



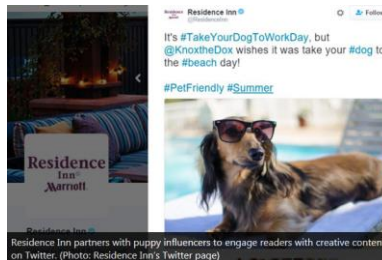
NEWS

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How hoteliers can capitalize on Twitter's evolution

Twitter pros shared advice on the best content and engagement practices for hoteliers and changes affecting the platform as part of HNN's ongoing Social Media Special Report.



GLOBAL REPORT—Content is key when it comes to engaging with guests and potential guests on Twitter, and experts believe recent changes to the platform could help hoteliers know their audience better if the platform is used correctly.

Debbie Miller, social media consultant and president of Social Hospitality, said some Twitter users have shifted their interest to more visual platforms, like Snapchat, Instagram and Pinterest, but there's still room for follower growth as long as hotel social media and marketing teams keep up with current trends.

"(Twitter) is still one of the big (platforms) because it can be used as a customer service tool, as a commercial tool ... as a way to share packages and events, as well as a way to check guests' postings (to Twitter) while they're on property," she said. "The 140-character count change will allow (hotels) to include more in their posts ... because there's more space to work with."

Twitter announced in May that users [will soon be able to include more information within the 140-character limit](#) by excluding Twitter usernames and media attachments from the character count.

Robert Cole, hospitality marketing and travel technology consultant and founder of RockCheetah, said the change in character limit could benefit hoteliers if they use the added room to post relevant content, but it will hurt them if it's used for the "grotesque marketing of things," because that can be annoying to Twitter followers.

"They were talking about eliminating the 140-character limit, which I think would be just horrible," he said. "One of the things (that works) for Twitter is the brevity of getting that message out in a short (post)," Cole said.

Twitter recently introduced [Twitter Engage](#), which is an app for the platform that allows users to track retweets, mentions and video views to better target and understand their audience.

"Twitter Engage is a way (Twitter) is enhancing its analytics," Miller said. "(It) might help hotels target certain people based on their (retweets) and posts, so that might be a way for hotels to get more insight on users and followers and be able to strategize (marketing)."

Cole said he's waiting to see if Twitter Engage will be used to enhance guest experience or if it will be used as a way to target users and bombard them with marketing promotions.

"(Engage) will help people figure out how people are using Twitter and what topics are hot, that sort of thing, which I think is a good thing," he said. "Again, the question is if that is going to be abused by marketers to suddenly start piggybacking on something that's relevant or do something that's (irrelevant)."

Cole said an example of that behavior would be a marketer taking a serious trending topic, such as a tragic event, and using it as a way to market to people just because it's trending on Twitter.

"It's really just being smart and using the platform for what it is intended for," he said.

Successful content

Sources said the subject of a Tweet is important when it comes to earning retweets and favorites from followers on Twitter.

"Our content performs well when it relates to Twitter trending topics and events or if it references well-known influencers or topics such as our Courtyard-NFL partnership," Lucia Evans, senior director of social marketing at Marriott International, said via email. "For Residence Inn, our pet content performs extremely well, especially when it references one of our partnerships with puppy influencers."

Residence Inn often posts photos of Knox the Dox and other dogs on its Twitter page. Evans said creative "aspirational travel content" also performs well.

At Commune Hotels & Resorts, creating platform-specific content is the most important rule of thumb, according to Fiona Boyce, director of social media and brand content at [Commune Hotels & Resorts](#).

"We've found great success on Twitter with sharing quotes related to travel and short travel tips that can be easily retweeted," she said via email. "We also offer last-minute exclusive booking codes to our followers on Twitter."

Alissa Montbriand, vice president of global integrated marketing communications at Carlson Rezidor Hotel Group, said promotional posts with deals are well-received by followers, as well as "visuals of new hotel locations or user-generated photos with short and sweet copy."

"We have several Twitter accounts around our brands," she said via email. "We have an overarching corporate social media team and collaborate actively with our brands in terms of both strategy and individual content."

Engagement changes, tracking ROI

Commune debuted on Twitter in 2007, and Boyce said the way the company connects with guests and followers has changed a lot since then.

"The use of GIFs has increased rapidly over the past few years. This was nonexistent when Twitter was first founded," she said. "We also love to use Twitter to connect with guests through Twitter Chats, which have become more frequent and popular since 2007."

Boyce said Commune tracks clicks to its websites, socially assisted revenue and engagement on Twitter by using Google Analytics and Hootsuite. Evans said [Marriott](#) tracks similar statistics.

"We track a great deal of analytics on Twitter, both organic and paid," Evans said. "The primary metrics tracked depend on the particular objective of the brand. We use a suite of third-party social analytics platforms as well as Twitter's own analytics tools. For brands interested in measuring awareness and consideration-related goals, we look at impressions, engagement rate, video views (and cost-per-view)."

Miller said hoteliers are also using Twitter [polls](#) to create content based on what the audience wants by taking feedback from the polls to create things such as blog posts and social media posts.

At The Gregory hotel in New York City, Twitter is used as a marketing tool, but also as a way to enhance the guest experience, according to David Israel, SVP at HotelAVE, which provides asset-management services to [The Gregory](#).

"We feel that Twitter kind of shines light most to one-on-one communications," he said. "Whether that's enhancing the guest stay or overall experience."

Israel said The Gregory works with an outside company that "scrapes specific keywords for us on our behalf, and also reaches out to target them" on Twitter.

"So we use it as a sales tool, but we also use Twitter to engage and assist our guests via real-time communication before or while they're on property," he said. "Once we know they are coming to our property, we'll use Twitter to scrape some of their preferences to better understand them. If we know via prior engagement that you're a family and you're going to have kids with you, we'll send extra towels to the room and maybe even send a gift for your kid."