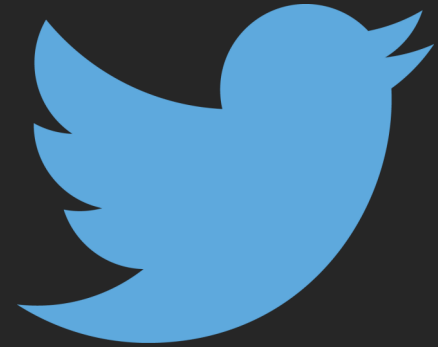


# Twitter

THE SHARED EXPERIENCE



**Twitter has been called the pulse of the planet**—a way for users to communicate and share ideas. But it is so much more than that. Many other social media platforms exist simply to stay connected with friends and family. While this is an important aspect, this feature should not become a limitation. Users should have the ability to reach outside the boundaries of their own social circle. They should be able to project their ideas out to the globe, rather than just their friends list.

This is what Twitter does. Twitter creates a shared experience with users around the globe, providing multiple perspectives and unfiltered opinions. This real-time social media platform gives a voice to everyone in the world, in a completely level playing field. By doing this, strangers can live

through a broadcasted moment together, users of any background and socioeconomic status can communicate, and a single idea can gain traction within seconds.

So what is Twitter, how does it work, and how does it transcend from a simple vanity tool to a revolutionary social media platform that forms shared experiences?

## TWITTER'S GOALS

During his lecture at the University of Michigan, Dick Costolo—the current CEO of Twitter—began by educating the audience about the purpose of Twitter and the ultimate goal it is striving for. He first introduces the concept of the “Agora,” which is the original town square where

ancient Greeks would socialize and do business (School of Information). People would trade, gossip, and meet new people in the agora. News would be spread and ideas would be exchanged. In the agora, people would receive a personal, multidirectional, and unfiltered conversation—all happening in real-time. However, there were some drawbacks. Information would take a while to spread throughout the crowds, many rumors and false information would be exchanged, and the town square was noisy, making it hard to communicate. Flash forward to the introduction of the printing press and the television. Information was being shared at a faster rate, but the communication was unidirectional—a television can only broadcast to a person, people can't respond back to the television.

Twitter's goal is to eliminate these problems by reinventing the agora. By creating a social media platform that allows for multidirectional dialogue, while still maintaining the unfiltered and personal attributes of a town square, we can rebirth a modern agora.

"We once again start to see multiple perspectives on a particular news story or event that's happening. We once again start to have a shared experience across the globe about what's happening and what we're viewing right now. We once get an unfiltered perspective on what's happening. But at the same time, it complements all these traditional forms of broadcast media, and all sorts of fascinating in ways that we would have never predicted." - Dick Costolo

## TARGET AUDIENCE

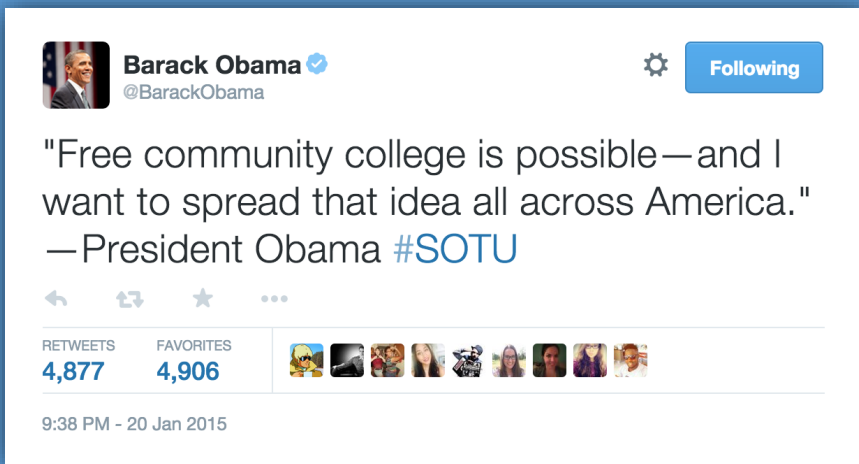
Twitter's target audience is by no means selective, but recent demographics have shown that Twitter mostly caters to adults between ages 18 and 29 ("School Networking"). Thus, college students and recent college graduates make up the bulk of this proportion. Twitter is also a platform for businesses and media to create profiles. Most companies (ex. Apple, Google, Netflix, etc.) have profiles on twitter in which they can post advertisements and notifications. Because advertising is very simple through Twitter and that Twitter has a diverse audience, these companies create their own target markets within the Twittersphere. Even Twitter has a twitter account.

