

# Who should handle your Twitter feed?

Twitter (and any other social network) is a form of public communication. Even individuals who are representing themselves are using it as a platform to reach a broader audience. Throw in a few hashtags and re-Tweets and suddenly you may be talking to millions of people.

At an organizational level, who should handle your Twitter feed? For many organizations, it falls to the communications/marketing folks (fine) and for some it is interns (not so fine). Some organizations have their top executive tweet (really good, I think).

And then there is Sweden, yes the country of Sweden (or rather its tourism board). You see, Sweden has embarked on an experiment to allow citizens to handle the @sweden Twitter feed. There are some rules on the ground—apparently, citizens should not discuss political views.

Someone forgot to tell the latest citizen to handle @sweden, a 27-year old “holy mother of two” Sonja Abrahamsson, that racism should also not be displayed. Sonja apparently is a huge fan of Adolf Hitler, and seems to be just a tad anti-Semitic. You can read all about it in this story on The Atlantic Wire and this story on AdWeek.

How is having Sonja do some stupid (racist) jokes helping to communicate anything positive about Sweden to any readers of the Twitter feed?

The person in charge of your Twitter feed is representing you (your organization, business or country) to the world. He or she is in effect, your public spokesperson. As such, this person should have the following characteristics:

- Be very knowledgeable about your organization (or country)
- Understand how Twitter works and that it can be quoted and used as a news source
- Be familiar with all key messages, press releases and other public information
- Be prepared to answer questions and comments professionally and not emotionally
- Be enthusiastic about your organization (or country)
- Keep personal opinions to him/herself

What do you think? Who handles your Twitter feed? Would you ever let someone like Sonja take over your feed? Thoughts and comments welcome!

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## **Should you do all your marketing on social media?**

Social media has lots of pluses when it comes to marketing. Among them are:

- Low cost (especially compared to the cost of advertising on television)
- Word-of-mouth value for trust and amplification
- Speed and ease in execution

Social media is a VALUABLE part of a marketing communications plan, but, it should not be the only part. If you put ALL your effort/dollars into social media, there is little doubt that you will be failing to reach all of your target audience.

Let me tell you about two companies that make their business

solely on online traffic, but are advertising in other media: Constant Contact and Reputation.com

In case you have never received an enewsletter, you should know that Constant Contact is an established email marketing business. Many organizations and businesses use Constant Contact to send out email campaigns. Constant Contact advertises its services on the radio. Yes. On the radio.

Reputation.com works on making sure that you preserve a good reputation online. It is useful for people/organizations that have received negative reviews or are associated with with negative news/information. Reputation.com advertises in print (I saw a print ad this morning in the Washington Post). It also advertises on television.

If these two companies—which do business online—have to take their advertising off line, that should tell you that you cannot rely on social media (or online media) alone. You have to mix it up. You have to reach potential customers where they are, and they may not be on social or online.

Do you do all your marketing on social media? If so, tell me why. If not, also tell me why.

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## **Me! Me! It's all about ME!!!!**

Two-year-olds LOVE the word me. They are just learning that they are individuals and that they want whatever their siblings or friends have. "Me too," they shout. "Daddy, Mommy, look at me!!!"

You would think Twitter has been overrun by a nursery school. In endless posts, self-promoters don't use the word me as such, instead, they go on about their blog, their client, their big idea. Post after post after post. Never "engaging" with others, never re-tweeting others, and certainly never sharing anything useful.

Take for example the life coach who just came up with a brilliant idea. She is going to make sure you hear about it—she even created her own hashtag. And she wants you to join in. Or the business development "expert" who wants you to like her Facebook page, and asks you every SINGLE day, several times a day. Or the PR guy who constantly tells you how great he is because his VIP clients have been featured in the media.

Sure, you should use Twitter and social media outlets to promote your business (and yourself if you are your business). HOWEVER, if all you do is self-promote, then you are mired in ME-ONLY thinking. In other words, you are being egotistical and/or narcissistic in your use of Twitter. Twitter is a SOCIAL media platform. Social means that there is more than one person out there, right? You want to INTERACT with other people, not just have people look at you.

Think about the Twitter users you enjoy following. What makes them stand out? I bet they:

- Share interesting articles and insights
- Interact with you (answer your questions, comment on your tweets)
- Re-tweet what you share

In other words, they don't only talk about themselves. They have grown out of the "terrible twos" and have learned that there is an US or a WE out there, not just a ME.

How should you deal with the "me-all-the-time" tweeps? Easy. Unfollow. You won't miss their egos clogging up your stream.

What do you think about my post? Ha ha! Just kidding.

Seriously, though, how far should self-promotion go on Twitter?

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## 3 Social Media/Web Marketing Mistakes to Avoid

Just this morning, I have seen all three of these mistakes, and by prominent websites/social media marketers.

**Number 1: Not having links open in a new page/tab.** Why is this a mistake? Because you are practically pushing people OFF your website and on to another.

