



Celebrity Twitter: A Conversation with Martha Stewart



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This session:

Special Featured Conversation: Celebrity Twitter
Martha Stewart, Founder, Martha Stewart Living Omnimedia

Q & A with David Carr, *The New York Times*

Best-selling author, award-winning TV host and editor, and entrepreneur Martha Stewart has been an early adopter of many new-media technologies. Few have been as intriguing as Twitter, where Martha has quickly gained half-a-million followers. Martha holds court on this white-hot medium, which has become a celebrity favorite.

Condensed and edited by Ken Sonenclar.

All photographs by Doug Goodman.
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David Carr: You have always been aggressive when it comes to exploring all the different media platforms. What I wonder about is, even though you have had a fair amount of new-media experience and your company is called Omnimedia for a reason, are you just stunned? Eleven

weeks, half-a-million, 600,000 [followers on Twitter] - boom!

Martha Stewart:

It's pretty phenomenal and I'm quite astonished at the ease with which you can get a following like that in this day and age. It took me two years to get that many subscribers to *Martha Stewart Living*, which was a record at the time.

David Carr: Yes, but it's a little different price point. It's free.

Martha Stewart: Well it's free, that's true. And I would have expected I would have had a least two million by now instead of 604,000 because it's free. So there is still a barrier to jump over. I don't know what that is yet. I haven't found it. I haven't found exactly what *these* people want. This is a new audience too.



It's not my subscribers. It's not my readers. Some people are saying that they are finding us, which is great. And I'm using it as a tool to become friends with a new audience. You have to do that in this world. And there's a lot of international, too. I don't read every single tweet that

comes my way, but there's a lot of international. Especially if you tweet early in the morning, you're

reaching the European gang right away. And it's very interesting to get Norway and Sweden answering you right away.

David Carr: There seems to be some crossover, more so with your television stuff. In other words, Twitter is a reach medium, as television is, as opposed to one of mass niche like the magazine or your website. Is it more like TV? I see a lot of cross with your television audience. You're continually telling people about TV.

Martha Stewart: No, more for radio even. If I tweet - and I do - when I have my "Ask Martha" program, which is generally once a week on Sirius [channel] 112,

XM [channel] 157, I tweet five minutes before I go on and the



board is lit up for the entire hour with really good questions. Really good callers. That is so far the most phenomenal use I have found. Those people are tweeting and listening to radios a lot.

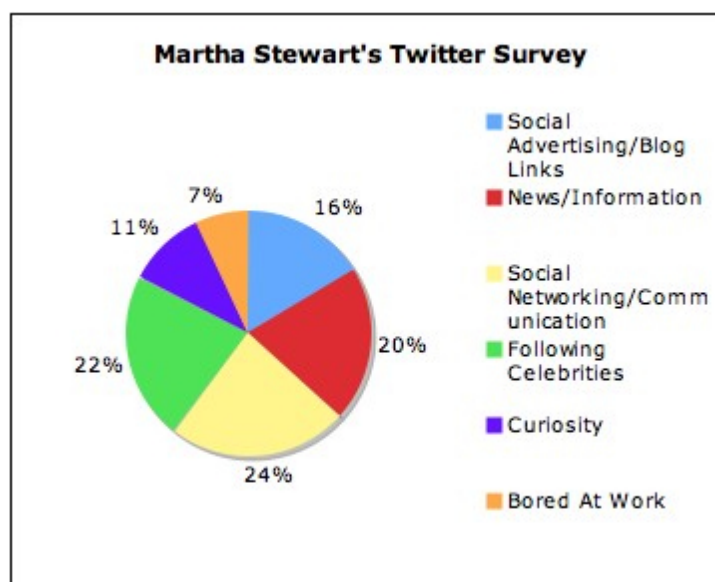
David Carr: Multi-tasking.

Martha Stewart: Probably. And driving too. They're probably driving, since most of them have Sirius radios in their car. But it's incredible how fast you can reach a very broad audience. And it's instantaneous gratification. And we actually did some research yesterday. I tweeted early in the morning and I said, "Why do you use Twitter? This is a serious question. I'm doing an interview tomorrow and I need to have some real statistics. Help."

