

## **Bruce Daisley** VP Europe, Twitter

**Media Masters – May 19, 2016**

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**Welcome to Media Masters, a series of one to one interviews with people at the top of the media game. Today I'm joined by Bruce Daisley, vice-president of Europe at Twitter. Bruce joined the company after holding various roles at Emap and Google, and was responsible for rolling out YouTube's now ubiquitous skippable ads format.**

**He was appointed UK Director of Twitter in 2012, and under his leadership Britain has become Twitter's second largest advertising market after the United States. Promoted to vice-president last year, he is now taking a leading role in developing the platform as well as overcoming difficult challenges including slowing user growth in some parts of the world and abuse of the service by trolls.**

**Bruce, thanks for joining me.**

Thank you for having me.

**So come on then, how did you end up the European boss of Twitter? That's an incredibly impressive position.**

A series of happy accidents really!

**It's always the same. We always get that.**

Sort of throughout my career, all I've really done is follow my passion. So my first job in media was before I really knew what media was. I wrote a cartoon CV for Capital Radio for a job when I was like 21 on the dole in Birmingham, and wrote a cartoon CV for a job at Capital Radio. Found myself working in media and I hadn't even known media existed to that point. Then sort of hopped through Capital Radio into Emap, then into Google.

### **How long were you at Google for?**

I was about four years at Google, and I was effectively... when I joined Google I was probably one of the few people there, a lot of management consultants there, one of few people who was interested in YouTube. For me, YouTube was like this bewitching confection of like, all of the video content ever created; a sort of place that can...

### **That's what it is!**

It's like it's the wonder of the world! And I still think it's the best website in the world. And so I was one the few people who wanted to work on that, and very soon a few of us started migrating to it, and then I found myself in the sort of leading position at YouTube, and then from there Twitter contacted me and asked me if I'd be interested in coming to Twitter.

### **And presumably... obviously you took them up on their offer, so that was that was something that you were quite excited about?**

I never cease to remark upon the fact how lucky I am to work at... you know, probably when I was working at YouTube I loved YouTube so much, probably the only place I would have gone to work or that would have provoked similar excitement and passion would have been Twitter.

### **So how long have you been at Twitter? Because your rise through the ranks there has been meteoric.**

I joined four years ago, and at the time it was a tiny little office, there was about six of us there, we had just bought TweetDeck so that was another six people in the corner, and we were sort of in this tiny little mouse-infested serviced office in Great Titchfield Street.

### **And what was the initial brief, then? So they hired you, you're now running the show, what was their kind of one-line nutshell, "This is a big problem, this is our big opportunity..." What was top of the your to do list?**

I think at that point Twitter was about 500 people globally and they were mainly in one office in San Francisco. So in some rundown office just off 4<sup>th</sup> and Folsom in San Francisco, and the aim was just help us open an office in another country, so it was very broad. And in fact, through that there was a lot of autonomy, so we were pretty much told, "Just get on with it, help us make it up as we're going along."

### **And what came next over the next couple of years, then? How did it go? I mean, clearly it's gone very well but in terms of your role within it.**

I think Twitter UK has been an especially strong market for us. There's something about the combination of things that combine to form the magic of Twitter are that it's about things you're interested in, but it's also about human... it's about sort of hearing... it's like this sort of Darwinian notion of like the best content rises to the top. And so consequently the Brits love that. And through moments like the Olympics the last time around, or just watching TV shows like X-Factor, actually the humour has just taken Twitter in the U.K. to a next level. So we're fortunate really, because when our American comrades are sort of looking over they say, "Look, Twitter UK is doing incredibly well." And more recently I've been trying to help work with the European team, so Twitter is going from strength to strength in France, it's incredibly strong in Spain... so we're just helping to evolve those things really.

**And how does that work in terms of the kind of cross-cultural awareness that you have to bring to that? Because obviously you're a Brit, you've done Twitter UK, you made a huge success of it, but aren't there kind of 'in-territory' challenges where you don't know how the Spanish are going to react to X Y and Z?**

There's definitely a lot of differences. In Japan we're bigger than Facebook. So in Japan, people adore Twitter and it's the biggest social network there because I think there's an important part of the psyche there where they love a degree of anonymity, actually. And so they're such a proud group of people that they love the fact that you can say things without the fear of shame or judgment. And in contrast, countries like Germany have always been an immensely private nation and probably this history of the last 50 years has helped to redouble their commitment to privacy and so consequently an open public network, something that's effectively handing anyone a public microphone, isn't a natural place for them to gravitate. So I think the important thing for us is to try and work out what are the things that each country is going to love and help celebrate them. For Germany, the World Cup Most recently, two years ago, was a really important take-off moment because for the first time I think they totally saw the magic of people talking publicly and seeing the power of that.

