & communicate casually & show we're real people. We're also beginning to appreciate just how huge and powerful the blogosphere is!"

Most unique reply: “Was thinking of v-day promos & asked everyone what they usually did on vday. Favorite reply: grumble about how much we hate the jewelry commercials”

On whether Twitter gets overwhelming: “At first, because there are so many tweets you feel like you have to answer everybody! Then you realize that that’s the nature of twitter…”

TV Guide



Twitter Name: TVGuide

TV Guide Official Tweeter: Meet Paul Greenberg, executive vice president & general manager of TV Guide Online. Not only is this big wig tweeting, but he’s using Twitter in one of the most brand appropriate ways I have ever seen. If I give Paul a little extra love it’s because even in the midst of the Golden Globes, he was incredibly responsive to my pleads for an interview and even offered to chat with me over the phone. The totally fab and genius Twitterer updates the account with a smattering of pop culture news, TV related buzz, celebrity spottings, and frequent replies to fans and followers. Go Paul!

Stats: 1391 following/1823 followers

On why TV Guide tweets: “We like to connect with users and keep them updated wherever they are, which is how we’ve quadrupled to 15mm uniques in 2 years.”

Great replies (he couldn’t pick just one): “Did I ever tell you my idea for a Burn Notice drinking game? Every time they eat yogurt it is a drinking moment. What do you think?” or, “I’ll defend every shot of Saving Private Ryan, even the framing device. Shakespeare in Love is only good for Gwyneth’s boobs,” and finally, “Bloodsuckers are the new black. Not sure what that says about the American psyche.”

On whether it gets to be too much: “No. We’re used to the pace of breaking news, and Twitter is a perfect vehicle for us.”

Finance

What are companies like Wachovia, H&R Block, and Intuit doing on Twitter? You wouldn’t think they would be able to find much of an audience, after all who wants to be reminded that taxes are due while browsing Twitter? These three businesses, however, are working hard to make themselves relevant and accessible to customers and naysayers alike.

Wachovia

Twitter Name: Wachovia

Wachovia Official Tweeter: Be nice to Matthew Wadley, who works in corporate communications, and who is brave enough to really put himself and the brand out there in spite of our current economic situation. He's tweeting because "Wachovia wanted to test the social networking waters in a way that allowed us to listen and engage with our customers."

Stats: 201 following/1,082 followers

Questions that are hard to answer via Twitter: "Account-specific questions tend to be challenging because there's only so much that we can help them with through a tweet."

On the internal and external response to the account: "Extremely positive but somewhat surprised to see a traditional company engaged in an emerging social community."

On great replies: "Nothing specific comes to mind… probably all the welcoming tweets we got when our '@Wachovia' domain went 'live.'"

H&R Block

Twitter Name: HRBlock

H&R Block Official Tweeter: Meet Paula Drum, the VP of marketing who was kind enough to respond to our questions in the midst of their National Tax Day event. According to her, things are going great for H&R Block on Twitter, which they use "to share valuable information, listen to what people are saying, provide moral support & solve problems." Paula's also on Twitter as pauladrum.

Stats: 1309 following/1064 followers

Most rewarding and challenging aspects of using Twitter: "Most rewarding: interacting with consumers 1:1. Love that connection – it's great to help. Challenge: respond quickly in a 24/7 environment."

Sage Advice: “Brands that want to participate in Twitter need to be committed & be part of the community. This is not advertising.”

Best Reply Ever: “I never thought I would be a @hrblock groupie.”

Intuit

Twitter Name: Intuit

Official Tweeter: Scott Wilder is Intuit’s general manager for online communities. He, along with the rest of the Intuit team (@1practicalgal), wants to “meet our customers’ needs wherever they are using their preferred communication tools.” Which means that you can expect him to be hanging around the Twitter water cooler, happy to listen and ready to help if need be.

Stats: 2,000 following/1,154 followers

Regarding awareness around Twitter: “Senior level staff is very familiar with Twitter — and like the rest of the company, uses Twitter as a listening outpost and as a way to inform customers.”

The pros and cons of Twitter: “Most rewarding: Answering Small Business questions — so they can manage their company better. Most challenging: Answering sometimes a question in 140 characters or less.”

Retail

You’re bound to recognize a few these prominent brands making waves in the Twitter ocean. Some have been around the block, and others are just ramping up their Twitter operations. Either way it’s nice to know they’re out there fielding our questions, offering us special discounts, and responding to the inevitable bad customer service experiences we tweet about.

Best Buy

Twitter Name: BestBuyRemix

Best Buy Official Tweeter: They've got a few at the helm, but Keith Burtis is the guy behind the remix account and he works as Best Buy's community manager for Remix (he's focused on technology, they've got others focused on the retail side of things), and he's working with a team on Best Buy's Open API project. If you haven't heard, Best Buy is letting developers access their data set to create widgets and mobile applications for a better consumer experience. He says all Best Buy twitterers use the site "to help facilitate communication, collaboration and community among our user base. Also to be human and be available."

Stats: 552 following/404 followers

On their cool Twitter bot: "We have a tool that has been built on the Remix API that allows anyone on twitter to look-up items in the Best Buy Product catalog and check it's availability and nearest location. Our twitter bot, responds in an @ Message back to the person with the question."

