

twitter

means business

how
microblogging
can help
or hurt
your company



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Julio Ojeda-Zapata



“Twitter Means Business” Book Excerpt

How microblogging can help or hurt your
company

By
Julio Ojeda-Zapata

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to you by Happy About



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<http://happyabout.info/twitter/tweet2success.php>

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Praise for this book

"Julio's book on Twitter is the first business-minded book about the topic that I feel comfortable recommending to companies wondering why they should consider the tool for their organization. I've found a resource that I will share effusively."

Chris Brogan (@chrisbrogan), social-media authority at chrisbrogan.com

"Julio brings us the first handbook for companies that want to properly understand, learn from and engage with the uniquely powerful social-media phenomenon that is Twitter. His crisp, clear writing style and thorough research make 'Twitter Means Business' an accessible point of entry for anyone looking to learn more on the topic."

Laura Fitton (@Pistachio), Principal and Founder, Pistachio Consulting

"Twitter just might be the best place on the planet—or the universe—to grow a new audience. 'Twitter Means Business' gives you a jump-start on the best practices and social-networking etiquette you need for success."

Veronica McGregor (@VeronicaMcG), creator of the acclaimed @MarsPhoenix and other space-mission Twitter feeds

"Think microblogging is all about announcing what you had for lunch? Think again. In 'Twitter Means Business,' Julio offers compelling case studies that demonstrate the power of engaging customers in this emerging social-networking platform—140 characters at a time."

Bryan Person (@BryanPerson), Social Media Breakfast founder and LiveWorld social-media evangelist

"Millions of people gather around the new water cooler known as the internet and talk about products, services and brands. Only now what they say is permanent, archived and searchable. The bad and the good never go away. In this book, Julio gives excellent advice to businesses on how to participate in one of the major water coolers on the web—Twitter—and come away with not just more good than bad said about them, but new legions of loyal brand fans."

Jason Falls (@JasonFalls), Doe-Anderson social-media director and SocialMediaExplorer.com author

"Of all the up and coming technology and communication tools on the web, Twitter has mystified and empowered more people than any similar service. In 'Twitter Means Business,' Julio makes short work of demystifying Twitter, both on threats and opportunities for business. He provides an engaging mix of big-brand and small-business case studies, applications for PR, and a plethora of Twitter crowdsourced tips from—where else?—Twitter. This book is an excellent primer for companies and business professionals that want to really understand the impact of Twitter for business."

Lee Odden (@leeodden), CEO, TopRank Online Marketing

"In 'Twitter Means Business,' Julio profiles two of my Twitter friends, Comcast and JetBlue. Yes, these companies are now my friends because we talk, on Twitter. Thinking about using Twitter to connect with your customers and prospects? Julio provides case studies to guide you. Really, really great stuff."

Steve Garfield (@stevegarfield), pioneering video blogger and Boston Media Makers founder

"With 'Twitter Means Business,' Julio delivered a comprehensive guide for companies of any size to embrace microblogging. The many real examples and actionable tips point the reader to find and join the conversation. With this book, you are on your way to start a successful social-media program for your small business or global brand."

Julio Fernández (@SocialJulio), global-search and social-media strategist, GlobalStrategies.com

"This book captures Twitter's essence and explains its powerful ability of allowing businesses to converse with their customers."

Connie Bensen (@cbensen), online-community strategist, conniebensen.com

"Consider 'Twitter Means Business' required reading for those who believe Twitter's sole purpose is to give the self-absorbed an avenue to crack wise in 140 characters or less. Julio clearly spells out the practical purposes of Twitter for individuals and industry."

Christopher Breen (@BodyofBreen and @HairofBreen), Macworld Senior Editor and technology-book author

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Foreword by Jennifer Leggio

Twitter changed my professional life.

If you had asked me about it a year ago, I would have had a snarky reply, like "What a silly name!" or, "Who needs to know what I'm doing all the time? or, "You mean, like 'twitterpated'?"

Most internet users still scoff at the name when they hear it, even with exposure in the New York Times and on CNN, and mentions by top political candidates and television shows.

Scoff I once did. Lucky for me, I happened to participate in a social-media webinar that encouraged its participants to sign up for the microblogging service. That turned out to be one of the best professional things I ever did.