**Well, I mean, just going back to Twitter UK for a second, and I do confess that I am a genuine addict of Twitter, I literally can't stay off it, even if I've not been on for sort of 20 minutes or so I find myself reaching for the phone. There are certain shows now that you can't watch without second screening, so for example *Question Time*.**

*Question Time* is the obvious one, isn't it?

**It would be unthinkable to just sit there like some kind of idiot just watching it! You have to engage, everyone's clicking on the hashtag, and they have the**

**Question Time** extra guests that's online on Twitter... these things must be fantastic for you to see.

I think the connection between Twitter and TV is especially strong isn't it, and actually for me, I love TV, and I love celebrating the power of TV, so I think what we've always tried to do is say that Twitter is really a sort of a brother in arms to television. We're not here to try and steal a march on it or somehow play it down. I think so often, especially digital companies, can spend their time talking down the power of television, and you hear nonsense like TV is dead. You know, people watch as much TV as they've ever watched and I think Twitter actually helps remind us why we're so fond of television really.

**I think it builds on the experience. I'm an avid fan of *House of Cards* and it's great to follow Frank Underwood on Twitter and all those kind of things. It's driving viewers to them. I mean, we advertise our podcast, the one you're on now, on Twitter and get loads of loads of real quality listeners too – it's great.**

*House of Cards* is a funny one, isn't it, because effectively people love tweeting along with TV shows and when they drop, and there's big news, and a revelation on *Game of Thrones*...

**#nospoilers!**

Yes! Will trend all day. Whereas *House of Cards*, you've got this sort of weird sense that people don't want to let anything out. I tweeted something about *House of Cards* today and someone immediately said, "I've not watched that episode!" and I didn't even give a spoiler out! So it's a challenge of how do you tweet along with your passions, as we're so accustomed to doing now, without necessarily ruining it for everyone else.

**It is difficult because I'm only just catching up with *Sons of Anarchy* – I'm on Season 7 – and I follow Ron Perlman on Twitter, and about a month ago... obviously was the fate that befell his character I didn't know about, but because it was a few years ago on normal television he just tweeted, "Oh, this happened," and it was a massive spoiler, and in fact lots of people replied to it and said, "Oh, steady on Ron, I haven't got there yet! I'm on Season 5!" And in the end he apologised, I think.**

Okay. It's hard that is though, isn't it? I saw Ian McShane in an interview, and he was it was in a TV interview revealing something, of course they forget that in the time that they first got into acting to now, the network that distributes that information is so much more perfect. Ian McShane might have wittered something about *Lovejoy* in the old days to a Jersey newspaper and it gets no further than that; now, the these

tiny little neural connections that connect every newspaper to every Twitter user across the world have transformed that power of the network I think.

**I think it's a sign of maturity of the platform as well that even as recently as four or five years ago Twitter was a good signpost to interesting content on various other platforms like blogs or a newspaper article, but now for us – I mean, I'm a reputation management consultant, you could call it that, we look after high net worths and CEOs – and Twitter's become a destination in its own right. We tweet things and start debates on Twitter for its own sake, not that it's leading off your network. Have you found that there's been an increasing use in that way?**

Probably the evolution of Twitter... Twitter is very much a sort of 'look at that' network rather than a 'look at me' network, so it's not necessarily here's a photograph of me in my swimsuit, or here's a photograph of me looking spectacular at this beautiful restaurant...

### **That's Facebook.**

But more 'I saw this interesting thing, I found this article' and sort of pointing your attention at it. So Twitter has always been that. I think probably the evolution the last couple of years is that it's just become richer, so as we use our phones for more things now, more images, more videos, and so to a large extent now, Twitter is sort of a series of captions and links. It's like a caption 'Oh here's an article I thought was interesting', 'Here's a new song that I love', and the link taking you off to where you can consume it – and that's probably the big change.

**I think one of the interesting things as well that makes it easy to use is the sheer brutality of and the ease at which you can unfollow people, because it does keep you on point and on your game, because even celebrities that go on too long, and I might be a big fan of them, but if they're boring I'll just unfollow them.**

You know, I was only thinking about this of the day because if you think of... like, the model we were brought up, and it seemed brutal at the time, but the model we brought up where someone would be on and doing a comedy show and then after four seasons you'd hear the news, "Oh, they've cancelled the show," and while it seems starkly brutal at the time it was done –Harry Enfield springs to mind – Harry Enfield was doing a long run of BBC then disappeared, then about five or six years later came back to Sky show. And you're like, "Man, there's no humour to this, the mojo has completely gone," and I think TV was very good at spotting when people were on the wane and moving away from them, probably in this sort of a quite a noble way actually, in hindsight. "This isn't as good as their previous material, let's leave the legacy intact, not milk it too long." And we tend to do that less, don't we,

with social media? We tend to sort of follow the same person and their weariness starts coming through. And I did something myself this year about two or three months ago, thinking right, okay, I'm going to refresh my timeline, I'm going to maybe unfollow some of those people I have followed before and add some far more exciting new people who maybe are just discovering...