Within a few hours we had 1,600 responses about why people Twittered.

David Carr: You could be up here talking about Twitter and having never actually Twittered. You have people around you. Liz [Estroff, MSLO's Senior Vice President of Corporate Communications] knows your brand as well as you do; knows your voice. And yet, when I read you, I know it's you. And I don't know what it is about your tweeting, but why would you do it? You run a company.

Martha Stewart: Tim O'Reilly [founder of O'Reilly Media] says he knows me, but he thinks I only Twitter half the time. And that somebody else does the rest, and



that's not true. I would say maybe it's five percent by Eliad [Laskin, Martha's blog writer and assistant]. If I'm somewhere where I can't tweet, I'll call Eliad

and say, “Make sure you remind them about the radio show or remind them about this guest that’s going to be on the show today.” So, but again, what I’m really proud of is that I’ve only updated about 250 times. That means only 250 posts in the 11 weeks. That’s only four times a day. So that’s pretty good. I think that’s a very good response. So if you tweet something that people can understand and that you’re not just saying, ‘Oh, what a glorious day,’ -

David Carr: You do some of those, though, too. I like that.

Martha Stewart: Oh sometimes, if I get home really late—

David Carr: I feel like we’re really sharing when you talk about...

Martha Stewart: That’s good, because look at this (referring to pie chart) ... 22% are [on Twitter] following celebrities. And that’s a big number, and what they

really want to know is that you are like them. You are a human being. You are part of the group. That you can talk to them on their level. And that’s what I’ve



always been anyway. I’ve just been part of the group, part of the gang. I really think that I know our customers and our readers and our viewers very well, and I try to talk to them like they’re me.

David Carr: But if I’m a shareholder of Martha Stewart Living Omnimedia, I’m thinking, “Chief Creative Officer, the person who really is keeping track of the brand: Do I really want her Twittering? Do I want her spending time doing this?”



Martha Stewart: I would think so. I would think you would want me to do that. Like on Derby Day I tweeted my mint-julep recipe. That’s a very valuable recipe on that day, because all my friends are going to watch the race. I was making a giant pitcher of those early in the morning so that - I did not start drinking them early

in the morning – but I had people coming over at five o'clock and I wanted to have *the best* mint juleps. And my recipe is unique – different – and I thought maybe I'll just tweet it. And I did. And boy, mint sold out in the grocery stores, because you need a lot of mint.

David Carr: But it was Kentucky Derby day. Do you think it was you tweeting about it or the fact that it was Derby day?



Martha Stewart: No no. It *was* Derby day, people were getting ready to watch the race, but they also should have had a really nice mint julep in their hand to watch that fabulous horse win. It was a celebratory day.

David Carr: One of the things about Twitter is that Twitter is the anti-aesthetic. It's pure text. You can customize your page. I notice yours has dogs on it. Your dogs have a Twitter, don't they, Martha?

Martha Stewart: Yeah, they do. The Daily Wag. Yes, Francesca

and Sharky. Their followers are growing, but they're mostly dogs and cats.

David Carr: Do your dogs have more followers than me?

Martha Stewart: Yes they do. They do, unfortunately for you. But they're all dogs and cats and there are not that many literate dogs and cats, we have found out. Francesca and Sharky also have their own blog, which is very active. They have Purina sponsoring them.

David Carr: In terms of the brand part of Twitter. Twitter is the anti-aesthetic. It's 140 characters. Not much trade dress around it. Very brief, little bursts of messaging. Your brand is all about grace and beauty and refinement and living well. And Twitter is like this ack-ack burst of communication, so it would seem as far away from what you do—

Martha Stewart: I still spell "you" Y-O-U. And "are" A-R-E, although most of my followers do not spell whole words anymore because they are finding it frustrating to have only 140 characters. There's that lady in Ireland – The *Times* wrote about her – who is Twittering recipes in 140 characters, and she does it brilliantly. And we're doing *Everyday Food* recipes like that, and that's getting a lot of attention. It's like a puzzle, trying to decipher a tweet like

that – a recipe. But since I first started, if I don't use the correct punctuation or if there's a misspelling or I don't capitalize something, I get called on it. But I said, "Look, I'm just trying to fit everything in the 140." The guys who invented Twitter did not give me 300 characters. They should. They should give certain people more characters.

