

Do Fortune 100 Companies  
Need a **twitter**™vention?

WEBER SHANDWICK  
 DIGITAL COMMUNICATIONS

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## INTRODUCTION

With more than 20 million people on Twitter in the U.S. (50 million worldwide), there are ample opportunities for audiences to engage with corporations and brands.

But are companies engaging effectively? Think of Twitter as the über corporate cocktail party. The influentials, celebs and dealmakers you invite will stay only if the conversation is entertaining, valuable and interesting. So, what makes good conversation? The key is listening and engaging.

Weber Shandwick conducted research to evaluate how effectively Fortune 100 companies used Twitter to its full potential as an engagement platform. The results provide key learnings for companies who want to make sure their party is one that's buzzing.

**Think of Twitter as the über corporate cocktail party.** Your influential guests will stay only if the conversation is entertaining, valuable and interesting.



## OVERVIEW

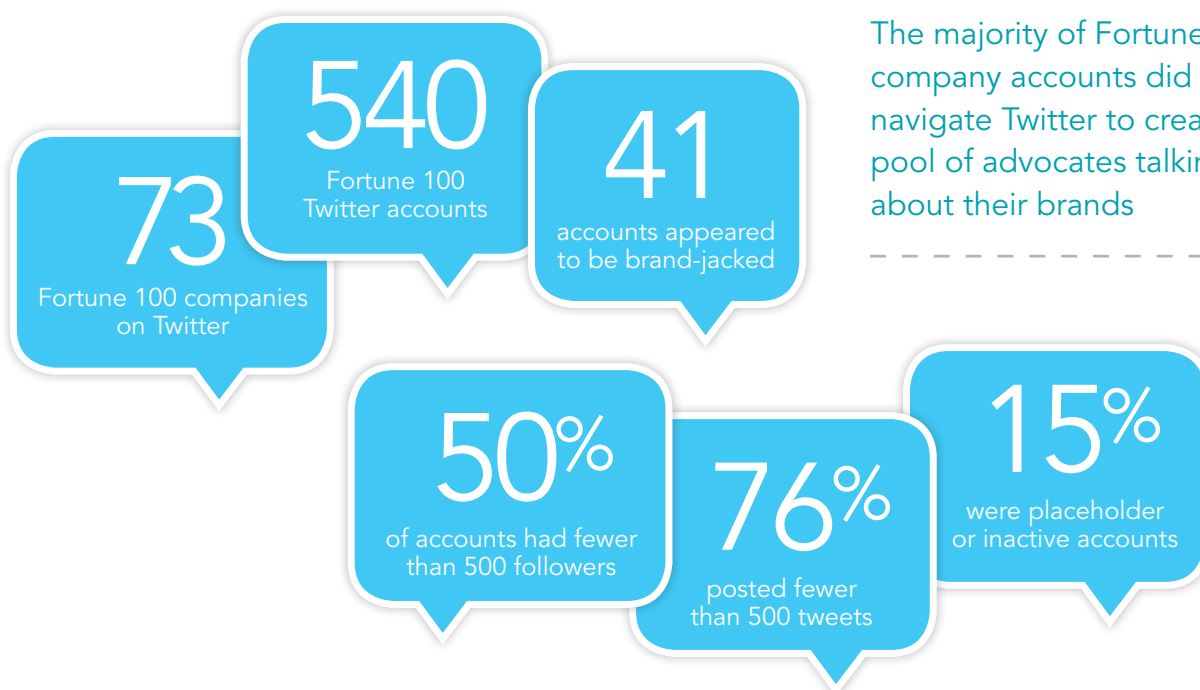
A Weber Shandwick study concludes that Fortune 100 companies need a Twittervention. Executed successfully, Twitter can help companies engage with customers, build new relationships and create a new pool of advocates talking positively about their brands.

The Weber Shandwick study showed that 73 percent of Fortune 100 companies registered a total of 540 Twitter accounts. However, about three-quarters (76 percent) of those accounts did not post tweets very often, and more than half (52 percent) were not actively engaged. (This was measured by engagement metrics such as numbers of links, hashtags, references and retweets.)