### **A kind of timeline spring clean.**

Yes, that it!

**What was the evolution of the mute function? I found that particularly welcome because there's certain friends who are a bit dull or whatever, and it's considered rude to unfollow them, isn't it, you don't want to do that, but you can mute them, which is exactly the same thing. And interestingly, I'll come on to trolls and what you're doing about that later, but I think muting helps as well because some of the people that have been on this who say they've had problems with trolls say that they will mute them because actually if you block them it gives that troll the satisfaction that you have you blocked them. So quite a few guests have said, "Just mute them and then they're tweeting away at you and they don't even know you're doing it."**

Yes, Debrett's could write a 21st Century Guide to Etiquette in the Digital Age...

### **They'd have to do now, wouldn't they?**

There's so many micro signals that we send out that... "What does that mean?" Someone's just like my tweet, or someone's just given me a reaction somewhere else, and yes, I definitely agree. The mute tool especially is strong, I think.

**The 'like' function is interesting for me because lots of people treat it differently. Like I have colleagues and friends that use 'like' not because they like it, it's a way of acknowledging if someone has tweeted them but they don't want to engage in a conversation, so it's like a stop to the conversation, a polite, "Yes I like that tweet, but I'm not going to reply." But I used to think naively, if someone liked your tweet, that meant that they liked your tweet.**

I think the versatility of those things is what makes them so powerful. So the ability to use them in different ways. A lot of people ask us, why did we move from favourite to like, and the reason specifically on that was that favourite was quite a bit of an opaque term if you first came to Twitter. So imagine this: Every month we have millions of new users come along to Twitter, and they're presented with it for the first time. And normally the mindset there is they've heard great things in the news, people have said, "Oh, you won't believe what happened yesterday on Twitter," or, "I was watching *Question Time*, it was so good." So we've got a lot of people who

are keen and interested, millions of them come along every week, and then the first thing they're presented with is the architecture of Twitter, and one of the things that they see is there's a button there saying 'favourite'. What we found was with new users, the burden of saying something was your favourite tweet seemed a bit like it was going straight to the fridge magnet, you know, it was like it was being pinned to the fridge, and they felt like it was this weight. "Well, I can't give that... that's not my favourite," or, "Why is that my favourite?" And what we found was that really for a lot of people, social media isn't the same as a journalist tweeting and getting 10,000 retweets or 1,000 favourites; for a lot of people they tweet something and they get no response. And so transitioning from favourite to like was just a way to try and make it feel slightly more lightweight; the ability that you could say you liked something without necessarily with the onerous burden that it had to be your favourite tweet. In fact, in the first month when we went live we saw about a 10% increase, and the increase has continued since.

**So what's on your To Do list, now that you the Twitter European supremo as it were? Because there's the slowing of the user growth say here – and don't get me wrong, you are still growing – but I think the slowing is perhaps because so many people are already on Twitter, I can't be on Twitter again I'm already on it. Monetising the user base. And, of course, trolls. So we'll pick them in in any order you want. Let's start on trolls. Because I've had a few idiots over the years on Twitter, either mute or block them, if they then set up a sock puppet account or another account, then I'll block that as well and they tend to go away. My personal way of dealing with them is just never, ever engage with them. But a lot of people have been troubled by online bullying, haven't they?**

One thing that we've learnt in the last 10 years... so Twitter is just around its 10th birthday, and I think the one thing that we've learnt in the last 10 years and all of us have learnt in the time that we've grown up with the Internet in the last sort of 10-15 years, is the way that by connecting everyone together, it services some truly heroic things that happen and some bad things that happen, and generally the pattern of behaviour that we see with trolling is that it tends to be there's more to the story than meets the eye, so maybe some of the people who've been convicted have been mentally not in the best of health. And so consequently I think what having that connected network, whether it's via email or whether it's via other social networks or Twitter, is that it allows those things to be surfaced that exist in society. The lesson probably for all of us is that digital citizenship and the responsibility of behaving as you would on social media is as important as anything else. So I read a wonderful article by Sali Hughes, a leading journalist. She wrote a treatment of her 10 years on Twitter and look, during the course of 10 years she's met her husband, she recounts in the article how she had a night out last Friday where all of the people she was out with she met on Twitter, so like this extraordinarily connection. But she mentions how she found her tweeting sarcastically about a TV presenter actually got back to the TV presenter and was quite hurtful to them. And I think probably what we've learnt the

last 10 years is that the world is far more connected than we think, and some general code of conduct of being nice to other people is probably a good start place for all of us.

**I don't know what I'm talking about here, I'll admit that in advance, but I've read a few articles over the years about this... I don't know what the name for it is, but it's like an online disconnection thing where perfectly pleasant people in real life become quite horrible when they're sitting late at night on their computer and start to send some horrible messages there. Do you think that there is something about the online experience that means people can be a bit more rude than they are? I mean, there's also question of tone; some people have said I've sent them a rude e-mail I didn't mean it in a rude way, just I would have said it with a smile but of course you don't get the smiles via e-mail.**

That tonality doesn't work.

