

The Prestige Brand's Guide To Twitter Success

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Introduction

Movie stars. News networks. Karl Lagerfeld. It seems everyone is on Twitter these days. The social networking service has reached far and wide, across mass media and mass markets alike.

Brands are discovering that Twitter isn't just for finding out whose BFFs are doing what. Companies make it part of their business model. Million-dollar online retailer, Threadless, uses it to crowd-source new T-shirt slogans. Coca-Cola uses it to test-market products and conduct focus-grouping in real-world conditions. Trump and Louis Vuitton, the #1 and #2 prestige brands on Twitter, respectively, use it to call attention to their product launches.

Prestige brands have challenges in the social space: how to keep their products exclusive, yet engage their customers, all while maintaining their brand identity. And with a reach that traditional publishers would kill for, Twitter offers prestige brands both opportunity and risk. The right strategy and resources can enable the former to far outweigh the latter.

Why Twitter Matters

Currently, in the U.S. alone, Twitter has close to 28 million visits per month—more than the New York Times and Wall Street Journal combined. If a firm foothold in our culture isn't enough reason to consider Twitter for your brand, take into account:

COMPANIES WHO USE TWITTER INCLUDE:

Retailers

Baskin Robbins, Net-A-Porter, Apple. Online shoe seller Zappos has over 1.3 million followers.

Service providers

H & R Block uses Twitter to answer peoples' tax questions, Comcast to provide customer service.

Media outlets

National networks (CNN, TV Guide, Wall Street Journal) and local TV, radio, and print publications use Twitter to supplement their content.

Small businesses

Tech startups, the Korean BBQ truck in L.A. who tweets to let people know where he'll be next (over 50,000 followers).

Social Media = \$ucce\$\$

According to a study from the Altimeter group, companies that engage customers using Twitter and other social media perform better financially—on average, 18% better. What's more, the least engaged companies from that study suffered, on average, a 6% decrease in revenue within that same time frame. Social media can no longer be seen a 'nice to have' marketing initiative.

Get to know your audience, in real-time

A simple keyword search on Twitter can give you snapshots of what people are saying about your brand at that moment. Monitoring Twitter is a quick way to listen in on conversations about your brand and 'conduct', real-time, impromptu focus groups.

Global and mobile

With its 140-character limit, a tweet was originally designed to be sent via text message. Whether you're using a phone or a Web browser, tweets can be sent and received from practically anywhere in the world. People are creating Twitter content from the backs of cabs, waiting in lines, on smoke breaks, or anywhere else they have a spare minute and a mobile phone or Internet connection.

Low cost of entry

With advertising budgets getting slashed on many levels, smart social media campaigns make more sense than ever for brands – and Twitter is the cost-effective way to get started in social media. It's free to sign up for a Twitter account. You don't have to pay to attract followers; they'll opt-in. And most options for managing and monitoring of Twitter data are free or inexpensive. And the reality is, if you don't have a Twitter account yet, your brand is already being talked about: a recent survey revealed that 1 out of every 5 tweets mentions a brand name.

Why Prestige Brands Need Twitter

When it comes to Twitter, prestige brands in particular face a unique conundrum. According to the Journal of Brand Management, a prestige brand "Evokes uniqueness and exclusivity, and is interpreted in products through high quality, controlled distribution and premium pricing." Meanwhile, social technologies are, by definition, for everyone. Isn't there a disconnect?

Time to join the party

But the face of luxury is changing. In the last two decades, a "new wealth" demographic has arisen—one with a taste for prestige brands and upwards of \$200 billion to spend on them. The demographic of people in the market for prestige items is getting larger, and by definition, less elite. Given the current recession, it's a demographic prestige brands can't afford to ignore.

Fashion expert Cate Corocan believes that when it comes to social media, the fashion industry has to update its view of audience:

“(Twitter) changes the way people experience mass events. I think the fashion industry can take a big lesson from that - how do you create interest? It’s no longer about keeping people out and creating exclusivity, it’s creating something people want to be part of, and enabling them to share it.”

Nowhere is this more prevalent than online, the only rapidly-growing segment of the prestige industry. An eMarketer report concluded that the number of affluent Internet users will grow from 43.7 million in 2006 to 57.1 million in 2011.

