I. Purpose of HootSuite

HootSuite's tagline is "the professional Twitter client." 1 It is a useful microblogging Web 2.0 tool that aids users in managing multiple social networking accounts. This tool makes managing several accounts extremely convenient. Several businesses are already using HootSuite, and now it is available in the classroom!

HootSuite is a social network that connects people and businesses around the world. This site brings in a variety of people and organizations because of the way it is constructed. Since different types of social media are so trendy now-a-days all over the world, HootSuite has incorporated these into its site. HootSuite has allowed easy access to viewing updates and information that may be important to a person. According to HootSuite's media page, users can "launch marketing campaigns, identify and grow audience, and distribute targeted messages across multiple channels." Also "using HootSuite's unique social media dashboard, teams can collaboratively schedule updates to Twitter, Facebook, Linkedin, Wordpress and other social networks via web, desktop or mobile platforms plus track campaign results and industry trends to rapidly adjust tactics." 4

HootSuite is used to put all of your social networks onto one combined website. It is easy to set-up and use! HootSuite is used to connect people from a variety of places in an organized, free manner.

II. The History and Development of HootSuite
HootSuite was built by Invoke and launched in December of 2008. HootSuite is currently a free application but according to their “FAQ” page the company is "currently investigating pricing plans and exciting new features for paid accounts." When HootSuite began, it started as merely a dashboard as a client for Twitter. Its main focus was on Twitter and that specific social medium. More recently it began including other social media like Facebook, LinkedIn, and WordPress among others. The idea was to allow people working with social media a better way to manage Twitter. As it was introduced, major companies realized the quality of HootSuite and started to pick it up. This wasn't just small businesses or organizations, among those that picked it up were the White House, Time Magazine, and AOL. As you'll see below, today there are still several major businesses and organizations using HootSuite. HootSuite also recently was "spun out" into its own company. As HootSuite looks to the future, their goal is to create a "mobile presence" and to be a leader in that space. This means being the leader among applications for data phones such as iPhones (which has been launched), the Android (which as of early 2010 is coming up), and the BlackBerry (in the works).  

III. Unique Uses of HootSuite

HootSuite is social networking made easy. On HootSuite the users can manage multiple social networks through this one site. Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Ping.fm, WordPress, Foursquare, and MySpace are all networks that can be connected under one person's account. In addition to the sites that HootSuite allows you to connect to, Ping.fm, which can be connected to HootSuite, allows you to update GTalk, Tumblr and many other social networks. This allows the user to access all of the accounts from different sites on one page.

HootSuite has added a feature that allows the user to schedule tweets and posts. With this feature the user can write anything from birthday wishes to reminders and set when they want this information to be posted.

Another great aspect of HootSuite is that you can organize the layout how you choose. You can have up to six columns in each tab. With this multi-column view, you will easily be able to keep track of several aspects of information at once. By choosing the layout, users will find it much easier to monitor what's important to them.

Here are your basic columns:

- Home feed (tweets from those the user follows)
- Mentions feed (any tweets with @username)
- DM inbox (direct message inbox)
- pending tweets (tweets you've scheduled for the future)
- Columns can also be added in order to track different friends or businesses.

When using HootSuite you have the ability to look at your profile's statistics or an individual tweet's statistics. According to the HootSuite FAQ page, this will show you several things. In the Summary Statistics area you can view "total clicks (for the past 24 hours, 7 days, 30 days or from within a certain range), daily clicks, clicks by region (overall), top referrers (overall), and the most popular tweets." In the Individual Statistics area you can see "the total clicks on an individual ow.ly link you tweeted out." Ow.ly has been found to be the most reliable and one of the fastest URL shorteners in a study carried out by Techcrunch in 2009.

HootSuite has an application for the iPhone and iPod touch meaning you can manage your HootSuite account on the go.

HootSuite Hootlet can be added to internet tool bars in Internet Explorer, Safari, and Firefox. By adding this feature the user can easily post about the websites that they are exploring. When on a site that the user wishes to share they simply click on the hootlet link in the tool bar and a quick post box appears. Here the link to the current website appears and a more detailed message can be added.

How does this application compare to the competitors?

There are many new products being designed to utilize social networking sites in a beneficial way. HootSuite is a newer model that has several abilities available through a single page. HootSuite supports several columns similar to Tweetdeck and Seesmic Desktop and can show the user the most important re-tweets within their links. It will also monitor RSS feeds and update your network accounts automatically. The user is also able to follow people, unfollow people, and report spammers through the management category. The user is able to post from one or multiple social networking sites that have been configured into the dashboard. You can also setup future posts that will be sent automatically. HootSuite users can choose to either use ow.ly or ht.ly to shorten URLs, both of which track click-through statistics extensively, while other services like CoTweet use Bit.ly and display only basic statistics.