**Because it doesn't filter through.**

I remember reading something about YouTube comments and about how there was... particularly there was a stage where YouTube comments were especially bad, and actually a lot of journalists will tell you don't read the comments below the fold, you know, don't read the second page... the bottom half of the Internet I think they describe it.

**Yes.**

Yes, that's right, that's right. I think probably the best thing we could do is recognise that the more we can teach digital citizenship in schools, the more we can encourage a default benign pattern of behaviour, is a good thing. I don't think we'll ever resolve these things and probably from a business like Twitter what we think is how can we give people as many tools as possible to deal with it. So you talked about the block button, we talk about the mute button. We think all the time how can we try and inform people how they can control their experience.

**Just to go back on to the next item on your To Do list in terms of user growth, in a sense you're a victim of your own success here in the UK, because even my mum's on Twitter! She only lurks on a few things but she is on it. What's the challenge, really? Is it the is it the new territories? Do you think, "Well, we're actually doing quite well in the UK and therefore the priority is now Spain, Italy, Germany."? What's your mindset?**

The interesting exercise we've gone through in the last few months is what we've tried to do is demonstrate exactly how many people are coming along every day and



consuming tweets. And in fact, while we talk about 320 million users, regular logged in users, on Twitter, we've actually got 820 million people who come along to the site every month and consume content. So there's very few businesses that actually have that number of people coming to them. Probably the challenge for us then is, we've got 320 million people logged in and 820 million people who are coming to the site. How can we bring that gap? How can we make that 500 million who aren't currently logged in, how can we demonstrate to them that this is a rewarding experience? And that's something we're focused on, so we think all the time about how can we simplify Twitter, how can we make it easier to understand, because broadly you could segment and oversimplify. You've got half the people who use it who are like you, they come along every day and understand it completely, refresh their timelines all the time. In fact, your frustration is probably you want to read more, you know, give me more to read. And then you've got those other people who maybe don't follow a lot of accounts, they've come along, when they come to their timeline everyone else is saying that there's a big discussion going on about the Arsenal game or about the Leicester game, or this big TV show being discussed, but when they come along to their timeline their timeline's empty. So the challenge for us is how can we turn those people who are maybe not yet convinced of the benefit of a network like Twitter? How can we bring them and show them the magic that some like you sees, really.

**So many segments of society, if I can call it that, have embraced Twitter. I work in the media, so everyone, all my colleagues are on Twitter and we're all in a big echo chamber. But TV programmes and brands have Twitter. If my train is late in the morning I'll just go straight to Virgin Trains and tweet them and find out what's happening... are there any kind of new areas of society and our lives that you can actually grow Twitter into make it even more ubiquitous? Do you have like plans for even more global domination?**

What we think about is, we think all the time about what's the essence of what makes Twitter good? So for us there's a lot of ways that people can connect, and what we don't want to do is say, "Let's do all of them," and try and focus our attention on all of them. So we think, "What's the special thing about Twitter?" and probably the best way to think about it is that actually the original prompt we've always given people, the box, says, "What's happening?" The box invites you to decide, and that's the promise of Twitter really, it's what's happening right now. So you open it maybe... if you've heard this big news story you open Twitter, or if you are watching a TV show you open Twitter, or if you want to hear what the new records released this week are you open Twitter, and Twitter is a great way to see what's happening. And probably the challenge for us is to think about how can we bring more of that to more people, so some of that is celebrating the liveness, and we launched Periscope about a year ago, which... actually the promise of Periscope, the guy who invented Periscope, his vision was teleportation and it was like, "Ah, I wish technology could help me teleport." And so the next best thing to being in Tokyo is, if you can go on a

map of the world and see that someone's in Tokyo, and look through their eyes. And that was sort of the vision that brought us there. And so actually, what something like Periscope does is it extends that 'what's happening' promise. It says, you know, Periscope is currently the number one app in France and massive success in Spain and growing everywhere else. But right now it allows you to say, I wonder what's happening in Paris?" "I wonder what's happening... this Madonna show in Sydney." And so it's like, it's taking that sense of what's happening right now and making it even more fully realised.

**You mentioned there about a concert. What is to stop people just filming or just holding their phone out for the entire concert and having people watch it live from all around the world? How do you protect it? Because I could aim my phone on Periscope at my television and my friends in another country could watch it live. There must be people who were trying to protect their digital rights, their live broadcasting rights, that would feel threatened by that, and how do you actually spot that and stop that from happening?**

Yes, so I mean... we fully respect the rights holders, and in truth I think anyone who tried to watch a Periscope of a TV show would abandon it pretty quickly.