David Carr: But what I'm saying is that there's no aesthetic to Twitter. It's pure information.

Martha Stewart: But I can send them to the aesthetic blog. The Martha Blog is the most beautiful blog. It's informative, it's inspiring, and it has the most gorgeous pictures. Hundreds of thousands of people visit it every single day. They love The Martha Blog. So I can send them there if I have something. Trying to get that 600,000 to go to a real blog to learn something is hard. I have found that. It's hard, because most people don't have the time, or if they're bored at work they want to see as much different stuff as they possibly can. Only the real



devotees are going to go and read the blog. Luckily we have a lot of those, but to get that 600,000 to really do something... And that's what I find a little bit distressing about Twitter. I find it very distracting. And I have a lot of cons about Twitter. I don't care about the 140 characters. But these people who are tweeting all day long – and some of them repeat and repeat; I get comments from the same person over and over again—

David Carr: Sort of the dance of the low-sloping foreheads. Not the demo you want.

Martha Stewart: No, no. I don't think they have low-sloping foreheads. They're probably perfectly nice people. But I think they are kind of misguided; and maybe they should be inspired somehow. I don't think the tweets can inspire as effectively as a real blog can, or a real communication, or a real magazine or real book. And I worry about that. I worry that people aren't reading because they only read in little tiny bursts.



David Carr: I Twittered – tweeted, excuse me – my massive following. Just for the record, 3,000 [followers] is a really good number. It was a personal goal of mine. And I asked, “What should I ask Martha?” And they said, “Why does she only talk to us? Why doesn’t she do any listening? She has 28 people she follows. They’re all mostly famous people.” I set up my Twitter so that I follow people who do a lot of links.

“I haven’t found exactly what *these* people want. This is a new audience too. It’s not my subscribers. It’s not my readers. Some people are saying that they are finding us, which is great. And I’m using it as a tool to become friends with a new audience. You have to do that in this world.”

You see Twitter as straight-up promotion; I see it as a somewhat creative-artistic endeavor. But here’s what I want to talk about. A lot of people, including me, set up and curate feeds – I have 150 – so that they’re link-rich and so that you’re getting information; it’s a way of listening. I re-tweet all the time. I link all the time. But I’m trying to talk about you and what you’re using Twitter for, which is, when it comes to listening, you

can’t afford to enter that data stream and really sit there – even if it was tightly curated – because you’re running a company.

Martha Stewart: I read pretty fast, so I go right down the line. If somebody tweets me something kind of interesting I will answer it kind of generally to everyone. And when I asked people about “what are you *really* doing at work,” I got a lot of answers and people started feeling a little guilty, I think. I try to put a little of... not morality, but maybe ethics into some of my questions – just a few. I don’t want to be the school marm all the time. But being a school marm is sort of a good use of Twitter. The information that one can impart to this broad audience is good, and if it gets them to think even a little bit, it’s good. And I think that a lot of people who are Twittering, like Tim O’Reilly – he’s a friend, but I follow him – his tweets are very, very informative about new technology. Do you follow him?

David Carr: Yes.

Martha Stewart: And he just sent me a link this morning, saying, “Don’t forget to mention Hillary Clinton announced the big, 21st century statecraft initiative on Twitter.” That’s pretty good.

David Carr: Where are we going to end up? Are we going to be a year-and-a-half from now, going,

“Yeah, remember Twitter?” Or, now that you’ve got 600,000 followers, unless someone can figure out a way to port them to the next thing, maybe Twitter is going to be a big part of your life – your business life – for a long



time to come.

Martha Stewart: Well, again, people will get bored if you only use it to sell. I think they won't get as bored if you use it to inform. But selling – there is a very very big chance they will get bored with you. They know when people are selling. If you're giving something away, it's a real good medium because they come in droves. Ellen Degeneres, with like 30 updates, got a million followers by giving away tickets to her show. That was phenomenally quick. And Oprah too. And in this economy especially, people want free things, they want good deals. But I don't do that. I don't have anything to give away right now.

