



Clockwork White Paper Travel & Tourism

TWITTER & ACCOMMODATION PROVIDERS
What should you be doing?

September 2010

www.clock-work.co.uk



In conjunction with: **Clockwork**
Marketing



About Clockwork

Clockwork is a bespoke marketing company with a passion for providing an unrivalled, personable and professional service across the entire marketing mix. We drive ourselves to always exceed expectations and to deliver marketing solutions that are affordable, memorable and above all deliver tangible results. If something doesn't make a difference then we see no point in doing it.

Our dedicated and talented team specialise in marketing strategy, web design and development, graphic design, direct mail, data management and digital marketing. Our digital marketing specialists use a range of digital communications to maximise online exposure and increase visitors to your site, combining search engine optimisation with social media marketing, online PR, reputation management and much more.

Clockwork's clients range from prominent members of the South West's burgeoning food and drink scene through to leading estate agents, high profile hotels and retailers.

For more information on the products and services we provide, please visit our website: www.clock-work.co.uk

Our Approach:



Contents

Introduction – What exactly is Twitter?.....	4
How are hotels using Twitter?	5
Recommended actions for using Twitter	7
Advice on using Twitter & tone of voice	8
Twitter and sales revenue	9
Twitter and customer service.....	10
How to track Twitter for mentions of your brand	10
Who should be responsible internally?.....	11
Hotels on Twitter.....	12
Is it worth the effort?	13
Next Steps... ..	14

Introduction – What exactly is Twitter?

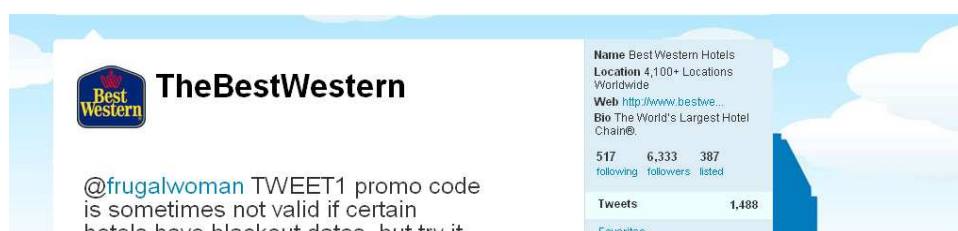
Twitter, a micro-blogging social networking platform that is currently gaining widespread use thanks to high profile celebrity endorsements, adoption by traditional news outlets and used as a communications channel by governments across the globe.

As of June 2010, close to 125 million people use Twitter, an online based service that lets people – and organisations – send frequent and short updates to their followers. Twitter is extremely valuable to organisations large and small because it is much more instant and interactive than any other online channel available. It's easy to use Twitter's search facility (<http://search.twitter.com/>) to monitor conversations and mentions of your brand, organisation or even Managing Director; travel and tourism operators from small independent hotels through to large airlines are using Twitter to communicate with customers, address customer service issues and promote special offers. All marketing managers and business owners should be registered on Twitter, even if it's just to secure your brand name and monitor mentions of your organisation.

What is it all about?

Essentially Twitter is an instant messaging platform that was developed to answer the simple question: what are you doing?

Users have space to type 140 characters about anything; these “tweets” are filtered into the newsfeeds of the others who follow you. You can follow as many people as you want and many travel and tourism companies have already developed a following of thousands:



People who use Twitter can receive other peoples updates by “following” them. Following an account causes the updates they post to appear on the main page of the user following them. To be heard though, you need to have people following you.

It is important to note that Twitter has come from nowhere to become one of the leading online channels for brands to interact with consumers and a strategy needs to be in place to ensure your organisation is not missing out on the promotional opportunities offered by the service.

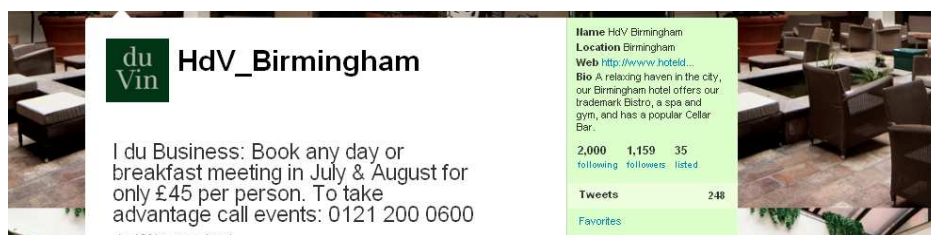
This white paper has been written to help travel and tourism businesses understand Twitter and gives some guidance on how to get value from the service.