In addition, 50 percent of the Fortune 100 accounts had fewer than 500 followers, a small number in relation to the size and reach of a major corporation. Another 15 percent were inactive; of those, 11 percent were merely placeholder accounts — unused accounts to protect corporate names against so-called brand-jacking on Twitter — and 4 percent were abandoned after being used for a specific event.

Weber Shandwick prescribes five essential steps as a starting point for Fortune 100 companies to create true engagement and market interaction on Twitter:

1. **Listen** to conversations
2. **Participate** in conversations
3. **Update** frequently with valuable information
4. **Reply** to people who talk about issues that are important to your company
5. **Retweet** relevant conversations



The majority of Fortune 100 company accounts did not skillfully navigate Twitter to create a new pool of advocates talking positively about their brands

## RESEARCH FINDINGS

### PERSONALITY, ACTIVATION, OWNERSHIP

Fifty-three percent of the Fortune 100 Twitter accounts analyzed by Weber Shandwick did not display personality, tone or voice on their account pages. Nearly one third (32 percent) presented personalities on their account pages, with well-designed backgrounds in addition to names and/or photos of those who posted tweets.

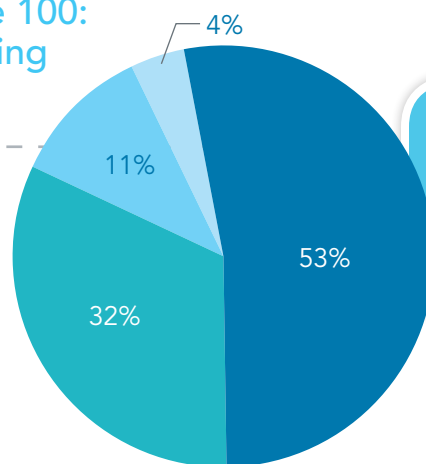
Four percent of Twitter accounts were no longer being used — either because an account had been set up specifically for an event that had since ended or the account was simply abandoned. Eleven percent were placeholder accounts that were apparently used as a defense against so-called *brand-jacking*. Brand-jacking has grown to be a serious problem for companies today. It occurs when a Twitter account with a company name is created by an unauthorized third party.

This indicates that many Fortune 100 companies on Twitter recognized the importance of safeguarding their brands on Twitter, even if they weren't yet convinced about its value to their particular business. Notably, 41 accounts appearing to represent Fortune 100 companies were brand-jacked; they were not included in the total 540 accounts held by Fortune 100 companies.

### Twitter Fortune 100: Account Branding

September 2009

- BRAND ONLY
- PERSONALITY
- PLACEHOLDERS
- INACTIVE



15 percent of accounts were inactive or placeholders to prevent brand-jacking.

**Best practices were not followed**  
by most of the Fortune 100 accounts  
examined by Weber Shandwick.



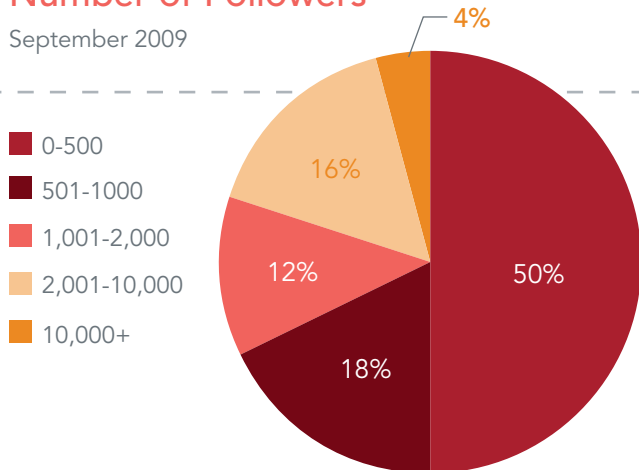
**TWITTER ENGAGEMENT**

Companies that excel at engagement on Twitter both listen to and participate in conversations. They provide frequent updates with valuable information. They have a large number of followers, they reply to people who talk about issues that are important to them, and they retweet those conversations too. They reply or refer to other accounts with @username, and in turn, they are referred to by other accounts.