## USING TWITTER

Twitter is composed of tweets. According to Twitter, "A Tweet is an expression of a moment or idea. It can contain text, photos, and videos. Millions of Tweets are shared in real time, every day" ("Story") . Users can also interact with tweets to help augment the social reach of a tweet. These actions are replying, retweeting, favoriting, and using hashtags.

## **"A Tweet is an expression of a moment or idea."**

Twitter also implements a User Follower system in order to connect people. Users can "follow" friends, celebrities, news sources, companies, or anybody that they find interesting. Tweets published by these profiles will then instantly show up on the timeline of the user who followed them. An important aspect is that this connection is



## THIS IS A TWEET



**Reply:** Users can comment on a Tweet to join the discussion.



**Retweet:** Users can share a tweet to their followers. Text can also be added to the retweet in order for the user to add their own thoughts.



**Favorite:** Users can favorite a tweet to let the author know that they like it.



**Hashtags:** Hashtags assign a topic to a Tweet. So, for example, Tweets that contain **#WorldCup** are about just that. Users can click on a hashtag to see Tweets related to a topic.

not mutual. Users (unless changed in their privacy settings) do not have to consent when followed by other people—they only receive a notification. Therefore a user can follow Barack Obama, without Barack Obama following the user back. This allows people to create a subscription-like relationship with other profiles. Users can follow individuals that they like and companies that intrigue them, creating a unique experience that is tailored to each user. Therefore, a diverse variety of news sources and celebrities thrive in this environment.

Users don't need to compose tweets in order to enjoy the experience of twitter. In fact, the Wall Street Journal reported that 44% of users have never tweeted (Rogowsky). This is because Twitter follows the 90-9-1 rule. Basically, 90% of the users aren't expected to contribute, 9% occasionally participate in Twitter (ex. replying or retweeting), and 1% are responsible for most of the activity on the site. Because of the plethora of breaking news and celebrity pictures sent out

through Twitter, many users find it satisfying to simply read Tweets instead of composing them.

## Users don't need to compose tweets in order to enjoy the experience of Twitter.

### NEW USER INTEGRATION

An important proponent for the large population of users is Twitter's ease-of-use. With relatively few buttons and few pages, Twitter is easier to navigate than most social media. By featuring a limited amount of powerful tools, it allows the user to become comfortable with the minimalistic style of the website and mobile app. Unlike most social media, Twitter does not try to implement every facet of social media (group messaging, event planning, calendars, etc.); instead, it focuses just on the simple concept of a tweet and labeling them through hashtags. This encourages users to explore the site without confusing