How are accommodation providers using Twitter?

Twitter should be viewed primarily as an extension of your corporate communication and customer service functions rather than a sales channel in it's own right. In general there are two main approaches that accommodation providers tend to be taking on Twitter:

To promote special offers

An increasing number of travel operators are using Twitter to promote special offers, some are even promoting offers specific to Twitter followers



Customer service

Many providers are using Twitter to respond to customer complaints. The following example shows an exchange between a person unhappy with post he received from a hotel and the hotels swift response.

12:12 PM Jul 15th via Twitter for iPhone in reply to mat_nenton

Got spam in letterbox from @██████████: 'congrats on your birthday'. 1. I never signed up for your spam, 2. birthday is in December #fail

12:06 PM Jul 15th via Twitter for iPhone

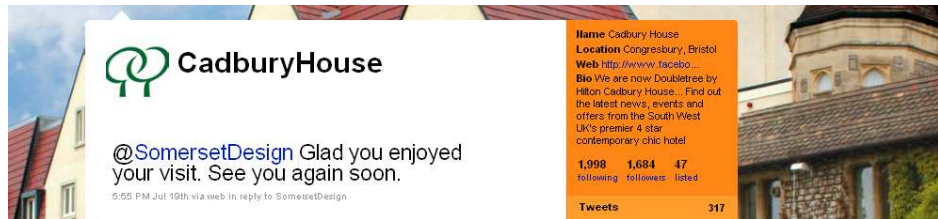
This reply to the disgruntled customer from a representative of the hotel was posted just 3 hours later:

@██████████ so sorry to hear that, I'm going to investigate this immediately! Helen

3:06 PM Jul 15th via web in reply to ██████████

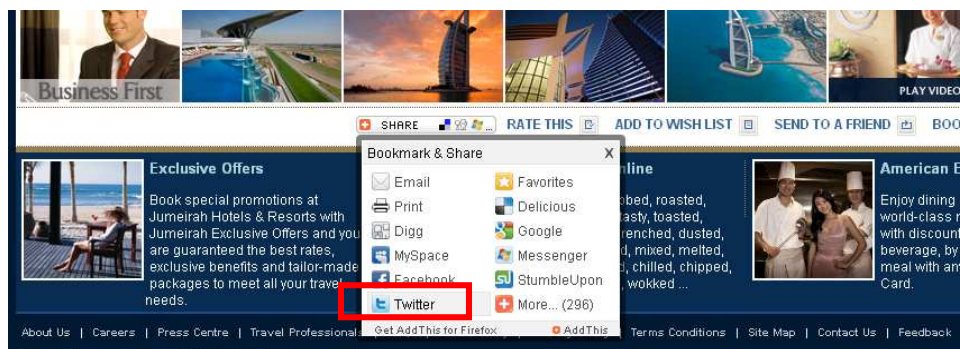
Longlands Barns, Whilborough Road, Kingskerswell, Newton Abbot, Devon TQ12 5DY
 Tel: 01803 872999 Fax: 01803 876111 Email: info@clock-work.co.uk www.clock-work.co.uk

Even positive comments about a guests stay should be responded to as this will increase customer loyalty:



Recommended actions for using Twitter

- Sign up to an account at <http://www.twitter.com> using your own business name as the account name. Even if you don't intent to use the account straight away it will prevent other people from using your business name.
- If you are ready to set up your Twitter profile, the next stage is to brand the account using your company's colours and logos for the profile picture, background and text colours. A well-presented profile will tell your followers that you care about your social media presence and you will be a good brand to follow.
- After setting up an account, the next step is to build your network. Twitter allows you to import email lists from your own contacts, however for brands the best place to start is by using Twitters search function to search for related interests. For hotels this might mean following local area guides or travel review magazines.
- Following someone on Twitter is the same thing as adding them as a Facebook friend, the only difference is that the user won't see your updates unless they choose to follow you as well.
- **Be clear about your Twitter objectives.** Are you using the service for customer relationship management, a monitoring tool or a marketing and sales platform? Understanding why you're using Twitter will help you follow these guidelines and create tailored copy.
- **Integration.** If you are serious about wanting users to interact with you on Twitter inclusion of a "Follow us on Twitter" badge on your website, blog or email communication will help encourage your consumers to check out your Twitter profile.



