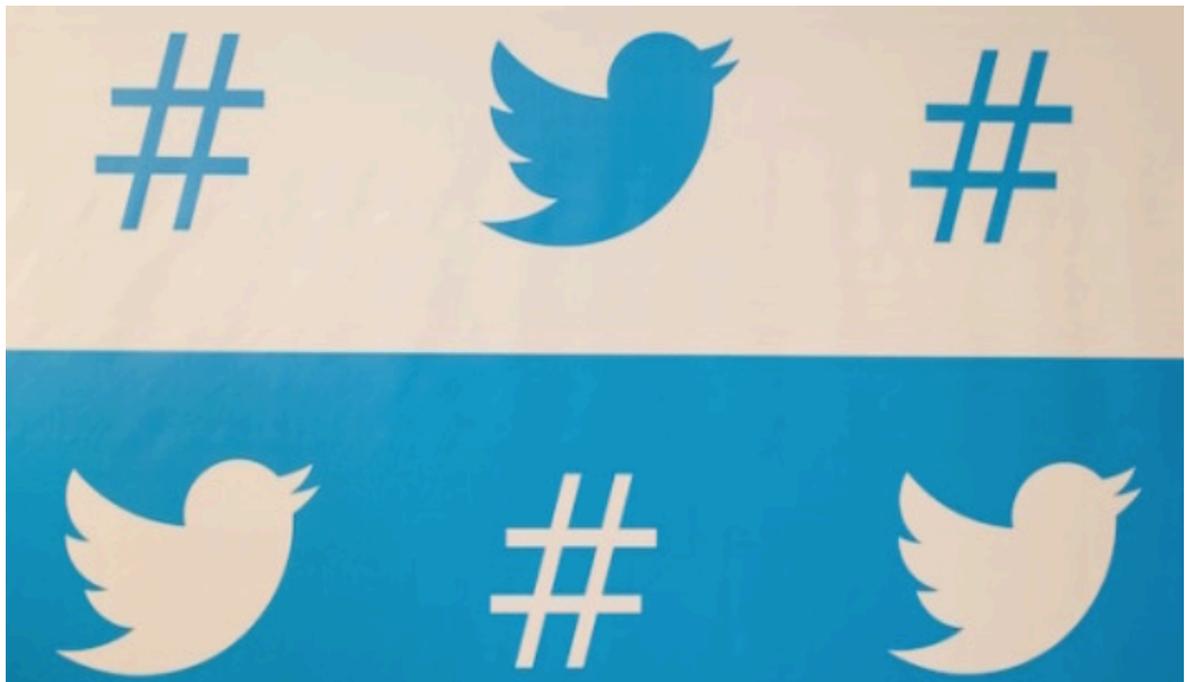


## What Twitter's Move to 280 Characters Means for PR and Marketing



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By Seth Arenstein



With President Trump inserting his new-media channel of choice, Twitter, into global media almost on a daily basis, these seem to be heady times for the social platform.

Yes, it's struggling to attract more eyeballs and with them, more advertisers. Twitter has about 330 million active users; Instagram has more than twice that number and parent Facebook counts 2 billion actives.

There also are myriad tweaks users continue to urge on the San Francisco-based company to make its platform friendlier (how about an editing function, so you can avoid deleting an entire tweet after you realize you omitted or misspelled a word or two?). Still, politics aside, wouldn't any brand appreciate the free world's leader thrusting its product into the planet's zeitgeist each morning?

We're ruminating on Twitter, of course, because today is the date that it officially drops its 140-character limit, its *raison d'être*, in favor of 280. The decision to stuff the Twitter bird to twice its weight, [announced late in September](#), stems from plans unveiled many months before that. Despite Twitter's continuing woes, the decision to move to 280 was made at a time when the life expectancy of Twitter seemed on far shakier ground than currently. Of course, this is a feel thing; we have no handy ornithological data to prove the bird is in better shape today.

But if Twitter *feels* stronger, why follow through on this decision to bolster growth, especially when President Trump already has made "Twitter" and "tweet" household words?

And the 280 rule is a garden-variety bad move. (Again, we lack stats to prove this, but come on; you know less is more, right?) Need we recount the many pundits who've decried Twitt-flation? (For the sake of career security, when one of those writers is your boss, you do it.) Our own Steve Goldstein took a memorable whack at 280 characters, making him perhaps the only critic of the move to weave in [a glow-in-the-dark yo-yo and an egg cream](#) made with [Fox's U-bet chocolate syrup](#) into his argument. [Mind you, not everyone is upset with the new 280-character limit](#). In fact some are in favor of 280 characters and are wondering [why tweets in Chinese, Japanese and Korean still are limited to 140](#). Twitter says this is because such languages are economical, with 1 character conveying much information. Some linguists and probably a philologist or two disagree.

More than that, Twitter seems confident 280 will bolster growth, not ruin the experience. APCO's Michael Galfetti agrees, to a point. "280 characters has not fundamentally changed Twitter," he says, cautioning, "280 characters should be used sparingly; just because we have that space doesn't mean we should feel compelled to use it. Save the multi-point arguments for Facebook and keep Twitter snappy and fun."

And what will all this mean for PR and marketing pros? Michael Lamp, SVP at Hunter Public Relations, sees benefits for marketers in the new 280-character limit. "When PR pros secure interviews on behalf of brand spokespeople, reporters now will be able to quote these experts in a fuller capacity, which means there may be greater potential to get additional brand key messages—and more direct quotes—in a single Tweet." The trade-off, though, is journalists, rated by their click rates, will need to be "savvier about how much of the story they tell on Twitter versus using the platform to drive eyeballs to their websites to read the rest of the story."

Lamp also sees marketers benefitting from 280 because there will be more space for #hashtags. "Since #hashtags are the number one way that users discover organic content, this means marketers can support a product post with additional hashtags, thereby paving the way to deliver more impressions and drive more earned conversation."

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