# Meet the new you.

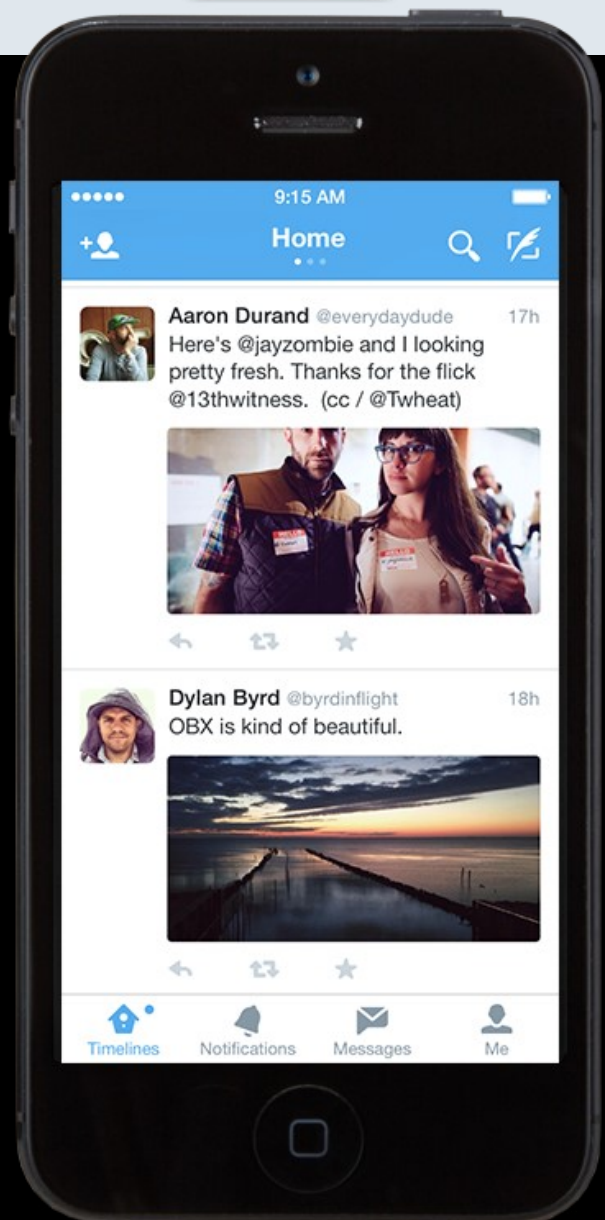


## PERSONALIZED PROFILE

The minimalistic approach to Twitter's profile page is a stark contrast to most social media. The user can change their profile and background picture, and their bio, but not much else. This allows for the user to focus more on the content than trying to make an impression on other viewers of their profile.

## MOBILE APP

Twitter also features a mobile app that allows users to access Twitter within seconds. This keeps the user always connected to the stream of information. It also helps when people "live-tweet" events. This is an action where people narrate the experiences that they are in. For example, during the Super Bowl, people will live-tweet about the game, the players, and the commercials. This creates a shared experience between those users who are watching the game.





# TWITTER THROUGHOUT THE YEARS

## 2006

**March** - Jack Dorsey's early sketch of Twitter; he sends the first Tweet on March 21.

## 2007

**April** - Twitter is spun off from Obvious Corp. into a separate company, Twitter, Inc., with Delaware incorporation filing on April 19.

**August** - The hashtag (#), first proposed by user Chris Messina, debuts on Twitter.

## 2009

**January** - US Airways plane crash in NYC's Hudson River is shared on Twitter; the photo is the first from the scene, breaking the news before traditional media knew about it.

## 2010

**April** - Twitter launches Promoted Tweets. Twitter announces it will provide an archive of public Tweets to the Library of Congress.

## 2011

**March** - Twitter shares milestone numbers for its fifth birthday, including 1 billion Tweets sent per week.

**June** - Twitter teams up with Apple to integrate Twitter into iOS 5.

**September** - Twitter announces 100 million monthly active users, worldwide. Twitter allows mobile users to share photos via SMS (MMS).

**October** - Twitter launches Promoted Tweets in timelines to all Twitter.com users.

## 2012

**June** - Twitter announces the new Twitter bird design.

**November** - President Obama marked his win with this Tweet, which became the most retweeted.

## 2013

**August** - 500 million Tweets are sent per day, or 1 billion every ~2 days. Twitter users set a new Tweets per second record.

## 2014

**March** - This year's #Oscars Tweets made an unprecedented 3.3 billion impressions, and this Tweet surpassed the previous record to become the most retweeted.

**July** - Our new Transparency Report shows a steady increase in global requests for account information, content removal, and copyright takedowns.

**October** - Twitter announces a partnership with IBM.

**November** - Twitter offers emoji as an open source library.

("Milestones").

them.

## HISTORY OF USE

Created in 2006, through the collaborative efforts of Jack Dorsey, Biz Stone, Evan Williams, Noah Glass, and other members of a podcasting company called Odeo, Twitter had an ambiguous beginning. The creators had intended to provide a service for a small group to communicate through SMS. The name "Twitter" originated from developer Noah Glass and the Oxford English: "a short inconsequential burst of information, chirps from birds." Because Twitter was originally designed as a SMS-based tool, there was a 140 character limit that mobile carriers imposed on SMSs. As Twitter transitioned to a web platform, the company chose to keep the 140 character limit to each tweet as a creative constraint.

At first, Twitter did not gain a large following because users were unsure of how to use it best or why they needed it in the first place.