I first used Twitter as a kind of public instant-messaging system—a faux pas that many newbies commit. I would post thoughts such as, "Going on a date tonight!" or "I really want some pizza," or "Seriously, is anyone listening?"

Shockingly, people were. I improved my game. I began discussing issues I saw in the communications industry, and began dialogues about computer-network security and enterprise-technology issues that are close to my heart. (Yes, you can do this in 140-character snippets.)

I peppered all this professional-speak with hockey chatter, improvisational comedy-isms and other personal-yet-not-too-personal

thoughts that make me who I am. I realized that people would not only talk to me because of my professional prowess but because they could relate to me as a person.

That is the essence of social media, no?

My social-media standing up to this point was nearly imperceptible, even though I was an avid blog reader and used Facebook, among other social-networking tools. When I would comment on blog posts, I'd rarely get a response.

Now, after months of talking to my favorite bloggers via unidirectional commentary, they were finally writing back—in 140 characters or less, on Twitter.

I found that Twitter is more than a communication tool—it is an engagement tool. Unlike blogs that emphasize a single author's thoughts and allows reader comments as a bit of an afterthought, Twitter fosters true two-way conversations. I was suddenly having many of these.

Before long, my Twitter chatter had led to more business- and technology-related lunches and dinners than I ever thought possible. It helped me pull together an online community of like-minded network-security types.

I developed a kind of personal "brand" courtesy of Twitter while enhancing the brand of my employer, a leading network-security company. Twitter gave me a new way to listen to my company's customers and its partners, and to support our sales and support teams.

It was my deepening understanding of this tool, and the grounding it gave me in social media, that eventually led to my role as a technology blogger and commentator. I write about all things social media—and particularly how they relate to business endeavors.

While Twitter is easy to use, its simplicity can be deceptive. Using it in business can be tricky, and takes much more than sitting in front of a computer and banging out random 140-character sentiments. Exploit-

ing Twitter the way Comcast, Zappos and JetBlue have requires a grasp of its nuances and the many ways it can be used in a business context.

That's one of the reasons why "Twitter Means Business" is such an important read for entrepreneurs, CEOs, communications professionals and anyone else in business who wants to learn how to engage customers or their own employees via the Twitterverse.

The stampede of businesses into the Twitterverse is proof that Twitter isn't a flash in the pan. Even with aggressive consumer-microblogging competitors, along with a new class of companies trying to create corporate-grade microblogging services, Twitter endures.

It's the microblogging service that started it all. It's a story you must understand, even if you eventually migrate to other microblogging services. After reading this book, you will get it. Then you can say that Twitter changed your life too.

Jennifer Leggio has worked in the strategic-communications industry for 15 years, most recently at a top network-security firm. She writes about business social-media trends on her prominent ZDNet "Feeds" blog, a part of CNET. She founded and co-runs a social-networking community for the network-security industry. She's @mediaphyter on Twitter.

1 Why Twitter Means Business

Comcast was annoyed with me. Specifically, a senior Comcast executive in the southwestern United States, far from my Minnesota home base, was irked with something I said on an internet service called Twitter.

He told me so. To be more exact, Scott Westerman "tweeted" this. That is how millions now interact on the internet. Twitter, a kind of "social networking" service, allows them to publish their thoughts in the form of brief text snippets or "tweets." A tweet cannot exceed 140 characters. Once tweets are placed online, anyone can see them and respond.

Among Twitter-using pals who "follow" each other on the service, this is hardly unusual. Twitter has become a popular way of socializing via PCs and phone text messaging. But the fact that a faraway Comcast executive whom I didn't know happened to pick my tweet out of the millions published every day and take the time to respond, was remarkable.

That's what this book is about. Twitter means business. That is, a service initially meant for informal communication between individuals has recently become the darling of businesses, large

and small. Such firms are finding the "Twitterverse" a fine place to keep an eye on their brands, and what is said about them. They are creating Twitter accounts and making friends with other users.