COMPANIES WHO USE TWITTER INCLUDE:

Some prestige brands decline to use Twitter for fear that it will eliminate their image of exclusivity and rarity - making their brand appear less authentic.

This need not be the case. Why not use Twitter as a separate channel offering small amounts of stock or rare items as limited-time offers - lasting a day, an hour, or until the item is sold out? Micro-specials like this can establish your Twitter profile as another, separate venue for ‘those in the know’, raising awareness and generating buzz while still maintaining a prestige profile.

Even if you don’t agree with this ‘new wealth’ theory, here are three very quantifiable reasons to get started with Twitter:

1. Finding audience

Even if you don’t have an account, Twitter is still valuable for any brand. By monitoring Twitter activity, it’s possible to find out who is interested in a new BMW or a \$4000 Be & D handbag. There’s a reason Net-A-Porter has 19,630 followers.

2. Brand stewardship

Prestige brands need to leverage social media to maintain guardianship of their brand identity in that space - if they don’t manage their brand across social media, someone else will.

3. Keeping up with your competition

A September 2009 study from LuxuryLab rated the top 109 prestige brands by social media presence. Of them, 46% had a brand presence on Twitter.

BEST IN TWEET: Luxury Brands with the Most Twitter Followers

Brand	Category	Twitter Account*	Number of Followers
Trump	Hotel	Ivanka Trump*	129,420
Louis Vuitton	Fashion	LouisVuitton_US	32,066
Four Seasons	Hotel	FourSeasons*	14,871
Fairmont	Hotel	BeijingFairmont*	9,574
Tory Burch	Fashion	Toryburch	8,097
Benefit	Beauty	BenefitBeauty	5,725
Lancome	Beauty	lancomeparis	3,624
Yves Saint Laurent	Fashion	Y_S_L	3,533
Ritz-Carlton	Hotel	SimonFCooper*	3,517
NARS	Beauty	NARSissists	3,302
Intercontinental	Hotel	WorldConcierge*	3,248
Christian Dior	Fashion / Beauty	Lady Dior	3,059

*Indicates brand has more than one Twitter account, corporate account, or account with most followers is noted.

Source: LuxuryLab, "The Digital IQ Index," September 2009)

A few updates as of January 2010:

Trump - 698,542 followers | **Louis Vuitton** - 69,487 followers | **Tory Burch** – 16,468 followers

How To Use Twitter

Not all brands make use of Twitter in the same way - and how your company uses it is what could set you apart from your competition.

Make sure you've laid out your goals for using Twitter before spending time and money on it. Some companies use it to provide faster customer support. Others have managed to use Twitter to deliver coupon codes and sell products. Still others use it to help generate buzz for product launches.

We've seen four primary ways companies find success using Twitter:

1. Provide customer service
2. Communicate with customers
3. Discover audience intentions; uncover unmet needs
4. Attract audience by leveraging Twitter content

1. Provide customer service

Prestige brands are known for providing exemplary customer service. Twitter can offer customers the opportunity to inquire about an order or file a complaint, as well as a chance to provide a company with feedback and unmet needs. Companies like United Airlines (47,032 followers) practically use Twitter as an 800 customer service number - with the notable bonus of being able to demonstrate direct efforts to resolve customer issues.

Your brand has a choice to make: if someone tweets "where's my shoe order?" or "your accessories are too expensive", you can respond and engage that customer, or ignore him/her. If you understand what your customers want, and you work hard to provide it, you will be rewarded with a strong core of responsive, engaged and loyal customers - just the kind of base you'll need to strengthen your brand online.

2. Communicate with customers

This is the Twitter option that most brands are comfortable with, given its parallels to traditional marketing techniques: 1-to-many broadcasting, announcing news, sales, product launches, etc. But if all your company does is make Twitter your new PR channel, you'll lose your audience. Instead, you need to really engage customers.

Not all prestige brands are comfortable starting conversations with their customers in such a public forum. But think of it more as an opportunity for your brand to tell a story. Nordstrom (21,769 followers) and Diane von Furstenberg (16,263) do.

Prestige brands also have an opportunity to use Twitter to offer lifestyle content from, or directed at, your target demographic. Have a photo of John Mayer wearing your brand, or Kate Winslet shopping in your flagship store? Link to it in a tweet. This allows users to share and spread your brand across other social networks as well.