Advice on using Twitter & tone of voice

Each brand uses its own identity and tone of voice which will need to be reflected across all marketing communication, social media sites included. However Twitter is designed as a friendly, informal method for sharing information and useful comments, therefore your tone of voice should ideally be reflective of this.

Tweet Often

- Tweet regularly, but only if you have something of value to say. Although there is no rule for the number of tweets, tweeting too often and you might be “unfollowed”, organisations should aim for at least a couple of tweets a week.

Integrate with other digital communication channels

- If you have a company blog, website or send email newsletters, ensure that people are aware that you are on Twitter and can follow your brand. Additionally, where possible ensure that updates are posted – e.g. a link to your blog post on your Twitter page.

Quality, not quantity

- Ensure you are not regularly tweeting about what you had for breakfast. Ask yourself if this would be interesting to the people following you – if the answer is “yes”, then it’s ok to tweet!

Offer promotions & discounts

- Offering exclusive Twitter discounts or promotional codes to your followers will result in your posts getting re-tweeted and entice new people to follow your brand.

“Snip” your web addresses

- Due to the small, 140 character limit it is almost impossible to link to pages without the web address taking up all of the post. This can be improved by using one of the many URL shortening services such as www.bit.ly to shorten the links.



Are you staying in our London hotels this summer? Check out the Dalston Roof Park <http://bit.ly/cLYkai> (via @londonist)



Twitter and sales revenue

Do not start a Twitter account just on the basis that it will be a valuable channel for filling unsold inventory!

- Whilst the core online objectives for accommodation providers is to sell rooms, it's extremely important to note that providers that simply advertise to their Twitter followers are unlikely to generate any revenue from the channel. The emphasis needs to be on conversation and customer engagement with followers, not selling to them.
- That being said, Twitter does have the potential to generate revenue as done properly, Twitter offers a new channel for users to hear about your company and go directly to your site to make a purchase.

<http://twitter.com/DevonHotels>



- Devon Hotels uses Twitter to communicate with potential customers, promote events at the hotel and post links job vacancies.

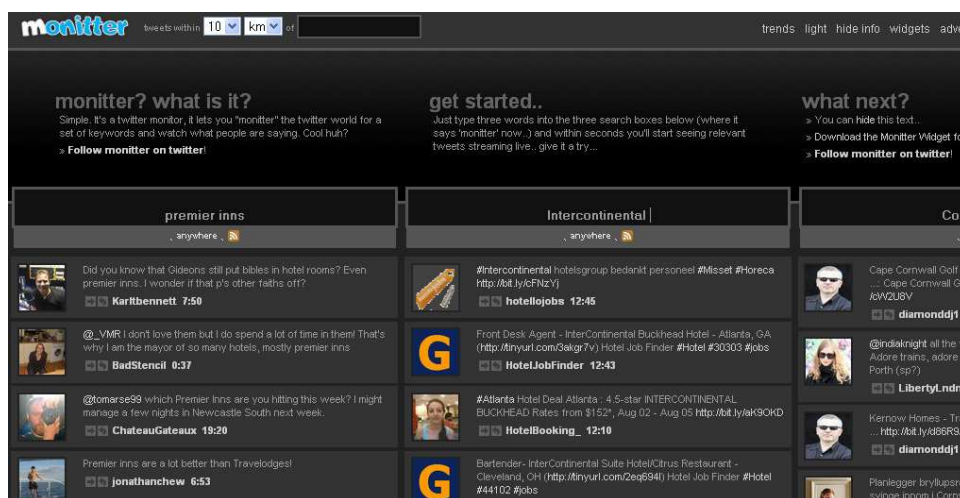
Twitter and customer service

Twitter is another social media tool which can help your customer service teams to react quicker to customer complaints. Many more customers are likely to write a passing negative comment in their Twitter feed or Facebook status than actually bother to phone up the accommodation provider and speak to a member of staff to highlight an issue.

The point here is that in monitoring Twitter, you can pick up and deal quickly with negative comments. Do it quickly enough and not only will the problem be dealt with, you'll also be providing a positive brand message that generates its own feeling of good will.

How to track Twitter for mentions of your brand

There are a number of free tools that can be used to monitor your brand on Twitter. At a basic level, the Twitter search function <http://www.twitter.com> can be used to monitor specific keywords. If you are after more granular information in your search then <http://monitter.com/> is a good tool to use:



In many ways, Twitter can (and should) be seen as a key part of your overall customer care and retention strategy. Some brands have their own customer service teams operating on Twitter and all of the time they are building relationships with guests, talking to them about their stay and offering regular guests incentives to keep returning.