**It wouldn't be in HD.**

Yes. It's like trying to just to sort of stream it through a TV shop window. I don't think you get the full HD experience from doing something like that. I think more something like Periscope is to try and bring you the crackle of energy of an event and give you a sense of what it's like. So probably someone's not going to recreate the experience of being at the Pyramid stage, but someone on Periscope in Glastonbury might give you a sense of the ambiance and what you're missing there. So I think it teleports you in an emotional sense rather than necessarily rendering in ultra HD 4k image quality. I don't think it does that, I think it's about trying to bring the sense of place and emotion.

**And in terms of monetising the potential for Twitter. Is that an issue? Because most people I imagine, you know, whether you got a few hundred thousand followers if you're a journalist, or you're someone like me, we're not paying; the service is free at the point of use. Now, we advertise this podcast on Twitter and we do very well at it, but I imagine that must be a tiny percentage of Twitter users that are actually paying you kind of cash money. So how do you do that? Is it is the kind of premise of Twitter that you have to get that critical mass of engaged users so that it's worth this podcast paying to advertise, because otherwise if you don't have the audience there's no point you having my money. What's the kind of model?**

The business model is remarkably successful actually, so we grew 58% in the last financial year, so sort of massive increase in how we're doing. I think the critical thing for us is trying to keep the experience of Twitter the same, and in fact when we first introduced ads and promoted tweets, the first people who were asking for them were the local restaurants who were getting an amazing amount of custom from Twitter already and they were saying, "How can we reach more of these people?" Or the small businesses who were saying, "I've just launched this or I've just crowd funded this. How can I reach more people to do more the same?" So it actually came from small businesses asking to do more, and we've tried to evolve it in that way really.

**I was flabbergasted a few weeks ago because we had Martin Fewell on, who is the head of media and communications for the Metropolitan Police, he was sitting in that very chair, and he said that in a lot of missing people cases they will put the notice of a missing person when they fear has been abducted on Twitter. So if someone's ex-husband is from say Ghana, and they have abducted the children and taken them back to Ghana, they will do a promoted tweet just to people in Ghana saying, "This person's missing." This has actually led to people being arrested and children being returned to their rightful guardian he said, and to me that was just genuinely amazing; I didn't even realise the police were doing that.**

I think the thing we've learnt over the last few years is that the notion that there's one social network that's one size fits all and uses privacy settings to do whatever to customise it, is just not accurate. We all use multiple products. And what Twitter's really good for is it's sort of the world public broadcast network. It's like a public messaging. And if you want something to travel a long way, Twitter is an immensely powerful place to do that. So it doesn't surprise me because the messages pass far and wide, because it's such an open network.

**Who does Twitter well? For example in politics, you remarked recently that Nicola Sturgeon uses Twitter very powerfully in the way that she kind of vocally and powerfully slaps down the critics in quite a witty way. Do you kind of encourage best practice? Do you see it, and do you see the people who are making the best use of it?**

I think the people who do it well, like you say Nicola Sturgeon, I love JK Rowling on Twitter, she's just remarkable because I think what she does is that she's probably the most famous author in the world in truth, isn't she, or certainly one of them, but she appears to be listening as well as broadcasting, so she often responds to people. She appears to be human. She's not afraid to make fun of herself. And I think the combination of those things make for just a fabulous person. And politicians the same really, the people who do Twitter well are the ones who aren't afraid to appear human, who aren't afraid to demonstrate that they've got interests and passions. The ones where you struggle is when it feels like a series of sort of local

newspaper photo shoots. They're opening somewhere, they're digging something. I think they're the ones that we struggle to connect with on a human level. I have to say it's certainly not my cup of tea, but Donald Trump is extraordinary on Twitter. I think what he's managed to do is he's managed to ensure that his message reaches people in an unfiltered way. He responds to things very quickly.

**It's clearly the real Donald on Twitter, whereas I think no one wants to follow – and we say this to our own clients – no one wants to follow a kind of clearly obviously ghostwritten Twitter account. Who wants to follow the fake Donald Trump as it were, written by a comms team?**

Yes, the fascinating thing is, the way that politics has evolved over the last few years is that it's almost the people who are not scared of making gaffes are the ones that we tend to start projecting more trust and faith on to, right? So the rough old image of Boris seems to connect far more, or free-talking Donald Trump. We seem to think okay, or general people seem to think okay, this guy seems not to be filtering what he's saying, and actually I like that unfiltered anti-politics stand.

