

seldomseenkid

Hi!

Thanks for downloading this, an e-book including a whole bunch of blog posts I've written about Twitter for Seldom Seen Kid.

The content included here is all available at the blog, but I decided it might be useful to pull the best 20 together in one single place, making it easy for you to read them at your leisure.

So, dig in and have a read, and I'd love to know what your thoughts are on any of the thoughts included here!

Best wishes,

Matt

[@geetarchurchy](https://twitter.com/geetarchurchy)

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[Is your company ready for Twitter?](#)

January 16, 2009

There has been a lot of talk recently about companies and brands using Twitter to connect with their audience. Jeremiah Owyang has written a brilliant piece reflecting on the [stages a brand](#) should go through before getting themselves onto Twitter. There's been a lot of talk about whether brands should in fact [be on Twitter at all](#).

According to [research by Emergence Marketing](#), around 60% of companies are not ready to engage with social media, let alone Twitter. The article estimates that somewhere between [60-75%](#) of companies are spying on their employee's use of the internet whilst at work, and makes the point: If you cannot trust your employees to do the right surfing, then how can you trust them to engage in social media on your behalf?

Simply, you can't. And this is one of the hurdles businesses need to overcome if they are looking to enter the realms of social media. You must trust your employees to know how your business needs to position itself, the tone of voice that suits and how you want people that you're approaching to perceive you.

Much of this perception can be derived from the brand's name, be it in your local high street, or globally. You tend to want to stick with it on business cards, shop fronts and websites because it says a lot about you. So you want to extend this out to [Twitter](#), or [LinkedIn](#), or [Xing](#). What though, if you can't and you become the victim of Twitter squatting (this is someone taking your company's name purely because you haven't already)?

Erik Heels points out in a blog post, that [93 of the top 100 companies](#) in the world, don't own their Twitter names. It might be advisable to check that yours hasn't already been taken – go on, do it now; I'll put a brew on.



So was it taken? No? Good, sign up and have a think. Do you *really* need to use Twitter? Remember, this isn't a case of getting your Twitter name and using it for the sake of it.

[Dave Fleet makes a compelling case that sometimes](#), social media just isn't for you or your brand and asks us to question several things:

If you're not ready to engage yet, my advice would likely be (all other things being equal) to listen and learn from what your customers are saying:

- * Who is talking about you?
- * Where are they talking about you?
- * What do they like?
- * What do they hate?

And Dave makes it clear that:

Social media isn't a one-size-fits-all solution to your problems. Don't listen to anyone who tells you it is.

And he's right.

But just because you're not ready to step into the social media pond right now, doesn't mean you shouldn't protect your brand from being harmed by those who are. It's the same as if someone started trading under a name similar to yours. If you are Joe Bloggs Ltd, but your competitor registers as Jo Blogs Ltd and starts doing a bad job, it can give your company, purely as an accidental consequence, a bad name. This is why many big companies buy up all of the website domains that are closely linked to their name, so that if somebody wanted to, they couldn't buy BBC.com and use it to be nasty to BBC.co.uk.

Protection of a brand should be a main priority for any company, and that goes across Google to an ad in the local Post Office window. Social media is just one of the many tools that are at our disposal to do this, and used correctly, there are many benefits. Have a read of the articles cited above and (now you've got Twitter covered) you can make the first tentative steps to keeping your brand safe online.

[The power of a retweet](#)

July 29, 2009

Retweets possess a magical power.

There are many articles looking at retweeting, [Kevin Rose explains how to retweet and what it is](#), [Jeff Louis tackles the thorny issue of auto-retweeting](#) and [this post on Blog For Profit reckons you can even earn money by retweeting and being retweeted](#).

So a quick recap for anyone who's like 'huh, wtf is a retweet?'

A retweet is a function in Twitter which allows you to repeat someone else's tweet in order to share it with your followers.

Why would you do this? You might think the tweet contains an interesting point, or a link to some compelling content.

But, there's so much more to it than that.

Retweeting is one of the most important functions a new user to Twitter can learn to harness and one of the most indicative forms of just who to follow – if you find someone who is being retweeted all the time, likelihood is they'll be throwing out some really interesting stuff to their followers.

Being retweeted is a bit of an ego stroke – I like seeing 'RT [@geetarchurchy](#) blah blah blah...' appear in my mentions feed in [Tweetdeck](#).

Being retweeted is a sign that someone else thinks that the tweet you've just sent out, is worth sharing with their followers.

Retweeting is a way of letting someone you're following, but isn't following you, know that you're following them.

Retweeting is a relationship ice breaker.

If you don't know somebody, but you'd like to enter their Twittersphere, it's a great way of showing them that you are listening to, and genuinely enjoying the content they are sharing on Twitter.

What's better than to retweet someone, and then for them to acknowledge that retweet publicly in a follow up tweet later in the day?

It alerts their followers to you and may even persuade some of them to start following you, growing your network and hopefully making some worthwhile connections in the process, whilst *also* being made aware of other great content.

Tweet, retweet and be retweeted.

