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Members of Parliament and the New
Mode of Institutional Communication

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Members of Parliament and the New Mode of Institutional Communication

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We know that members of Congress do not utilize Twitter to their full advantage, but what about members of the British Parliament? Tweets such as “@[ash0turner](#) the incentive applies to all housing not just council built homes” from Eric Pickles appear knowledgeable and helpful - taking time to answer an individual’s question. Meanwhile, tweets like “I’ve been told to stop being ‘overgrown schoolboy’ + to ‘grow up’ when I mischievously made a No to the Euro tile for a French village hall” from Michael Fabricant make him seem fun and personable, as well as independent. The nine members of the Conservative party we searched for seem to understand the power of Twitter and use it to reach out to constituents to build their own popularity.

Our nine members of Parliament all Tweeted to constituents directly. A few, such as William J. Hague, Eric Pickles, and Louise Bagshawe had over half of their fifty most recent tweets directed to followers. These members come across as caring more about constituent concerns than tweeting about where they will be having lunch or what members of the opposing party did, as some other members do. Grant Shapps, Jeremy Hunt, Douglas Carswell, and Michael Fabricant had between ten and twenty-five percent of their most recent tweets directed to followers.

To find our information, we first used the website Tweetminster, and found a list of all of the Conservative MPs and their Twitter names. We then went through all of these people, and sorted them by the number of their followers. We chose to sort by number of followers, because that would show their level of interaction better than their number of updates. Had we sorted by

number of updates, we could have found people that did not interact at all with their constituents, which would not have been helpful for the topic at hand.

Once we sorted the list of MPs, we chose the top nine, in terms of followers. We chose to use the top nine because we could each archive three searches on Archivist. In Archivist, we began searches using the MPs Twitter names, rather than their real names, so that we could find direct messages to and from the MPs. Two sets of names were started on November 10, and one set of names was started on November 12. We used up to 100 messages by each MP, although some had far fewer messages than that. For those that did not have many messages archived (because Archivist can only go back so far), we went through their Twitter feed and read their messages to determine what they were doing.

For each MP, we went through up to 100 messages and categorized the type of message each one was. They could either be a retweet, a message to a constituent, or an update. We also looked at the number of followers they had, how many people they were following, and the total number of messages that they had posted. The types of messages were put in percentages of the total number of messages posted by each MP.

Each of the subjects that we followed used Twitter to their advantage in their own way. Louise Bagshawe used 75% of her tweets as a way to personally connect with her followers and people that wrote on her Twitter page. Other MPs like Ed Vaizey use retweets as a way to communicate to their followers. Each of the representatives uses Twitter to make his views/personality better known. Twitter provides a simple way for these members of the conservative party to display these views on a public medium.

By following these nine members of the Conservative party, we identified how Twitter helps representatives interact with their constituents. Some of the MPs use it as a way to connect with followers on a more personal level, while others use it as a way to further their political views. Twitter is making it easier for political members to connect with individual people. It has changing the way we view social media and is changing the way we view our political representatives. These Conservative members of Parliament are taking full advantage of Twitter and using it as a political advantage.

	Followers	Following	Updates/Number of Tweets	Retweets	Interactions
William J. Hague	25,420	63	360	0%	70%
Grant Shapps	15,193	12,731	1,553	2%	10%
Eric Pickles	11,001	108	1,219	10%	50%
Jeremy Hunt	7,925	58	77	<1%	10%
Ed Vaizey	4,942	284	443	33%	5%
Louise Bagshawe	4,520	2,400	5,835	<1%	75%
Douglas Carswell	3,026	81	1,599	10%	20%
Nick Herbert	2,413	23	242	5%	<1%
Michael Fabricant	1,948	175	678	<1%	25%