**Like you say, I don't agree with their politics either but there is a sense of authenticity isn't it, that you can connect to a real person. And I think we seem to be moving away from that kind of cookie cutter identikit politician that's the party man or woman that's on message all the time. That doesn't seem to go down very well on Twitter at all. And I wonder whether there is something there about societal change that Twitter's bringing? Because obviously you've got the Arab Spring, you've got all of these kind of issues where there are genuinely changes to the world if I could put it as grandly as that, that Twitter's bringing about.**

Yes. We were in sort of reflective mode and we were looking at some of the things that happened in the last 10 years, and whether it's... there was a protester in Egypt who was arrested, and as he was arrested he tweeted, "I've been arrested." And in fact it shone a spotlight on the fact that this guy had disappeared. And it might not have been noticed for a couple of days. But definitely those things, that DNA of being a public broadcast network, public sort of microphone, handing people a microphone, really is the power of the networks. So it means that when Emma Watson is saying, "I want to create a movement which is about feminist ideals but embodied through men," and so when she created HeForShe, actually Twitter's a perfect place for something like that because it passes far and wide. I think within minutes people like One Direction were tweeting using the hashtag and it was sort of taking the power of what was there and just making it a public message really.

**I'll come back to some of the challenges that Twitter is facing in a second, but just to go back to the user growth issue that we're discussing, is there a kind**

**of demographic split nowadays? So for example, my young nieces aren't on Twitter and they wouldn't consider it, they're on Instagram and Snapchat, and then a lot of my professional peers are my friends are on Twitter because I'm a 40-year-old bloke, as it were, and then my parents and my slightly older friends tend to be active on Facebook. Is there a kind of demographic split now in society where your age and your demographic determine which platform you're going to go on?**

Twitter has never been especially strongly skewed towards schoolkids or the sort of strong strength there... I think because it is a series of captions and links; linking off to a fascinating article, linking off to somewhere there – it tends to be quite an adult platform. And so we've always performed there, and that's still reflected in the people who use the product. Probably the thing that we find easiest to convert is when people have got a passion in something, then they see to it is the place for them to consume that passion. I remember Grace Dent, the writer, said that Twitter is a mirror and it will mirror back or reflect back your interests to you.

**You can actually work out what someone's probably like just by looking at who they're following and who they're interacting with.**

Definitely.

**I think Twitter's really raised its game in terms of photos of the last couple of years, but if I post a picture on Facebook I might get 20 likes but on Twitter it will be only two. Do you think that that's something that you're trying to address by moving slightly away from the non-linear timeline? Because if I put a picture on Facebook I know that my friends are going to see it ultimately, even if it's 12 hours old whereas before with Twitter, if they weren't on the platform in that time period they were going to miss it, it would have been completely missed.**

I think... you talked there to one of the challenges we've got because we know when people go through all the content in the timeline they say, "Wow, such good stuff here," but they're missing about 90% of the tweets. So we know that actually some of the best stuff that maybe their friends have shared, they're missing. And so that's one of the things in our mind when we talk about features like While You Were Away and bringing those things in to try and show you the best tweets from people you engage with frequently, bring those to the top of your timeline. The other thing there is trying to make the 'like' an easier, more lightweight thing. So when previously we're asking people to favourite something, in fact a lot of people thought, "Why earth would I favourite something that seems so ephemeral and so short lived?" because favouriting thing almost feels like sort of giving the school star a merit badge, and so that's why we've transitioned to a like. Because we recognise that

maybe we're never going to be the same as other platforms DNA, but we want people to get the sense that their tweets have been seen and appreciated.

**What have you guys got wrong over the last couple of years? I mean, any company can make a mistake and learn from it, but what are your current challenges at the moment where you think, "Right, this still needs to be worked on."?**

If you think... so every month we've got 820 million people who are coming along and reading tweets. We've got 320 million users. So we've got a massive number of people who are thinking, "That tweet fascinates me. I've just seen something about the budget, I saw a tweet, I came along, I looked on Twitter, I went through other tweets," but they didn't sign in. So trying to take people on the journey where they recognise some of the biggest breaking news, whether it's Gary Lineker talking about Leicester City or whether it's someone talking about a new record release, they're seeing these tweets all the time. But we're not necessarily persuading all those people to come and sign in. And in addition in the course of 10 years some people have come and said, "I don't get it. I don't understand Twitter." And so probably the thing we've not done as well as we could it is persuade people what's in it for them. And actually that's an interesting evolution of what's happened in 10 years. It probably, you know, when you and I joined Twitter maybe sort of...

**Back in the day.**

Yes, back in the day... we probably, if you're anything like most users, we came along, we were slightly baffled by it, maybe came back a couple of times and then we had like an epiphany. We consumed Twitter a while the London riots were going on, we consumed Twitter while the Olympics was going on and we were going, "Actually I get this. It's just sort of filled me with information that I couldn't get anywhere else," and that epiphany was a really important stage. Now, when people download an app I think the average time that people give an app to demonstrate what the app is for is one minute. So we download that, in fact 30% of apps are never opened once they're downloaded. So we download an app, we give it a minute and we're very happy then to assert, Right, I don't get that." So therefore when you go and say, "What is Twitter good at?" and what we're not good at, I think we've set ourselves the challenge; how can we make it easier for that experience that you and I have, of adoring it, how can we make that more universal?