Finally, you have an opportunity to reaffirm your brand image using crowd-sourced content. Part of Kate Spade's twitter feed comes from a vintage typewriter located in their flagship NYC shop. Anyone who visits the store can write a tweet for the Kate Spade account. Other tweets from that account promote events, sales, and other goings-on at the store.

All of these tactics connect your brand to your customers – in an intimate way.

3. Discover audience intentions; uncover unmet needs

This is an incredibly valuable opportunity for brands. The more clearly you know your audience's intentions, the easier you can find the audience you want to market to. From there, you can uncover unmet needs of your target.

While the signal-to-noise ratio can be high on Twitter depending on your brand, there are ways to find the consumers who might be interested in your brand and ways for you to initiate that engagement. To determine the value of Twitter engagement, we use the TICS scale. TICS represents the four different kinds of tweets you'll find about your brand: TRASH, INTEREST, CONTACT, SELL.

For example, let's say your brand is a product type that's likely to be twittered about, such as coffee. If you go to search.twitter.com, Twitter's own search engine, you will find a real-time, 30,000-ft view of how the millions-strong Twittersverse regards your industry, your brand, your product, etc, depending on what keywords you use in your search.

TRASH

Most of the tweets you'll find on Twitter are Trash: irrelevant, usually shallow vanity content your company isn't likely to care about. At Halogen Network, these tweets are referred to as, "digital exhaust."



[seanpauellis](#): They dimmed the lights. How did they know my weakness? There isn't enough **coffee** in the world that'll save me now!

less than a minute ago from *Echofon* · [Reply](#) · [View Tweet](#)



[sofeeuh](#): 4 more hours. given the choice I'd rather have some **coffee** right now than food.

half a minute ago from *web* · [Reply](#) · [View Tweet](#)

INTEREST

You'll also find a slightly lower percentage of tweets that reference your brand, which may be of Interest, for brand recognition or demographics purposes, but not much else:



[BuckeyeBrownie](#): Yummy **Starbucks!** Thanks to Brad and Brian :-)

2 minutes ago from *TweetDeck* · [Reply](#) · [View Tweet](#)



[e_rob](#): **Starbucks** with Kaylee and Brandon!

less than a minute ago from *web* · [Reply](#) · [View Tweet](#)

CONTACT

Getting a little closer to action, you might find tweets from people who need help or service regarding your brand. Now we're at the stage where, if you're Starbucks, you might want to Contact the person, perhaps by apologizing for a faulty product, providing a link to a convenient "Find a Starbucks" iPhone app, etc.



[amecoli](#): I finally manage to drive to [@starbucks](#) and get my latte... To find out that tastes AWFUL yuk!! <http://pic.gd/34d0ff>

about 2 hours ago from *UberTwitter* · [Reply](#) · [View Tweet](#)



[dominicru](#): At JFK AA terminal and can't find Starbucks! Am I in a time warp?

about 2 hours ago from *TweetDeck* · [Reply](#) · [View Tweet](#)

A SAMPLING OF TWITTER MASHUPS:

Twittervision

A "real-time geographic visualization of posts to Twitter." You'll see where in the world people are tweeting from.

Helveti-Tweet

A stylish stream of Twitter updates that mention the word Helvetica.

Portwiture

Grabs photography from Flickr that matches the content of your most recent Twitter updates.

Twitrans

Translate your tweets to any language.

Splitweet

Multi-account Twitter management and brand monitor.

source: <http://mashupawards.com/category/twitter>

TwitterMap

A mashup using Google Maps that lets you hone in on a specific part of the map to see recent Twitter updates from that region. It's great for seeing what the people in your home town are talking about.

source: <http://webtrends.about.com/od/webmashups/tp/7-great-twitter-mashups.htm>

SELL

And of course, some tweets practically scream for brand action – a concrete opportunity to Sell. Although they're the hardest to find, tweets like these are perfect opportunity to reply with a plug and a coupon link. With some due diligence and analytics to sort the relevant tweets from the meaningless ones (see Tools and Resources), Twitter can serve as remarkably valuable tool for your brand.



[missYcola](#): Out of **coffee** ground, now I want to switch to **beans**. I just don't know **which** brand/kind to get? Haven't really had a good! **coffee** here yet.