Why Twitter is challenging: "There is an expectation of immediacy around twitter. Being as timely as people would like with information can be a challenge."

The Home Depot

Twitter Name: TheHomeDepot

The Home Depot Official Tweeter: Meet Sarah Molinari, Home Depot's corporate communications manager and queen of proactive customer service via Twitter. Sarah's all over Twitter these days, but she took a short breather to talk to me about the company's Twitter account and why she's hitting the Twitter streets. Sarah believes "Twitter provides another way for our customers to reach the company. I offer help and answer questions about our stores and our business."

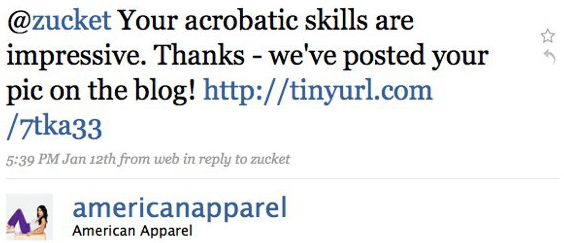
Stats: 2,371 following/2,745 followers

When asked to pick a unique tweet: "It's hard to pick one. Especially when so many of the conversations I have on Twitter end up being about toilets and such!"

On senior staff and their awareness of Twitter: "They are aware and supportive of its continued use to benefit our customers."

What's she's learning via Twitter: "It's about sharing relevant info and being available when customers need us. That could be when a hurricane is bearing down or when someone's water heater breaks."

American Apparel



Twitter Name: americanapparel

American Apparel Official Tweeter: Meet Lisa Kim, website manager for the über hip clothing manufacturer. Not only is she using the account to reach out to dissatisfied customers, but she's also crowdsourcing for ways to improve, and including pics from customers on the official American Apparel blog.

Stats: 1,600 following/1,633 followers

Why American Apparel tweets: "We don't have an official goal but we'd like to give our customers a way to get in touch w/ us and give us feedback and ideas for products."

How they use Twitter for customer service: "We saw a tweet from someone who received less than stellar customer service at a store in Canada & we got in touch with them to sort it out."

Rubbermaid

Twitter Name: rubbermaid

Rubbermaid Official Tweeter: Meet Jim Deitzel the brand's e-marketing manager. His title might be a little old-fashioned, but his Twitter usage is totally in style. Jim tweets with flair, engaging with rubbermaid users and organizers, and even giving away nice little treats from time to time. Don't be fooled by the low follower count; Rubbermaid is a brand that really gets it.

Stats: 881 following/882 followers

Why he tweets: "I wanted to reach out to the professional organizer community and it turns out many were using Twitter. It was a great way to communicate."

What he's learned: "I've learned to not rely on spell check anymore And that whatever I tweet can & could be held against me "

Strangest retweet: "Recently someone retweeted every reply I made to them. I thought that to be rather odd."

Whole Foods

Twitter Name: wholefoods

Whole Foods Official Tweeter: Meet Marla Erwin, interactive art director with Whole Foods. She tweets on general food and environmental topics. They've also got Winnie Hsia behind the scenes handling Twitter inquiries and posting links to the Whole Foods blog. They think that, "Twitter has been a great tool for helping answer customers' questions and also for hearing what people have to say about Whole Foods in general."

Stats: 17,613 following/16,357 followers

On the organization's awareness around Twitter: "The Integrated Media, Marketing and IT teams have quite a few members on Twitter, and the enthusiasm for @wholefoods is high. In the company at large we are shifting to a broader awareness of our online presence, including getting more of our local stores on Twitter in the near future."

On the awesome response from followers: "We ran a Tweet of the Day contest for a while to feature some of the best comments we received, and it was surprisingly hard to choose just one per day. We did get a marriage proposal via Twitter — that was pretty special!" [@flowerdust tweeted, "I heart you Whole Foods. Will you marry me?"]

What they're learning from Twitter: "...A lot about the importance of localized information. Whole Foods is a very decentralized...Because of this we will be working to get more local information out to people via accounts tailored to individual stores or cities, such as @WholeFoodsLA."

Zappos.com

Twitter Name: Zappos

Zappos Official Tweeter: CEO Tony Hsieh needs no introductions. His Twitter celebrity has been earned through diligently building up a reputation of stellar customer service and innovative web outreach efforts. You'd think that a guy following 36,893 fellow tweeters wouldn't have time to respond to each and every one, but Tony's famous for his Twitter replies and even took a few minutes while at CES to

respond to our questions.

Stats: 36,893 following/32,562 followers

The most challenging thing about Twitter: “Trying to keep track of long conversations over several days. I normally ask people to email me instead if there’s a lot of back and forth.”

On whether or not he takes Twitter breaks: “If I’m busy (such as being in back-to-back meetings at Zappos) or in an area with no cell reception, then I take a forced twitter break.”

On the oddest replies he gets: “I have no idea who is behind @meanbot, but I get funny/random messages from that account every once in awhile – http://bit.ly/zmeanbot”

Food and Beverage

What do you do when you go to Starbucks and the barista is rude, or your experience downright sucked? You could fill out a comment card, but if you’re like me you’re more likely to walk away angry, soured on the brand behind your daily fix. In today’s world, however, food and beverage brands are starting to turn to Twitter for customer insight, and to right their wrongs real-time. The strategy seems to be working.

