

Background

As part of its nascent, and gentle steps to increasingly monetise its platform, Twitter announced that it would be launching brand pages. Starting with a select group of launch partners, Twitter is to enable brands to customise their profile pages, allowing them to take greater control of the look and feel of the page, as well as making it easier to share more content.

Details

There are two main areas in which brand pages will differ from existing profiles:

- Brands will be able to customise the pages to a greater extent than is currently possible, allowing them to display branded assets more prominently. At present these assets are often hidden by the feed.
- Brands can choose to keep a particular tweet at the top of their feed as opposed to the top tweet automatically being the most recent. This greater control is designed to make marketers, normally used to having total control of the message they choose to present to consumers, feel more comfortable with Twitter as a medium.

Implications

The main targets of this initiative would appear to be two-fold:

- Marketers who might currently be uncomfortable with Twitter due to the lack of control that they currently have over their presence on the platform
- Facebook and, to a lesser extent, Google. Both of these suppliers have made great steps in convincing clients that their respective products are essential components of a brand's asset portfolio – Facebook in particular has carved out a role as being the second home, or in some cases first, of every brand worth its salt.

Twitter has, to date, raised over \$1 billion dollars and is, following its most recent funding round, valued at over \$8 billion. They have a large audience, high profile users such as Oprah and Ashton Kutcher, and are increasingly becoming a key part of many consumers' media consumption habits, as the spikes in tweets around TV shows and events show. However, all of those are not going to pay back that \$1 billion in funding unless Twitter can increase its revenues.

Advertising revenue for 2011 is estimated at, ironically, \$140 million, with predictions for future potential ranging from just over \$300 million to over \$2 billion, but for those to come true, brands need to feel comfortable on the platform, hence the new features. As Twitter's Adam Bain said: *A tweet's only 140 characters...(brand pages) are like an invitation (for consumers) to learn more*"

Summary

Twitter is hugely successful in terms of its visibility in everyday life and wider popular culture, being cited as a key part of everything from the Arab Spring to the UK riots but, to date it has yet to turn that notoriety into revenues (a conscious decision in many ways). Twitter is starting to make its advertising products more widely available but, as we noted when they were first launched, it is often hard for brands other than entertainment companies or service brands (who often use Twitter as a virtual call centre) to see how Twitter ads will work for them. By giving them more control over their presence on the platform, Twitter hopes to change that. But as these pages will require time and resource to manage, as do Facebook & Google+, it may end up being brand budget and head-count constraints that end up deciding whether or not they succeed.