5 days ago from *Seesmic* · [Reply](#) · [View Tweet](#)

4. Attract audience by leveraging Twitter content

While Twitter offers multiple opportunities to both listen and reach out to your audience, you can also use it to attract an audience to your brand.

Twitter provides use of their API (Application Programming Interface) free of charge, enabling developers to create applications that use Twitter's content in a wide variety of ways. This is accomplished by either combining Twitter data with information from another website, such as Google Maps, or by presenting Twitter data in a unique way.

Case Studies

As discussed, there are a variety of ways for brands to find success on Twitter, whether by increasing sales, establishing a wider profile, or gaining a better understanding of consumer needs. Here are a few more examples of brands – both prestige and mainstream – who have found quantifiable success:

The Trump Soho Using Personality to Draw a Crowd

Developing a Twitter application for your brand can be as simple as showing your relevant Twitter feeds on your own website. Halogen Network created TrumpSohoHotelCountdown.com to promote the opening of the Trump SoHo hotel. It leveraged two brands, Trump Hotels and Ivanka Trump, by streaming their respective Twitter feeds onto the front page of a site. Visitors to the site can see Ivanka's latest tweets about the hotel, write back to her, and read what others are saying.



By creating this opportunity to engage with the brand and with Ivanka, Trump is not only drawing attention to the impending opening of the newest hotel, the Trump Soho, but also creating interest in the various Trump-branded Twitter accounts. Trump Twitter accounts have doubled in followers since the launch of this site.

Pepsi Building Brand on Innovation Alone

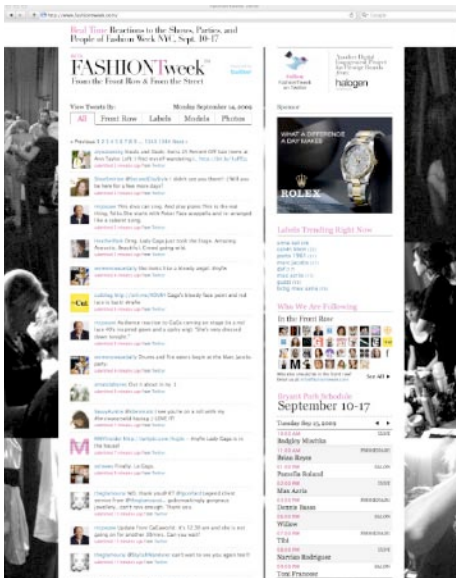
Pepsico's Zeitgeist application is also a Twitter mashup. It launched during Austin, Texas' 2009 SXSW festival, a key event for digital influentials. Zeitgeist aggregated tweets centered around the event into attractive, easy-to-read visualizations of relevant event categories: arriving, drinking, registering, eating, connecting and partying.

By providing real-time trends and opinion about the event, it catered to those in attendance and those vicariously following the event online. Attendees in particular found it helpful for choosing panel discussions, nightclubs, and restaurants.

Less of a revenue driver and more of a reputation builder, the PepsiCo Zeitgeist was the talk of Austin, generating 1,600 digs, 1,500 tweets, and ultimately, 4 million impressions on blogs and websites.

FashionTweek Owing Fashion Week on Twitter

Halogen Network, in celebration of Fall 2009 New York Fashion Week, built FashionTweek, a mashup application that collects all tweets pertaining to the styles, people and parties of NYC Fashion week and featured them, categorized, at FashionTweek.com. Contributors include established fashion bloggers, celebrities, and designers. By building this application on top of Twitter's content platform, FashionTweek allowed fashionistas worldwide to read about the fashions, the runway, the parties, the models, etc., all in relative real-time in one place.



Coke Freestyle Using Twitter to Improve the Product

Coca-Cola recently developed a mashup project that supports customer acceptance of Coke Freestyle, a new soft drink dispenser they are testing at select restaurant chains. Coca-Cola plans to combine consumer feedback on social media sites like Facebook and Twitter with the RFID data from the Freestyle machines to determine the popularity of the 100 soda flavors each machine dispenses.