Starbucks

Twitter Name: Starbucks

Starbucks Official Tweeter: Get to know Brad Nelson, a guy that loathes DMs but lives for replies. Just take one look at the follower count if you still need proof that brands should be on Twitter. And Starbucks isn’t just any brand on Twitter, with Brad at the helm, they’re doing everything right. A former barista, Brad is now manning the Twitter ship and he’s responding to DMs, replying to mentions of Starbucks, trying to help customers find resolutions to their problems, and putting out fires left and right. If you ask me, Howard Schultz should buy this a guy a drink — or better yet — lattes for life.

Stats: 31,616 following/30,270 followers

Feelings on Twitter: “I love the 140 character limit for tweets … DM’s feel so restricting…. Just my own neurosis, perhaps.”

How he manages it all: “Tweetdeck. It’s great. Everything you need to see at once: DM’s, Replies, Searches, and Trending topics. Also, spending time on it. The more you keep up, the more manageable it is.”

On the most asked questions: “We get a lot of questions about Starbucks Cards. Some of that might come from our Card website that is currently being updated. Also, general questions about needs in our stores.”

Burger King

Twitter Name: theBKlounge

Burger King’s Official Tweeter: The King. A sensitive burger aficionado and breaker of whopper virgins the world round, had this to say when I dared to question his identity: “You must understand that you cannot get intimate immediately. Ask your other questions first and we’ll see if you can have it your way.”

Stats: 858 following/780 followers

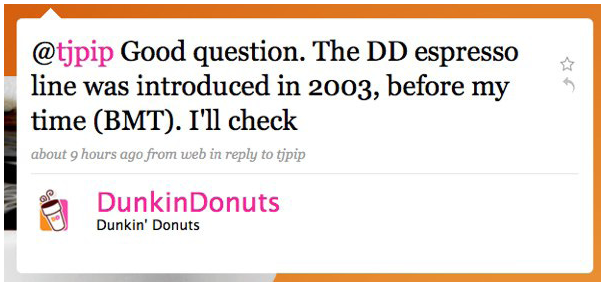
A more serious explanation of the King tweets: “In all honesty theBKlounge is a branding experiment about how this new hot communications tool, Twitter, works with brands.”

On how the King manages the Twitter load: “You at mashable should be aware of Twitter Search and Tweetdeck. Just plug in a few search queries “burger king” “thebklounge” and Im set.”

A look into BK’s Twitter crystal ball: “Thought you’d want to know that I am planning to resign from theBKlounge soon.”

Editor’s Note (1/28): @theBKlounge has been identified as a hoax and a prime example of brandjacking. More details are available here.

Dunkin’ Donuts



Twitter Name: DunkinDonuts

Dunkin’ Donuts Official Tweeter: Raise your cup o’ Joe to David, a.k.a “Dunkin’ Dave,” the dude who works in corporate communications and who “tweets on behalf of the DD mothership.”

Stats: 4,421 following/4,291 followers

What he's trying to do on Twitter: "Dunkin' Donuts is a brand that places a huge premium on listening to our customers. In addition to engaging directly with our customers through social networks like Twitter, it's also invaluable for us to be able to get their opinions and feedback in real time and in very authentic ways."

On the volume of replies they get: "We have been pleasantly pleased with the response volume we've received — there's clearly enthusiasm for the brand on Twitter. It's been exciting to see the conversation with our customers take off."

Popeyes Chicken

Twitter Name: PopeyesChicken

Popeyes Chicken Official Tweeter: This remains a mystery. I communicated back and forth with Alicia Thompson, who is VP of communications and PR, and she said, "the author of the twitter character is too chicken to share his real identity." Poor chicken. The chicken did share, however, that he/she sees Twitter, "as a way to stay abreast of what our consumers are up to, and to get a leg up on the competition."

Stats: 835 following/876 followers

On plans for 2009: "We want to continue to engage our poultry number of followers while promoting the reduction of pork spending."

The Twitter challenge: "Some days are tough to come up with witty tweets, but we tend to pullet off."

Questionable taste in chicken: "Came in during one of the presidential debates: "Is Popeyes promoting white meat or dark meat this November?" Ouch, couldn't retweet that one."

Tasti D-Lite

Twitter Name: tastidlite

Tasti D-Lite Official Tweeter: Meet the Twittering king of the tasty and low-cal New York treat shop, BJ Emerson, who also finds time to moonlight as the director of information technology for the chain. BJ is so passionate about the brand using Twitter that he even sent me a follow up email with even more goodie-filled details like the fact that they spent a long time observing Twitter before they decided to make the leap and participate.

Their customers are even more passionate about the brand, and have been creating product-focused fan groups and blogs for years. With the Twitter account, Emerson hopes to "engage customers on their terms, be relevant and have fun."

Stats: 158 following/105 followers

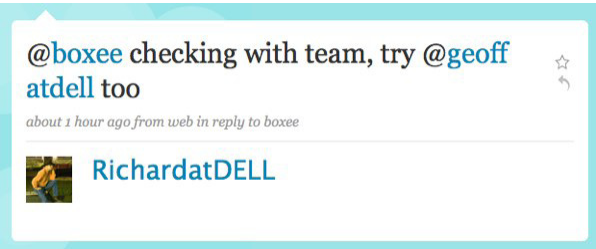
On Twitter promotions: "We started by sending BOGO coupons to twitterers near specific stores. Great response."