[3 Twitter relationship building steps](#)

July 30, 2009

I wrote yesterday about the [power of retweets](#), and how they can help us to build a relationship on Twitter. Today I want to examine this more closely and throw at you a three step theory on how we can take this further and develop a relationship with someone over time.

This may seem naive, but I believe that we are seeing a shift in the way Twitter is used. Many 'power users' (y'know the guys that dominate the must-follow lists) it appears to me, are inundated with @'s and DM's from users wanting to know more from them, and sometimes it all becomes a bit too much. This happens on successful blogs frequently where so many comments are left for the writer, that he or she cannot possibly take the time to respond to each one.

This has transferred to the Twittersphere and it is sometimes frustrating that a platform supposedly so open, can at the same time feel so closed because those big guys and girls won't engage.

Now this is not supposed to be a 'how to talk to celebs on Twitter' guide. I hope that this will help us to rationally think about how to approach a stranger on Twitter that is someone we want to talk to. I say we because this applies as much to me as it does to you or your gran.

1) Use retweets

Retweeting is a simple way of making ourselves known to a fellow Twitter user. If we retweet someone's tweet, it will appear in their mentions stream, or if they're savvy and have a separate RT stream setup, they'll see it even more clearly. This can bring us to the attention of person x.

There's no need to go over board on this at all, and if we do it'll seem like we're obviously after attention. Just RT any content we genuinely think is useful to our network, and we should be fine. That's why we want to engage with them after all isn't it.

If they are a good Twitter user, they'll thank people who retweet them. If they don't, they may not be someone we want to engage with in the first place. If they thank us once or twice, we can begin to thin about engaging in a direct conversation with them.

2) Answer A Question

One of the many great things about Twitter is that people use it to crowdsource information; where are the best restaurants, who's recently got the latest phone etc etc

This means that person x may from time to time be looking for some info around a certain topic and ask their Twittersphere. Why not, if we know the answer, let them know, and point them in the direction of some useful information by way of a link? Hopefully they'll say thanks and we can start a conversation up as we share an interest (why else would we know the answer to their question?)

3) Ask Them A Question

If we're at a point where we've been identified as adding value to person x's Twitter stream we should know as they'll have started following us. This gives us an opportunity to perhaps ask them a question about something they are knowledgeable about and to enter into conversation. If they are willing to answer or help you find out, we're well on our way to getting to know person x (IRL/ITL rules applying natch).

At this point, hopefully we'll be starting to think about following other members of their Twittersphere and trying to engage with them too. If we can follow this process with two or three of person x's followers and start to appear in person x's feed more frequently, that is essentially third party endorsement and another indication to our usefulness.

This is by no means a quick or perfect process, and of course it probably has many flaws which I hope you'll all take pleasure in pointing out! What I have tried to do is provide a simple way of making relationships easier to build and maintain for anyone who may be struggling.

I do expect flaming from the Twitterati, but from those guys I'd hope for some real insights :-)

[What is a Twitter Hashtag?](#)

August 18, 2009

Twitter Hashtags are a way of following tweets from different Twitter users, in one simple thread. Very simply, Hashtags allow you to watch a conversation, event, meme or topic evolve in real-time.

An example of a tweet with a Hashtag looks like this:



You can then proceed to follow all the tweets with that Hashtag – there are several ways to do this.

The first is to go to [Twitter search](#) and enter the hashtag into the search bar, for example: [#musicmonday](#)

Here you will be notified when there are new tweets with that Hashtag, and you have to hit refresh in your browser, or hit F5.

Another way to do it, is to set up a specific feed in a Twitter application such as [Tweetdeck](#) which can be set to refresh in real time.

What is really interesting though, once you've got the hang of Hashtags, is to watch how small communities grow up around them, and then disappear again.

A good example of this is the development of [memes](#), which see people tweet about a particular cause, such as [#ilovethenhs](#). And, at the moment, Twitter doesn't track these and store them, so once they're gone, they're gone for good.

To make sure you're tweets with Hashtags are registered, you must follow [@hashtags](#) on Twitter, and you can find out more info on [Hashtags.org](#). If you don't know what a Hashtag means, you can check out [Tagdef](#), [Tagalus](#) and [What The Hashtag](#) for definitions.

[Monitoring keywords on Twitter](#)

February 1, 2009

Monitoring [keywords](#) across different social media platforms including [Twitter](#) and the blogosphere, is one of the best ways to gauge how your brand is perceived.

You have those who we'd call '[key influencers](#)', and of course other ordinary consumers. Key influencers are, in PR land, perceived as the most important group to get your brand in front of. These are the people in the eye of any particular social storm, be it a group of friends or a group on a social network, who pass on their knowledge of a particular topic to those around them, whether they offer it, or it is asked for.

'Why is it important to get a brand in front of key influencers?', I hear you shout. They will be knowledgeable about a certain subject and will give your brand credibility if they think it is worthwhile. This of course will translate into sales for your client. But how do you know if these guys are liking your product? You can go and ask them, get their opinion and engage in a dialogue that will be beneficial for both you and them. BUT, how do you find key influencers to talk with in the first place? it can be tricky, and you don't want to spend your time looking for five people when really you want to know what the other 50,000 people think.