"With Twitter, it wasn't clear what it was.

They called it a social network, they called it microblogging, but it was hard to define, because it didn't replace anything. There was this path of discovery with something like that, where over time you figure out what it is. Twitter actually changed from what we thought it was in the beginning, which we described as status updates and a social utility. It is that, in part, but the insight we eventually came to was Twitter was really more of an information network than it is a social network." - Evan Williams (Lapowsky)

Keeping in mind that the importance of Twitter shifted to an information network rather than a social network, users began using it as such. Hashtags, introduced in 2007, made it easier for people to sort through the information and group their tweets within a category. People began shifting away from just following their friends and family, to following news sources, sports teams, celebrities, and businesses.

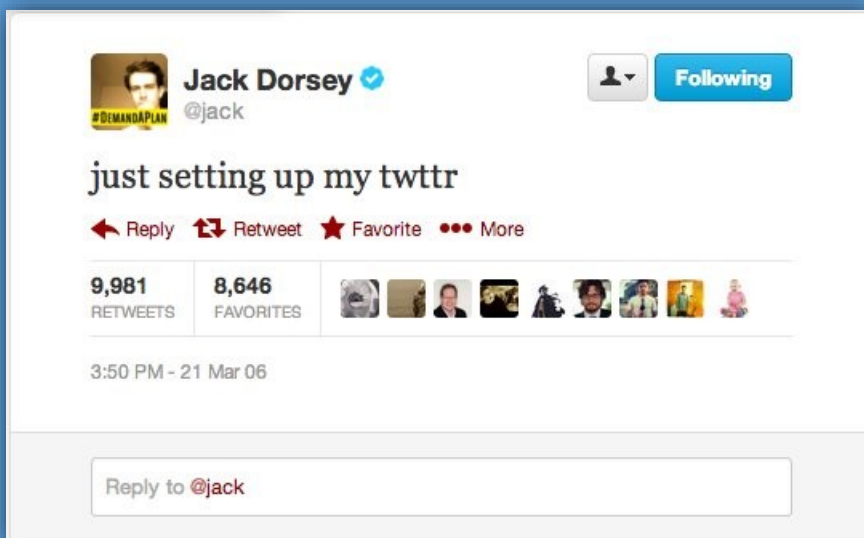
## BUSINESSES

Businesses are increasingly using Twitter as a way to release news, market their products, and communicate directly with customers. Through Twitter, companies can keep an eye out on their desired market and the general attitude that people have toward their products. They can also drive awareness to people who follow them through promoted tweets and trends. With promoted tweets, businesses can construct a tweet that will appear at

## People began shifting away from just following their friends and family

the front of a user's timeline. Companies can also specify the targeting option in order to promote their tweet to an intended audience. Promoted trends work in a similar way, allowing companies to create a trend that is highlighted on a user's home page.

However, the most unique feature of maintaining a business profile is that the company can directly communicate with their customers. This includes providing customer service. Many businesses will run their immediate help desk through Twitter, allowing employees to help customers troubleshoot their problems with a certain product. This is a simple and efficient way for companies to gain customer satisfaction. Never before has a company been so easy to access.



## THE FIRST TWEET

The first tweet was written by Jack Dorsey. At that time, the project name was actually "twttr" because the company was focusing on mobile platforms. They had to have a five digit shortcode for SMS, so they dropped the vowels in the word "twitter."

## CELEBRITIES

Twitter also has the privilege of featuring genuine accounts for many celebrities. From Barack Obama to Drake, everyone has a Twitter profile. Because of the follower system, users can become immersed in the life of these celebrities. Every picture, video, and thought that a celebrity posts is now immediately available to millions of followers. This gives users a unique inside look on the celebrity's life. Celebrities are able to reach out to the public without being filtered by a third-party system, picturing real people the way they actually are.

Another important feature is the ability for celebrities to interact with their fans. Through the even playing field created by

## Celebrities are able to reach out to the public without being filtered by a third party system

Twitter, each person's tweet has the same chance to be read by a celebrity. In many cases celebrities respond to these tweets, providing the fan with an exhilarating experience that they can share with their friends and family. For example, during a lockout season in which NBA players were prohibited from basketball, NBA superstar Kevin Durant tweeted:



@KDTrey5  
Kevin Durant

This lockout is really boring..anybody playing flag football in Okc..I need to run around or something!