Who should be responsible internally?

The person or persons who take responsibility for your Twitter account must have a comprehensive understanding of how conversations work online.

This kind of engagement is possible more within the territory of the accommodation manager as the “face” of the organisation, or person responsible for the marketing of the organisation, be aware that other employees may already be twittering. Utilise these existing experts within your company to help drive your understanding of the concept.

As Twitter only broadcasts to people who opt-in, it is essential to add value to those who choose to receive updates – offering information on the local area, events and news would help drive followers, additionally integrating your Twitter profile through other digital marketing channels will help increase readership.

Hotels on Twitter

Its not just hotel chains that are using Twitter to great effect, the following list of hotels using the service include a large number of privately owned hotels:

Rank	Hotel	Location	Followers
1st	Chesterfield Hotel	Mayfair, London	44,233
2nd	London Marriott	London	3,286
3rd	Travelodge UK	Nationwide	3,472
4th	May Fair Hotel	Mayfair, London	2,537
5th	Brown's Hotel	London	1,674
6th	Blue Rainbow ApartHotels	Manchester & Edinburgh	3,302
7th	Red Bull Stockport	Stockport, Cheshire	2,808
8th	The Hotel	Watergate Bay, Cornwall	1,464
9th	Best Western GB	Nationwide	1,387
10th	Botley Park	Southampton, Hampshire	1,229
11th	The Gleneagles Hotel	Perthshire, Scotland	1,078
12th	Crerar Hotels	Scotland & Yorkshire	1,736
13th	Malmaison Hotel	Manchester	1,348
14th	Jurys Inns Hotels	Nationwide	985
15th	Garstang Golf Hotel	Garstang, Lancashire	1,861
16th	Cadbury House	Bristol	1,673
17th	Malmaison Hotel	Edinburgh	1,049
18th	The Ritz	London	909
19th	The Scarlet Hotel	Mawgan Porth, Cornwall	869
20th	Four Seasons	Hampshire	825
21st	The Castle Inn	Lulworth, Dorset	707
22nd	The Bondi Hotel	Bournemouth	1,032
23rd	von Essen Hotels	Nationwide	979
24th	Red Carnation Hotels	Nationwide	823
25th	London Town Hotels	London	727
26th	Andaz London	London	1,533
27th	Hotel du Vin	Glasgow	1,337
28th	Park House Hotel	Sandringham, Norfolk	1,305
29th	Hotel du Vin	Birmingham	1,148
30th	Sidney Hotel	London	910

Longlands Barns, Whilborough Road, Kingskerswell, Newton Abbot, Devon TQ12 5DY

Tel: 01803 872999 Fax: 01803 876111 Email: info@clock-work.co.uk www.clock-work.co.uk

Marketing | Web Design & Development | Search Engine Optimisation | Data Supply & Direct Mail | Design & Print

Company Registration No. 4831890. Managing Director: Clare Bushby. Directors: Paul Bushby & Martin Shelton. Registered Office: Longlands Barns, Whilborough Road, Kingskerswell, Newton Abbot TQ12 5DY

Is it worth the effort?

One of the major challenges of engaging in social media is the significant time investment required. It is not enough to create a profile and expect users to stumble across it – Providers need to be proactive and engage with consumers. Some hotels (see top 30 hotels on the previous page) do just this with a combination of announcing news while also chatting with potential and past guests. Other hotels use Twitter as a broadcast only platform whilst some just create a profile and abandon it. Only those who engage and use it as an extension of their customer service department can reap any benefit.

Most social media platforms can only be used for marketing through engagement. Creating then abandoning social media profiles can reflect badly on a brand and will not be as effective at communicating to customers with. Engagement needn't take a tremendous amount of time.

If you are undecided about whether to engage in Twitter then ask yourself if your core audience are already interacting on this space. If they are, then there is a good reason to engage with them and use Twitter to push brand awareness, solve customer service issues and promote special offers or late availability issues.

Next Steps...

We recommend you have a look what other accommodation providers are currently doing on Twitter using the table on page 12. This will give you a feel for what the competition are doing, what tone they are using and the number of followers they have.

If you are considering what your company should be doing with Twitter and would like a little help on the options available, contact us for an informal chat.

If you are interested in hearing about what we're doing to monitor social media and define strategy for accommodation providers then please get in touch to discuss a social media audit.

To hear more please contact Clockwork – info@clock-work.co.uk