Fairmont Chicago Courting Local Influentials

Many prestige chain hotels, such as the Fairmont Hotels & Resorts, have separate Twitter accounts for each property, giving each hotel the opportunity to showcase its unique amenities, services and local knowledge. Specifically, Fairmont Chicago had the objective of increasing awareness of the hotel and its auxiliary restaurant and spa businesses. A re-designed Twitter background allowed them to establish a specific branded user experience. The hotel also initiated a personalized, direct marketing campaign to key influencers in the Twitter community – users who were connected to the Chicago hospitality or hotel industries and who had large followings.

Once a strong base of influential followers was established on their Twitter profile, Fairmont Chicago launched a Twitter contest that required participants to send tweets to their own followings, as well as to join the hotel's Facebook group. This spread awareness of the hotel and a particular promotional special they were offering online.

The account's following doubled in the first week. By the end of the campaign, a respectable 10% of the hotel's Twitter followers participated in the contest. And the energy around the contest and the hotel led to spontaneous user-generated content created about the contest, including an ecstatic blog entry from the winner of the contest.

Threadless Crowd-Sourcing Creativity, Creating Buzz

Threadless, a million-user t-shirt company that solicits designs from its audience, leverages Twitter to find their customer's new favorite T-shirt slogan. With its new 'TwitterTees by Threadless' program, anyone with a Twitter account can submit tweets to be considered for printing on a t-shirt. As with user-submitted graphic designs, Threadless' community of 1 million-plus users vote on each submission, with the winning tweets used on a new t-shirt and the winning users receiving a cash prize.

Baskin Robbins Using Events to Build Audience

The popular ice-cream chain used a charity promotion, coupled with Twitter, to create a new audience and a strong platform for future promotions. Their "31 cent scoop" promotion offered scoops of ice cream for 31 cents each for one night only - with the proceeds going towards a \$100,000 donation to the National Volunteer Fire Council.

Knowing that conversations about this promotion would be take place on Facebook and Twitter, Baskin Robbins set out to encourage and leverage this communication. They set up an event page on Facebook, and participated in the online buzz via its Twitter page. They responded to excited user tweets about the event, re-tweeted tweets and photos, and answered questions for curious customers.

During the event, tweets related to the event (i.e. had the words "Baskin Robbins," "31 cent" peaked, taking up .12 percent of all tweet volume worldwide. The increased interest and Twitter traffic resulted in Baskin Robbins gaining over 10,000 followers.

Since the event, Baskin Robbins continues to build intimate relationships with their customer base on Twitter - resolving customer issues, asking users about their favorite ice cream flavors, and listening to their audience to gain insights via this free focus group. They're also using the channel to host trivia quizzes (offering Baskin Robbins gift certificates as prizes), send out happy birthday wishes, and notify followers of new promotions and new store openings.

SOCIAL MEDIA MISSTEP: HABITAT UK

Habitat UK, a high-ticket British furniture chain, ruffled a lot of feathers by adding special keywords to their tweets that made their posts show up in popular trending topic searches—including Iran's 2009 election riots. It was considered spam--the equivalent of reading a CNN news ticker and finding an ad for living room sets. It spawned a great deal of criticism from the Twittersphere and damaged Habitat UK's brand.

source: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/pda/2009/jun/22/twitter-advertising>

Risks & Advice

RISKS

Having to regain your name: Remember the domain name rush ten years ago? If you haven't claimed your company and brand name on Twitter so far, someone else may have beaten you to it.

Giving the peanut gallery a platform: Twitter allows anyone to see what others are doing, saying, and thinking about your brand - in real-time. Thin-skinned brand managers or CEOs, get ready.

Losing spin control: Tweets end up all over the Internet: Facebook, blogs, and other social-media/sharing services. Can your brand let go of that kind of control?

ADVICE

In order to address and combat these problems, we recommend several strategies:

1. Claim your name.

If you're not on Twitter yet, reserve your company name and brand. Brands who have been "brandjacked" on Twitter include Exxon and countless celebrities.

Similar to the domain-name gold rush from ten years ago, a number of brand names have been claimed on Twitter by people hoping to sell the name back to the company. Twitter frowns on this type of activity but cannot outlaw it outright. They have, however, started a pilot program of "Verified Accounts", which they have offered to a small set of clients (mostly celebrities) - but may expand it over time.

In the meantime, Twitter's Terms of Service specifically disallows "name squatting." If someone has taken your company's name is using it inappropriately, Twitter will help you get it sorted out.