16 hours ago via Echofon ☆ Favorite 13 Retweet ↻ Reply

To which a college student replied:



@groverbey  
George Overbey

Got a game tonight in Stillwater!! I need a deep threat!! RT @KDTrey5: This lockout is really boring..anybody playing flag football in Okc..

16 hours ago via Echofon ☆ Favorite 13 Retweet ↻ Reply

An hour later, Durant showed up to play—scoring four touchdowns and winning the hearts of his fans.

## BREAKING NEWS

There's no denying it; news is increasingly breaking first on social media. Newsrooms



Ellen DeGeneres  
@TheEllenShow



Follow

If only Bradley's arm was longer.  
Best photo ever. #oscars  
[pic.twitter.com/C9U5NOtGap](http://pic.twitter.com/C9U5NOtGap)

↻ Reply ↻ Retweeted ☆ Favorite ... More



RETWEETS  
3,378,897

FAVORITES  
1,942,178



9:06 PM - 2 Mar 2014

Flag media

## THE TWEET THAT BROKE TWITTER

During the 2014 Academy Awards, the host Ellen DeGeneres took a selfie featuring many celebrities. This became the most retweeted tweet in the history of Twitter—a feat achieved in just an hour. By the time the awards ceremony was over, this tweet had amassed over two million retweets, which caused the social media site to crash for a short time.

have taken to social media to quickly alert mass amounts of followers about emergency news stories. Because of Twitter's subscription-like follower system, broadcasting to users is both easy and efficient. Reporters can bypass the hassle of organizing television or newspaper broadcasting to deliver real-time breaking news directly to their audience. Using retweets and hashtags, a single news story can reach millions of people within seconds. Due to the 140 character limit imposed on every tweet, users find these tweets easier to read and understand.

Along with receiving alerts from news sources, users can also find a sea of reactions and commentary. Although many credible news sources exist on Twitter,

many users contribute to the breaking news. Therefore, users who are experiencing the breaking news situation can post pictures and video of what they see and they can describe what they are going through. This adds a first-person and personal experience that is not available through broadcast media. However, this comes with a price. Many users may knowingly or unknowingly spread false information through their tweets. This is usually resolved through online debates between concerned users.

## CONCLUSION

Through reinventing the agora, Twitter has created a space where users can participate in unfiltered, multidirectional

**#BlackLivesMatter**

**#ICantBreathe**

**#IllRideWithYou**

**#UmbrellaRevolution**

**#WhyIStayed**

**#BoycottClippers**

**#Ferguson**

## TWITTER REVOLUTION

During the revolutions occurring in the Middle East—known as the Arab Spring—Twitter was frequently used as a method to plan the protests, mobilize demonstrators, and update the public with news about the revolution. By using a social media platform, the information on these tweets gained global public attention.

Similarly, when the Ferguson protests were occurring in 2014, Twitter played an extensive role. Through the use of hashtags, protesters were able to create a battle cry against social oppression. Many of these hashtags (ex. #BlackLivesMatter, #ICantBreathe, #Ferguson) were echoed by celebrities and news sources, connected people across the world in the battle against racism.



conversations. A common theme throughout the many uses of Twitter was the lucid interaction between a single user and another entity—be it another user, a celebrity, or a company. No longer does socioeconomic or political limitations exist

## Twitter brings the world closer.

between these dialogues. An average man can chat with a celebrity. A single person can have a direct one-to-one experience with a company. A concerned citizen can broadcast his views to millions of people. By focusing on information, Twitter proves to be a more efficient way of communicating ideas.

Twitter functions as a way to connect people who are sharing common experiences. Whether it is tweeting #redwedding during the Game of Thrones finale, #GoPats during the superbowl, or #BlackLivesMatter during the Ferguson protests, an experience is only more fulfilling when you share it with someone else. These shared experiences enrich our lives and provide us with a community. This community extends past the circle of friends and family—it includes the entire world. By implementing an architecture where information can be easily composed and consumed, Twitter accomplishes what simple social networks cannot: it brings the world closer.

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\*Note: All the images are from Twitter users or from the Twitter About section.