This is where the likes of Twitter can come in [handy for your brand](#). You can follow specific key words, such as your brand name using a variety of different tools, of which [Twitter has many](#). You are then able to see what people are saying about your brand in their tweets.

Here are some of the better free tools to have a look at, some are for Twitter, others are not:

[Twitter Search](#)

[Spy](#)

[Tweet Scan](#)

[Backtype](#)

[Board Reader](#)

[Trendr](#)

[Social Mention](#)

Now the wonderful thing is that although these don't distinguish who your key influencers are – they tell you what consumers are actually using your client's product think of it or them. Why is this important? It allows you to engage in conversation with the people providing the revenue that your client craves, and crucially, the people that aren't.

The next step on from this is to monitor what is being said about your competitors and the compare these conversations, to give you an opportunity to position your client in a way that will make them stand out from their potentially crowded market place.

[Are Twitter Trending Topics The Next You Tube Video Viral?](#)

July 2, 2009

Social Media measurement is a tricky thing. How can a successful campaign be truly judged? I certainly don't know, but it is not through the use of numbers.

We have seen, over the last five or so years the rise of the 'viral video' – that is a video which goes viral. These are magical things which just capture a moment in time, that people respond to and want to actively share with the people around them. Some of these videos rack up millions of hits, and this was the birth of a horrid, despicable phenomenon.

Does the phrase 'we'll make you a video, put it on You Tube and it'll go viral, get your brand 4 million hits and your sales will increase tenfold' seem familiar? The promise that a video will go viral is something that a cautious brand, not quite up with the social media space, will be made to think 'oh yeh, that sounds cracking, here's £130k, go get us 4 million You Tube views'. It is simply not the case.

A good video, often a brilliant video, will not go viral. Yes, you can have a pretty good stab at getting it right and be just about there most of the time, but a large part of that is down to the way that the community who the video is intended for, are engaged with.

It is who watches, not how many watch that counts

Moonfruit, the website building company, will tonight and over the next few weeks be patting themselves on the back over a great idea that went really well – simply add a hashtag [#moonfruit](#) to the end of a tweet to stand the chance to win a Macbook Pro. This is a really engaging idea and I applaud Moonfruit for [doing it so well](#), sort of, spam aside.

The upshot of this is of course, that Moonfruit becomes a trending topic alongside [#MichaelJackson](#) and [#Iranelection](#). What a great demonstration to the brand manager of how social media can bring your brand to the forefront of a community(!)

However, what happens if this becomes a standard KPI? Will digital marketing and PR people find themselves saying 'not only will your video go viral, we'll get you to be the top trending item on Twitter'?

We must be careful that this is not the case:

- a) Twitter feeds will be full of brand spam
- b) The noise will become indistinguishable
- c) Genuine conversation will be drowned out by brands competing to get to number one

It's who tweets, not how many tweets that counts

[Twitter Trending Topics are no longer relevant](#)

September 22, 2009

Twitter Trending Topics have often been seen as the best way to gauge what the mood is right here, right now, in the land of Twitter. Be they Michael Jackson, Iran Election, or Mrs. Slocombe's Pussy, the rise of the popular keyword has been significant.

The importance of the Trending Topics sidebar too has grown. If a brand can get their name or product to trend, hey presto, promotion, for free, in front of millions of eyeballs.

This has led to many brands and many people gaming the system – look at the [Moonfruit](#) scenario – and this means that, for the most part, Trending Topics do not necessarily reflect the true nature of the main topics of conversation on Twitter.

This means that they are no longer relevant. A waste of space which does nothing but promote off-repeated hashtags, which are largely nonsensical to the end user. The end user does however, like [Trending Topics](#), so they can get that snapshot of what is important at any one time.

What I'd like to see is localised Trending Topics, made up from individual user's followers and followees. You have 100 followers and 100 followees who are not into the NBA for example, but do watch English Premiership football. Your

Trending Topics will include relevant tidbits about the English Premiership, because the Topics are taken from your followers not the mass, but not the latest basketball game because it is not relevant to you, despite it being a Twitter-wide Trending Topic.

This would make conversations more relevant to each user, encourage users to find other users with similar interests and help to prevent brands and [spammers from gaming the Trending Topic system](#).

Yes, this may be initially difficult to implement due to API calls and such, but, for Twitter to grow they have to find ways of keeping the platform free from spam and relevant to its users. By helping users to make their experience more personal they can do both of these in one swoop.

[Twitter List Etiquette](#)

November 2, 2009

By now, Twitter Lists should be [available to pretty much everyone](#) and will soon be coming to a [third party app](#) near you.

There are mixed views on Twitter lists, many say they are a good thing and help to organise your feed, and others who say they are nothing more than a popularity contest.

So what does the new feature mean for Twitter users and the way they interact with each other?

There are two strands of Twitter List Etiquette as I see it, **when you've been added** and **when you're doing the adding**.

