

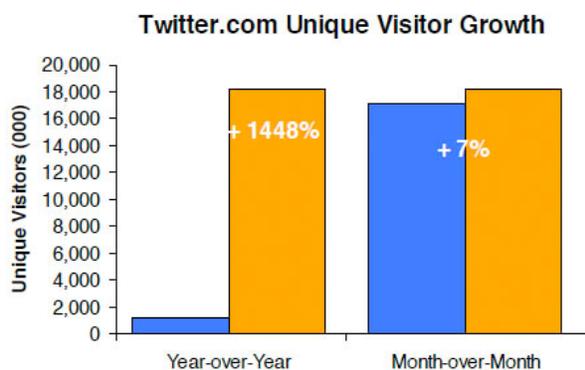
## Up Front

### Whither Twitter for Pharma?

"I happen to think that no element of new and emerging media is more important than Twitter - something that should be apparent to anyone involved in communications," said Mark Senak on Eye On FDA blog.

Senak cites the "astronomical" growth rate of Twitter users. eMarketer estimates that there are currently about 6 million registered Twitter users, which equates to around 3.8 percent of people on the Internet. After Twitter demonstrated its worth keeping people informed of events in Iran, I'm sure the astronomical growth will continue. By the end of 2009, there may be 12 million or more users.

According to comScore Media Metrix data, there were 17 million U.S. visitors to Twitter.com during April, 2009. This represents an 83% gain vs. March and a 3,000% gain vs. year ago. Neilsen, on the other hand, estimates there was a 1,448 percent increase between May 2008 and May 2009 (see chart).



Most Twitter users are 25-54 years old, with the largest segment being the 45-54 age group.

Most of these numbers tell us about visitors to the Twitter.com website. But this does not tell the whole story, according to Nielsen. "The ability to (use) Twitter via a mobile phone--whether through the mobile Web or via text messages--is a driving factor in the social network's success," said Nielsen Online's Michelle McGiboney.



The various, non-web access points to Tweets—ie, posts made via Twitter—is something pharmaceutical brand marketers should think about before they develop their branded Twitter applications.

As you will learn from reading the article "Pharma Marketers Dive Deeper Into Social Media" in this issue of *Pharma Marketing News*, a branded Tweet on Twitter.com may be FDA-safe, but the same Tweet seen on a cell phone or a

client app like TweetDeck may violate FDA regulations. That's because on the Web the Tweet can be surrounded by the "fair balance" information on the same page, but it stands alone when viewed on your cell phone.

Still, branded Tweets as seen on cell phones can be FDA-safe if there is no mention of benefits (ie, indications). Such Tweets are just "reminder ads." Is this what your audience wants?

Which raises another issue I have with Twitter. Who is your audience? What do your followers want? Is it really worth it to post Tweets when you know practically nothing about who's reading them?

Take Novo Nordisk's "Race with Insulin" Twitter account (@racewithinsulin), which features Tweets from racecar driver and diabetes patient Charlie Kimball. As of July 7, 2009, that account has 233 followers compared to 128 on June 19, 2009. That's an impressive 82% or greater month-over-month growth rate.

But, the number of "Race with Insulin" followers is probably pretty miniscule compared to the number of visitors to the branded site ([www.levemir.com](http://www.levemir.com)).

In the approximately 2 months that "Race with Insulin" has been on Twitter, only 41 Tweets were made. Let's say that, on average, 200 followers viewed each of those Tweets. That works out to 8,200 views total or 4,100 views per month! Hardly worth my time to write about let alone for Novo to pay its agency thousands of dollars for maintaining the account.

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Who are the followers of “Race with Insulin?”

Other than manually browsing through 233 followers and reading their imprecise and often missing profiles, there’s no easy way to know much about followers of “Race with Insulin” or any other Twitter account.

Looking at a few of “Race with Insulin” followers, I find @ktina7126 who says she is “boredd.. hit me up on yahoo if you wanna have some funn,” several racing enthusiasts, Mapdoctor.com (where you can find doctors), @shattler (no profile) who “is fantasizing about rolling around on a bed of crushed red beets,” and many others who have no information whatsoever in their profiles.

I can use twitalyzer.com to get a report on the relative influence, signal-to-noise ratio, generosity, velocity, clout, and other useful measures of “Race with Insulin” Twitter success. But that does not tell me if the audience is composed of racing enthusiasts, diabetes patients, bloggers, or just women interested in showing Charlie Kimball a good time!

Boehringer Ingelheim (BI) also has a Twitter account (listen to podcast “Pharma on Twitter: Boehringer Ingelheim”; <http://bit.ly/2EOynh>). Nearly 1,900 people follow @boehringer, but BI does not know where they come from. In a recent Tweet, BI asked “Can anyone recommend a tool that can accurately show the location of followers as statistics (not as a map) eg % per country?” No one responded!

You would think that the dozen or so pharmaceutical companies that have Twitter accounts would survey their followers to learn more about them! That’s what I do.

A survey of followers of @pharmaguy (that’s me) tells me that 66% of my 3,000 or so followers come from the US, 12.3% from the UK, 4.3% from Canada, 2.5% from Switzerland, and between 1.2% and 1.9% are from various other countries. About 75% work in the pharmaceutical industry (drug companies plus agencies, consultants, etc.) and are “very” or “somewhat” supportive of the industry.

The biggest segment of my followers (27.7%) have been using Twitter for only 1 to 3 months and only 10% have been at it for more than a year. A majority (54%) monitor Twitter a “few” times per day and 27% do so “continuously” every day.

Most of my followers use Twitter to keep up with industry news (87%), to build a network of business contacts (60%), and to microblog about issues of importance to them (46%). About a third want to drive traffic to their websites.

I know a lot more about my followers. The point is, I care enough to ASK them! Which is something that pharma marketers are afraid to do. I mean, heaven forbid that they should learn of an adverse event!

IMHO, Twitter is not much use to pharma marketers for building a brand. It’s more about supporting your customers; ie, patients and physicians. My advice is to use Twitter to have conversations with your followers to learn more about who they are and what they want. Then deliver what they want and lead them to a closer relationship via your brand site.



**John Mack, Editor**



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[www.twitter.com/pharmaguy](http://www.twitter.com/pharmaguy)

### More Twitter User Data

Source: HubSpot (<http://tinyurl.com/m3q13y>)

- 79.79% of Twitter users failed to provide a homepage URL
- 75.86% of users have not entered a bio in their profile
- 68.68% have not specified a location
- 55.50% are not following anyone
- 54.88% have never tweeted
- 52.71% have no followers