

WHY I AM FINALLY JOINING TWITTER?

Rajan Madhok

After a lot of questioning by friends and colleagues about why I do not use twitter, and with recent offer of support, I am finally joining twitter. Let me tell you why I resisted first before I say something about why I have changed my mind, and how I see my use of twitter.

Apart from being IT incompetent I have always remembered the Mark Twain quote: "Excuse the long letter I have not had the time to write a short one". The limited space and my rambling (*sic*) approach in discussions inhibited me. I also felt that I do not really want to talk all the time –what is there to say every day and many times a day. I am not conceited enough to believe that what I do is earth shattering and needs to be shared all the time. In any case, most of my work is already in the public domain since I have been a seriously reflective practitioner all my life (see www.leadershipforhealth.com website for the recently compiled compendium of my writings), so what is new about twitter was another issue. Also I have looked at a few twitter posts and found them very repetitive (has anyone done a serious content analysis of the posts of some of most frequent contributors, my cursory analysis shows at best 15-20 key words repeatedly – I ask this question also out of ignorance and maybe there is a way to check the content, or there is a reason for repetition), although there are nuggets too- but was the time spent in separating wheat from chaff worth it? I have already become a 'crackberry' (actually iPhone) person and something I am trying to stop, using twitter may just make it more difficult!

So why change? Well, it is all Amir Hannan's fault! His offer of support and hand holding, has been a clear factor in this decision and there are other reasons. That saying about timing is everything is also true in my case; as I write this I am in India where a new government has been installed led by Narendra Modi. Modi defied the pundits and used social media including twitter as part of his winning strategy. I also see massive potential for change using social media here and the amazing developments in IT. So, if you want to change things then you have to use the right means. And although I have supposedly retired from mainstream NHS, I feel my best is yet to come and I need to prepare- and this 'hunger' and the feeling of 'unfinished business' has finally convinced me. There is a very personal reason: I realised that I was becoming very fixed in my ways and reluctant to learn and embrace new things (my youngest son has shown me how much I need to improve to become a better person) and so I want to do and succeed at doing something new (for me).

So, how am I going to use twitter? Of course I want to use it for promoting causes but I do not really see myself as an activist or a single issue person – my interests are eclectic (?). My aim however is, and has always been, to make a difference and promote health and ensure safe and affordable care; the ways and means have differed over the years. My motto is "Do good, have fun and make (decent) money"- and I thought being a doctor allowed one to do all that; a real privilege.

Although wanting to support development through technical capacity building through education and training, I see leadership development as the more

sustainable means to improve health. I have also become (although I have always been to some extent) someone without borders as I believe that health is truly global now and we need to learn globally to act locally. So I want to use twitter to link up with colleagues who share similar interests, and more importantly who can move things along. I am impatient for change and not interested in endless analysis or complaining!

I am not into numbers – either in terms of followers or tweets (quality to me is still more important than quantity). I want to have a concordat with followers- I see them as co-developers with me, I see this as a two way relationship with a win: win for both. I also see this as a wonderful opportunity to use twitter for my personal growth, I will try and use this to set goals and monitor my own performance. So I will be in the glass bowl, and even saying this is scary for me, and I hope that you will help me. I will rely on blogs to supplement the few tweets (I am mindful of too many and they forget you and too few and you can forget them problem). My blogs will come on www.leadershipforhealth.com and www.cln.nhs.uk

Who will I follow? I do not really know who is out there fully and more importantly the content of what they have to say. I do not however necessarily only want to follow people with just my current interests or causes, I want to be stretched and learn new things. I want to know about out of the box thinkers/doers and how to innovate. I want to know and learn about social and economic development, human interest stories and books, performing arts and poetry.

By way of a professional example, I am currently seriously challenged by a colleague in India who has asked me to tell him what would the safest hospital which provides the best patient experience look like? In doing so how to use best technology, training, design and processes. Now although I know something about business process reengineering and LEAN and have been to some world class health care facilities I am not sure how to answer his question. Especially as he wants me to think like Steve Jobs and create something that does not exist yet. This combination of convenience, safety, affordability, trust, aesthetics, especially in India, is a BIG ask, but I am relishing his challenge as it is making me think differently and hopefully some of you will help.

So do suggest some people whom I should follow and learn from; who are your heros, and especially those who may be invisible. I believe that for every one visible hero there are at least 10 (or much more) who have done similar or achieved more, and we need to recognise and celebrate those who get on with things quietly.

Anyway, I have just amply demonstrated why twitter will be a struggle, having rambled. So must stop here. Looking forward to the journey with you.

Rajan Madhok

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