

Microsoft icon Bill Gates starts tweeting

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The recently-retired Microsoft legend's Twitter page bore a blue checkmark icon used to verify identities of famous people using the wildly popular microblogging service.

As sundown neared in the Pacific state of Washington where Gates lives, he had logged four tweets and signed on to "follow" messages at 40 other Twitter accounts including those of Microsoft and its new Bing search engine.

Twitter users that Gates was tracking ranged from Queen Rania Al-Abdullah of Jordan and US President [Barack Obama](#) to actress Ashley Tisdale, actor [Ashton Kutcher](#), and CERN European Organization for Nuclear Research.

Gates was also following [tweets](#) from prestigious TED conferences known for mind-bending themes and humanitarian missions.

"I'd like to welcome @billgates to the twitterverse," tweeted Kutcher, who had 4,396,936 followers at the microblogging services as of late Tuesday.

Slightly more than 61,000 people signed on to follow Gates on his opening day tweeting.

The number of people following Gates rose steadily as word of his arrival among the "twitterati" ricocheted with increasing speed in "retweets" through the day.

"Welcome to the club," tweeted US television celebrity Ryan Seacrest of the popular "American Idol" program.

Twitter, fueled by smartphones and online bursts of 140 characters, soared to lofty heights over the past year and the number of users reportedly topped 40 million by the end of 2009.

Twitter is said to have spurned takeover offers worth hundreds of millions of dollars from [Google](#) and [Facebook](#) and its influence as a

communications and news-breaking tool has been validated in a number of ways.

In June, the State Department asked Twitter to delay scheduled maintenance on the service because it was being used by protestors angered by the results of Iran's disputed presidential election.

More recently, Google and Microsoft began integrating Twitter messages into their respective search engines, a new feature described as real-time search.

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