**Number 2: Poor social sharing tools (or worse, not having them).** Poor social sharing tools are those that don't provide the title of the post, or the blog, or the author. The example I came across this morning gave me this when I clicked to share on Twitter: Currently reading [URL address]). How is this sharing helpful to anyone? You have to provide a reason for people to read your Tweet.

**Number 3: Not checking @ mentions on Twitter.** Someone is trying to communicate directly with you—is it wise to ignore him/her? Big companies with customer service problems would do well to check their @ mentions. This is easier done with a Twitter client like Hootsuite or Tweetdeck that automatically

puts @ mentions in their own column.

Are these your top three mistakes? What would you add or subtract?

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# What is going on with the social in social media?

## Twitter trolls and raconteurs

If you follow me on Twitter you know that I often share articles and insights regarding communications, marketing, PR and social media. You will also see a lot of political commentary. I know that having a political point of view can be a turn-off to some potential clients, but I have chosen to use my social media to share what is important to me.

Yesterday, I tweeted about how the GOP is working to deny access to contraceptives. Promptly, a pro-Mitt Romney supporter (don't know name or gender or location) tweeted back that contraception is not health care. I pointed out to him or her that getting pregnant can lead to health complications for certain people so contraception certainly can be health care. He or she said there are many "natural" ways to prevent conception. It kept going until the troll was silenced with something he or she had no answer for...why insurance should cover Viagra.

After this exchange, I was left wondering once again why people on Twitter seek out those who they disagree with and

start sparring with them. I don't. I am not there to fight with those that don't see the world like I do...and I certainly don't seek battles out. If I disagree with someone I follow/follows me, that's a different story. I didn't go out looking for a fight.

Social media can connect you to people all over. In my mind, I would rather find those people I connect with rather than those I disagree with. I would rather find friends than enemies.



Photo from Loriane DiSabato via Flickr.

### **Facebook "friends"**

Facebook friends are people you have met at some time in your life, and with whom you share a Facebook "connection." Sadly, it is not a real connection but rather an artificial one. There are those friends who never use the site at all. Are you connected if you never hear from one another? And then there are those that share every minute detail of every day. They aren't connecting—they are spamming everyone they have met with everything on their minds. And then there are those who only feel comfortable connecting over Facebook. These people

are incapable of picking up the phone or sending a non-Facebook email. Instead, they “connect” with you by liking your post or wishing you a happy birthday on your wall.

On his blog, the 8 pm Warrior, Aaron Briebert said in the post “Warning: Social Media is Killing Real Communication (and Relationships)” that social media is a form of deferred communication, and one that is

*tearing apart traditional relationships. Especially among young people. As we get overwhelmed by deferred communication, stuff is missed. Divisions are formed.*

Mashable recently published this post: “Is Social Media Actually Making Us Less Connected?”, in which Professor Sherry Turkle from MIT says that technology is impacting the quality of our relationships.

*One major issue, she [Turkle] said, is that when we text, email or post to a social networking site, we’re able to project ourselves as we want to be seen. “We get to edit, we get to delete, and that means we get to retouch.”*

*Inversely, Turkle notes that a face-to-face conversation “takes place in real time and you can’t control what you’re going to say.”*

*Further, with our phones at our constant disposal, Turkle says we’re only paying attention to the things we want to pay attention to. And that leaves us increasingly disconnected from our friends, family and co-workers as we simply turn to our devices when a conversation no longer interests us.*

Social media is not helping anybody develop social skills, in fact, it seems to be killing social skills. If we have a disagreement with someone, instead of having a difficult conversation, we are unfollowing or unfriending. If we don’t care for someone, we just hide their posts or block them. And

there are those who expect that you will learn about major life events (engagements, break-ups, promotions, babies) from their Facebook status.

**The fact is real relationships take effort.** Facebooking and Tweeting can be done in a few minutes a day. It's quite easy to post a happy birthday message on someone's wall. But to call the person, send him or her a card, or see him or her in person takes time and effort.

Do you think social media is really social?

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## 'Cause it's your birthday

Wishing people a happy birthday has become uber popular thanks to Facebook. The social network reminds you that it is your "friend's" birthday and makes super easy for you to post those two two words "Happy Birthday" on his/her wall. Oh yes, some people get more creative and wish you a great day, or to have fun. Depending on the number of friends you have, you could get dozens, if not hundreds, of greetings.

Does this mean that birthdays are more important now than ever? Is Facebook tapping into the little girl/boy in everyone who just loves her/his birthday and the celebration of it?

I think the birthday greeting phenomenon points to several things:

**Facebook has made it easy to connect without really connecting.** Posting Happy Birthday on someone's wall is easy. Writing a card or an email or (gasp) picking up the phone and calling, now that takes some effort.

**Facebook is ruling our lives.** If Facebook reminds us, then we

remember somebody's birthday. If not, it is like it doesn't exist. Some people are living their lives on Facebook—using it to announce milestones (births, engagements, divorces), snub people, brag, proselytize, look for sympathy (oh...I am so sad says the status update).

**Facebook gives us a false sense of belonging.** This is a corollary to my first point. We think that if 100 people wish us happy birthday it must mean something. I assure you, it means little to nothing.