Two tasty replies: "@tastidlite You certainly are the yummiest Twitterer," and, "@tastidlite Your flavor alerts just might change my life."

More Big Brands

We found a smattering of other brands who are getting the twittering for business thing right. Don't be surprised to learn that most of these big-time players have multiple people tweeting on behalf of their brand, and even share Twitter observations and lessons in their boardrooms with the big wigs.

Dell



Twitter Name: RichardatDELL

Dell Official Tweeter: Meet Richard Binhammer, a man who truly embraces the succinctness of the Twitter format and who tweets on behalf of Dell sans an official title. Richard is quick to respond, straight to the point, and a great advocate for Dell and their other twitterers. When asked to describe his role with Dell, Richard explained that he has "...no title. for the past two years I have been focused on listening, learning and engaging with blogs and others in social media."

Stats: 3,150 following/3,016 followers

On why Dell tweets: "Which Dell account...there are lots of them Content subscriptions, deals and offers and then people connecting. All with one purpose: so people can connect with Dell in ways they want/meaningful for them.

On the best DMs: “Best dms are always the ones looking for help figuring out what’s the best new Dell system for someone or people who share links about their Dell pics etc.”

Concerning senior staff’s awareness of Twitter: “Yes the most senior people are well aware of the various accounts and our active work on Twitter from all perspectives.”

EMC

Twitter Name: emccorp

Official Tweeter: You might already know Dan Schawbel, who guest writes for Mashable from time to time, but what you probably didn’t know is that Dan’s the man running EMC’s Twitter account. We felt that Dan’s association with Mashable in no way changes what he’s try to accomplish on behalf of EMC, a company he’s been with since July of 2006. Their following may be small, but Dan has a clear purpose for EMC’s tweets, which includes, “News distribution, hashtagging events (e.g. #emcworld), promoting job openings, and engaging stakeholders (where appropriate).”

Stats: 151 following/460 followers

Why EMC tweets: “As Twitter adoption rose among customers, employees, and partners, we wanted to engage them, keep them up to date, and promote our brand.”

On the CEO’s familiarity with Twitter: “EMC has become more familiar with Twitter at all levels of the organization. Joe Tucci (our CEO) presented on it at EMC World 2008.”

Their most unique reply: “cre8tn @EMCWorld converted in house bloggers!! They pulled from resources ...ohhh yaaaa...doin the happ-ay dance. thanks again @jowyang.”

Kodak

Twitter Name: kodakCB

Official Tweeter: Say cheese! Jennifer Cisney is Kodak's chief blogger and on top of twittering, she also manages the corporate blog. From her super smiley headshot on Twitter, to her upbeat responses to my questions, everything about Jennifer gives me Kodak-happy gooesebumps, which makes her the perfect face for a brand trying to catch up to competitors.

Jennifer's got the social media socialite thing down, and I actually envy her job which is "much more than just blogs. We also have accounts at Facebook, YouTube, Flickr, Delicious and Twitter. I add content to all of these and I monitor the conversations happening there. You can see all our social media activity at http://www.kodak.com/go/followus."

Stats: 1,582 following/1,613 followers

Why she tweets for Kodak: "I was already tweeting on my personal Twitter account"

Using Twitter for customer service by Ben Parr

Customer service can evoke some serious misgivings or negative emotions. Although customer support is designed to help the consumer, the pain of waiting for a phone representative and the impersonal emails can cause more damage than good for a brand. People are turned off by the term and companies have begun to use different terminology to describe their efforts.

This is not how customer service has to be. With the connectivity made possible by social media, companies have found a new way to engage their customers, solve their problems, and build goodwill for their brands: Twitter. Understanding how Twitter can transform customer relations for the better can be substantial for reducing costs and improving brand image.

Step 1. Understand why Twitter is an ideal customer service platform

Before calling the company executives into a meeting and telling them we must use Twitter, you need to understand just why Twitter and customer service is a match made in heaven. Let's think about some of the major tenants of good customer service and how they relate to Twitter:

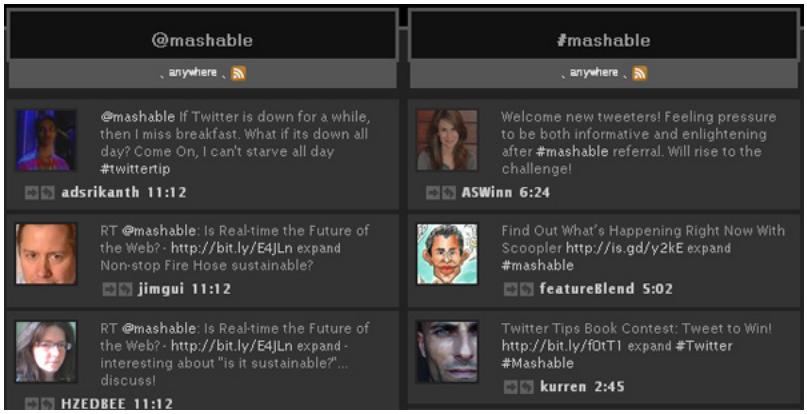
Problem resolution: The main goal of customer service is to help someone resolve their issues. While phone conversations can help solve problems, wait times do not. Twitter is a lightning-fast platform that can help sift through and solve problems quickly. If it's a small issue, a single tweet may be enough. For a more complex problem, the brand can initiate a deeper conversation with the customer.

