

# Call it twine? Twitter makes wine for charity

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This photo taken Oct. 13, 2009 shows Noah Dorrance, left, marketing director and Michael Brill, right, president and CEO of Crushpad, looking over a bin of grapes that will be used to make a wine for Twitter in San Francisco. Twitter is teaming up with a San Francisco winery for a project billed as the biggest online wine event to date and the first time the social media network has made a formal bid to raise money for a good cause.(AP Photo/Eric Risberg)

(AP) -- Everyone likes a wine with character. How about one with 140 of them? Yes, the people at Twitter - the social media site on which users post messages no longer than 140 characters - are getting into the wine business, putting together an ambitious project aimed at raising money for literacy.

While others have used [Twitter](#) to raise money for or attention to various

issues, the project, which launches Thursday, is the first official attempt by Twitter as a company to raise money for a cause, said Twitter spokeswoman Jenna Sampson.

Based on the popularity of wine and all things Twitter, organizers predict this will be the largest online wine project to date.

"It's definitely an experiment," said Michael Brill, president and CEO of Crushpad, the winery teaming with Twitter and the pro-literacy group Room to Read.

The project began after a few Twitter employees got involved with Crushpad, a facility that allows enthusiasts to create their own barrels of wine without having to own a vineyard. Crushpad, which like Twitter and Room to Read is based in San Francisco, provides grapes, equipment, expertise, storage and bottling. Clients get as involved as they want to, checking in on their wines physically or through Internet messages and videos.

At first, the plan was for Twitter to make some wine as an employee team-building activity, says Sampson. But after someone brought up Room to Read, which works to establish libraries and schools in developing countries, it decided to go bigger.

"It became apparent pretty quickly that we could probably create a wine, great wine, sell it for a relatively low price and take some chunk of the proceeds and send it to Room to Read," Brill said.

Just how big the project can get is still up in the air.

"It's winemaking, which is usually for us a four or five person endeavor, mixed with Twitter, which is a tens of millions person endeavor," said Brill. "What happens when you push those things together? I'm hoping

we just average the two customer bases," he said with a laugh.

The wines, a chardonnay and pinot noir to be released next summer, will be called Fledgling.

Grapes for the new wine already have been trucked into the Crushpad facility and are in the process of being crushed and fermented. Once the project begins, there will be a Twitter account "(at)fledgling" where followers can get updates on the grapes' progress. To keep the logistics manageable, one barrel of chardonnay and one barrel of pinot noir will serve as representative samples to be followed by video postings and other online updates.

Early next year, there will be a barrel tasting, in San Francisco and also at remote locations using mailed samples, with tasters tweeting their opinions.

The finished wine - just how many cases is still to be determined - will sell for \$20 a bottle, with \$5 of that going to Room to Read.

"We're excited," says Room to Read founder John Wood. "Our team and their team together making [wine](#), it's a way to have a lot of fun and it's a way to create a lot of libraries at the same time."

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Twitter: <http://www.twitter.com>

Crushpad: <http://www.crushpadwine.com>

Room to Read: <http://www.roomtoread.org>

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