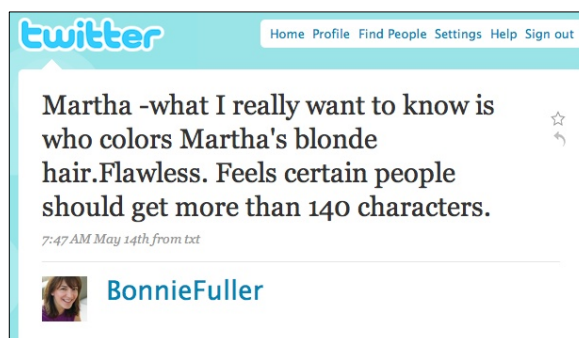
David Carr: Vegetables from your spring garden?

Martha Stewart: Yes, but I don't want a line down the street.

Audience Member I: A real test of this is what would you pay for your 250 Twitters? Seriously. On a businesslike basis, if this thing is going to become a business enterprise.

Martha Stewart: Right. What would I pay? I'd have to discuss it with my company. I'd have to discuss it with my advertising department to see if we really want to advertise that way on Twitter. Probably it will be a tool for doing that. But again, I'm saying that you're going to turn away a lot of potential customers if all you're doing is selling that way. So I don't know the answer to that.

David Carr: There has been talk on Twitter that one form monetization would take is for those most-followed slots, which have extreme value, to be sold.



Martha Stewart: Now Facebook is not charging yet. And they have 200 million subscribers, right?

David Carr: They have a lot of ads, though.



Martha Stewart: If I were Facebook I'd be charging; \$20 a year to start, maybe.

David Carr: I would dump my Facebook right away.

Martha Stewart: But you're not the kid that really depends on that kind of communication.

David Carr: But I have 1,500 friends.

Audience Member II: Would you dump your Twitter?

David Carr: No, Twitter is a defense for me as a media person. I feel it's really important, number one as a listening device - as a kind of human-enabled RSS where information puts me ahead of the news cycle eight to 12 hours, usually. And so it has extreme value. And because it is so viral and blowing up so quickly - faster for some than others - I feel that defensively I need to keep an eye on it. And again, I

am finding out stuff on there all the time that I just did not know. All the people I follow have links. It's not about the 140 words. It's what are they seeing that I'm not seeing? And so instead of my Google Reader I'm seeing the steady data flow of all these rich links on the way in during my commute that's telling me what I need to know.

Martha Stewart: Well that's why Google wants to buy Twitter. Because it's edited. You can edit your information flow very nicely on a thing like Twitter. And that's edited research, which I think is so important in this day and age. So for me too, the people I follow really give me the information in certain areas that I

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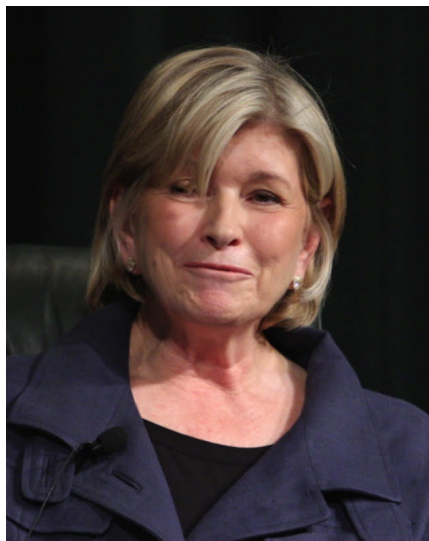
want and need. So that's worth something. I haven't thought about paying for it yet. But I would certainly pay \$20 a year. Or I would pay \$20 a month for it. And I think we're going to start seeing monetization in all kinds of ways on the web soon. And I think we should. I think we

should all be paying for something. And maybe then it will become more edited and more useful. Because right now sifting through the masses of stuff when you Google a term or Google a store, it's so hard to find what you want. And that's what you're saying Twitter does for you. And it does.

David Carr: Yeah, and even [Google CEO] Eric Schmidt has said he's concerned that the web is going to turn into a cesspool.

Audience Member III: David, you're in the information-gathering and interpreting business. Martha, you're in a different business of creating content. David, I understand why it's interesting to you to be crowd-sourcing information, but Martha is creating information in a way that you're not.