When You've Been Added

Being added to a list is, to me, very similar to being retweeted. It is the acknowledgement that for one reason or another, another user thinks you are adding value to a particular way in which they use Twitter. **This is not to say if you're not on any lists you're not adding value**. Some people will be on 1500 lists, some people may be on 1. It doesn't matter.

What does matter is that you take the time to thank you for being included and maybe even have a look through that list to see who else is on there that you might like to follow, if not following the whole list. And there is of course no need to follow that list – it's your user experience after all.

When You're Doing The Adding

Each user will have their own reason for creating a list, cool folks, fellow workmates etc I think it's important that each list has a purpose. For example I've created a list of the [Spook team at Edelman](#) so that I can keep upto date with their latest tweets without always being glued to my feed.

You don't need to tell people when they've been added – I think they'll probably notice when their lists count has gone and I think that if you do send out 100 "hey you made my Twitter list" messages, those users that follow you and aren't on that list will get pretty annoyed pretty quickly and unfollow. I don't think there is any harm in tweeting "I just created a Twitter List" with a link – I would hope that any list I made was useful and would be of interest to other Twitter users.

Keeping a list private vs. outing it in public is interesting. If you make your list public, there are bound to be people who may think "why am I not on there", and I think that for subjective lists, private may be the way to go whereas if a list is 'factual', there is no harm at all in making it public.

Personally, I will try to avoid creating "top xxx to follow" type lists – as [Chris Brogan so brilliantly points out](#):

"I realized what I'm not going to like about them: they will exclude people. Sure, on the one hand, they're a great way to group people and information

together. For instance, I might make a list for news feeds. I might make a list about travel, like hotels and airlines.

But the minute you move into the people department, things get sketchy quick.”

And I tend to agree with him. There is no reason for me to alienate any followers or people I follow – Twitter is, by its nature, an inclusive service, and that is how I want my experience to remain.

This is only the beginning of Twitter Lists and the way they are used is sure to evolve, and hence so are my brief thoughts on etiquette. I hope that these initial ramblings are useful and help to contribute to the place we will get to in 6 month's time.

Thanks to [Anna Hardman](#), [Dan Lazarides](#), [Laurence Borel](#) and [David Noble](#) for inspiring this post!

UPDATE: Naturally, as always I forgot someone, sorry [Jacqui](#)!!

[Twitter Dies – Then What?](#)

August 7, 2009

Yesterday, social media faced it's first serious, and seemingly co-ordinated, attack. Twitter, Facebook, Google apps engine and Live Journal [were all affected by a DDOS attack](#) that had Twitter out of action for about 3 hours. The sites affected are now [working together to investigate the attacks](#).

There have been different theories knocking around about who is responsible – some say 4chan, some say Iran, some say Conficker. Whoever, or whatever it was, brought the social media industry to its knees for the longest period of time I can certainly remember.

Where did you go during this time to communicate?

I headed to Friendfeed and kept an eye on Read Write Web and Mashable to see how things were progressing.

What is interesting is that there was a feeling of helplessness, very much one of a cable being pulled out and an uncertainty exactly of what to do, within the group of people who were affected. Quite what this says about us, I'm not sure.

But it made me think – where would we go if this had been a permanent blackout? Would have all gone our separate ways, ending all of the small connections we've made, or would we have all stumbled back into each other on a different platform?

Where would Twitter users migrate to, if Twitter disappeared tomorrow? Would it be Friendfeed, Tumblr or back to Facebook?

My initial reaction was Friendfeed because it is real-time and I have imported all of the feeds of the guys who I follow on Twitter over to this platform. Others did the same. The thing is, since Twitter came back to life, I've not returned to Friendfeed to check on my inbox, as I know my contacts would respond to me on Twitter anyway.

That feeling of loss and helplessness was not pleasant and indeed was almost disorientating, strange though it seems, Twitter's ability to connect instantly one person to another, and then end that connection is even more compelling when it's not there.

[BBC Question Time on Twitter](#)

May 22, 2009

I felt compelled to turn on my TV and watch Question Time this week after seeing the vast number of twitter updates talking about the program, in which, the panel politicians were getting berated by the audience. This is indicative of an interesting behavioural change as the online world becomes more entwined with the offline.

It used to be the case that something would happen on TV and then you'd go and talk about it in a forum or leave a message on a board. Now we are being driven to engage with the offline event, because of the interest in it online.

According to a [Forrester report](#) from June last year, "Now that broadband has reached 72% penetration among Internet users in Europe and is almost ubiquitous in some European countries, consumers are spending more time online engaged in dozens of new bandwidth-heavy activities."

[and...](#)

"A global survey from Accenture recently confirmed that consumers were rapidly adopting multiple viewing platforms for TV. There were 13-point increases in the number who would watch content on personal computers (74 per cent in 2009 against 61 per cent in 2008) and on mobile devices (45 per cent in 2009 versus 32 per cent in 2008)."

This, of course, demonstrates that watching TV over the internet is a) easier and b) more widespread (but we all know that anyway).

But is the Internet driving us back to watch TV we wouldn't have otherwise? With iPlayer and 4oD for example, you can watch shows retrospectively. But what about that principle happening in real time?

bbcqt and Question Time were both in the top ten trending topics on Twitter – was I the only person on Twitter to be tempted to turn my tv on and find out what I was missing? Indeed will the same have occurred with Eurovision?