Positive brand image: Great customer service gets talked about, and this can lead to more sales and more attention. Twitter is one of the most viral platforms around, which can make one happy customer into an international story.

Staff involvement: If the team does not buy into the notion of helping the customer, they are going to provide sub-par assistance. Twitter is not only a more interesting platform than phone or email, but gives staff a better picture of their impact on others.

Cost reduction: Customer service via Twitter often takes less time and a lot less money than a dedicated call center. With Twitter, it's necessary to be short and to the point, which reduces the time needed to solve each problem.

Step 2. Track the ENTIRE conversation around your brand



Once you understand how Twitter can play a role in customer service, the next step should center around conversation tracking. What are people already saying about your brand? Have people misinterpreted your message? What about the good things they say about your new feature? Track ALL the possible keywords that are related to your brand, like the names of your key features or any nickname your company may have. Here are two tools we recommend:

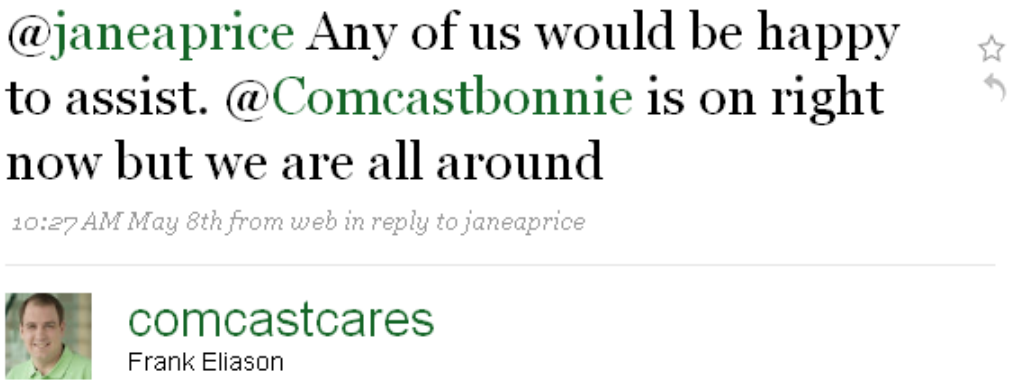
Monitter: Monitter makes it simple to track multiple keywords on one page using columns. Create a new column for each new keyword or keyword variation you want to track. Monitter will update in real-time whenever those words are mentioned on Twitter.

Tweetbeep: If your brand isn't getting dozens of mentions per hour, or if you want to be sure you're catching everything, Tweetbeep will check Twitter for you and send you emails with all of the mentions of your brand, as well as links so you can easily save tweets or write a response.

Step 3. Make customers aware of your presence

Watching a conversation gives you a good idea of your brand's reputation and standing in social media and elsewhere, but it's a passive approach. Great customer service is active. To get started, make your Twitter presence known. Ask users to follow you on Twitter, prominently place a button on your website, and advertise that you're trying to engage with your customers in problem resolution via social media. Customer service on Twitter won't work if nobody knows where to find you.

Step 4. Respond quickly and transparently



The key to great customer service is the speed and quality of your response. When you find someone complaining about an issue, @reply them asking if you can help. Don't take an arrogant tone and don't tell them they screwed up. Ask them if they'd like you to intervene and provide them the information they need.

If a problem is sensitive, the customer is extraordinarily upset, or you want to get in contact with a customer fast, either try to direct message them or give them a fast way to contact you, like a special email address or even a personal phone number. Let them know you're there to help and go with them step-by-step.

@replies work best because there are no restrictions on who you can reply to and it provides a public and transparent face to your customer service. Others can see what you're doing, which can help reassure customers or even solve problems they were going to ask you about, saving you additional time.

Step 5. Be engaged in the conversations

Twitter is a conversational platform, and people like to talk to people, so take time to chat as well. Twitter is an opportunity to build an image and identity for the brand, so talking with customers about why you like the brand so much, what cool things the company has done, or retweeting a success story gives people many reasons to follow what you say.

So remember, even if you're using a software like Salesforce's Service Cloud to manage Twitter customer service, it needs to be supplemented with personal conversations.

Step 6. Be authentic

Most of all, when you're conducting customer service and customer relationship management, you need to be forthcoming. It's easier than ever for your customers to research whether or not you're telling the truth. And if you aren't, they will punish you by mobilizing and making their anger heard. I can give you plenty of examples where this was the case.

Despite this warning, the benefits to your brand and your customers by using Twitter as a customer service platform are immense. Comcast, Dell, Southwest Airlines, Ford, Starbucks, and many more have been successful in promoting a positive brand image and solving customer problems with less cost than phone or email service. Twitter and social media are helping redefine how customer service is done.

