



## The Chaffey Column - December 2008

### **Twitter for Business**

Twitter seems to have passed the Tipping Point with new celebrity Twitterers like Richard Branson, Stephen Fry and Al Gore becoming active within the last few months.

Although you may have heard the hype about the microblogging service Twitter (<http://www.twitter.com>), you are a lot less likely to be using it; users number around 3 million worldwide. Even Barack Obama, the user with the most followers or friends only has 35,000, but he seems to have used it and other web media to his advantage!

If you haven't used Twitter, it enables its users to post short messages or "tweets" of up to 140 characters by different web services. But it offers much more than an instant messaging client. Its value is in its openness; you can keep tabs on what's hot from a wide community who will link to the latest, most significant blog postings and discuss topics.

To get a feel for what's involved, go to [www.twitter.com/stephen\\_fry](http://www.twitter.com/stephen_fry) and you will see that he has around 20,000 following his latest exploits such as a filming trip to Africa. Posts are very similar to status updates in a social network such as Facebook, indeed 'tweets' including links to relevant articles can be syndicated to Facebook. The main difference is that the audience for Twitter feeds tends to be wider and more interactive – users can ask questions of their followers who can reply. Facebook recently tried to purchase Twitter for a reported \$500 million, showing the potential synergy between them.

Jeremiah Owyang ([www.twitter.com/jowyang](http://www.twitter.com/jowyang)), a social media analyst at Forrester gives an example of the business use of Twitter. He has around 15,000 followers for who he provides insights about the latest developments in social media, so improving the profile of his employer, Forrester.

Unlike many twitterers, Owyang doesn't regale his audience with details of the local weather or school run. On his signup page, he explains how he doesn't use Twitter by avoiding: "Personal Minutia: I rarely talk about waking up, eating lunch, or starting my car, instead, I want to add value. Excessive personal discussions: I've been criticized for not @replying at people, but it's because I'm sensitive to not overload the community with a discussion that's only relevant to a few people. Instead, I may direct message them, favorite a tweet, or shift to email."

So is worth twittering for business? As always, the answer is "it depends". If you have a popular blog or you are a publisher appealing to a web savvy audience I recommend offering Twitter as a choice for your subscribers. For example, publishers such as the Guardian ([www.twitter.com/guardiantech](http://www.twitter.com/guardiantech)) and E-consultancy ([www.twitter.com/econsultancy](http://www.twitter.com/econsultancy)) use Twitterfeed to automatically syndicate their blog postings. But is best to not only push stories, but elicit feedback and participation. Journalists working for these organizations also have their own Twitter accounts which tend to be more personal.

Twitter is also useful for web startup companies and larger agencies to position their business. Many journalists such as Mike Butcher of Tech Crunch ([www.twitter.com/mbites](http://www.twitter.com/mbites)) now use Twitter both to find and post stories. [Business Week](#) has featured an article on the CEOs of tech startups who use Twitter to communicate to customers, journalists, potential investors and employees. Michael Acton-Smith the [www.firebox.com](http://www.firebox.com) and Moshi Monsters founder who spoke at the National B2B Centre conference in September is an example of active UK CEO Twitter user - [www.twitter.com/acton](http://www.twitter.com/acton).

I have also become a Twitter convert in the last month ([www.twitter.com/davechaffey](http://www.twitter.com/davechaffey)) and my only regret is not starting earlier since it provides a great way to keep bang up-to-date with the latest developments in digital marketing. See you on Twitter!

### **About the author**

Dr. Dave Chaffey, is the Director and lead consultant for [Marketing Insights Limited](#), an independent digital marketing consultancy. He is the best selling author of several [Internet Marketing books](#) used by digital marketing professionals and on many University and College Courses globally. His latest book, eMarketing eXcellence: Planning and Optimising Your Digital Marketing, written with PR Smith, was published in June 2008.