SOCIAL MEDIA MISSTEP: KETCHUM PUBLIC RELATIONS

Just remember that Twitter is a public medium. Anything you tweet could be seen by virtually anyone. Pity the Ketchum PR employee who, just before giving a presentation to FedEx, wrote a tweet insulting FedEx's home city of Memphis. A FedEx employee saw the tweet, forwarded the message to company executives. A letter was then drafted by FedEx, telling him they were unsure they would need his company's services from that day forward.

source: <http://www.marketingprofs.com/9/dark-side-of-twitter-what-businesses-need-to-know-stelzner.asp>

2. Stay authentic.

Your brand on Twitter should be as authentic to your identity as any other extension of it -maybe even more so, given that Twitter is a conversational, sharable media.

For instance: the bulk of the tweets for Tory Burch's fashion company are written by Tory herself. She writes about personal style, events she attends, restaurants she frequents, and more, signing each one with a "TB" at the end. The tweets are streamed live on her company's site.

Karl Lagerfeld's Twitter account is an extreme example of how authenticity flourishes on Twitter. When a Karl Lagerfeld Twitter feed began, thousands rushed to follow him - only to find out eventually that it was an impostor. A Social Media Misstep? Not quite. Once it was revealed that every tweet was, in fact, taken from Karl Lagerfeld quotes from various interviews, "his" follower count continued to grow (184,011 followers). The tweeter is not Karl, but the tweets are. As such, they're completely on-brand. It's a rare case where authenticity actually won out over reality.

3. Build credibility.

Imagine you're walking into a Louis Vuitton store. Does a salesperson run up to you and immediately push their sale items and new promotions? No way. If all you do is send one-way messages on Twitter, pushing promotion, bragging about press accolades, or selling product, your followers will tune out and opt out.

Michael Brito of social media news site Mashable advises that brands focus on "developing a reputation as a trusted source of information or being seen as an expert in a particular subject...ask questions, be personal, and engage people naturally within the Twitter community."

Many people who use Twitter for business use a 4-to-1 rule of thumb: for every tweet about your business, make sure you have 4 tweets that engage others, whether answering questions, sorting out a customer service issue, or responding to a user's tweet about your brand or a related interest. While being conversational may not suit your brand, there are surely ways your brand can engage customers and encourage responses without resorting to a hard sell.

4. Take care of quantity and quality.

Try to tweet a minimum of four times a day, and make sure your tweets provide value to both your brand and your followers. For the latter, set up criteria by which to define value. Consider these questions:

- Do your tweets answer questions, resolve customer problems, or represent positive exchanges with one or several followers?
- If you are making a Twitter-exclusive product or deal offer, does it include a unique coupon code, so you can tell how many people are responding?
- Are you tracking how much traffic your brand's website(s) receive via Twitter?
- If your tweets have unique URLs in them, are you tracking click-throughs?

Tools & Resources

Twitter has done an excellent job making the service accessible for developers. As a result, you'll find hundreds of helpful applications that allow you to employ Twitter effectively.

TRACKING AND MONITORING

VENDORS

Once you've clarified your brand goals for Twitter, tracking results can be easy. Many of the analytics services you currently contract with, such as Nielsen and Down Jones, already offer appropriate services for Twitter and other social media channels. Services that specialize in online social media include Radian 6, Altierian, Scout Labs, and Visible Technologies.

FREE SERVICES

[Twinfluence](#)

See how far your Twitter profile reaches by tracking not only how many followers you have, but how concentrated your audience is and how fast your campaign is growing.

[TwitterGrader](#)

Find out who the top Twitterers are for any term you choose.

[Twitalyzer](#)

Calculate your popularity, your signal-to-noise ratio, clout among the Twittersphere, and more.

[Trendistic](#)

A helpful visual interface to help you see what's trending on Twitter.

SHARING MEDIA

[Sharing Files](#)

Services such as FileSocial and FileTwit allow how to upload and share files (up to 50 MB) of any kind.

[Sharing Music](#)

There are dozens of services that let you link to songs online and play them in your browser. Twt.fm, Songza, and Blip.fm are just a few of these.

[Sharing images](#)

Twitpic and frog.ly are the most popular services. If you have a Flickr account, you can tweet your Flickr photos using their Flickr2Twitter service.

[Sharing videos](#)

Tweetube, Twitvid.io, and Twitvid.com are all popular Twitter-based video-sharing services.