**It's interesting, because the first time ever checked out Twitter years and years ago, @PaulBlanchard was available, but I'd looked at it and thought, "This isn't that great, so there's no point registering to this, it looks like a waste of time." That's the worst decision I ever made, because a year or so later when I finally signed up it had gone, so I'm now @PaulWRBlanchard. Because of course,**

**Donald Trump is @RealDonaldTrump. If he's going to be made president, will you get an executive order to change his name? Because you must get these where people have missed out on their name. And I suppose it's really difficult as if there's a Bob Tazwell who beat the other Bob Tazwell to the name, then who should have the right to that handle?**

Yes, we would never take a name off someone. If the name is unused then we can offer it to a celebrity. I suspect @RealDonaldTrump is just happy to have that. I know that Liam Payne from One Direction on Instagram is Fake Liam Payne, and it's got the verified tick next to it, but that's his handle.

**And how's the verification system working? Because I used to do that, I used to follow people that I thought was a celebrity. Is it quite an administrative burden to do the verification? It's become a bit of a badge of honour as well to be to be verified isn't it?**

I just want to assert that I can't verify anyone. So I get people approach me asking to be verified; I can't verify anyone. This is what separation of church and state there... and I think we just contact people. So we've got a team who contact people, and if we think they're suitable we will verify them. But I can't verify them.

**I imagine you must get inundated with requests! But how does it work? Because the mystique of the process as well must add to the fact that people want it, they think, "Wow!" I've seen some people that you wouldn't expect to be verified, and you think, "Oooh, they're verified!" You know, why are they more important than me?**

If it was up to me I'd verify everyone.

**You're not verified, actually, so that's proof that...**

I'd verify everyone.

**So why aren't you verified? I mean, in a sense you ought to be because you are the boss of Twitter Europe.**

Yes, but the objective of verification is to try and help you see that maybe if you come along – in the old days there might be eight Simon Cowells – this is the real Simon Cowell, and we ensure that the other ones demonstrate they're a fan account or that it's not the real Simon Cowell, but of course there are people who want to post about Harry Styles or Rihanna all day and we're not going to take that opportunity away from them. But so verification just helps you see who's the right one to follow.

**And what was the genesis of it though, in terms of how you administrate it? You talked about separation of church and state; do you have like several people holed up in a room and it's their job to just kind of hunt out these things? Because if you go on the FAQ it does say, "Never contact us, we will contact you."**

Don't contact me. I want that to be really clear!

**Yes, we will do that. Well, you haven't even verified yourself!**

So the objective is... if you think about this, Twitter has become this immensely influential platform. You know, half a billion tweets every day and news is broken every day on Twitter, and so if you see... if you come along to Twitter and you see that Nick Clegg has said something about something that's been reported in The Sun, then you need, and news organisations need, to be sure that that is Nick Clegg. It's not just someone in Rochdale with a coincidentally similar name. And so the verification is just merely to allow that authority that comes from being the official account to have the weight of authority to it.

**But do you get stuck in disputes as it were, where a celebrity will have an impersonator and they feel for whatever reason that they don't want this other Twitter account to exist? Do you get a lot of people contacting you saying you must take that down and all of this kind of thing? Because I imagine you obviously have to comply with any legal or court orders, but it hasn't got that far yet you don't want to be the arbiter of which Twitter accounts are better than another, surely?**

Yes. But I mean... so the important thing to say there is that if someone is passing themselves off as someone, there's a very different matter than if someone is just a fan account for Kanye West, and so we treat them in different things. If someone reports something to us and we find it's in breach of our terms, then we do act. If someone was trying to pass themselves off as a leading financial analyst and they're not that person, then you can understand it's really important that we try and ensure that no one is misled. But if someone reports it we will definitely keep an eye on that. But therein is exactly why the verification system exists.

**And how do you how do you work out the nuance of whether someone feels bullied or not? So for example, my friends and I might be bantering with one another and I'll say to them, "Ah you're a despicable human being," and it's clearly meant in a complimentary jokey sense, but then other people... if someone said that to me completely from cold I would take that as something quite unpleasant. You can't be the arbiter of... I mean, how many hundreds of thousands of tweets are there an hour just in the UK alone? You can't be**



**checking every single tweet. How do you kind of police the integrity of the system?**

I think this is why you need to have a system that relies on report, like you say, what you might describe as sort of joshing between people... the best way to deal with it is so for you to report and say, "This isn't OK. This isn't. This tweet was not good. I did not receive it favourably." Then that's the best way to police it. It's simply impossible to police in any other way.

