

The Future of Twitter Might Affect Your Business



Sally Falkow, Meritus Media

The one thing you can rely on in Social Media is that there will be change.

Each year new networks pop up and some go away. The major social networks (Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter) have been fairly stable for the past five or six years, but that might be about to change -Twitter just reported a dismal Q4 for 2016: 16 cents per share on revenue of \$717 million.

This was way below Wall Street's expectations. Back in November 2016 the shares were \$18. They are now at around \$16.

So what does this signify for the future of Twitter?

Apparently brands don't consider Twitter as sexy as Instagram or Snapchat. It doesn't create social media stars and their advertising is not producing as much revenue as other networks. (This might not be such a bad thing in light of the [PewDiePie incident](#), which highlights just how tricky working with these young social media influencers can be.)

Journalists on Twitter

One aspect of Twitter that's not well-known, and often not considered by brands, is that journalists and news organizations are the largest and most active verified group of Twitter users. (Source Triggertrap Report.) And according to the *2016 Cision State of the Media Report* journalists don't think Twitter is going away anytime soon.

21.6 percent of journalists believe it is the platform mostly likely to [grow in value](#) to the media industry, and approximately 40 percent say Twitter is their most valuable social channel. (PR peeps take note!)

The Growth of Video on Twitter

There is some good news: even though user growth and revenue were disappointing, video views on Twitter are on the up-and-up. Business Insider and its two sister publications attracted more than 6 million video views on Twitter in January 2017, a significant increase from the 1 million number six months ago. Similarly, Mashable's video views on Twitter have quadrupled in the past four months. (Source: Forbes.com)

Why Should We Care if Twitter Flies Away?

Used correctly, Twitter can have a huge impact on customer service, perception and reputation. One CEO who knows how to do this is Elon Musk. His tweet about a new Tesla product launch resulted in a \$900 million increase in value. His prompt reply to complaints about Tesla car owners hogging charging stations earned him more goodwill.

I asked a few PR influencers for their thoughts on the future of Twitter

Q: What's your take on the future of Twitter?

Gini Dietrich [SpinSucks](#)

Twitter serves a unique role as a communication channel that can't be found anywhere else. People take to Twitter to be part of the news cycle, and to engage with brands, celebrities, and influencers. It's an incredible resource for brands seeking to understand what motivates and engages their audience.

Unfortunately, much of the doom and gloom you see in media coverage is due to people comparing it unfavorably to Facebook. But here's the thing: There's only one Facebook. And people use Facebook and Twitter in entirely different ways, and for different purposes.

Chris Abraham [Gerris](#)

Twitter isn't going anywhere. It's become an International dial tone, like the internet itself, like your phone service or your AM, FM, and Ham Radio spectrum. Twitter will become protected some way or another becoming, effectively, a protected essential public utility.

Twitter is an essential commodity that benefits the State Department, Open Source Intelligence (NSA, NRO, CIA, FBI), and Corporate Intelligence (NASDAQ, DOW, etc). There's too much good, free, *intel* – remember the [Real Time Web](#)? It's still a thing!

Lee Odden [Top Rank Marketing](#)

A recent poll of Top Rank readers shows that 50 percent view Twitter as a news feed.

It certainly serves a function for users, whether it's

marketers pushing out content, people reacting to what's on TV or political hyperbole from you know who. The question is whether that use is enough to sustain the business model.

Q: This announcement of a big loss in the last Quarter has raised doubts. Will it last or fade away?

Gini Dietrich

I think we're already seeing Twitter make some moves to adapt to what it does really well. For instance, people love to take to Twitter to discuss their favorite TV shows in real time as they're watching them. Twitter has been working with brands to take advantage of this with targeted advertising, custom emojis, and more.

Lee Odden

Twitter hasn't added much in the form of features to attract users or to create additional capabilities that businesses would pay for (outside of advertising). I may be wrong, but Twitter is its own worst enemy in the way it has been managed and its ability to adapt and innovate in ways that satisfy both "free" users and paying customers.

Chris Abraham

Maybe this is a play for a leveraged buyout. Maybe someone has discovered that Twitter is the #1 channel for @realDonaldTrump and @potus to communicate directly to and with the world. More valuable than CNN, MSNBC, and possibly FOX News – at least when it comes to total eyeballs. Don't forget that volatility doesn't necessarily mean vulnerability. It could just mean corporate raiding.

Q: If it does go away how will that affect brands that use it for customer service?

Gini Dietrich

Most brands are not exclusively using Twitter as their customer service platform. As new social media platforms gain traction, brands have to assess how they want to use them, and what level of customer resource support to provide through them. If Twitter went away tomorrow, many brands would likely see an increase in emails and phone calls on customer service issues that were formerly handled through the social network.

Chris Abraham

Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat can't do the same thing that Twitter can do, all these years later. And I don't see another one coming up. Know why? Because Millennials and Gen Z like their small little chat apps a lot more than they like their live out-loud and share-with-the-world networks. Bieber could leave Insta but he would never leave Twitter – I mean, 91.7M followers!

Q: And how will it affect the public who have grown used to a fast response via Twitter?

Gini Dietrich

Your customers are expecting a fast response through whichever channel they use to contact you. And research is showing they're becoming less patient each year. That means brands will have to figure out how to harness artificial intelligence and predictive analytics to improve their customer service communication performance times.

Chris Abraham

Aside from the fact that the Twitter handle has become a de facto internationally-recognized contact number second only to the URL, there are other sexier and stickier channels that people devote a lot more time to.

But everyone knows that they can actually get liked, retweeted, and responded to by their favorite brands and

celebrities and influencers – or somebody repping them – on Twitter and that’s rarely the case on Facebook.

Q: What about those of us who use it as a news source?

Gini Dietrich

Twitter is just one of many digital news sources people use. Our phones learn what news we’re interested in and push us notifications. I can ask Alexa to read me my daily news update while I check my email. Other tools will find their way to fill the gap.

Lee Odden

Since a large number of users regard it as a news source it will leave a gap.

Chris Abraham

The real time web just isn’t the same on Google or Facebook or anywhere else. Twitter really does still have the pulse. I feel like normal consumers use Twitter less as a news source, outside of celebrity news, than actual media outlets and so forth, although the app and the web interface is evolving to become a better and better filter with a much-improved algorithm.

Q: What are the implications for PR, if any, if Twitter goes away?

Many PR folk are using Twitter lists to tap into diverse audiences. They use it to listen to the conversations, engage and build relationships. If Twitter goes away this would be a real loss to the PR function.

And the last word from Gini

Twitter has been a boon to PR practitioners for building relationships with influencers and journalists. Without

Twitter, it will be significantly more difficult to identify those people and build a relationship with them over time. [PR is a relationship business](#). Always has been. That means we'll have to find other places where they're congregating, such as niche industry community sites, and start over there.

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