David Carr: Again and again I think that large media companies have made a mistake thinking of the web as a place to broadcast. It is



often a place to listen, and the information that Martha gathered overnight with her audience, of 1,600 respondents, is

unbelievable. Now it's not scientific; they're self-selected. But we found out a lot overnight and I do think that media companies have an opportunity to do some listening.

And what will happen with the way Twitter is set up is that if there's going to be a video that's viral tomorrow tonight, I probably will see it

today. The first story about what the *Boston Globe* employees are going to do - I'm going to see it right away. It eliminates the need to check in on the Google Reader and stuff like that.



Martha Stewart: I got an email yesterday via my blog from someone who couldn't answer in 140 characters, but she took the question very seriously. She said that for her "the biggest drawback of Twitter is that if you are following a person and they don't wish to follow you back, it is like a one-sided

conversation. Pretty darn stupid. You are talking to yourself and

pretty much answering yourself back. Being ignored is no fun.”

David Carr: Well it’s called social media for a reason, and it can hurt. The definition of fame, as expressed by Clay Shirky, the author of *Here Comes Everybody*, is that fame is the inequality of inbound interest versus outbound interest. And with Twitter, in your case, you have 28 people you follow and 600,000 [that follow you]. I could make a judgment about that. I follow 150 people; I’m followed by 3,000. And people do expect those sorts of *buddy follows*, which is, “Are we not friends here?” And the answer is no, probably not. We are not friends.

Audience Member IV: There are now services that let you buy Twitter followers. Four thousand for \$13, in one instance.

Martha Stewart: Oh brother. You can buy followers. If you care that much, right?

David Carr: We’ve all been waiting for Twitter to jump the shark. And to me it might have been the day Oprah joined. And that on that day, crusty old me, I was on the top of *New York* magazine’s sort of Twitter chart, and I thought that anything that both Oprah and I know about is probably over.

Audience Member V: I’ve been on Twitter for quite a while now. Eight months ago it was about finding out about an earthquake in California ahead of the radio and television. Now it’s about “my cat needs a bath.” It’s now got a totally different set of

David Carr: “I follow 150 people; I’m followed by 3,000. And people do expect those sorts of *buddy follows*, which is, ‘Are we not friends here?’ And the answer is no, probably not. We are not friends.”

users, and I don’t think that the new users are going to stay long.

Martha Stewart: They’re already dropping out. I’ve always liked *The New York Times* or CNN or headlines, which are important to me too. I want to know if there’s an earthquake or a fire or something bad.

Audience Member VI: For people who aren’t involved with Twitter but want to compare it to something, I compare it to water-cooler conversation, where you’ve got a few seconds between meetings where you talk about, “Did you hear this? Did you see this?” But from the research you did, do you see any brand impact?

Martha Stewart: I think it's a little early to do that, until I get to know who these people really are and how they really respond to questions. This [survey] was the first time I've asked them a question other than "Don't you feel guilty about wasting time?" And I think I will use it more often for that. I'm going to try a few more questions. I can target the weddings world. It's probably a very good way to target young people who are about to get married or are thinking about getting married. I think I can probably target gardeners. Several people who are Twittering are gardeners and they have quite an active site. It's really interesting because they can impart daily information about a specific topic. And I think you'll see that happening more and more.

David Carr: There are pure writers on Twitter, guys and women, who are amazing at 140 characters. And I just follow them because they are gorgeous in this medium, as I would in a magazine or television show. There are people like [NYU Professor] Clay Shirky, who are always helping me see over the hill again and again. There are automated feeds - The *FT* has a wonderful automated feed; *PaidContent* has a wonderful automated feed. In my business, Neiman Lab - again and again the kid that's doing that has a sensibility; you can just see right into his head.

You can tune all this any way you wish. Martha clearly has found a way. What people want to know is: Where you gonna be, Martha? What are you going to be doing? Who you gonna see? And one of the things I like about what you do is, "And oh, by the way, here's a link to my blog where there's pictures from back stage the other night," which is what people really are looking for.

Audience Member VII: Are you considering charging subscriptions for your online content?