The media maker's guide to Twitter

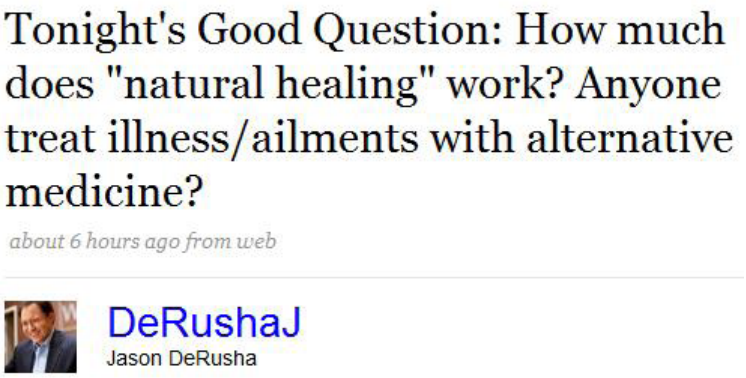
by Leah Betancourt

Journalists are using Twitter to engage with their audience, connect with sources and continue building their personal brands.

The 140-character format forces writers to focus their attention and get to the point quickly. But this isn't just sound-bite style reporting. I talked with some reporters about Twitter and how they use it.

Twitter enhances reporting

Jason DeRusha, who's @derushaj on Twitter, a reporter at WCCO-TV in Minneapolis, uses Twitter daily as part of is his job. He started using it Aug. 2, 2007, the day after the 35W bridge collapse. He said in an e-mail interview that it lets him continue building his personal brand as a journalist.



DeRusha uses it specifically to crowdsource stories and promote his work. He does a segment called "Good Question" five nights a week in which Twitter plays a role.

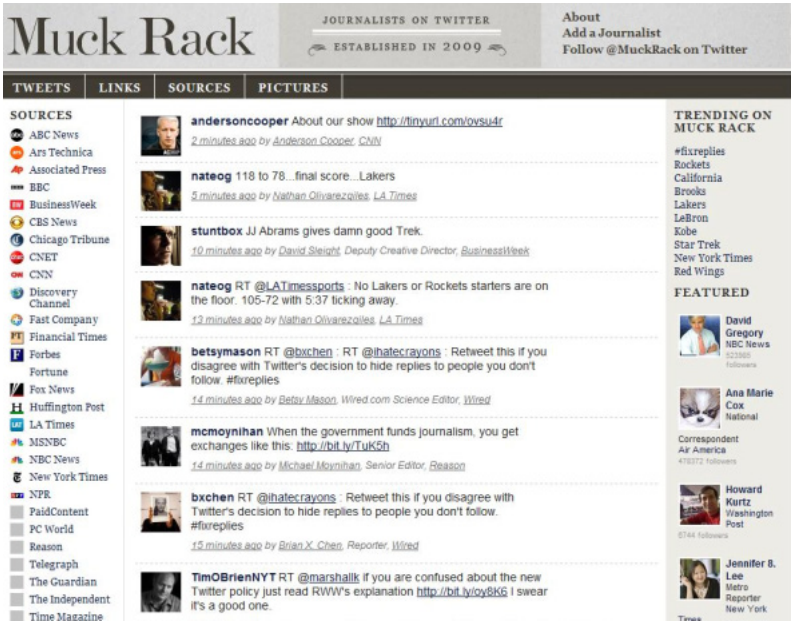
He often puts his questions on Twitter at the start of the day, and then his followers (more than 2,200) help him come up with angles, or chime in with their opinions. Rather than interviewing random people on the street, he's able to get more targeted feedback from people with relevant life experience.

DeRusha's first Twitter success story was in late 2007. He was doing a story on December sniffles caused by allergies to Christmas trees. He used Twitter to find someone who was allergic to Christmas trees, who has to use heavy protective gloves to decorate theirs. He said he would never have found this source without Twitter.

John Dickerson (@jdickerson), Slate's chief political correspondent and author of "On Her Trail," has been using Twitter as part of his job since November 2007. He said in an e-mail interview that as a writer, he finds the voice he uses for Twitter is different than his normal voice. He said that he feels Twitter helps him think differently about how to communicate or perhaps just come up with a more clever line about something.

Dickerson learned from Twitter that people regularly confuse a fact that you report with advocacy for the fact you're reporting. "So if you quote the president, they assume you approve of the quote. I know people did that, of course, but I've been surprised how much they respond that way to items I write on Twitter," he said. "It's reminded me that this is sentence structure, since a sentence is about all you get on Twitter."

Twitter tools



Muck Rack is a site compiled of real-time Twitter activity by journalists. See what journalists are reading, following and talking about. The site is searchable by news organization, tweets, links, and photos submitted by journos. Journalists can be recommended for inclusion on the site. When users submit a journalist, they can fill in a news organization that has not yet been added and explain more in the comment field.

MediaOnTwitter is a sortable database of journalists that includes the journalists' names, Twitter usernames, beats they cover, media outlets they work for and the countries in which they live. Users can submit a new contact for consideration by using a web form.

Two wikis by My Creative Team list those who work in the news business and media outlets on Twitter. Media People Using Twitter categorizes journos by country and then lists their name, news organization and Twitter username. My Creative Team's site said it can't accept any more editors, but submissions and updates can be emailed. The Media People on Twitter wiki content can be downloaded into Microsoft Word document format. The Media Outlets Using Twitter wiki lists news organizations by country, company name and Twitter username or page URL.

