



If you can't beat 'em, Tweet 'em

Columnist falls prey to Twitter mania

I am a twit. I know some people who know me, as well as some of my regular readers, have probably already come to that conclusion. But now it's official. I have joined the masses and opened an account at **Twitter.com**.

I don't think I would have joined Twitter of my own accord, but my supervisor pointed out that since I write about websites, apps and social media, I should probably hop on the bandwagon.

Now don't get me wrong, I'm not anti-Twitter or anti-technology. I make my living using — and teaching others how to use — the latest hardware and software in the publishing industry. I spend a good deal of time every week researching and evaluating evolving trends in digital media.

I appreciate and even embrace technology in general. However, I don't feel the need to adopt every shiny new thing that comes along. I like to choose what I use a la carte style. Different people have different needs, and there are devices and programs available to suit almost any need. Twitter certainly has a place in the digital ecosystem.

Sharing, short and sweet

For those who are not familiar with Twitter, it's basically a social media platform that allows people to share information. The information is posted as tweets, which are short text messages (less than 140 characters). Tweets can also contain links to images, video, websites and other related tweets.

If a person or organization has information that you're interested in you can choose to "follow" their Twitter feed. The tweets of those you follow will show up in your Twitter feed as they're posted. Anyone can follow accounts and view the tweets, but you must register if you want to post tweets.

If you have friends who tweet, you can stay up to date on what they're eating, where they're going, what they're doing and all the other idle banter that clogs up social media, along with the occasional witty observation or shared gem.

Tweeting appears to be a requirement for famous and wannabe famous people. Twitter makes it easy to keep up with the exploits of your favorite actor, athlete, politician or anyone else you find noteworthy. And just like tweets from your friends, you'll need to wade through a lot of inane or self-serving chatter to discover the occasional funny joke, useful information or inspirational thought.

Keeping up with friends and

celebrities via Twitter is not of much interest to me personally, but I can appreciate that lots of people do like to be virtually connected to those they care about.

Personal vs. professional

For me Twitter is most useful as a tool to keep tabs on news that interests you. This is how The Times-Tribune, as well as most other media companies — and businesses of all kinds — use Twitter:

Newspapers are now multimedia companies. In addition to news printed on paper that's delivered to your front door every morning, we also publish electronically to our website, mobile app and Smart Edition. This content is available and updated 24/7 on your smartphone, tablet device or desktop computer.

The Times-Tribune supplements this electronic coverage with many dedicated Twitter feeds. Sports fans can follow Donnie Collins to track developments on the new RailRiders' stadium. Lifestyles reporter Josh McAuliffe will keep you up to date on "The Office" or the Oscars. Reporter Katie Sullivan will keep you informed with breaking local news. And now I'll be tweeting on websites and apps @koneillTT.

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