The key thing here, is to decipher whether this is happening because people want to become a part of something that they are missing out on to contribute to the discussion, or if they want to see what is happening just to be a part of it.

[Talking to journalists on Twitter](#)

December 20, 2008

I've recently had two extremely differing experiences as a PR approaching journalists on Twitter.

A client of ours recently hi-jacked a news story, which our business division took care of, and put out an e-shot on the same day which was tasked with selling in. I experimented with approaching a couple of journalists I follow on Twitter to see what the best way to throw a story idea at them was. What I found was two very different results. I pitched the e-shot at 6 hacks and had 3 positive results and 3 negative results.

I used the same text for each of them – very colloquial and humanistic. If you've read my previous posts about my theories on [how PR should be conducted](#), you'll hopefully have ascertained that I'm as honest as possible in the way I communicate with journalists.

The first set of hacks were all very receptive to this approach, and actually appeared to be genuinely interested in why I was using Twitter to contact them. I ended up having a fifteen minute conversation with a BBC News correspondent about this very topic – this is notable for several reasons a) we spoke about the story for literally a few minutes and the remainder of the time we spoke about Twitter and different methods of communication b) it's difficult to get hold of ANY BBC journalists, let alone the guys creating outside broadcasts c) we've built a little bit of a relationship, albeit only fledgling, but I hope the journalist in question will remember me next time not because of the story, but because of the way I conducted myself.

The second group were all very suspicious. Am I just another jumped up PR trying to get around their bullshit radar? Am I trying to appear 'cool' by talking to them on Twitter in a bid to get kudos and hopefully coverage for my client? I hope that's not how I would come across to them. In fact, one particularly important journalist was overly grumpy with me – he may have been having a bad day, and this is fair enough, but don't take it out on little old me trying to give you something (which turned out to be very) juicy to write about!

So what did I learn?

That Twitter is just another conduit in the PR/Journalist communication path. It's an interesting, and so far, primitive way of getting in contact. There are increasingly more writers looking for comment on Twitter, which is a great thing. If, as a PR, you can get what your client needs to say in across in one or two tweets, then you're doing your job pretty effectively. I think journalists are very open to this.

Pitching stories in is a trickier subject, as I've discovered. You need to catch the journalist in the right frame of mind, even more so than when sending an e-mail. A polite f*** off over e-mail is deletion, on Twitter you may just encounter a tweet back that isn't very pleasant! Look at what previous tweets the journalist has posted in the last 24-48 hours, find out if they're busy or don't want to be disturbed, or feeding the cat – whatever. It is even more critical to time your tweet right than when sending out an e-mail – make sure you're certain the journalist will be happy to be contacted and you may well strike gold.

[Top 5 Tips: How to talk to journalists on Twitter](#)

December 21, 2008

Following on from my recent blog post looking at an [experience I've had talking to journalists on Twitter](#), I thought it might be good to lay down a mini checklist of what you should be aware of when trying to sell in a story to a hack already on Twitter:

- 1) Find out if the journalist you're targeting is happy to be spoken to by PRs with stories on [Twitter](#) – if they despise the fact you're trying to pitch to them on their favourite micro-blogging site, they'll despise you even more afterwards; don't risk harming that relationship.
- 2) Read recent tweets – if the journalist is about to go and take their kids to school, the last thing they want is their phone vibrating telling them about a great new lead – there *are* more important things in life.
- 3) Make sure what you're pitching is relevant – if you can't convince a journalist in 140 characters you might as well lose your press release in their inbox. Make sure you know, as you should anyway if you were to send an e-mail, exactly what floats their boat.
- 4) Don't be a droid! Ok so you've got a set of messages you have to get across to said journalist to keep the client happy. That doesn't mean you have to reel them off like a robot. Be original and be yourself, if you're trying to be overly-PR, you'll get found out in an instant and ignored from then on.
- 5) Don't be afraid of being knocked back – the initial contact has been made and as long as you stick with the above four points, you should be fine. Selling in stories can be torrid sometimes and Twitter is giving us another angle with which to communicate and converse with journalists, and them with us, so make the most of it.

[UK Regional Newspapers on Twitter](#)

April 28, 2009

Back in January, I wrote a post looking at how [regional newspapers can use Twitter](#), and embrace the new ways of communicating rather than competing against them. How pleased was I then, to see that the [Camden New Journal](#) have got a Twitter feed, *and* used it to break a story, [@newjournal](#).

The CNJ used the twitter feed to live tweet updates from this weekend's [Camden Crawl](#), London's premiere 'rush from a to b and miss the bands you want to see' annual music street party. And, whilst there could've been the use of a hashtag to help keep the character limit down and keep the tweets in one place, it provided a great insight into how the newspaper can use emerging technologies to keep their interest followers abreast of the latest local news. In London, this should become widespread – many Londonistas will be on the service and, if they're not already, I'd suspect they soon will be.