Tracking tweets

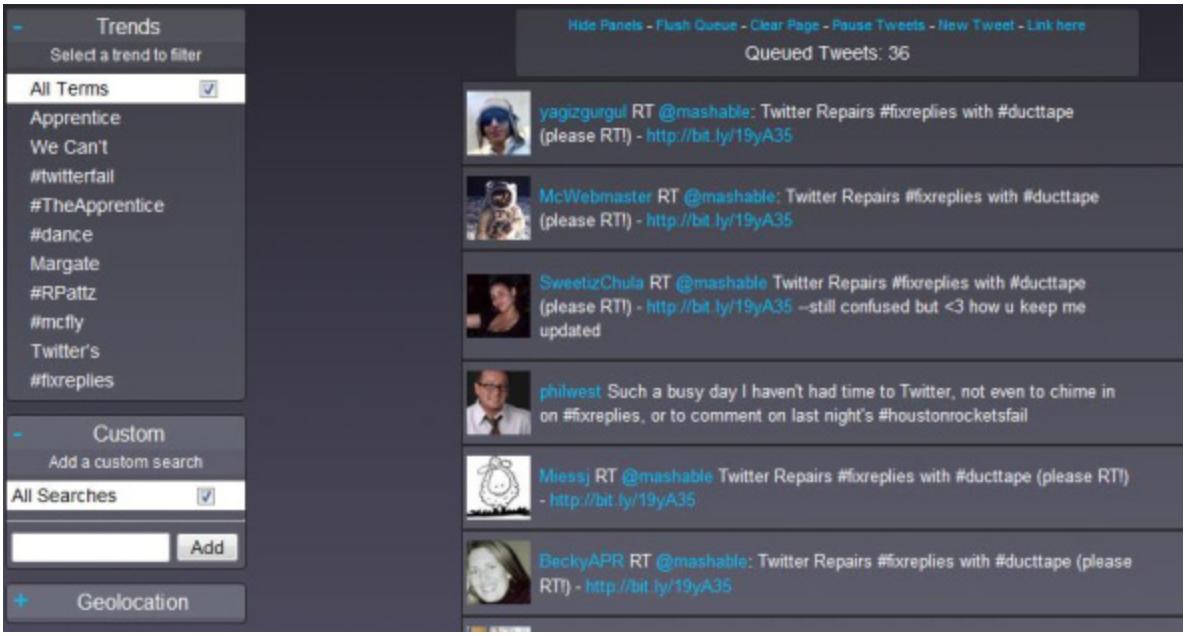
TweetDeck's dashboard allows users to follow groups, track topics in real-time by keyword, organize tweets, @replies and Direct Messages.

Patrick Thornton (@jiconoclast), editor and lead writer of BeatBlogging.org, posted a great how-to video outlining the tools he uses for Twitter for reporting, finding story ideas, monitoring beat blogging and live blogging.

Thornton's video shows how he follows his friends' tweets (journalists using social media or people talking about social media) on TweetDeck to see what they're working on and the tools they've discovered in social media. He points out that replies are helpful for crowdsourcing.

Thornton also suggests feeding Twitter's search results (based on your keywords or hashtags) into an RSS URL, then using an RSS reader to create a Twitter result to limit your tweets to just what you're watching right now.

A great alternative to TweetDeck is Seesmic Desktop.



Journalism.co.uk reported that The Daily Telegraph was using Twitterfall in its newsroom to monitor breaking news events. Twitterfall allows users to track Twitter's trending topics and hashtags or create custom search results, even by geography. The most recent tweets drop down from the top of the page into the feed. Users can control the speed, theme and location from where the tweets are coming.

Journalists can get email updates from Twitter to their inbox with TweetBeep. Alerts can be set up based on hashtags, Direct Messages, and @replies.

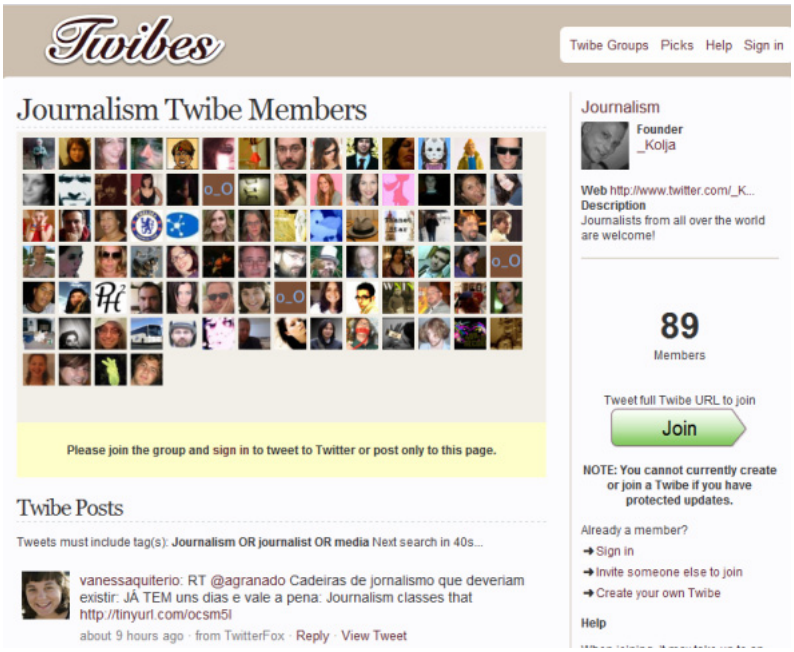
DailyRT, like TweetMeme, lets newsmakers know what the top retweeted items are on Twitter. Another tool called BackTweets finds tweets by URL (even if they have been shortened).

