



## To tweet or not to tweet is a business question

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Is there a commercial use for social networking sites such as Twitter and Facebook?

This is an important question for many company owners, who have found themselves devoting precious resources to keeping online followers updated through Twitter tweets, while wondering if there is a bottom-line benefit to their businesses.

Dell, the US-based computer retailer, recently attributed \$3m (£1.86m) worth of revenue to its Dell Outlet Twitter account. However, for many other businesses, the benefits are less easy to measure.

However, many companies use the technology to solve business challenges, such as finding personnel, improving staff productivity and finding new customers.

London-based software developer Huddle found its head of product, Martin Eriksson, because he was following the dynamic young company on Twitter. Eriksson claims he was not looking for a job at the time, but a tweet by Huddle co-founder Andy McLoughlin saying that he was looking for someone caught his attention.

At Mitchell, Huddle's other founder, says he and his colleagues now rely entirely on social networks to recruit people because it has been such an effective medium for finding staff. Huddle's founders also track online "alumni" groups in which former colleagues update each other on their movements. "Everyone has noted that networking is important for their job, so they keep in touch via these groups," Mitchell says.

Social networking can even be used by the staff of small businesses to build a sense of community within the organisation. This has proved to be the case for Melorum Publishing, a research and training business that has 35 employees across four continents – half of whom either work from home or in small offices.

Victoria Melorum, the company's co-founder and chief executive, says that the technology was adopted because it was led by employees rather than a management edict.

(abridged)