According to [Twitter Grader, London](#) is one of the top cities in the world for Twitter users, and that is set to grow, what with it being the centre of the media world and all, (Disclaimer, being in London this makes me prone to London bias, and I'm sure colleagues in San Fran or Chicago would disagree).

However, how can we expect the vast majority of local papers to do this, considering some don't have a [website](#) yet, and others are scared of the impact on their advertising revenues?

It's a brave, but ultimately very smart move in the long run – a local paper can build up their twitter presence, develop a relationship with their followers and when an advertising based model for companies pops it's head round the corner, they can charge advertisers for direct contact with local people through the twitter feed.

"Need a Camden plumber? Tweet Joe Plums" for example. A simple classified ad in the form of a tweet. The only danger to this is that the feed becomes a spam fest with no news and only advertisements, but that would then see the newspaper's followers fall and a drop in revenue – so why not limit the amount of advertising tweets...

[Twitter vs Digg – measuring success](#)

January 26, 2009

So it's official: [Twitter](#) is as popular as [Digg](#) according to [new findings from Hitwise](#). This makes it the 291st favourite website in the UK, [IT Pro portal report](#). With a [974% jump](#) in users over the last 12 months, Twitter is hitting the mainstream in a big way. Helped by celebrity endorsers such as Jonathan Ross and widespread press coverage, Twitter is now inescapable.

All of which is wonderful, and long may it continue, but does this huge rise in popularity mean that it should now be included as a primary part of a PR's social media offering to clients they represent?

In simple terms, if it already isn't, it soon will be.

Many MDs, CEOs or founders may be sceptical of Twitter and how much use it actually is. There are a number of reasons for this:

They've got bigger things to be wondering about, like sorting out their budgets

There's no accurate way of measuring how much influence or what PR actually does on Twitter

It could be a fad, and something that will fade in the next 12 months

They just don't get it

However, what we must exercise here is patience.

At the moment, ROI is a huge HUGE influencer on where investment is going to be made. How can PRs show that social media, and Twitter, is providing a bigger ROI than a £100k advertising campaign. At the moment we can't really. Unless you sit and count through every single conversation every day for 6 months instead of being on the phone trying to get coverage – *no-one* would pay *someone* purely to do that.

Upto now, success with a social media campaign could be measured by the amount of views a video has and if it goes viral, how many members your [Facebook](#) group gets and how many Diggings a webpage gets. And how important is getting on to that first page of Digg?

It's massive.

Digg gets [327 million page](#) views a month and about 30 million uniques. That's a lot of pairs of eyes rolling over your brand name in a short space of time. What Digg allows us to do is measure the initial uptake of an article in readership. We can **measure**. That is the key here.

We'll only truly be able to prove Twitter's value to PR when there are consistent and accurate tools that let us compare positive/negative content over a period of time set by a specific keyword. I'd argue we're not far off that. [Twitter Search](#) is one of many key word monitoring tools out there, and there is a tool called [Happy Tweets](#) that calculates how morose or jovial your tweets are. If there is a clever bod out there who can amalgamate the two and make it measure set

periods of time then chuck the results out in graphical form, tell me about it and we'll make some money ;-)

[How can bands use Twitter?](#)

February 12, 2009

It seems to me that bands, musicians, artists, however you wish to classify music makers, have yet to 'crack' [Twitter](#). There are many artistes on the micro-blogging service making the most of the opportunity to tweet. [Lily Allen](#), [Mike Skinner](#) and [the Maccabees](#) are all active social media purveyors, tweeting now and then various random snippets such as:

PETA , By the way my coat isn't real fur, but it was bloody expensive. Cover me in paint and I WILL send you the bill.

Just gave magic a big fat ableton controller for his birthday. Light up DJ toys and a beautiful woman is all a man needs

...from the aforementioned Ms. Allen and Mr. Skinner. But, how about this from the Maccabees:

We have just announced some exclusive final tickets for our Camden Barfly show on March 5th over on our myspace...very limited!

Freebies? Offers? To people on Twitter? Not yet.

A conversation with a journalist from my [former local rag](#) got me thinking about what bands could be doing to engage with their fans on Twitter. ([And here's the resulting interview](#))

Now, one of the hardest bits about being in a [band](#), is building buzz around what you're doing and getting people to come to your gigs time and time again. So why not make each one a little bit special and only **announce it to people following you on Twitter?**

Or what's more, we're all familiar with the elusive invite code that protects new startups from over-eager users, so why not use a similar system **giving away free tracks to tweople?**

Twitter should not be used by bands, as many do, to simply say 'got a gig in Camden, see you there'. That is of course broadcasting. Why not **ask fans on Twitter where they want you to gig**, or how about offer a **competition** to play round someone's house?

Use Twitter to find artistic types who like your music, and **ask them to create something** – a t-shirt or your next CD sleeve
And, like the Macabees, if your fans are saying nice things about your latest record, **say thank you**.

You can follow [my band Cedar on Twitter](#) too, where essentially I'll be experimenting to see what ways Twitter can with and against us, I'll be sure to let you know how we get on.

