

## How a decade of Twitter schooled brands in immediate customer service

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As **Twitter** clocks up its first decade, some **brands** are looking for more sophistication in its services while others are still confused about what to use it for.

"Most clients are still figuring out the role for **Twitter**," says **Nik Roope**, executive creative director and co-founder of **digital** agency Poke.

"After all the commotion over the years you would have thought companies would have figured it out but most haven't. This hasn't been helped by new platforms entering the fray, fracturing demographics and shifting use and culture of the incumbent platforms like **Twitter**."

But talk the likes of **Tesco** and **Audi** and you sense these are **brands** that do have a clear idea of what they get out of the platform. It's mainly about customer service, according to the supermarket chain's **digital marketing** director **Toby Horry**.

"A lot of customers are using **Twitter** as a service channel and we've really embraced that, so we now have a lot of people who may historically have been telephone-based customer service who are now operating largely in the **Twitter** space," he says.

Where conventionally **Tesco** might have taken a couple of days to respond to customer service queries, **Twitter** allows the **brand** to be "very immediate".

### Twitter keeps brands on their toes

**Audi** has also settled into using **Twitter** as a direct channel to individual customers.

"We've moved away from considering **Twitter** as a platform that provides a wide reach, like Facebook for instance," says **Emma Page**, the car **brand's** **digital** and **social** media communications manager.

"If **Twitter** were to disappear next month, we'd lose a platform for managing customer care and conversing directly with our fans."

**Twitter** has heightened people's expectations about customer service and speed of response to complaints, according to **Roope**, who believes its open nature is key to its future.

"**Twitter**, as the only really open forum, is good for encouraging discourse, and for keeping **brands** on their toes," he says.

These words are echoed by **Audi's** Page, who comments that **Twitter** has evidenced how diverse the **brand's** audience is.

"There are **Audi** fans and automotive fans who are all hugely knowledgeable, ready to let us know which models they particularly like or dislike, engage in debate about the competition and generally keep us on our toes," she says.

Adds **Roope**: "Being more conversational, **Twitter** forces **brands** to understand how gesture and behaviour are at least as important as 'content' in these spaces.

"With the intensity of attention, **Twitter** is a crucible for evolving the way **brands** speak more generally – no matter how strict your **brand's** tone of voice and attitude is, everyone more or less softens up on **Twitter** and is forced to become more customer-centric."

### **Brands want more customer service tools**

**Twitter's** management itself embraced the customer service role last month by introducing new direct message and customer feedback tools. The former allows customers to immediately begin a conversation with a **brand** over direct message and the latter allows **brands** to [privately solicit users' feedback after an interaction](#).

**Tesco's** Horry says he would like to see **Twitter** come up with further developments in customer service, as well as more interesting creative formats (such as **Twitter** Moments, which **Tesco** has taken part in) and better targeting, which touches on **Tesco's** use of the platform to push out **brand** content.

"Platforms like **Twitter** are now as much a paid environment as an earned [media] environment," says Horry, who before joining **Tesco** four months ago was managing director of **digital** agency Dare.

He says **Tesco's** future focus will be on becoming increasingly agile in responding to customer needs, whether for service or helpful content.

"As the targeting functionality of **Twitter** and other platforms improves we're keen to make sure that the right people are getting the right content and people who don't want content don't get it."

At **Audi** Page is planning to get to grips with **Twitter's** live streaming tool Periscope, which she believes will give **brands** more opportunities to connect to fans and customers.

"The possible lifting of the 140-character restriction could be another game-changer, giving our messages and conversations more room to breathe," she adds.

"Having said that, there is an art in keeping things brief. *Vorsprung durch Technik* is only 23 characters, after all, yet it says everything you need to know about **Audi**."

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