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CEOs and Twitter: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly

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Posted by [Neal Leavitt](#) on April 30th, 2014 at 12:25 pm

These days if you sneeze funny, it can go viral – and for CEOs, catching cold may be the least of their worries. The myriad social tools available to CEOs can be a mixed bag.

Take Twitter, for instance. There are numerous content opportunities if properly implemented. But there are caveats. As reported by Louis Bedgian in [Benzinga](#), a financial media outlet, CEOs aren't infallible – and their words can cause financial tremors.

Marlene Morris Towns, a Georgetown University marketing professor, told Bedgian that in many instances, a CEO's tweets are often distributed in real-time without being vetted.

“They're not run through legal and compliance which allows you a lot of flexibility to jump on things as they

happen – it also holds you at risk,” said Towns.

Towns added that CEOs “step in it themselves sometime by letting their personal views be known when they shouldn’t necessarily be known. Sometimes that’s their fault, sometimes it’s not. Somebody asks them a question in an interview, they say something off the cuff and next thing you know, it’s on social media.”

To wit, a few years ago, Micky Arison, former CEO of Carnival Corporation who also owns the NBA’s Miami Heat, was fined \$500,000 by the NBA for a tweet he posted about negotiations between the league and the player’s union.

But Twitter can be a very effective communications tool for CEOs. Arik Hanson, writing in [O’Dwyer’s](#), spelled out a number of examples of how Twitter can be implemented by CEOs to benefit their company.

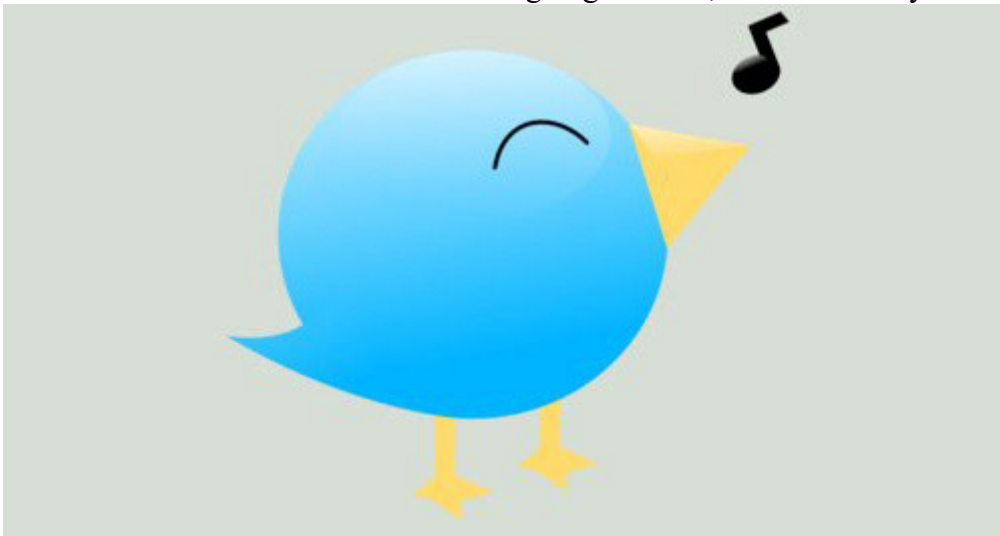
Some of these include:

- Share earnings call information
- Recognize employee wins
- Triage customer issues
- Retweet corporate accounts regularly
- Tweet about other business interests
- Tweet your interests
- Retweet other company employees
- Talk about your community
- Tweet about events you speak or attend

While CEOs are slowly integrating Twitter and other social media platforms into their overall communications strategy, the numbers are still quite low. [Investor Wired](#) recently reported that only 30% of executive directors within NASDAQ 100 companies are present and active on social networks.

And a 2013 CEO.com/Domo study of social media usage by CEOs at America’s 500 highest growing companies showed that a significant number of CEOs are still invisible on social media sites. While Twitter participation for CEOs increased about 56% in 2013, the percentage of CEOs from these top 500 companies that actually tweet was only 5.6%.

With some companies the business use case for Twitter can be somewhat murky, with no clear correlation between Twitter followers and sales. So going forward, a few takeaways are best summed up by [Forbes’](#)



Susan Adams:

“Given the rise of Twitter and the public’s hunger for instantaneous news, CEOs may want to consider diving into the medium. But they should focus on the quality of their posts, in order to attract serious followers.”

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