These best practices were not followed by most of the Fortune 100 accounts examined by Weber Shandwick. Half of those accounts had fewer than 500 followers, while more than half did not meet engagement metrics that were analyzed in Twitalyzer (e.g. numbers of links, hashtags, references and retweets). As well, three-quarters (76 percent) of those accounts posted fewer than 500 tweets. This indicates either a lack of engagement by many companies with their followers, or newly established accounts that haven't yet started using the platform to build relationships.

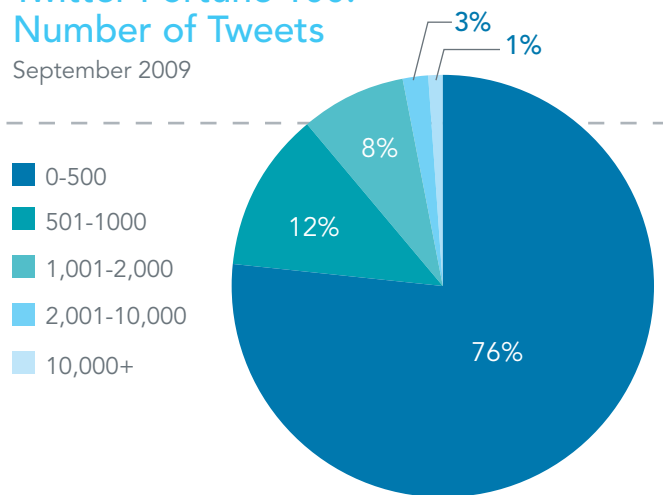
**Twitter Fortune 100:  
Number of Followers**

September 2009



**Twitter Fortune 100:  
Number of Tweets**

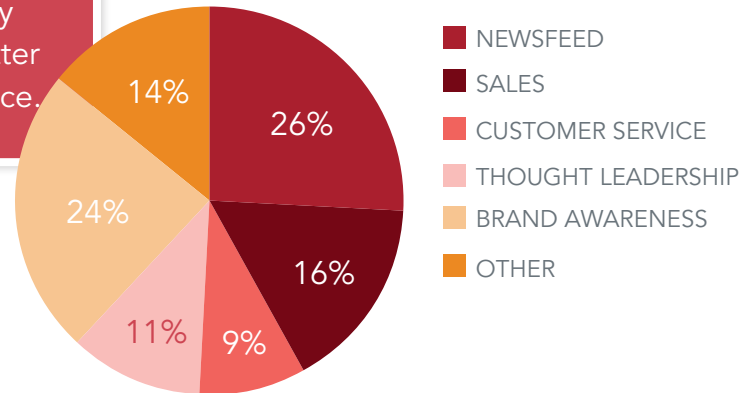
September 2009



Twenty-four percent of the Twitter accounts were primarily used for brand awareness; however many of them appeared to be on Twitter simply to have an online presence.

## Twitter Fortune 100: Account Purpose

September 2009



### TWITTER ACCOUNT PURPOSE

Twitter can be used by businesses for many purposes; its value differs for each company. If best practices are followed, businesses can discuss their news, products and services with a wider audience, increase brand awareness, gain new customers, boost sales and/or provide customer service.

Among the Fortune 100 companies examined by Weber Shandwick, 26 percent of their Twitter accounts were primarily used as a one-way flow of information (either by RSS news feeds or manual tweets) that offered no engagement with followers. Tweets did not provide opinions or encourage discussions. This contradicts the value of Twitter as a two-way dialogue to build relationships with customers and advocates.

A sizeable 24 percent of the Twitter accounts were primarily used for brand awareness. Many appeared to be on Twitter simply to have an online presence. They did not use the platform to reach out to the community and demonstrate that their brand is a trusted source of valuable information, a business that not only talks but also listens to customers.