[Can Twitter Make Your Band Famous?](#)

November 26, 2009

The first thing you do when you form a band is get yourself on Myspace. You don't even need a song recorded, just get your band's name registered and you're famous. Sort of.

Where would musicians be without [Myspace](#)? What did we do *without* it? Oh yes, play gigs and try to sell CDs...

Can the social media really, I mean *really*, give a band the extra audience they need to 'make it'?

The obvious examples of Lily Allen and The Arctic Monkeys, both of whom leveraged Myspace to build hype around their music are, so far, the only artists to have properly engaged with an audience on the web, despite the vast amounts who have tried.

What about the likes of [Tumblr](#), [Twitter](#) or [Pownce](#)? Can micro-blogging services do for your band, what Myspace did for theirs?

The argument for:

1) If your band is active enough, status updates can offer an insight to your followers what life is like in a band, even if it is only your band. "On way to venue, stuck in traffic" is hardly the most outrageous post, but, it lets your followers know that they too, stuck in traffic, are on your level.

2) Offers of exclusives are a wonderful motivator for a fan or a would-be fan. Offering your followers an exclusive track if they sign up to your feed is a positive interactive tool that can encourage loyalty. Ok so it's not a hand written note inside a CD case, but it's the 21st century's equivalent.

3) A loyal following could convince a minor label to take a chance. Much in the same way 50,000 listens of your visionary work on Myspace will grab a record exec by the shoulder, 5,000 people who want to know your every rock and roll move is a sign of a decent sized fanbase.

The argument against:

1) Being in a band isn't really that entertaining for an outsider, unless you're U2 or Radiohead. Who cares if you're stuck in traffic on the way to a horrible little pub in south London. Not me.

2) There's not enough people switched onto these sites yet to make a difference. If only a handful of tech journalists are listening, they're not going to get you into the NME or the ears of a buying public

3) It's idealistic to think that record executives are tuned into social media. A lot of A&R people are still looking on Myspace to find bands and not monitoring content feeds from bands, promoting their music in a web 2.1 format.

[Can Twitter Make Your Band Famous? Part 2](#)

December 26, 2008

A month ago, I posed the question, [Twitter Can Make Your Band Famous](#) and asked you all to take a survey looking at different aspects of Twitter and bands using it to promote themselves. Now, I can reveal the results!

Only 38.5% of everyone who voted said they'd follow an *emerging* band with 76.9% saying that they would follow their *favourite* band on Twitter – a key statistic that tells musicians that if they provide the right sort of updates then their fanbase will feel engaged, *but* only if you are of a certain popularity level. I imagine the [Ting Tings](#) would be popular, whereas [Cedar](#), would not.

But what sort of information are fans looking for? According to the poll, gig updates (69.2%) and witty or insightful tweets (69.2%) are the favoured topics. When I say witty or insightful, these are most likely to be observational or commentary led snippets, possibly of a satirical nature.

Interestingly, only 38.5% said that if a band proactively followed them on Twitter, they might reciprocate, but 61.5% of bands don't use social media enough. Now this is a dilemma for bands, especially those who have just started out. If you want to bring your audience closer to you, and they *do* want your input, but, they don't want it on Twitter, what tools do you have?

Forums and blogs are the nuts and bolts. [Danny McNamara](#) of [Embrace](#) is always actively talking to people on his band's forum when he gets the opportunity. [Elbow](#) and [Doves](#) often write on their blogs and share photos. Utilising social networks is the spirit level, Facebook and Myspace being the obvious candidates for that first foray into that particular add a friend fantasy land – indeed we've seen the [Arctic Monkeys](#) and [Lilly Allen](#) do this to brilliant effect.

So what have we learned?

That the survey was not pointless exercise! Now, remember, a poll needs at least 1000-1500 respondents to be a serious representation of the population, I had a marvellous 52 responses! Thank you to everyone who cast their opinions, one day we'll hit the four figure mark.

But primarily, I think that the results show that social media is a good way for bands to get closer to purveyors of their music and that they are willing to be involved when they're approached, but only if they think the band is going to add a particular value to their social media experience.

It is, essentially, principally the same as any social media contact – a type of value must be added, whether it's comedic, academic or insightful.

[o2 iPhone Twitter Experiment](#)

April 12, 2009

I'll be honest, after being initially sceptical of the iPhone, I have been convinced that the o2 driven wonder phone is the way to go. I apologise to [Elliot](#) unreservedly for taking the Michael out of the connection speed, dodgy connectivity and unresponsive vibrate alerts :-)

I have, in a bid to upgrade to an iPhone now, rather than in July when my contract is up for renewal, deliberately tweeted the following in the hope of getting o2's attention:

Oh hai o2, have 3 months left on mobile contract – anyway to upgrade so I can get an iPhone now rather than later?

I have tweeted this on an Easter Sunday at 18:51 when the team in their offices who'd usually be monitoring for such activity will surely be on Easter hols, and resuming their social media monitoring on Tuesday.

Why?