TWITTER TOOLBOX

[Tweet scheduling tools](#)

Working for a brand, you may need to clear tweets with one department or another. Services like TweetLater or HootSuite will allow you to schedule your tweets over days, weeks, or months. This way, you can write blocks of tweets for department approvals and schedule their broadcast as you see fit.

[Filtering conversations](#)

TweetDeck is a popular toolbox that allows you to set up groups and filter conversations, so that you can send and/or receive tweets to the groups of your choice. TweetDeck groupings are also great for analysis and monitoring of other groups.

[Search.twitter.com](#)

The simplest way to take a snapshot of twitter activity is to use Twitter's own real-time search engine and see what the Twittersverse brings back.

Conclusion

A study conducted by Pear Analytics showed that 40.55% of the content generated on Twitter is “pointless babble”. That's a lot of digital exhaust to push your prestige brand into. But the power and value in the remaining 59.45% of the content on Twitter presents a tremendous opportunity for brands. Like any media initiative, social or otherwise, success from Twitter will come from planning and dedication. It will require a strategy, resources, and consistent maintenance and monitoring.

Twitter's current usage numbers continue to grow - numbers that include early adapters, influencers, and online media mavens. The sooner you get your brand started using Twitter, the sooner you can start telling your brand story. Because remember, even if you don't have an account, your brand is likely already being talked about on Twitter.

Appendix A: A Twitter Primer

What is Twitter?

[Direct from Twitter's FAQ's](#) Twitter is a service for friends, family, and co-workers to communicate and stay connected through the exchange of quick, frequent messages. People write short updates, often called “tweets” of 140 characters or fewer. These messages are posted to your profile or your blog, sent to your followers, and are searchable on Twitter search.

It may help to think of Twitter as a ‘micro-blogging’ service. On a blog, entries are one to several paragraphs long (often with photos or video added). Twitter entries are limited to 140 characters (roughly 15-25 words, including spaces) that can link to photos or video.

What's the big deal about it?

Simply stated, it's the fastest-growing social media site. According to a Nielsen Online study from March 2009, Twitter grew 1,382% year-over-year in February, registering a total of just more than 7 million unique visitors in the US for the month. In fact, other social networks have added features to become more like Twitter.

Why are "tweets" just 140 characters long?

The creators of Twitter developed the service to take advantage of mobile phones' SMS text abilities—and standard text messages are 160 characters. Since a user's name is part of every Tweet, they left 20 characters for that—hence the 140 characters for the message.

What do I need to get started?

All you need to use Twitter is a mobile phone or an Internet connection. "Tweets" can be sent a number of ways, including via text message or by the Twitter.com website.

There are also a number of websites, widgets, and mobile apps that make tweeting more convenient such as an iPhone app that lets you tweet over the internet (without using up text messages) and web page widgets that let you tweet without having to leave the page you're on.

What are "followers?"

A "follower" is to Twitter what a "friend" is to Facebook or MySpace: a member of your network. It means that you'll see their tweets—and those of everyone else you follow—on your Twitter home page.

How do I gain followers?

Twitter allows you to search for friends by name (or user name), import friends from other social networks, and invite friends via email. Once you find people you want to follow, go to their home page and click the "follow" button. For the most part, if you follow someone, they'll follow you back.

Do I have to follow someone to read their updates?

No, although you do if you want to read them from your home page. You can also visit the person's home page, or search for their tweets using search.twitter.com.

Can I use Twitter for advertising?

You can, but it's a slippery slope. Twitter is best used to establish relationships with your followers. If all your tweets contain marketing messages or calls to action, you won't engage them, and they'll un-follow you.

If your brand wants to use Twitter, create a plan with clear goals for success. Once you know your purpose for tweeting, stick to it for a while and re-evaluate. It's all right for your goals to evolve as you go along.

Appendix B: End Notes

<http://www.quantcast.com/twitter.com#traffic>

<http://www.engagementdb.com/>

<http://www.fastcompany.com/blog/kit-eaton/technomix/though-twiters-not-doing-ads-20-tweets-mention-brands>

<http://mashable.com/2009/07/02/luxury-brands/>

<http://www.marketingprofs.com/.../how-to-build-your-brand-with-luxury-customers-hader.asp>

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