This is how Westerman and I connected. He, like a number of other Comcast employees, was monitoring the Twitterverse for mentions of his firm. He didn't answer all such tweets (key staffers at Comcast's Philadelphia headquarters are paid to do that), but took it upon himself to respond selectively. Westerman found my tweet¹ using a keyword search, mere minutes after I had posted it one April afternoon, and fired off his mildly indignant reply.²

I was so surprised and flattered to hear from such a high-level Comcast executive that I later interviewed him for this book (see Chapter Two). Comcast is one of several dozen Twitter-hip companies profiled in these pages. Some are giant corporations; others are small family-run companies. All have found Twitter to be invaluable as a business tool.

If you're reading this book, you're likely with a company that has heard about Twitter and wants to learn more. Or maybe you're part of a public-relations (PR) or online-marketing agency that advises companies and thinks Twitter might be worth a look—for you, your clients, or both. This book also looks at PR agencies that have become Twitter believers.

Twitter: From Blather to Business

Twitter might seem like the last place on the internet any self-respecting company would want to do business. It can be a trivial and childish realm, filled with blather about bodily functions, pet excrement and what users had for breakfast, lunch or dinner. I plead guilty to this, tweeting about such inanities as my beloved burritos. I even came up with a mock observance, Burrito Avatar Friday, with a different burrito as my user picture or "avatar" every week (my followers have come to expect this morsel, and I can't disappoint them).

1 <http://twitter.com/jojeda/statuses/799893624>

2 <http://twitter.com/wscottw3/statuses/799909787>

Twitter seems to encourage such triviality with the question it places above its text-input window: "What are you doing?" (To which I reply, "Eating a yummy burrito, of course.")

The Twitter format alone might give a respectable company pause; how on Earth can it utter anything of significance in chunks of 140 characters or less? And who would care?

Yet, for all its perceived and real inanity, Twitter has recently seen an influx of companies that have set up accounts and begun using the service for everything from sales and customer service to internal communication and hiring. Turns out the 140-character limit is a boon; Twitter is easy compared to other ways of communicating online, like blogging. (Twitter is sometimes called "microblogging" because tweets are like teensy blog posts.) Just tweet something; this takes all of a minute. Companies are now doing so with gusto.

Twitter is hardly the only place for such companies to create a presence online, beyond their own sites. The web is in the throes of a "social media" revolution that emphasizes two-way communication, a huge change from the old days when companies only had to post information online and let others digest it. Today, they're engaging their customers in web discussion forums, on blogs, and on social-networking services like Facebook.

Twitter still lacks Facebook-level popularity. If you mention Twitter to college students, you will often get blank stares. While consumers increasingly depend on social media to share customer-service stories and find buying help, Twitter isn't one of their top picks. Thirty-nine percent of candidates recently surveyed by the Society for New Communications Research said Twitter and similar services (like Pownce) had "no value" for consumer research.³

³ <http://tinyurl.com/5jq8h8>
sncr.org/2008/04/22
/new-study-indicates-consumers-use-social-media-to-share-customer-care-experiences-and-research-companies%E2%80%99-customer-service-reputations

Yet, still the companies come. The reason: Twitter is on fire. Its users are a remarkably vocal, energetic crowd. More and more businesses want this energy to rub off on them, and seek to generate some fireworks of their own as they discover their inner tweeters.

How Twitter Can Help Your Company

Twitter is your window into a world where your company is likely a topic of discussion. Think about that for a second. Hundreds, thousands—or even millions—are talking about you. What they say—good or bad—is priceless information, regardless of how you act on it. Some companies use Twitter passively, absorbing what is said in the Twitterverse and factoring it into their decision making. Others are active, using Twitter to offer information and to engage their clients and prospects.

Bottom line: Paying attention to Twitter should be a top priority.

How Twitter Can Hurt Your Company

The worst thing you can do with Twitter is to ignore it. That's when real damage can be done to your bottom line, especially if your customers are somehow unhappy about you, and saying so in the Twitterverse. Tweeting is so quick and easy that Twitter users tend to vent about their frustrations. So what if they are frustrated about you? They'll say so; bet on it. And if their tweets contain misinformation about your company, you could get into trouble, as false rumors about you spread at the speed of the internet.

Bottom line: Pay attention to Twitter.

Companies that neglect their brands on Twitter will sometimes see their company names or products hijacked by people not related to their organizations. In one recent, notorious case, an account associated with the Exxon Mobile business giant was revealed to be the handiwork of a person who didn't work for that corporation.⁴ The Twitterverse is replete with corporate brands that are being hijacked, or simply being neglected by their owners.⁵

So Who Is On Twitter, Anyway?