"I try to put a little of... not morality, but maybe ethics into some of my questions - just a few. I don't want to be the school marm all the time. But being a school marm is sort of a good use of Twitter. The information that one can impart to this broad audience is good. And if gets them to think even a little bit, it's good."

Martha Stewart: I've been considering that since we started, which is about 15 years ago. So I would like very much to figure out how we can ultimately charge. I am doing a test with iAmplify for our videos, some of our very interesting older videos.

We have a vast library of really good how-to video material. And that will be our first content “charge.” And we’ll see how it goes. But it’s going to happen. It has to.

David Carr: I just want to thank Martha. She’s on her way out of town today. And I think it’s really cool that you came in and talked to us.

Martha Stewart: Thank you.



The Participants

Martha Stewart is the Founder of Martha Stewart Living Omnimedia, Inc.

From the award-winning magazine, *Martha Stewart Living*, to the best selling product lines that bear her name, Martha Stewart shares the creative principles and practical ideas that have named her America's most trusted guide to stylish living. Millions of consumers rely on Martha Stewart as their guide to all aspects of everyday living – from cooking and entertaining to decorating and home renovating, and much more.

Martha has always drawn inspiration from her surroundings. Raised in Nutley, New Jersey, in a family with six children, Martha developed her passion for cooking, gardening and home-keeping in her childhood home on basics of cooking, baking, canning, and sewing; her father, a pharmaceutical salesman and avid gardener, introduced her to gardening at the age of three in the family's small but orderly backyard plot.

While earning a bachelor's degree in history and architectural history at Barnard College, Martha worked as a model to pay her tuition. She was married in her sophomore year, and, upon graduating, became a stockbroker on Wall Street, where she gained her early business training. After moving to Westport, Connecticut, in 1972 with her husband and daughter, Alexis, she developed a catering business that showcased her remarkable talent and originality. Her unique visual presentation of food and the elegant recipes she created for her catered events were the basis for her first book, *Entertaining*, published in 1982.

Martha's creative vision is the blueprint for Martha Stewart Living Omnimedia and the expansive multimedia and merchandising portfolio that includes award-winning magazines such as *Martha Stewart Living* and *Martha Stewart Weddings*; the nationally syndicated, Emmy Award-winning television series "The Martha Stewart Show;" Martha Stewart Living Radio on SIRIUS channel 112 and XM Radio 157; the marthastewart.com website; bestselling books like *Martha Stewart's Cooking School*, *Martha Stewart's Encyclopedia of Crafts* and *Martha Stewart's Homekeeping Handbook*; the *Martha Stewart Collection* of products for the home at Macy's; *Martha Stewart Everyday* mass-market merchandise at Kmart; *Martha Stewart Crafts* with EK Success; *Martha Stewart for 1-800-FLOWERS.COM*; and more.

In 2007, Martha unveiled the new Martha Stewart Center for Living at the Mount Sinai Medical Center in New York. The center is an outpatient facility for geriatric medicine, providing clinical care and education for patients, offering training for physicians and coordinating healthy-aging research and practices. Martha was inspired to create the center by her mother, Martha Kostyra, who remained active and engaged in life to the age of 93.

David Carr writes a column for the Monday Business section of *The New York Times* that focuses on media issues including print, digital, film, radio and television. He also works as a general assignment reporter in the Culture section of *The New York Times* covering all aspects of popular culture. During the Oscar season, Carr writes a daily blog about the awards season as the Carpetbagger, including weekly video segments.

For the past 25 years, Carr has been writing about media as it intersects with business, culture and government.

Carr began working at *The Times* in 2002 covering the magazine publishing industry for the Business section. Prior to arriving at the *Times*, Carr was a contributing writer for *The Atlantic Monthly* and *New York Magazine*, writing articles that ranged from on the ground coverage of September 11th, homeland security issues, and a number of profiles, including Harvey Weinstein. In 2000, he was the media writer for Inside.com, a web news site focusing on the business of entertainment and publishing.

Prior to arriving in New York, Carr served as editor of the *Washington City Paper*, an alternative weekly in Washington, D.C. for five years. Carr is the author of "The Night of the Gun," published by Simon & Schuster, and spends way too much time on Twitter.