HootSuite offers: multiple account editors, shared accounts, manage multiple accounts, scheduled tweets, link monitoring, save keyword searches, and all of this is accessible through an easy to navigate dashboard.
IV. How to Use HootSuite

It’s easy to set up a HootSuite account! Here’s what you need to do:


2. Click on the green button, “Sign up now.”

3. Create your account, putting in the information in the required fields, indicated by the red asterisks (Note: You must be at least 13 years of age to use HootSuite).

Here is a link to the “Video Tour” from HootSuite Media, Inc. It details some of the useful features of HootSuite!

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NXpYVTnyCjU
4. Next, add your social networks to your dashboard.
5. Manage your accounts!

HootSuite has a very detailed “Frequently Asked Questions” page, which can be found at the following link: http://hootsuite.com/faq.

V. Uses of HootSuite In the Classroom

HootSuite can be used in several different ways in an educational setting. The next four examples demonstrate the teacher as the manager of the HootSuite account, using HootSuite specifically for their purposes. The students would be using the corresponding social networks that are incorporated into HootSuite. These four elements aid the teacher in communicating effectively with students:

The first is the click through analytics. This allows the HootSuite manager (the teacher in this case) to track the level of traffic on their social networking sites. Teachers could have their students set up Twitter accounts where they could pose questions. By tracking the traffic level, teachers would be able to see where the students were spending the most time. This could help the teacher determine things like whether the lesson was too difficult or too easy.

A teacher will also find the stats button at the bottom of the page very useful. After sending out messages, a teacher can use that information in the stat section [total clicks (for the past 24 hours, 7 days, 30 days or from within a certain date range), daily clicks, clicks by region (overall), top referrers (overall) and most popular tweets] to determine what their students are focusing on the most. This could be what they need the most help with, what they found the most interesting, or simply what was the most important to them to read. Then, the teacher can take that information and further discuss what they now know is most relevant in the classroom.

Through HootSuite, a teacher could post tweets from multiple accounts. A teacher will post that information and reach students in several formats. This means, a student could receive information no matter what major social networking site they are using---Twitter, Facebook, etc. This would be extremely useful way to reach students with things like small updates or assignment reminders.

The fourth element is the use of queue tweeting. This would allow a teacher to set up a tweet post to be sent out as students progress through various projects. Instead of having to remember to send a message out at each point, a teacher can write all the posts at the beginning, and schedule when each should be sent out. This will save the teacher a lot of time and will reduce the stress about remembering to send out reminders and other important information.

Lesson Plans

A note about student use of HootSuite: As we explored HootSuite, we discovered that if being used in a classroom setting, it is necessary that the student is at a middle school or higher grade level. Elementary aged students would not have the skills necessary to manage through HootSuite. This complies with the fact that you must be 13 years old to have a HootSuite account. Teachers of higher grade levels may find it useful though, as shown through our example lesson plans for middle school, secondary, and post secondary grade levels.
Elementary School

Although it may seem a little too advanced for elementary level students, teachers may be astonished to find out that many young children already have access to social networks like Facebook and Twitter. Students at the 5th grade level are old enough to get familiar with these types of programs. This lesson is based around students collaborating through a group page in Facebook which they manage on their Hootsuite account. Collaboration is one of the tools needed for anyone going into the workforce, even in the Arts. This is a great introduction to the idea of collaborating and working with classmates to solve and complete a work of art.

Collaboration and Pop Art.doc
Collaboration and Pop Art.pdf

Middle School

As would have been for the elementary level, it was a bit challenging to figure out effective ways for middle school aged children to use HootSuite. Here are some ways that incorporate learning about the history of technology alongside learning how to use HootSuite and apply it in the real world. These lesson plans work well in the order they are listed as they each build on the one before.

In this first lesson plan, the teacher will introduce the students to HootSuite. The teacher will explain how HootSuite works in the real world and students will determine how they could use tools and other technologies like HootSuite to help them in their future careers.

Real World Technology (Doc)
Real World Technology (pdf)

In this second lesson plan, the teacher will show the students how to make tweets and posts through their HootSuite accounts. As a history lesson, the students will have to research about an event in which technology has had an impact on our society. Then, the student will use HootSuite to post about this specific event.

Technology in History (Doc)
Technology in History pdf

In the last lesson plan for middle school, the teacher will have the students respond to the comments of another student. This will initiate discussion on the history that the students have researched. Students will develop precise and efficient communication skills.

Communicating With Technology (Doc)
Communicating With Technology (PDF)

Secondary

The next three lesson plans are for students at the secondary (high school) level. These three lesson plans incorporate the very important STEM disciplines. Students will find these lessons useful in continuing to practice specific concepts in areas that are often challenging.