Twitter, though hardly the leading social-networking service on the web, has grown at a rapid clip.

In fact, Twitter was the fastest-growing social network as of September, logging 343-percent growth over the previous year with a leap from about 533,000 users to about 2.4 million users, Nielsen Online announced in mid-October.⁶ As of April 2008, traffic to the Twitter site had grown eight-fold over the previous year, according to another internet-tracking firm, Hitwise.⁷

Twitter was the most popular microblogging service as of last summer, with traffic that far surpassed that on rival services like Pownce and Jaiku, according to Hitwise. As of mid-summer, Twitter traffic was twelve times greater than that of Plurk, and about 24 times higher than that of FriendFeed, two services often cited as Twitter alternatives.⁸

According to site-analytics service Compete, Twitter saw more than 2.5 million unique visitors as of August 2008, a 443 percent increase over the previous year.⁹

Friendfeed did little better than 500,000 unique visitors between August 2007 and August 2008, with flattening traffic towards the end of summer, according to Compete.¹⁰ Jaiku and Pownce had a fraction of this, with Jaiku doing the best at just over 160,000 unique visitors.¹¹ And while upstart Plurk saw a surge in interest at the beginning of 2008 and peaked at nearly 350,000 unique visitors around June, traffic declined sharply after that.¹²

4 <http://chron.com/disp/story.mpl/side/5920513.html>

5 <http://facereviews.com/2008/08/12/33-brands-that-suck-on-twitter>

6 http://netratings.com/pr/pr_081022.pdf

7 <http://tinyurl.com/5np52k>

weblogs.hitwise.com/us-heather-hopkins
/2008/04/twitter_gaining_momentum_but_s_1.html

8 <http://tinyurl.com/5uogqj>

weblogs.hitwise.com/heather-dougherty
/2008/07/twitter_growth_continues_despi_1.html

9 <http://siteanalytics.compete.com/twitter.com/?metric=uv>

10 <http://siteanalytics.compete.com/friendfeed.com/?metric=uv>

11 <http://siteanalytics.compete.com/jaiku.com+pownce.com/?metric=uv>

Many Twitter-traffic calculations don't even account for use on mobile phones, which is common. This means Twitter could be vastly more popular than statistics show.

Twitter doesn't release its own user or traffic figures, but co-founder Biz Stone told me in August that the service had "grown six times over in the last 10 months. It has strong growth."

To put Twitter in perspective, though, Hitwise in April ranked it 439th among websites it calls "social networks and forums," and 4,309th among all websites. Such figures meant it hadn't achieved mainstream popularity, as other social-networking sites like MySpace, Facebook and YouTube arguably have.

This hardly makes Twitter inconsequential. The raw number of users tells only part of the story; it's also key to note who these people are. Those on Twitter tend to be "the thought leaders, early adopters and influencers" on the internet, said Mike Keliher of St. Paul, Minnesota, based Provident Partners, a public relations and social media consulting agency, which watches Twitter closely.

Such people include online celebrities like Leo Laporte, the tech-podcast mogul and radio personality, and Robert Scoble, the irrepressible video blogger. They also include social-media experts like Chris Brogan of CrossTech Media and Jeremiah Owyang of Forrester Research. Also on the list: Barack Obama, who overtook web entrepreneur Kevin Rose as Twitter's most-followed user as of mid-August, and TV personality Stephen Colbert. Obama had about 105,000 followers (an unprecedented figure) on the eve of the presidential election.

Even millions of lesser-known Twitterers tend to run in tech-hip and web-savvy circles. Twitter attained critical mass, after all, at the super-geeky South by Southwest Interactive Conference in Austin, Texas, early last year,¹³ attended by thousands of social media and "new media" types, and the service remained an attendee favorite at this year's SXSWi.

12 <http://siteanalytics.compete.com/Plurk.com/?metric=uv>

13 http://blog.wired.com/monkeybites/2007/03/twitter_is_ruli.html

What such people have to say about your company, therefore, carries more weight than their modest numbers might initially suggest. So overlook or dismiss them at your peril. Twitter-savvy companies do the opposite: They pay attention to them, and engage them.