**Facebook has made a decision to promote birthdays, and we are all blindly following.** I don't see Facebook promoting anniversaries, or job promotions, do you? We have seen how Facebook arbitrarily decides what we should care about—witness the new time line or the highlighted stories in the news feed—and we are powerless to change it.

Let me be clear—I am not against birthdays. Heck, there are fewer things I enjoy more than birthday cake (sheet cake, preferably chocolate, with some vanilla frosting...yum!). I am just against the new world Facebook is creating for us and the sheeplike way we are all following it.

If you aren't on Facebook, does it mean you don't have a birthday?

**Have you signed up for the DBMC quarterly newsletter? First issue of 2012 is coming up in February. Enter your name and email address on the upper right-hand side of this page.**

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# One week without Facebook

It's been a week since I logged into my personal Facebook account. One week in which I haven't "liked" anything or found out what my "friends" are busy doing in their lives. And guess what? It's been OK.

I decided to avoid Facebook this week because frankly, I am sick of the site. Between the false feeling of connection to the inspirational quotes, location check-ins and general braggadocio, I am not sure which irritates me the most. And it is definitely not the point to be annoyed when you are on a website.

This week I have been on Twitter and LinkedIn. On these social networks I generally learn more than I ever do on Facebook. Twitter provides me with up-to-the-minute news, links to information I may have not seen and a way to chat with people in real-time. LinkedIn lets me see what people are doing professionally.

This leads me to social media marketing. If you are relying on just one social network like Facebook to do all your marketing communications, you may be putting all the proverbial eggs in one basket. You should diversify. Yes, Facebook has a HUGE audience. But it is a POTENTIAL audience, not a measured, constant audience. People do not yet HAVE to go to Facebook every day. They may choose to, but they don't need to go there to check mail or get their news.

I would still counsel you to use Facebook as part of your marketing mix. **Because it is opt-in for people, you are communicating with those who are receptive to your message.** That is truly valuable. Just don't share inspirational quotes or you will lose me!

Your thoughts? How do you feel about Facebook?

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# One question to improve your Twitter stream

Do you have the kind of Twitter followers you want? Are you getting the information you want and need from your Twitter stream? If the answer is no, I have one question for you to consider before you post your next Tweet:

**Who cares about what I am about to post?**

Do your friends care? Your mother? Your potential clients? Your colleagues?

Not everything you want to say has to be said on social media. If you want to vent about your new dishwasher, why not call a neighbor? If you want to make brunch plans—why not text your friends?

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# How to be a better Twitter user

Twitter is not for everybody because it takes some time and skill to use it to its full effect. Since there are so many conversations and so much information being shared, its easy to get lost and not see any usefulness.

**First, define what you want from Twitter.** Do you want to follow like minded people? Are you a news junkie and want the latest breaking news? Do you want to get your name out there?

Once you have defined what you want, you can then choose to be a “lurker” or a participant. Lurkers just listen and gather information without adding anything to the conversation. They generally don’t start conversations nor share ideas. Participants are more active—choosing to share links, engage in conversations, re-tweet content.

Obviously, you will get more in the way of real connection by participating actively.

**Second, understand how Twitter works.** Twitter is real time conversation. People are talking to each other right now. And they are talking to many people. Sometimes, newbies just respond to a question someone has posted hours ago, without any reference to the original question. That is confusing.

**Third, get a Twitter client like Tweetdeck or Hootsuite.** It is far easier to see what is going on using a Twitter client than it is to use the Twitter web interface. You can see your @ responses (responses that mention you) and you can create specialized feeds for different subjects or groups of people.

**Fourth, monitor Twitter for @ responses or for Tweets mentioning your name or product.** There is nothing worse than lack of response or super delayed response. I posted something five months ago and someone is just getting back to me. That is not timely...and it shows a complete lack of understanding on how to use Twitter.

**Fifth, understand and use hashtags wisely.** Hashtags that define a topic are useful when conducting searches or grouping tweets into one heading. Some people love to make up hashtags and use many of them on a single tweet. I say choose one that encompasses the topic, if you want to have a greater presence around that tweet.

**Sixth, interact!** If you have chosen to participate in Twitter, make sure you are interacting with other people. If you see something that is interesting, re-tweet it. Answer people’s

questions, comment on their posts.

**Seventh, don't just sell, sell, sell or self-promote.** Nobody wants to see a sales message all the time or your bragging. Twitter allows you to unfollow people quite easily.

This is not the Twitter Bible. I am sure there are other things to keep in mind...what would you add?

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## **And another thought on social media ROI**

Social media is about connecting with people on a more intimate and individual level than mass media. In the past, companies spoke at their audiences through advertisements and other marketing forms. Now, companies can INTERACT with their audiences, in fact making communications more of a two-way phenomenon.

With that in mind, the closest comparison to social media is in-person networking. I wonder how many companies calculate the ROI of sending a company representative to a networking event. If the person makes ten connections but no sales is that considered bad ROI?

Networking, and social media, is about building connections. There may or may not be a dollar value that can be attached to those connections.

Thoughts?