This first lesson plan is for a high school Algebra 1 course. After learning about adding, subtracting, and multiplying polynomials, the teacher will have students create their own problems. They will post these problems to their Facebook or Twitter accounts using HootSuite, and then solve other students’ problems using the list section on HootSuite.

Algebra 1 (Doc)
Algebra 1 (PDF)

This second lesson plan is for a high school chemistry course. The teacher will first teach the students about what a specific location on the Periodic Table means. Then they will have students answer a daily question through Facebook or Twitter. The teacher can see these responses through HootSuite.

Chemistry (Doc)
Chemistry (PDF)

This third lesson plan is for a high school technology or computer applications class. The teacher will review with students how to use HootSuite. Then, students will read an online article. Through a HootSuite account, the students will then post a short summary of the article. The challenge here is summarizing an article in 140 characters or fewer!

Technology (Doc)
Technology (PDF)

This lesson plan is for history classes of at least Jr. High age. After the teacher has taught about WWI, the teacher will review HootSuite, then students will review the treaty of Versailles. Through students’ HootSuite account they can share their ideas of how to go about the project and their pros and cons of the fairness of the treaty of Versailles.
Post Secondary

These last three lesson plans are for teachers who work with students at the post secondary level. These lesson plans also represent a variety of areas. Each lesson plan enhances a typical classroom activity or outside project by incorporating the use of HootSuite.

This first lesson plan is for a marketing course. The teacher will have the students come up with an original product, idea, or organization. Then, the students will use HootSuite to manage multiple microblogging and social networking sites that they will use to promote their product, idea, or organization. This is a semester long project—students will learn what works and what doesn’t work regarding marketing with microblogging and social networking tools.

Microblogging Marketing (Doc)

Microblogging Marketing (PDF)

This second lesson plan can be used in any science course. The teacher will have the students take turns developing problems of the week to send out to classmates via HootSuite—those classmates will then be required to answer the problem of the week.

Science Student Problem of the Week (Doc)

Science Student Problem of the Week (PDF)

The third lesson plan is for a communication course. The class will have to go to a computer lab for this activity. The teacher (or a student) will send out an impromptu speaking prompt via HootSuite to a specific student Twitter account. Then, that student will have to speak for at least one minute on the given prompt.

Impromptu Speaking (Doc)

Impromptu Speaking (PDF)

Disadvantages to HootSuite in the Classroom

With social media comes possible issues of inappropriate usage. Having a teacher contact students through mediums such as Facebook can be indirect violation of corporation rules regarding current student and teacher relations. This can also be uncomfortable for the student to be posting school related materials on their personal social sites. Unsubstantiated accusations could be made, making the learning experience in the classroom less effective.

VI. Uses of HootSuite Outside the Classroom

Organizations and Clubs

HootSuite would be a very useful tool for an organization or club. The secretary or other leader of that group could be given the responsibility to manage multiple social networking sites through HootSuite. The group would have several different social networking sites including a Facebook. Then, through HootSuite that person could manage all of them. They could send out important information such as dates of events, reminders to members to follow through with a task, information on meetings, introduction of members, and so on. HootSuite would allow the secretary to schedule the tweets ahead of time so they could prepare far in advance to make sure every bit of information is sent out on time. It would be a great way to ensure updates for the organization are getting out quickly and efficiently.

Some organizations that could benefit from HootSuite:

- Sports teams
- School clubs
- Non profits
- Music artists
- Any group that has to manage multiple social networking accounts!

Business
HootSuite allows people who are trying to manage a personal account and a business account simultaneously through one application. HootSuite is being used by several companies including National Geographic, Disney, Fox, Dell, the NBA, U.S. Army, msnbc.com and People. These big companies have more than one contributor so HootSuite makes it easy to manage multiple users over various social network accounts. They can monitor their brands through HootSuite by finding out what people are saying about each one.

Companies will find the stats section very useful. It allows them to determine who is seeing their updates. They can see the total number of clicks per day for each company twitter account. They can see a pie chart of the clicks by region—what other country or area is viewing the tweets? This will show which regions a company is reaching, and will show the areas where the company needs more exposure. This section also shows the clicks by referring websites.

International

HootSuite could also be used internationally outside of the classroom. Anyone can log in no matter the location. All you need is internet access. It would be possible to manage the accounts for several locations from anywhere in the world. Using HootSuite is a great way for users to experience different cultures and to share and read about the experiences of people all over the world. HootSuite on the IPhone is available in several languages including German, Japanese, Spanish and Portuguese, and there is also an option to translate tweets into one of the aforementioned languages. This makes the IPhone version of HootSuite a lot more accessible to users in those countries who might not know English or finds it difficult to understand in full.

VII. Showcase Documents

Here is the handout from the showcase:

Handout (Doc)
Handout (PDF)

Here is the brochure from the showcase:

Brochure (Pub)
Brochure (PDF)

VIII. References


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