Twitter: A Professional Learning Community Fit for #K12Talent Managers?
By Emily Douglas-McNab, Teresa Daulong, and Morgan Webb

On January 9, 2015, the Pew Research Center published survey data concerning social media use in the United States. The results were surprising. Did you know that 81 percent of all American adults are internet users and that the majority of those people have social media accounts on platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Pinterest, and/or Instagram? Further, Pew’s research found that multi-platform use is up 10 percent from 2013, meaning that 52 percent of online adults use more than one social media site.

What is Twitter?
Launched in 2006, Twitter is a micro-blogging, social media service that allows users to read, retweet, and post messages online. What makes Twitter different than traditional blogging is that messages have a 140-character limit, so you have to share your thoughts quickly and succinctly! Twitter posts are called “tweets.” You can also attach links, images, and videos to get your point across. Among Twitter’s 284 million monthly active users:
- 77 percent of accounts are held by people and organizations outside the United States.
- Most users (80 percent) connect to Twitter using their mobile phone.
- 500 million tweets are sent per day in more than 35 languages.

There is a misconception that Twitter and other social media platforms are only a place for teenagers or celebrities. This couldn’t be further from the truth. A growing number of legislators, business leaders, universities, nonprofits, authors, actors, athletes, school districts, and educators all use Twitter to learn, share information, market products, advocate for a cause, communicate with customers, and more. How you set-up and use your account is up to you. Twitter has also become the first choice of many journalists for broadcasting breaking news, and Twitter “followers” has become a measure of influence and popularity. With more than 53 million followers on Twitter, Barack Obama has far greater power to influence public opinion with what he tweets than a user with only 200 followers.

Twitter as a Professional Learning Community
For many educators and other professionals, Twitter serves as a global Professional Learning Community (PLN) to learn, share, reflect, and grow their craft. For instance, Twitter chats have become a popular forum for teachers and school leaders from across the country to collaborate, share ideas, and engage in discussion around a variety of education topics, from curriculum and instruction to student growth measures to recruiting and selection in schools. Twitter chats are real-time conversations, often moderated by a “host,” and organized around a specific hashtag. For example, every Tuesday educators from across the world discuss current teaching trends, education technology, and more using the hashtag #edchat.

In looking at how frequently users engaged with social media, Pew researchers found that “36 percent of Twitter users visit the site daily, with 22 percent saying they go on Twitter several times a day.” Another 24 percent of users indicated that they visit the site a few days a week. So, chances are that no matter where you live or the time of day, there will always be someone on Twitter available to answer a question, collaborate on a project, or share valuable resources to support professional development.

As human resources professionals, we use Twitter to connect with colleagues, thought-leaders, entrepreneurs, and other industry experts nationally and internationally to keep a pulse on the latest HR news, research, and policy changes, particularly in education, as well as professional
Learning opportunities Building a PLN on Twitter takes time, but it offers tremendous benefits both personally and professionally. You are in control of the amount of time you dedicate to the PLN, what information you share and with whom you share it, and what resources and strategies you feel are valuable to apply to your own professional development.

**Twitter and Educators**

From teachers to principals, counselors to curriculum specialists, educators across the world are using Twitter to connect, share, and improve their practice. A post on the National Education Association’s website asks, “Can tweeting help your teaching?” In the article, Christopher Bergeron, a district-level technical coordinator from New Hampshire, explains “Some teachers are more open to collaboration and networking. Those who value personal networks are more excited about the technology even if they are not overly tech-savvy.” He goes on to describe Twitter as being like “the ticker at the bottom of CNN—only a ticker populated with information about those people or things you care about, want to learn from, or want to know about.” We couldn’t agree more. There are thousands of teachers, principals, district leaders, school districts, and other education organizations to follow on Twitter that share stories, strategies, classroom resources, professional learning opportunities. Many educators connect via chats, including the aforementioned #edchat, #edtechchat, #edleaders, #k12, #pdke, #ednewschat, and more.

**Twitter and HR Professionals**

There are also numerous human resources and K-12 talent management professionals on Twitter. A quick Google search will produce dozens of HR leaders and organizations to follow. There are also many popular chats, including #Tchat, #HRISchat, #HRTrends, #TalentNet, and #SHRMYP covering a wide range of topics, from recruiting and selection to leadership, culture, and staff engagement.

**Making the Connection**

In the article “Eight Simple Ways to Use Twitter to Enhance Your Career in HR” author Alan Collins shares strategies for leveraging Twitter to support career success. These include:

- Expand your professional network to build credibility and grow your HR brand
- Reinforce your professional HR image by using a headshot, targeted profile and bio, and custom background
- Follow and learn about organizations you’re interested in, as well as stay up-to-date on HR news
- Identify and research possible job candidates for your organization

*Are you actively involved in a PLN to grow your education and/or HR skills and knowledge?*

*In the New Year, is Twitter a possible place for you to build your own PLN, sharing your ideas without barriers?*

**About the Authors**

**Teresa Daulong**

Teresa currently works for the nonprofit Battelle for Kids on projects related to performance excellence such as strategic planning, process improvement, customer experience, and organizational development. She is a Lean Six Sigma Green Belt and brings with over 10 years of experience in the healthcare and business management field. Since 2009, Teresa has been a
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Emily currently works for the nonprofit Battelle for Kids. She has a Master’s degree in human resources and her MBA from The Ohio State University Fisher College of Business. Emily also has her SPHR certification from HRCI, her SHRM-SCP from the Society of HR Managers, and a certificate in HR and Social Media management from Cornell University. Emily keeps the “K-12 Talent Manager” blog for *Education Week*.

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Morgan works for the Ohio Department of Administrative Services as a Senior HR Analyst. She has her Master’s degree in Human Resources from The Ohio State University Fisher College of Business, her Lean Six Sigma Yellow belt from LeanOhio, and her PHR and SPHR certification from HRCI. On occasion Morgan lends her compensation and classification study expertise to Battelle for Kids as a consultant. Since 2005 Morgan has been a volunteer, donor, and Board Member of the volunteer-run, Appalachian-focused nonprofit Grandma’s Gifts. You can follow Morgan on Twitter using @Morgan_Webb.

*Starting Monday, February 23, 2015 at 9pm ET/8pm CT, join the new education and HR-focused edchat with AASPA members Teresa Daulong, Emily Douglas-McNab, and Jason Liewehr, using hashtag #K12Talent. This chat will occur on the second and forth Monday of each month.*

**References**