**If I have the odd irksome person I can just block them, but when it starts to get into a concerted campaign of harassment is that when you start to get involved? Because clearly there's disagreements between people and there's unpleasant people on Twitter, but then do you feel that it has become a bit of a problem where there's a concerted attack of harassment, and where do you step in? Do you have algorithms that monitor this kind of stuff where you say, "Look, if this person's blocked 700 people in the last 20 minutes, then there might be something that we ought to look at." How does it work?**

I think safety is probably the top priority for us, and thinking about how we keep people safe on the platform is really critical. We've got a team all the time who work on these things, we've got a Trust and Safety Council actually which is a group of minority groups, of mainstream groups, who give us advice on what the best thing to do is. For the vast majority of people they don't see any bad content on Twitter so there's sort of a disconnection between 99% of people never have a bad experience, and our aim is to provide the people who do have a bad experience with the tools and the experience... for the vast majority of people, they tend to see Twitter as a place where they come along, follow the news, have a laugh. So their experience is very different to that press narrative that sometimes you get.

**A couple of final questions then, in terms of what's next on your To Do list, then? Because I mean clearly, I don't doubt that you're busy, but it sounds to me that you've got a good network, good critical mass of users, innovations in terms of Periscope, but what's going to be the next big thing for Twitter?**

If you're all about the next 12 months, we've probably got five things that we're working on. Firstly, how do we make Twitter more simple? We know we've got this incredible product that sort of comes alive when things are live. How do you make it simpler for people to use? I think next, how do we ensure that Twitter is a safe place and how do we ensure that people when they come along to Twitter, they feel safe? But then it's just thinking about different groups and for us, how can we support developers. Developers have always been a really important part of the Twitter community and actually have helped create a lot of the things that we know today, whether it's Twitter search or whether it's some of the clients we acquired, things that developers did. Supporting creators as the other group, so developers and creators,

how can we ensure that people see Twitter as a profitable place to come along and make money out of the product? And critically, the final thing is just that celebration of liveness, of just making sure that where live things happen, Twitter is the place you come to talk about them.

**What gets you up in the morning, then? Are you thinking, “Oh, I’ve got a long To Do list, or do you leap out of bed thinking, “What’s today going to hold?” And do you check Twitter first thing in the morning, like I do? It’s one of those things I do, very sadly.**

First thing I do, I guess, we’ve all got our little routine, so I wake up in the morning, check my messages, email and then Twitter.

**Oh, so email first?!**

Because I work in a California-based company, there’s always things that have come in overnight. So even if you might have gone to bed...

**On the back foot straight away.**

... with an empty inbox, but you wake up to 30 emails...

**I have clients in the Far East, and in LA and New York, so it’s whatever time zone, you know, whatever time of day it is, someone’s wanting answers.**

Yes. I think the fascinating thing about anyone who’s working in any way like your job, or anyone connected to the world of digital, is that evolutionary changes are happening so quickly, that there’s a constant sense of being out for your depth and uncertain, and sort of open minded to what’s happening, and I think that’s the same – so we spend the whole time fascinated with how things are changing, looking at the numbers to see if that will give you a sketchy outline of what people are doing with the product. We’ve seen a massive explosion of Periscope, and you only need to open the Periscope app right now and have a look at some countries, there are just hundreds of people Periscoping from them. So we’re seeing that, and we’re trying to understand what’s the DNA of that success? What’s the thing that catalyses the real take-off of those things? So it’s things like that really, every day it’s waking up with a fresh mind and trying to work out, “Okay, what are the big news stories? What’s going to happen in the evolution next?”

**Final question, which is linked to the penultimate question there is, I mean, Jack Dorsey was talking about potentially removing the 140-character limit. Part of me thinks that could either be genius or it could be folly, and you never know because what makes Twitter as it is the brevity of it, but then sometimes**

**it is frustrating. Do you ever have that sense of some things you can't change and then others you think, "Actually there's no sacred cows, we might change the whole lot," like the character length.**

So I think what you've done there is we've done with it with Jack's tweets is we've shown you a glimpse of thinking. And in truth, it comes from a reflection of the fact, if you have a look at Twitter right now a massive proportion of the images on Twitter are text captures, so you've got this system where people are hacking the way that Twitter works, they want to say more than 140 characters. What's the way for them to do it? In fact, the best people at that are actually the press, the journalists. They've got a great article, here's the link to the article, but here's the sort of the killer quotation.

**Or they write a note on their iPhone and screenshot it and upload that.**

So I think there's a recognition that we that we want to allow that, but like you say, brevity is at the core of the Twitter brand, so I think this is sort of a glimpse of some of the thinking that's ongoing, and some of the ways that like you say, we want to ensure that we're keeping the mojo of Twitter exactly the same and respecting that. Probably the best way to say how that works is that the vast majority of people who work at Twitter were pulled towards it magnetically through their love of the product. So we've got a whole group of people who love the product as much as you do, as much as people in the street do. Trying to debate those... the way that we will evolve into the future there.

**Bruce, it's been an absolutely fantastic interview, I know you must be a busy man. You've got Twitter Europe to run, so I'll let you get off – but thank you so much for your time, I've hugely enjoyed it.**

Thank you.