



DR ADRIAN STEELE explains why
Twitter is a serious business tool

WHAT'S THE TWEET ABOUT TWITTER



the words of the UK prime minister recently, 'Too many tweets makes a twit'. I now think I 'get' it, and consider Twitter as a core business communication protocol. Twitter is not for children, I was told recently by a social media industry commentator that they prefer Facebook for many reasons. Apparently the principal reason is that Twitter's micro blog post style demands properly constructed sentences, and kids cannot be bothered to write using a degree of correct grammar. Twitter is used for business because it is interactive, easy to digest, and always more up to date than news from email newsletters or printed publications. It offers an unparalleled opportunity for opt-in opportunities to fleetingly reinforce your brand to stakeholders almost every day if you get the content mix right. It has huge potential for business, and early adopters in the global labeling industry are investing in it, including this publication.

In our short run labeling division we have the challenge of interacting with thousands of micro businesses, all really busy entrepreneurs trying

new ideas in new ways. Especially with the online marketing model we use, currency with your target audience is vital, and Twitter helps us relate to our customers. However for me, Twitter's best feature is market intelligence, giving me instant information from businesses I am interested in, and no-one else. No unnecessary noise, just the facts I want from suppliers, industry commentators, customers, competitors and prospects. If I don't need a feed any more, I instantly unfollow them and keep the information flow manageable. Who can suggest a better business information feed?

Of course not every business you are interested in is on Twitter (yet) but I think it's only a matter of time. Twitter will never replace key personal relationships, but as field sales teams become more expensive, smaller and targeted more at bigger accounts, and remote selling and service becomes more common, Twitter offers a new way of engaging with businesses in a credible way. Being up to date with your industry specific Twitter feed has given me a topical point of conversation to engage with other industry professionals I meet whilst networking, and to be blunt, to be informed helps your credibility.

B2B adoption of Twitter is about where websites were for business 10 years ago: the early adopters were exploring and benefiting, others had an ineffective minor presence and many just had not grasped the concept. If Twitter is not in your marketing mix yet, maybe it's about time to join the Twitterverse Tweeple.

Dr Adrian Steele is the MD of the Mercian Labels Group and is @MercianLabels on Twitter.

Whilst writing this piece I am on a train travelling to a smart packaging seminar. En route I am in two-way dialogue with the train provider giving feedback on the lack of facilities for mobile working business travellers. I'm doing it on Twitter. It's immediate, accurate, interactive and rewarding feedback for both me as a regular customer and their customer services. If they have any sense, and I have no reason to think otherwise, they will style their future service offerings to the marketplace accounting for this feedback from engaged customers. Such is the power of Twitter to affect business outcomes.

I have been using Twitter for nearly a year now, having ventured into the process believing, in