

## Making Twitter Actually Work By Ralph Tegtmeier

Twitter has become everybody's darling ever since major companies like Dell publicised how many millions of dollars they're actually making via this 140-characters-is-enough microblogging platform. Expectedly, this has called many web entrepreneurs, including major corporations, to the fore, hoping to integrate Twitter into their portfolio of online marketing tools. After all, this is where masses of potential clients seem to be flocking together, creating an ideal arena to increase exposure and solicit quality leads.

Nor did the major search engines fail to adapt: both Google and Yahoo have struck multimillion dollar deals granting them access to the Twitter "firehose" to manifest that No. 1 buzz phrase of 2009: "real-time search." So, it really doesn't get more mainstream than that.

However, as with most new technologies and markets, a lot of misconceptions tend to abound. Merely rolling out a slew of mindless promo messages to a few thousand Twitter followers with whom no deeper relationship has been established is bound to boomerang badly. Blatant PR failures are a frequent occurrence, and whenever this happens, large parts of the Twitter community react in a most unforgiving way. It's not that a more subtle, soft approach is nothing that couldn't be implemented, given that adequate resources are assigned to it and an intelligent long-term strategy is being pursued. Yet, far too many

companies still seem to be getting this entirely wrong.

There's a lot of Twitter automation services and tools around that, if not adopted properly, will actually aggravate the issue. Many of them may seem intuitively sound, one example being automated direct messages (DMs) to welcome new followers. Unfortunately, in real life, this is probably the most hated and unfailingly ridiculed technology of them all: a surefire way to minimize your campaign's chances of success.

It's little surprise that there's a tremendous amount of mystique surrounding Twitter in corporate board rooms these days. And the most common contention to be heard across the web is quite obviously a backlash of ill-reflected company marketing strategies gone awry: "Twitter is an utter waste of time. Sure, it can drive traffic nicely, but you just can't make any money from Twitter." Yet, nothing could be further from the truth — it seems the time has come to bust this myth-in-the-making.

Making Twitter actually work for the level you're targeting does require insight into the actual mechanics of Twitter — and online conversations in particular. At my company, we conducted tests for several months before we finally decided to shift a major portion (about 75 percent) of our marketing efforts to the Twitter platform with stunning success. Sales aside, we forged several new strategic partnerships and even hired qualified staff via Twitter — and all this at an unprecedented speed and degree of efficiency.

Indeed, the real question is how to bring your message across this huge stream of endless tweets and how to actually be heard in an ocean of white noise without breaking the bank. Obviously, automation is key here — but which automation tools

to use? They do come in many flavours, which tends to amplify the confusion — a challenge that a Search Engine Strategies panel will address in depth. Starting off with applications that will allow you to find and organise your followers, your special interests timelines and conversations, the spectrum ranges from traffic and influence metrics analysis to scheduled time zone and geolocation specific tweeting, and, finally, automatic content generation.

Beyond the deployment of specialized applications, you will need to be aware of a set of technicalities like how to prevent getting your account banned by Twitter, when and how to launch your tweets for optimal results, how to deal with Twitter spam and phishing issues, and more. Treading the fine line between ripping success and utter failure is about the right kind of credible interaction. So, you'll want to learn why subtle, suggestive marketing works best on Twitter — and how to automate that effectively, too. Combined, this will furnish you with effective strategies to outpace your competitors.

At fantomaster.com, we have been in the Internet business since 1999. You do tend to get a bit jaded after all that time spent in pursuing countless fads, the dotcom bubble, the incessant hype over IT, and lots more. The Twitter experience, however, has effectively managed to revert all of this — not the least because it's so eminently profitable if you do it right. \*



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*Subtle, suggestive marketing works best on Twitter.*

### Want to learn more?

Ralph will be moderating the "Automating Twitter" session on Thursday at 4:15 p.m. For more information, visit

[SearchEngineStrategies.com/london](http://SearchEngineStrategies.com/london)