Surprisingly, only 16 percent of the Fortune 100 accounts were used mainly as sales vehicles for company products and services. Other companies did not appear to understand that sales growth can be achieved by posting special Twitter offers, coupons, limited bargains and sales prices, or by searching for customers who mention a company product and reaching out to them to build a relationship.

Customer service was the focus of only 9 percent of the accounts; it is highly likely that these companies are worried about corporate reputation — posts that might be damaging to a brand. In addition, success requires a commitment to respond quickly to customer queries, suggestions or complaints. According to Twitter's own best practices, "your reply should come within a day, if not within hours."

Thought leadership appeared to be the least prominent Twitter strategy by Fortune 100 companies, with only 11 percent focused on it. Corporate reputation and authority can be extended onto Twitter, but are most effective only after thought leadership is demonstrated in newspapers, trade publications or recognized by analysts and bloggers.

Finally, another 14 percent of accounts were used for other reasons such as recruitment or employee-specific information, or their accounts were locked and not visible. These companies were unable to build relationships with interested communities.

### CONCLUSION

For the majority of Fortune 100 companies, Twitter remains a missed opportunity. Many of their Twitter accounts, examined by Weber Shandwick, did not appear to listen to or engage with their readers, instead offering a one-way broadcast of press releases, company blog posts and event information.

This falls short of the opportunity that Twitter offers as a valuable communications channel and strategic social network. For those companies, Weber Shandwick prescribes a Twittervention to help them:

- **Create** a companywide engagement strategy; a set of guidelines with best practices
- **Demonstrate** a consistent and comprehensive brand presence
- **Build** a dialogue that paves the way to new relationships with customers and advocates
- **Generate** loyalty among new and existing communities

To maximize the benefits of Twitter, companies should offer opinions and encourage discussions, reach out to their communities of customers and advocates, build relationships with new customers and look for untapped supporters.

The number of active Twitter users in the United States already exceeds 20 million and can be expected to continue to grow. This is a massive human database to tap; companies that understand the value of Twitter can benefit from its potential as a viable engagement platform.

A majority of Fortune 100 companies are not using Twitter for its intended benefit: to create meaningful connections and relationships with customers, potential advocates, media and other business contacts.



For companies with more than one brand, only the Twitter accounts of the flagship brand were evaluated. Only official Twitter accounts were reviewed.

## METHODOLOGY

Weber Shandwick conducted an in-depth study into the activities of Fortune 100 companies on Twitter between August 28 and September 4, 2009. The analysis identified which companies used Twitter according to best practices and how well they engaged with Twitter users.

For companies with more than one brand, only the Twitter accounts of the flagship brand were evaluated. In addition, only official Twitter accounts were reviewed; accounts were determined to be official if they contained:

- A company email address, phone number and links to the company's corporate websites
- Consistent company messaging in the account's bio and tweets
- Photos of company employees who were managing the account

The following metrics were analyzed:

- **Number** of company Twitter accounts
- **Account Branding:** The account either identified personalities who posted on behalf of a company or it was an anonymous, faceless brand account.
- **Account Purpose:** The account was used as a news feed, for sales and promotions, customer service, thought leadership, brand awareness or its usage was unclear.
- **Engagement:** In the last seven days of our research, the numbers of URLs cited, hashtags, references by other companies, unique referrers, references to other companies, retweets, unique retweeters and retweeting others. (Twitalyzer was used to determine these metrics.)

## DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

**Following:** People follow you to receive your updates

**Tweet:** An individual post

**Retweet:** A message that is reposted (usually with "RT" in front of it)

**References:** People refer to your account or your account refers to others

**@username:** The beginning part of a post that is directed specifically at a user

**Hashtag:** The symbol # with a keyword that describes a topic of conversation

**Active:** An account was considered active if a tweet had been posted in a specific seven-day period, according to Twitalyzer

This study is part of Weber Shandwick's Social Pulse offering for online monitoring and measurement. Social Pulse shapes strategy, execution and program refinements for Weber Shandwick clients around the world.

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