- a) It'll be interesting to see if I get a response
- b) I want to see how long it takes to get a response ([o2 is mentioned 15 times in 2 hours according to Twitter Search](#))
- c) I want to know how personal the response will be
- d) Will I be directed to their sales line or will I be able to talk to an o2 representative over Twitter?

This is of interest to me particularly because of the PR I do in the mobile space and my general interest in brand engagement in the social media sphere. The official UK o2 Twitter account is [here](#) and has been active today, so let's see what happens...

[o2 iPhone Twitter Experiment: Concluded](#)

April 22, 2009

Last week, [I started an experiment](#) to see if [o2](#) would respond to a [tweet I sent](#) shattering into the Twittersphere.

The aim of the experiment was to see if I would get direct contact with someone from o2 who might be able to help me upgrade to an iPhone, without speaking to anyone from o2. It was a kind of a test to see if they would respond to a seemingly random tweet from someone they'd never heard from before.

Well, a bit disappointingly, they didn't. As rightly suggested by several people 'why not just @ them?'. Well, I could have done, but that would defeat the object. I have no qualms with o2 about a non-reply, and I have no issues with their [customer service](#) – let me make this quite clear. I have been with o2 for more years than I care to remember and they've always been pretty good.

What this demonstrates is that for brands who have an active presence online, the goal posts have shifted. For consumers online, the goal posts have shifted. For consumers offline, the goal posts are that little bit further away.

There have been several stories about brands actively engaging their customers on Twitter to solve issues. [Comcast](#) have a real person behind the scenes helping with queries for example. This means that a customer can have an issue resolved in real time and can get answers from a brand representative almost instantaneously, and, because it's on Twitter, there's a bigger prize than if the conversation was conducted over the phone.

Is this leading to [Twitter snobbery](#)? By using Twitter to engage with those customers online, are brands neglecting every customers who are not online, let alone on Twitter? This is a big issue that may leave some feeling a bit miffed to say the least. Why should Granny Smith be queue jumped by Tom 2.0 just because Tom is on Twitter? She shouldn't, in reality she should probably get priority, but, because any failure to deal with a problem could spread like wildfire on our favourite micro-blogging platform, this happens.

So what has the experiment taught us?

Our expectations are changing. As customers we expect instant resolution; as brands we are expected to react within minutes, and this is an issue which is only going to grow.

[Twitter in Schools](#)

May 25, 2009

There has recently been a growing discussion around [Twitter's use as a front channel](#), highlighted no better than at the recent [Somesso social media conference in London](#).

Alongside the speaker's stage was a big screen with a live twitter feed which pulled in tweets with the relevant [#smo09](#) hashtag, which provided a real time commentary of what was being said.

So, why can something similar not be used in schools?

This week, a Scottish teacher has been investigated following her [reported use of Twitter](#), which is prohibited by the school she works at. She is not facing disciplinary action, but her local council is 'looking into the matter'.

The content of her tweets revolved around some of her classes, and weren't particularly positive:

"Had S3 period 6 for last two years...don't know who least wants to do anything, them or me."

"The thought of having some of my S4 beyond exam time doesn't bear thinking about – for them as well as me I suspect."

Now, I am not condoning her use of Twitter as a vent – I think it was unprofessional and naive. However, I think this raises a valid question: How can Twitter be used in the classroom?

[David Hopkins](#) put together a deck which looked at exactly this, and he hit upon several ideas:

Classes: Open discussion in timetables seminar/class, continue outside the classroom

Community: Create community feel through linked tweets

Instant feedback: Approval/disapproval of recent discussions, issues, etc

Public notepad: Share inspiration, reading, thought, ideas etc

Technology: Laptops, netbooks, iPhones / iTouch and other smartphones, any Internet enabled device

Messages: Use Twitter as personal message board

You could not use Twitter (yet) in a class full of 12 year olds, they would, I'd predict, abuse this and use it for purposes other than education. However, if you are in a class at University or 6th form and have access to the internet, these pupils should be self-constrained enough to use this as a platform to share ideas and questions with each other. This helps to stimulate discussion and to rationalise thoughts with your peers and to engage with the subject you are following.

To [restrict use of Twitter](#) will soon be seen as draconian and the first group to rebel against this will be those in education who should have access to the latest technologies to help them learn and develop ideas.

To follow innovative education related people, have a read of this [Top Ten Twitter Education Feeds](#) post.

About

I work with the Spooks at Edelman Digital, where they let me play on Twitter and come up with cool things to do for our clients who range from a global accounting firm to a professional social network, and a global beverage brand to a global coffee chain.

I am a purist in my approach to working digitally. As a blogger, and generally subversive type, being honest, transparent and holistic in what I do both personally and professionally, is very important to me.

My background is in music and consumer PR, but my passion is for all things digital and how we use social networks, micro blogging platforms and the blogosphere to communicate.

I'm fascinated by the media and the different ways we spread messages and interact with each other, be that through PR, advertising, marketing, word of mouth and new social networking platforms.

Before I joined the hectic world of PR, I studied journalism at Westminster University which I hope has given me the skills to be journalist and PR friendly. In a media industry where these two professions will be forever intertwined I think it's important to be aware of how the grass grows on both sides of the fence.

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