The View From Twitter HQ

Some web-savvy companies are not only wooing Twitter users, but Twitter itself. For a number of firms, a visit to Twitter's San Francisco headquarters is a rite of passage. The Nevada-based online retailer, Zappos, made a courtesy call earlier this year (you'll read a lot more about the legendary Zappos later in this book).

So did Mighty Leaf Tea Co., based just across the Golden Gate Bridge in Marin County, California. Mighty Leaf staffers arrived at Twitter HQ earlier this year with massive amounts of gourmet tea (Twitter staffers like it) and gave the Twitter troops a presentation about how the tea vendor had begun to harness the service in its business. Its Twitter account had gone online at about the same time another specialty-foodstuff supplier, the famed Whole Foods of Austin, Texas, started its Twitter account. (More on Whole Foods later.)

For Bliss Dake, Mighty Leaf's Vice President of E-commerce and Operations, that was an exciting time. He was mulling how to make tea and technology intersect, and figured that Twitter was the key. He envisioned tapping a ready-made audience of web sophisticates who know classy tea bags (the Mighty Leaf kind is handcrafted and biodegradable) when they see them. He'd start tweeting about tea, get answers from fans, and really mix it up.

Twitter is "an amazing way to connect with people instantaneously," Dake later told me in an interview. "Lots of our customers are out there—what better way to reach them?"

Twitter's Stone hears a lot of that lately, and said, "We're excited. We think it is great."

Twitter's creators had mulled such ambitious business use when they created the service in 2006. But Twitter was then a side project within a podcasting company dubbed Odeo, and "We kind of scaled it back. It was too broad a vision. We scaled it back to just people saying what they were doing."

Stone and two Odeo colleagues, Evan Williams and Jack Dorsey, spun off Twitter in the spring of 2007 (Williams is now Chief Executive) and have since endured a bumpy ride, as their brainchild has suffered all manner of service outages. Twitter has been so unreliable at times that its "fail whale," the cartoon that is displayed in browsers when the service is inaccessible, has become an unofficial, ironic mascot emblazoned on t-shirts and mugs¹⁴ (and at least one tattoo¹⁵).

Stone attributes the service's problems in part to its rampant growth, and staffers' initial inability to "scale the service." It has been playing a continual game of catch-up as it has become popular, he said, and it needs to "focus on getting ahead of those growing pains, getting ahead of the wave and not being in a crisis situation day to day."

It appeared to be making headway by late this year, logging only 41 minutes of so-called "downtime" in September and 54 minutes in August, compared to more than 11 hours in July, more than 12 hours in June and more than 21 hours in May, according to Web-tracking service Pingdom.¹⁶

Amid these problems, Twitter has made it easy for third parties to create Twitter-related sites, services or software to augment the experience. This has spawned a vast ecosystem of Twitter enhancements that have helped cement its popularity amid competition from other microblogging services.

This third-party support for the Twitter technology has been "a big surprise," Stone said, "a very big and pleasant surprise."

14 <http://zazzle.com/failwhale>

15 <http://inquisitr.com/2600/epic-fail-whale-tattoo>

16 <http://tinyurl.com/5vokel>
pingdom.com/reports/vb1395a6sww3/check_overview/?name=twitter.com%2Fhome

Stone also has been surprised by the degree to which companies have lately been willing to get on Twitter, despite its problems. The business world has been quicker to embrace the service than it has with other internet technologies such as blogging in years past, he said. He's amazed with how the Whole Foods grocery chain, JetBlue Airways and Comcast, among others, have learned to use Twitter in a variety of ways.

Such corporate use had become so important to Twitter by late this year that the service was mulling whether to begin charging companies for their business-related tweeting. This was part of increasing pressure Twitter faced by the autumn to begin making money, something that hadn't been a major priority for the service since its inception.

Companies on Twitter "are getting a ton of value" from the service, Stone told me in October, "so it makes sense to consider a revenue model."

This book documents dozens of corporate-Twitter case studies, and more are out there in the Twittersverse. As this book went to press, the migration of companies onto Twitter continued unabated. Big newcomers included Best Buy, Home Depot, Starbucks, Sprint Nextel and Popeye's Chicken & Biscuits.

So how can your company use Twitter? Oh, the possibilities...

