



What are you doing to master the Twitter-verse?

With the possible exception of Facebook, Twitter generates more controversy than any other social media site. Moreover, the program's simplifying limit of 140 characters per message has been complicated by a multitude of supplementary applications.

For PR practitioners, Twitter offers a vast marketing audience and reaching them requires a thorough understanding of the Twitter-verse.

Evolution of Twitter

Upon its inception, Twitter asked participants, "What are you doing now?" However, as more serious users migrated to the program, it became a source of links to interesting articles.

As Twitter evolved, the transmission of links became constrained by the 140-character limit. Programs such as www.bitly.com sprang up to "shorten" links by providing an alternate URL.

Still, Twitter is consumed by a lot of drivel and spam, so sophisticated tweeters should adhere to the 80/20 rule: 80 percent of your tweets should be informational and only 20 percent purely promotional.

Establishing a presence

Twitter lets everyone see your messages without any of the boundaries you find on

Facebook or LinkedIn. You can access anyone's Twitter account to grab their followers, who will generally reciprocate out of common courtesy. Sophisticated tweeters will automate the reciprocation process using programs such as www.socialoomph.com.

A dividing line of about 1,000 followers separates Twitter professionals from dillitantes. The "Twitter Yellow Pages," www.twellow.com, will help you find followers for your clients by searching on their industry or location.

You can benchmark your clients' growth on Twitter by determining their Klout score (<http://klout.com>) on a scale of 1 to 100.

Twitter programs

PR pros should include their clients' branding on their Twitter home page by using www.freetwitterdesign.com to add logos and website colors. Color Cop, another auxiliary program, helps you match colors exactly by dragging the icon of an "eyedropper" over any part of your screen to get its color-index number.

The popular TweetDeck provides an interface to let your client monitor Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn simultaneously; another useful program, Your Twitter Karma, lets you "whack" (unfollow) people who don't reciprocate, ensuring more people will

follow you than the reverse.

You can also funnel followers from Twitter to LinkedIn because the latter provides much more background about its members. Just include your LinkedIn address via an automatic message on socialoomph.com.

Further refinements

You can avoid consuming vast amounts of time on Twitter with additional tools. Twitterfeed.com can be used to automatically tweet out blog headlines; socialoomph.com can set up the equivalent of a Google Alert for any keyword in your Twitter-stream; lists can be used within Twitter itself to divide followers into subsets.

The infamous hashtags, any topic preceded by a # sign, have played a major role in everything from revolutions in the Middle East to the groundswell for Conan O'Brien. Just include them in your messages and they will go to everyone following that topic.

Twitter continues to grow in an organic way. And just like search engine marketing, PR professionals must keep up with the latest developments.

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