

Twittering Nabobs - Why Twitter is Frustrating the Muse

Posted At : January 20, 2009 1:49 PM | Posted By : Mark Kruger

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I'm a word lover. When I write an article or essay my largest hurdle is to pare it down to meet the requirements for the number of words. As a word lover I am addicted to sending email. I often send long didactic responses to simple questions. Recently my wife sent me an email asking about an adware program that was traversing the Internet. Did I have any experience with it? Why no (said I) I've never fought a battle against that particular adware. I did however have to remove x y and z and implement a b and c in order to fully inoculate myself from yada yada yada. I must have droned on for a couple of paragraphs. My wife, with her usual pithy response, wrote back with one word. "Oh..." she said. Ah to be so succinct.

To someone like me Twitter is a frustrating constraint. In case you have had your head under a rock, **Twitter** is a site that gives users the ability to post just 160 characters at a time. Users "follow" each other and the idea is that you keep track of what you are doing throughout the day. Now how can I say something in so little space? So far I have made 3 attempts to answer the question "What are you doing?" and in each case I can't get beyond "...trying to learn to twitter". Of course any lover of Hemingway (who's high school is my own alma mater) knows that a paucity of words can be a *good thing* and lend itself to clearer communication. I'm also mindful of the words of Jesus in Mathew 6 where he warned his followers to not fall into the habit of babbling when they pray like some others "...thinking that they will be heard for their many words." Lord knows I don't want to be thought of as a babbler.

So I'm determined to Twitter some each day (uh... starting tomorrow). I think the whole "less is more" trend will continue and I'll tell you why in one word (which is obviously difficult for me) - Smartphones (hmmm... that might be 2 words). I have noted a drastic increase in the amount of email delivered to me using phones instead of a laptop or desktop. Now techy egg heads like the folks I hob-nob with at Max, CF United and WebManiacs (no offense to Mike Brunt, Mike Smith, Ray Camden, Charlie Arehart, Michael Dinowitz and other Muse hobnobeas) have always been quick to grasp and use the latest and greatest gadgets. So getting a smart phone email from one of them is certainly not surprising. What *is* surprising is that customers who are not otherwise tech savy are buying these devices and using them to send email. I don't mean they are sending occasional notes or meeting confirmations from the road. I mean that for some folks these devices are becoming their *primary email client*.

What does that have to do with twittering? It just so happens that to write lengthy and involved emails is easier with all 10 fingers. It's much harder to do with your thumbs. Now my new Blackberry Storm is *much* easier to type on than my previous Moto Q, and and as I get used to it I have found that I can type pretty fast - making things like email and Twitter more convenient to use over the phone. But that doesn't mean it is a good choice for a novel - or even a blog post. Chatty emails are a bit out of the question.

Using your phone for email has another unintended consequence. It brings your email conversations onto the same platform as text messaging. Text messaging is so ubiquitous that as users we are familiar with the stripped down way of talking with it (IF U R 2 BZ - CTO STW 4 AEAP 4 MTF). I am noticing that this cryptic way of communicating has begun to creep into emails sent from phones as well. Where I used

to receive emails with full salutation, introductions, caveats and asides - I now get the straight unadorned poop (and seriously - when have you ever seen poop decorated) without all the bells and whistles.

So personal communications, having only lately (within the last 20 years) been revolutionized by email and the web - is undergoing yet another transformation. We are being twitterized whether we like it or not. Our dialogue is becoming less and less like a series of essays and more and more like a phone conversation. I suppose I will simply have to adapt. I'm off to answer that question - "what are you doing?"