Listening

One of the first and best ways to use Twitter is in stealth mode. You don't have to tweet a thing, just watch and listen. What are your customers saying about your company or your products, positive or (heaven forbid) negative? It's a snap to find out via keyword queries on specialized search engines such as Twitter Search, owned by Twitter, and Tweet Scan.

This turns Twitter into an early-warning system (like a canary in a coal mine) for spotting negative buzz and heading it off before it does real damage to your bottom line. Ignoring negative online commentary about your company could really hurt you. Just ask the computer

maker, Dell, which once overlooked a top blogger's complaints about its laptops and soon was associated with the buzzphrase "Dell Hell." Dell now listens closely on Twitter.

Companies that have Twitter monitoring down to a science include the Blip.tv internet-video company, which distributes daily reports among staffers about what was said about the company on Twitter. Blip.tv has been adept at spotting and addressing user discontent before it festers. At Salesforce, a provider of business-management services, a key staffer uses web search tools to find and analyze all that is being said online about his employer, including on Twitter.

Twitter users are a vocal, influential crowd, so you need to know all they say about you. It's so easy; you have no excuse. You can do it in-house, or hire a search specialist like Radian6 or Techrigy to do it for you.

Speaking

Eager to speak out? Twitter is a great place for companies to do so. It's easy; just tweet in 140 characters or less. And what you say can have a major impact. Got hot deals? Dell has made big money by advertising its deep discounts on computer hardware via Twitter.

Want to spread the word about your cool new product? Evernote, maker of internet software, has drawn an unusually large and loyal following on Twitter, where it keeps its customers apprised of updates to its note-taking applications for PCs, Macs and iPhones.

Companies that have boosted their e-visibility include the Holiday World and Splashin' Safari entertainment complex in Santa Claus, Indiana; candy maker Mars Snacks, in the guise of a sultry "Ms. Green" M&M; consumer product giant Unilever, in the guise of the popular Klondike Bear associated with ice cream bars; and Sonos, maker of audio equipment.

Such efforts will have varying degrees of success. Firms that are crassly commercial may experience a Twitter backlash or just be ignored by the Twitterverse. A light touch with this, however, can pay off in a major way—Just ask Evernote and its thousands of followers.

Engaging

Companies aren't using Twitter to its full potential if they are only broadcasting and not interacting with their customers. Twitter is all about conversations—among individuals, and also between businesses and their clientele, who appreciate seeing some semblance of humanity in the companies that sell them airplane tickets, cable internet or tax advice.

Monolithic companies like Comcast and Dell admit they once paid little attention to what their customers said about them online, much less engaged that clientele in conversation. They paid dearly for this. Comcast's low rankings in customer-service surveys are richly deserved, as the company's own Vice President of Customer Service recently admitted to me.

Now Comcast is on Twitter, finding people who talk about the company and responding to their questions and concerns. So is the multifaceted H&R Block tax-service company, which is trying to change the perception (one customer at a time) that it is solely a strip-mall entity. So is JetBlue, which has a way of startling Twitter-using travelers who get its tweets out of the blue. So is Whole Foods, the popular organic- and natural-food grocer, which has displayed a knack for replicating its loyal offline following in a Twitter-based form.

Evolving!

For firms embracing Twitter heart and soul, the service can have a transformative effect.

Look no further than Zappos, the Nevada-based online retailer, which has made a crusade out of Twitter. Its CEO is a prolific tweeter, and Zappos urges its employees to use the service on the company's behalf as well as their own. This turns them into company champions.

The benefits of using Twitter can be internal as well as external; at Zappos, it has fostered communication among its workers and become a promising tool for recruiting new talent. Even in darker times, when the company is laying off workers, these find strength in their Twitter unity. Zappos and Twitter are virtually synonymous.

A Boston-area Twitter star called Laura Fitton—known on the service as "Pistachio"—is more proof of Twitter's transformative powers. The business consultant was laboring in relative obscurity in early 2007 amid a difficult move to Boston—just in time to have her second child. She felt very isolated at that time.

"I had no contacts," she told me in a phone interview. "I was a homebound mom of two, not knowing anybody, not having the luxury to join the Chamber of Commerce."