Sourcing, networking

Need a source? Then follow Peter Shankman (@skydiver), founder of Help a Reporter Out, on Twitter. He'll typically post tweets prefaced by UrgHARO: with instructions on the topic and how to respond. Help a Reporter Out touts more than 100,000 sources. HelpAReporter.com has a sign-up page in which sources can get up to three emails daily with 15 to 30 queries per email. Journalists submit their queries

using an online form.

Tweet weekly with other journalists, bloggers, public relations or media types with #journchat. It's 7 to 10 p.m. central time every Monday, and tweeps join by using the #journchat hashtag.

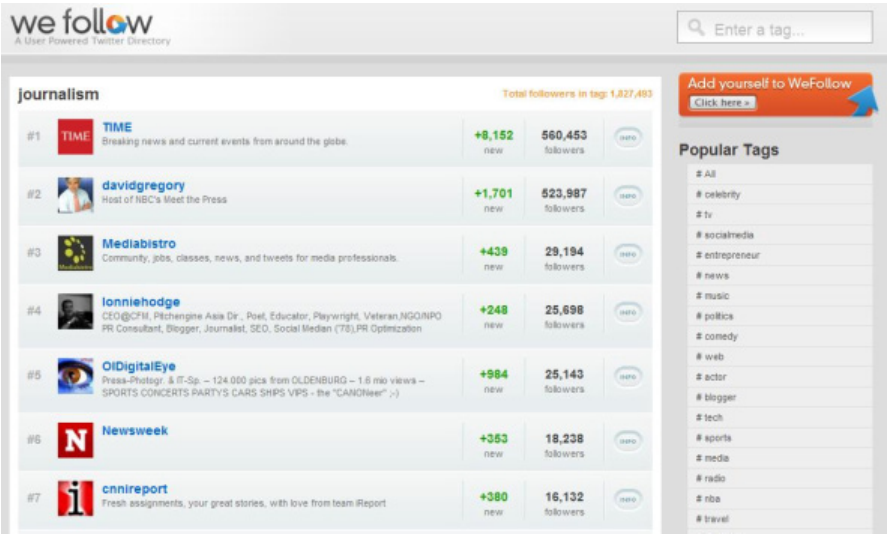


Chat with others on Twitter by topic with Twibes or create your own. Updates must have the protected setting turned off in order to create or join a Twibe, the site says.

To follow real-time conversations with other Twitter users, there are tools such as ThreadedTweets.

Find and follow with directories

An exhaustive Twitter directory created by Digg founder Kevin Rose called WeFollow allows journalists to find other news professionals or even experts by hashtag. Tweeps are listed in order of the number of followers they have. To get added, users pick the three hashtags under which they want to be listed and then tweet the results to submit the listing.



Find Twitter resources by category with the directories Twellow and JustTweetIt. Twellow touts itself as the Twitter Yellow pages with more than 3 million profiles. It has a TwellowHood map feature so Twitter users can find followers by location. JustTweetIt includes several sections of Twitter tools and a Gotta Follow section.

Find others locally and list yourself on the geotargeted Twitter directory Localtweeps. It ranks top tweeted cities and states based on the amount of users listed in the directory for that area.

Roll breaking news tweets via email

The Daily Sentinel offers a layman's step-by-step coding guide for setting up a breaking news Twitter stream on a news website. Journalists then send tweets using the Twittermail e-mail interface. This is particularly useful if several reporters out in the field want to cover a single spot news event without having several Twitter accounts and have it flow into a single Twitter stream.

Back to basics

While there are lots of tools for doing stuff with Twitter, remember to keep perspective in the Twitter-verse. Just because a news story is big on the microblogging site, doesn't always necessarily mean it is offline. DeRusha reminded journalists that it's important to still get out and talk to people in the flesh and that they cannot stop reporting because they are using Twitter.

DeRusha offered tips for journalists using Twitter:

• Do: Get engaged.

• Do: Read replies.

• Do: Respond.

• Don't: Turn Twitter into a non-stop back-and-forth exchange. Take bigger discussions to e-mail or Direct Messages.

• Do: Start as a listener. It's OK to start following people and just treat Twitter as something like the AP Wires. Don't be discouraged because you only care about 1% of people's tweets. You don't cancel the AP Wires because you don't care about the Lottery numbers from Kentucky.

• Do: Post a profile picture.

• Do: Talk to your boss about his/her philosophy about Twitter.

• Do: Ask permission before tweeting anything about internal information (new hires, fires, layoffs, etc.)

• Do: Treat your Tweets like a microblog. Consider whether your readers would care about something before you belch it out to the wider world.