

Is Twitter a High School for Adults?

There are followers and lists and getting many of each seems to be the focus for many people on Twitter. Some people make pleas for more followers and then there is “Follow Friday” in which people recommend to their followers other people to follow.

If this sounds a bit like a high school popularity contest, it is, for some people. Many people use Twitter to give and get information and ideas, but there is a subset of people who use Twitter to prove their hotness/coolness/hipness/in-the-knownness. These people go so far as to form cliques on Twitter, endlessly referencing their clique friends in every Tweet. They converse in public with each other and rarely engage with non-clique/inner circle people. Several of these people are “social media experts,” which is ironic since they are not being very social (I must credit Daria Steigman of Steigman Communications with this idea).

I have theories as to why Twitter becomes like a high school for these people but I won't share them here. It is important to remember what social networks are for, and that is to make it easy to create connection. If all you are doing on Twitter is sending shout-outs to your five closest buddies or endlessly promoting yourself, you are not using Twitter to its full potential. I can't say that you are not using Twitter for what it is intended because I have no idea what its founder was thinking when he created the microblogging site.

Twitter is a great learning tool and it is a great sharing tool. It democratizes access and can really serve to mobilize people around causes. Eugene Robinson makes excellent observation in today's Washington Post, saying:

Twitter and other networking sites are unfiltered by editors or other gatekeepers. They rely on the wisdom of the crowd to sort out what is accurate and what is not. To someone (like me) who has spent his career as a gatekeeper, this was tremendously unsettling – at first. During the Iran protests, I saw how quickly Twitter users identified misinformation that was being posted by government propagandists. The self-policing capability of the medium is impressive.

The other big difference is that social networking offers not just information, but also the opportunity to take action. Twitter users were able to work together to mask the identities of the Iranian demonstrators who were using the site to tell the world what was happening. Last night, along with the news from Haiti came suggestions for how the Twitter community could most effectively help the relief effort.

Is this “news” the way we used to think of it? No. But it’s news people can use.

Read complete article [here](#).

To those popularity hounds on Twitter I say put high school behind you. If you have something worthwhile to say people will follow you no matter who your friends are or aren’t.