"Twitter opened up so many doorways," said Fitton, who was initially skeptical of it, but promptly harnessed it to make friends, develop a loyal following (of more than 7,300, at last count) and become a "global presence," in the words of social-media authority Shel Israel:¹⁷

"Laura has been a communications professional for over 15 years. Yet, if you have heard of her, I'm willing to bet it has been in the last year or so. And I'll double the bet that however you have heard of her, there is a direct line on the social graph that goes directly to Twitter where she is known simply as 'Pistachio.'"

Fitton's Pistachio Consulting firm once focused on presentation coaching for businesses. As this book was being finished, she had re-launched her consultancy to focus on helping businesses understand and effectively harness online "microsharing," including Twitter.¹⁸

"I've seen what has happened to my own career just using Twitter," Fitton told me in our chat earlier this year. It has "tremendous power."

The Rest Of This Book

Here is what to expect in the rest of "Twitter Means Business."

17 <http://redcouch.typepad.com/weblog/2008/04/twittering-her.html>

18 <http://pistachioconsulting.com>

Chapter Two: In "Five Companies on Twitter," I offer five detailed case studies. The companies profiled in this chapter—Dell, Comcast, JetBlue, Whole Foods and Zappos—have led the way in corporate Twitter use. They use the service in different ways, which shows the flexibility and versatility of this still-new and novel medium.

Chapter Three: In "More Companies on Twitter," I offer a dozen quick-hit case studies focused on the likes of H&R Block, Mars Snacks, casino giant MGM MIRAGE, music-gear maker Sonos and internet-software publisher Evernote. I look at Twitter use in the media industry, as well.

Chapter Four: In "Twitter and Public Relations," I delve into public-relations agencies that use Twitter. As the PR industry has embraced Twitter en masse, it is persuading its clients to give it a look. Firms such as the Graco baby-product maker are now using Twitter, thanks to advice from public-relations advisers.

Chapter Five: In "The Twitter Veterans Weigh In," I share the wisdom of experienced users. I recently hosted a Twitter-based conversation among members of Social Media Breakfast Twin Cities, a group composed of people with deep Twitter and social-media experience. They had plenty to say about how companies are using Twitter.

Chapter Six: In "Twitter Tips, Tricks and Tools," I walk you through the service basics and then dig deeper, showing you how to bend the service to your will. An ecosystem of services and software is available to Twitter users, and I point you to the best stuff. I note Twitter competitors, and show how to juggle multiple services.

Epilogue: My employer and I became a case study for this book as I was writing it. I am on staff at the Minnesota-based St. Paul Pioneer Press, and I have touted it informally on Twitter. In September, my editors formalized this by having me tweet on the newspaper's behalf during the Republican National Convention in St. Paul. It was quite an adventure.

A Note About Twitter Style

When identifying Twitter users, I'll use their full names as well as their Twitter handles or usernames. In keeping with Twitter tradition, I'll precede such usernames with the "@" symbol. I'm @jojeda for personal tweets, @PiPress at the Pioneer Press and @twitinbiz for book-related use.

Throughout the rest of this book, I will quote some Twitter content verbatim. Let's look at one of my tweets, to understand Twitter syntax:

jojeda: Happy Burrito Avatar Friday, everyone.

When one Twitter user makes a reference to another user, this is usually done by typing that person's username preceded by the "@" symbol somewhere within the body of the tweet. When someone names me in a tweet, for instance, they will compose that posting something like this:

jongordon: Ladies and gentlemen, it's Burrito Avatar Friday. See @jojeda

When one Twitter user addresses another directly in a public tweet, the username of the recipient goes at the beginning of that tweet:

jongordon: @jojeda I expect a NEW burrito avatar every Friday. Don't even think about recycling old burrito images.

The tweet recipient can then reply:

jojeda: @jongordon I will do my best to accommodate—though I should note that last Friday's very colorful avatar has wormed its way into my heart.

About the Author



Julio Ojeda-Zapata has been on the front lines of the internet and computer revolutions as a syndicated columnist, editor and award-winning writer for more than a decade. He's an internet addict with a bulging RSS newsreader and thousands of tweets (he is at @jojeda and @twitinbiz). He writes for the St. Paul Pioneer Press, part of MediaNews Group. He lives in St. Paul, Minnesota, with his wife, son and a guinea pig called Pepita. Reach him at julio@twitin.biz.

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