



Wanted: more careers people on Twitter

Gill England discusses how using Twitter at work taps into a rich source of market intelligence, feedback, contacts, networks and links with your stakeholders.

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Whaaaa???

It's easy to feel overwhelmed by the hugeness and speed of Twitter. Isn't it just for hip young things and celebrities to share what they had for breakfast....? Won't it just distract me from my core business/clients? How can the Tweetosphere have anything to do with career development or career practice?

As the Twitter website tells us "Twitter is a real-time information network that connects you to the latest information about what you find interesting. Simply find the public streams you find most compelling and follow the conversations." There are currently 175 million registered users, and 95 million Tweets written per day.

"At the heart of Twitter are small bursts of information called Tweets.

<http://support.twitter.com/articles/15367-how-to-post-a-twitter-update-or-tweet>

Each Tweet is 140 characters in length, but don't let the small size fool you—you can share a lot within a little space. See it in action. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NshQFrpC2O4>

Career Services has a Twitter page. We decided to get involved in social media and to see how it could work for us. Gingering up our Facebook page and working on a You Tube presence are other ways to use this rapidly developing medium to connect in new ways with people and organisations (nationally and internationally) that have similar interests to our own.

I am one of a small Twitter team made up of web content developers, a web technical developer, a web editor and a career practitioner. Basically, we tweet anything that is to do with careers, RT (that's retweet: forwarding on others' tweets), or reply to others, progressing into an online conversation.

Imagine trying to condense some great career-related idea into a haiku! That's what it's like trying to craft a decent tweet sometimes. It's probably best if you look at a few examples of Career Services Tweets to see what I mean: <http://twitter.com/careersnz>

So why would a career practitioner Tweet?

Twitter is a rich source of market intelligence, feedback, contacts, networks, links with your stakeholders. We are still measuring our reach and impact which is also very easy to do using on-line tools such as Google analytics. On an anecdotal level, we have had good feedback on the fact we are tweeting and what we are tweeting about from our networks. Being part of a professional conversation that goes beyond the world of careers can be rewarding. With 600 followers and 525 other Tweeters we are following (as of today – but growing) there is potential to spread a message further than you realise.

In classic “planned happenstance” style, you can stumble onto links, ideas or contacts that could be anything from banal to life-changing.

You can reach potential clients too, although given the public nature of the medium and the limited number of characters, there is not much scope to give career information and advice. You are more likely to catch onto conversations or questions and make the most of the opportunity to engage with potential clients, sending them a link to your or other relevant websites.

If you work as a practitioner on your own, it is like having a virtual team of colleagues to take notice of you, ignore you, respond or chat to you. Unlike the real colleagues, however, you can just click on “exit” and they are gone – letting you get on with your work!

From my career practitioner perspective, I have been re-introduced to an “old flame” interest in equal employment opportunities, and find myself regularly retweeting EEO Trust Tweets:

<http://twitter.com/EEOTrust>

I’m also really enjoying the “Oppositional Thoughts” tweeted by Dr Jim Bright via his “Factory” blog and podcast site:

<http://twitter.com/TheFactoryPod/>



Some tips

To get people to follow you, follow as many Tweeters as possible.

Don’t agonise over the deeper philosophical meaning, ethical implications and socio-political ramifications of your tweet. Random quirkiness is likely to work better than “quote of the day” Tweets.

On the other hand, remember you are representing your own company or your employer – check out the flavour and tone of other Tweets and you will see that it self-regulates. A

good quality, relevant Tweet will be re-tweeted by others or replied to or you will gain more followers. Then you know you are on the right track.

The tone of Tweets varies. Some are news updates, snippets of information, aphorisms, questions or announcements. Most are pointing to something interesting – offering the chance to explore. Research is sometimes needed to create interesting Tweets.

I would definitely recommend removing yourself from Twitter by closing your internet browser at times of the day you don't want distraction. You quickly learn to screen out the dross and notice the gems.

On the technical side, you can set up an account on websites such as Tweetdeck or Hootsuite to view and sort your Tweets.

Some definitions

It is probably best if I don't try to explain for you what everything means.

A full glossary of Twitter terminology can be found here:

<http://support.twitter.com/entries/166337-the-twitter-glossary>

and a set of how-to instructions here: <http://support.twitter.com/groups/31-twitter-basics>

It's all pretty straightforward. Once you are set up, follow us on @CareersNZ and we will follow you.

Now you just need to begin.