

Twitter tweaks website to show more photos, video

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Twitter CEO Evan Williams makes a presentation about changes to the social network at Twitter headquarters in San Francisco, Tuesday, Sept. 14, 2010. Twitter is turning its short-messaging website into a multimedia showcase by adding a new pane that will make it easier for its 160 million users to peruse photos and video. (AP Photo/Marcio Jose Sanchez)

(AP) -- Twitter is turning its text-messaging website into a multimedia showcase by adding a new pane that will make it easier for its 160 million users to check out photos and video.

The redesign unveiled Tuesday may compel people to linger on Twitter's website for longer periods and come back more frequently, making it a more attractive advertising vehicle.

"We are still figuring out all the new possibilities," Twitter co-founder Biz Stone said in an interview.

The facelift, expected to roll out around the world in the next few days, splits the website into two panes. One is devoted to the 90 million messages, or "tweets," posted on Twitter each day, and the other features the images contained within the text. Until now, most links to photos and video have been displayed on other websites or browser tabs.

The new look further underscores Twitter's emergence as a major communications hub.

In the process, Twitter has evolved from a geeky hangout when it started four years ago to a worldwide phenomenon today.

People are mainly opening accounts now so they can follow the tweets from the friends, family, celebrities, media outlets and lawmakers that interest them. These spectators, or "lurkers," tend to only publish their own thoughts or observations periodically.

Forrester Research analyst Augie Ray said he believes the growing audience of spectators is the main reasons that Twitter had to do something to make it easier to wade through the sea of content cascading through its website each day.

"Improving consumption of Twitter-based content is important not just for Twitter, but for interactive marketers as well," Ray wrote in a Tuesday blog post.

Twitter didn't even start allowing advertising within a limited number of tweets until five months ago. The privately held company, based in San Francisco, still gets most of its revenue from a series of data-sharing deals with [Google](#) Inc., [Microsoft](#) Corp. and other companies.

Stone said Twitter still needs to work on its business model before pursuing an initial public offering of stock. That most likely will mean

attracting more advertisers in a way that doesn't disrupt the exchange of information and ideas on the service.

The split-screen approach of the redesigned website appears aimed at achieving that goal.

The website's left pane will look familiar, featuring a timeline that chronologically stacks all the tweets from the people that accountholders chooses to follow.

The right panel appears to open up new real estate for content. It is being set up so users can click on individual [tweets](#) to look at embedded images and other information without having to navigate away from their home pages.

"It's all about getting more out of Twitter in a lot less time," Twitter CEO Evan Williams said Tuesday.

[Twitter](#) has reached agreements to display content from more than a dozen online photo and video sites, including Google-owned YouTube, Yahoo Inc.'s Flickr, GoJustin.TV, Twitgoo, TwitPic, TwitVid, Ustream, Vimeo, and yfrog.

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