Twitter tool shows hot tweets when people meet

October 5 2009, by Steve Tally

Twitter reader, Need4Feed.com

(PhysOrg.com) -- The first Twitter tool that ranks the popularity of individual messages plans to make the backchannel conversations at conferences and meetings more interesting.

Need4Feed, a new Twitter tool developed at Purdue University, ranks Twitter messages in several ways, allowing users to see what is being said outside of the meeting rooms at a [conference](#).

"Need4Feed lets conferencegoers sift through the noise to find the important things being said," says developer Kyle Bowen, director of informatics at Purdue.

The tool determines popularity by employing an [algorithm](#) that analyzes how other Twitter users respond to a message by reposting it, replying to it, marking it as a favorite or whether the message initiates a longer conversation.

The tool will be unveiled Tuesday (Oct. 6) at the HighEdWeb 2009 conference in Milwaukee. The Need4Feed site for the HighEdWeb 2009 conference is available to anyone at www.need4feed.com

Need4Feed analyzes all [tweets](#) that include a hashtag, which is the way Twitter users tag a message related to a topic. Hashtags allow messages to be grouped together so Twitter users can follow the topic. Need4Feed examines all of the messages marked with a particular hashtag and provides additional information about those messages.

People using Need4Feed can see the most popular messages even if they are not following the person who sent it.

"If someone tweets a message and there is no one to follow, does it make a sound?" Bowen joked. "Now we can see what's being said by everyone at the meeting. The tool ranks individual messages and not people."

The tool lists all of the messages tagged for the conference in one window, but a second window offers several additional features for conference Tweetees:

* The most popular messages are ranked and displayed, and it also shows the Twitter image of people who voted for each message.

* Messages can be sorted by time so users can identify tweets coming from a specific session or workshop.

* The most re-tweeted messages are ranked and displayed.

* The most popular secondary hashtags used by people at the conference are shown in a tag cloud.

* The most active conversations springing from particular messages are listed.

* The people who are tweeting most are shown by displaying their Twitter images.

* Images sent via Twitter are posted as thumbnails in an image stream.

Bowen said conferencegoers don't need to change their behavior or Twitter settings to use Need4Feed.

"If they are using the conference hashtag they are already participating," he said.

Provided by Purdue University (news : web)

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