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**5 Things
I've Learned From Twitter**

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5 Things I've Learned From Twitter

Twitter is a micro-blogging service that limits your text to 140 characters, or the length of a phone text message. It is the same concept as the Facebook or Google Chat status updates, but I have found that it is a much different audience and so I use it in a different fashion. I am by no means a Twitter expert (and as it is still a relatively new platform, I am not sure anyone else really is at this point either), but here are some of my observations and things I have learned from using it:

1. It's Okay to Make Twitter Manageable For YOU

Twitter can become information overload really fast. When I first joined, I tried to follow anyone who followed me. As that number grew, I found that the notes from people I wanted to

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keep up with became lost in the constant stream of updates letting me know that someone I had never heard of was eating lunch at Chipotle.

I then made a decision to limit the list of people I followed to people I have met in the offline world and whom I am interested in staying connected with online. Of course I have my exceptions to this and I do follow some people whom I haven't met in person, but this guideline has helped make Twitter manageable for me. The fact of the matter is that there are tons of interesting people out there, so please don't feel guilty if you can't follow everyone. If you can, then more power to you.

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2. Twitter Works Best When You Interact

The CEO of Zappos, Tony Hsieh (@zappos), recently wrote an update that said "I think lots of marketers have trouble understanding Twitter because they try to be interesting rather than try to be interested." There are certain automation tools that help make Twitter more useful, but it works best when you actively participate and are actually interested in the people you follow. Some days will give more opportunity for this than others, but it is worth the effort to use it as more than just an RSS feed that lets people know you've updated your blog.

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3. Twitter Has Its Own Audience

One of the most interesting things I have noticed about Twitter is that it has its own unique audience. Some of the people who follow my updates read the Blue Orchid Designs blog or The Smart Planner, or both. However many of the people who follow me don't read either of my blogs but only the Twitter updates. As a result, I write some information series that only post on Twitter and not the blogs.

4. Twitter Is Completely Permission Based

Some people will update ten times a day with information about their products, store or other item they are selling. While this is

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annoying and I feel that it misses the point, there really is no such thing as Twitter spam. If you don't want to read about someone's product updates, don't follow them. The choice is yours, simple as that.

This is also where Twitter is very different from the Facebook status updates and one of the main reasons why I do not sync those updates to appear on both. On Twitter you are specifically choosing to receive short updates on someone's life; on Facebook you are opting to stay connected with them in a more general sense. Facebook currently doesn't offer the feature to select individual updates to view - you either have to choose to see all or none of them. Since Facebook is the one

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area where all seasons of my life intersect (friends from elementary school as well as industry colleagues and everyone in between), I do not want to inundate those friends with messages they did not necessarily opt in for.

5. People Use Twitter to Complain. A Lot.

I am convinced that the number of posts on Twitter would be reduced by about 70% if they deleted all of the updates that people vented or complained in. I do believe that venting is necessary and can be a healthy outlet, but that it should be reserved for a select few people who have agreed to be safe sounding boards. It doesn't need to be broadcast to the entire world.

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On the plus side, you can take quick stock of just how often you complain by going through your Twitter history and counting the number of complaints or vents you've posted. In this case, it can be a real eye-opener to a blind spot as we often don't realize just how much negativity we put out into the world. Set a goal to cut the number of complaints in half for this year.

There are a ton of people using Twitter, from the CEO of Zappos (@zappos - perhaps the most famous for using the service) to Shaquille O'Neal (@the_real_shaq - yes, that is really him updating) to your next door neighbor (maybe). As for the

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wedding industry there are two must-follow people who use Twitter often and they are wedding industry expert Rebecca Grinnals of Engaging Concepts and of the Engage! Conferences (@weddex), and Sean Low, president of and business guru behind Preston Bailey Design, Inc (@seanlow). In my opinion, these two should definitely be on your follow list and anyone else is optional, including me.

You can follow me on Twitter at @blueorchid.