Microblogging Inside and Outside the Workplace

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“11% of American adults use Twitter or update their status online.”
- December 2008

“Twitter sees 50 million tweets per day. That’s 600 tweets per second.”
- February 2010
Outline

- Research Questions
- Related Work
- Method
- Results
- Discussion
Microblogging inside and outside the workplace

- How is microblogging useful in a work context?
Microblogging inside and outside the workplace

- What differs between microblogs directed at an internal, private audience and at an external public audience?
Microblogging inside and outside the workplace

- Why are people consuming microblogs?
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Research on microblogging topics

- Outside the workplace
  - Keeping up to date with friends
  - Sharing information
  - Directed communication

(Java et al. 2007; Honeycutt and Herring 2009; Huberman, Romero and Wu 2009; Naaman, Boase and Lai 2010; boyd et al 2010)
Research on microblogging topics

- **Within the workplace**
  - **External use** (Zhao and Rosson 2009)
    - Build awareness
    - Establish common ground
  - **Internal use** (Zhang et al. 2010)
    - Impediments to adoption
Boundaries between public and private use

- Mixing personal and professional friendships can be awkward and complicated (Skeels and Grudin 2009)

- Need to ensure balance between public and private use (Efimova and Grudin 2007)
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Method

BlueTwit
BlueTwit is an internal Microblogging environment similar to Twitter

New users please hit the login link up in the banner to create a new ID and read the following Quick Start

Methodology

What's happening?

In Woodbridge, VA • X
Latest: @geminie: that's my motto with all the open source stuff I use. Surprised Snow Leopard would do that thing, about 1 hour ago

Home

eric_andersen: Nice. Will Foursquare be sold? Maybe, or "we could stay independent and just continue killing it"-@dens
http://j.mp/cByELU

3 minutes ago via bit.ly

eric_andersen: Coool @ScottKirsner: interviews #Foursquare co-founder @dens http://j.mp/cByELU #EatDrinkBeSocial

7 minutes ago via bit.ly

orgnet: Looking forward to Dunbar's study of online groups... http://bit.ly/6g0q28

about 3 hours ago via mobile web

Renewed by barrywellman

scheridaryan: Canadian govt. eyes online forums about political issues to correct what it perceives as misinformation
http://bit.ly/d0U2Dg

about 1 hour ago via TweetDeck

Renewed by barrywellman

sadatshami: 00 tweet(s)

97 • 229 • 21
Following • Followers • Listed

Fav... fav this

a place to discover Twitter's favorite tweets.

Home
sadatshami
Direct Messages 40
Favorites
Retweets

Search

Saved Searches

tsbt2010
cscw2010

Lists

Lists are timelines you build yourself, consisting of friends, family, co-workers, sports teams, your name it.

New list

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Microblogging inside and outside the workplace
Method

- **Participants**
  - 34 users from 15 countries and 8 business units
  - Used internal tool (BlueTwit) and external (Twitter) over same time period
  - Frequent users (> 20 posts over a 4 month period)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Average use (days)</th>
<th>Following</th>
<th>Followers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blue Twit</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twitter</td>
<td>468</td>
<td>282</td>
<td>339</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data Collection

- Dataset
  - Data collected for BlueTwit and Twitter over 4 month period
    - 19,067 posts in the two tools
  - Extracted 4 weeks (1 wk/month) to analyze
    - Corpus of 5,387 posts
    - 3,152 (58.5%) from Twitter and 2,235 (41.5%) from BlueTwit

- Interviews
  - Phone interviews with 25 of the 34 people
## Coding Scheme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Status</td>
<td>“Good Morning World. It’s going to be even better after a cup of coffee :-”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide Information</td>
<td>“Chart API in JavaFX <a href="http://tinyurl.com/pe8qbo">http://tinyurl.com/pe8qbo</a> #JAVAFX”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I love it when other people waste my time. I really do.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask Question</td>
<td>“Anyone know if there's an easy way to view just unread mails in Notes?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directed + question</td>
<td>“RT @HIURJK - Anyone (that means you Bill) have any suggestions on how to increase the value of a Website using Social Media?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“RT @TDGE Anyone up for dinner? &lt;&lt; Do you have a restaurant in mind @TDGE?”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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Categories of posts

► Most frequent use
  • Provide information
  • Directed posts

► Internal use
  • Ask questions
  • Directed posts
  • Style is work-oriented

► External use
  • Provide information
  • Style is more “social”
Public vs private

- Clear sense of what is appropriate for an internal-only audience

  ➔ “if all that <the tweets that are posted internally> went outside I would feel that you would be somewhat exposed because inside people are more willing to share more readily their direct experience whereas outside they are probably not likely to say here’s something that went really wrong... although would not be seen as a bad thing...”

  ➔ “I’ll refer to technologies that no-one outside may even know about or normal processes that aren’t even relevant to other people.”
Reputation Management

- **Internal: Importance of giving back**
  - “Value as an employee is to be visible inside the company. You have to be visible to show people. I help my community with new solutions. To give and get.”

- **External: Publicity and promotion**
  - “I’m getting a degree of advertising out there in terms of the external evangelizing I’m doing so that's broadening my audience and is generating other followers and generating requests for doing presentations to conferences.”
Fostering connections

- Developing better awareness of professional connections in advance of a future planned or unplanned meeting

→ “I feel like I know these people. When it does come a time when I meet them or I might need to engage with them on something there has been an element of rapport established... we don't actually know each other but we do, from the interactions we’ve had in that space.”
Consumption of microblogs

- Microblogs provide early access to human selected information
  - “Twitter is for early breaking news. I get to know what's happening. When there is something new from Google, I get to know quickly.”
  - “With Twitter I know it’s a human that has selected the information that is saying that you should read this article. RSS feed is robotic selection for topics while twitter is human selection of what I should see. And it’s the quality of my network”
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Discussion

- How is microblogging useful in a work context?
  - Form of crowd-sourcing – asking questions and providing answers
  - Anticipatory connections

- What differs between public and private?
  - Confidentiality
  - Style of writing
  - Awareness of audience knowledge and interests
  - Some erosion of boundaries – despite differences lots overlap

- Why are people consuming microblogs?
  - Motivation for posting - Building reputation, awareness
  - Motivation for reading - Early, quality news
Picture Credits

- Slide 3: http://www.flickr.com/photos/ladymixy-uk/3649349353/
- Slide 4: http://www.flickr.com/photos/respres/3231178720/
- Slide 5: http://www.flickr.com/photos/michaelsphotos/117928868/
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Thank You!

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