and Costolo and a "drunk-the-Kool-Aid Twitter believer." But he also says Twitter will need to work hard to persuade the rest of the industry to learn how to exploit this new communications medium—right after they were forced to school themselves on the art of Facebook and Google. "Every time there is a new platform, there is a new thing you are measuring," Bedecarre says. "What's the value of a 'like' on Facebook? What's the value of a 'retweet'? I do think that's a challenge for advertisers."

While the New York Giants were beating the New England Patriots in this year's Super Bowl, a different kind of battle erupted on Twitter. General Motors, one of the game's largest advertisers, accompanied its five TV commercials with a wave of simultaneous promotions on Twitter, spending hundreds of thousands of dollars to get its tweets, with links to its TV spots, in front of users of the service. One of those ads, which depicted Chevy Silverado drivers who survive an apocalypse but mourn their absent friend, a Ford owner, set off a minor conflagration. Executives at Ford and GM, along with truck aficionados, waged a war of 140-character tweets over the relative doomsday-surviving attributes of the companies' respective full-size pickups. "At one point it was like the Hatfields and the McCoys online," says Joel Ewanick, GM's chief marketing officer, who gleefully monitored the action from a social media "war room" in GM's Detroit headquarters. "That was our intent. We wanted to give people something to talk about, and Twitter helped us do that."

Over the past six months, Twitter has tried to give advertisers such as GM a variety of new ways to spend money on the service. Last September it began allowing advertisers to send promoted tweets to targeted subsets of people even if they are not following those brands on the service. That same month it began accepting political ads from candidates and political action committees and designating them with a distinctive purple check mark. On Feb. 28, Twitter announced it would also start sending promoted tweets to mobile phones, beating Facebook in the race to make money from exploding mobile Internet use. Later this month, Twitter will open the doors of its ad network to corner bakeries, taco trucks, and other small businesses, which will be able to funnel ads onto the service by submitting bids at Twitter.com without having to talk to a salesperson.

Silicon Valley is watching these plans closely to see whether Twitter can justify the $8 billion valuation it got last summer after an investment by Russian venture capital firm DST Global. There are plenty of reasons for skepticism. Its users are accustomed to selecting whom they follow and what they want to see, and an influx of ads from companies could turn them off, a reaction Twitter engineers internally call "fatigue." The coming tools for small businesses could also pose a problem; such self-service systems tend to attract mischief makers who try to drive traffic to spam- or malware-laden websites. When Google rolled out similar tools for its system, AdWords, early last decade, spammers found cheap search keywords and put links to their websites next to results. Then they stocked those Web pages with worthless ads. Facebook has suffered from similar mischief. In January, Twitter acquired a security company, Dasient, to guard against such manipulation.

For now, many major advertisers are sampling Twitter with budgets far smaller than what they spend on Google or Facebook. In January, Nike sponsored a tweet inviting users to "make it count," a promotion foreshadowing the launch of its body-monitoring bracelet, FuelBand. In February, Walt Disney unveiled a campaign for the new Pixar film, *Brave,* with a promoted trend that invited users to recount their own stories of courage. Verizon Wireless, Subway, and Delta Air Lines have been active as well. "We want to be where our customers are," says John Harrobin, Verizon vice president of digital media and marketing, who nevertheless notes that Facebook ads more often result in sales. Twitter users, he says, are more likely to click on ads and engage with the company's message, "so it's often the first place we use to dispense information."

In January, McDonald's demonstrated one of the risks of Twitter advertising. It rolled out a campaign with the innocuous hashtag #McDStories as part of an effort to promote tales about the farmers who supply the restaurant chain's produce. Critics of the company immediately co-opted the hashtag with stories of food poisoning, weight gain, and poor employee hygiene. Rick Wion, McDonald's social media director, says he's pleased with Twitter's ad tools and will continue to use them despite the potential for blowback. "We know that at times promoted trends can be used by critics to take potshots, but in every case where we've used them, the positive conversations and tweets from our customers far outweigh the negative."

Earlier this year, Newt Gingrich set up a petition on Facebook to reduce the price of gas to $2.50 a gallon by supporting expanded North American oil drilling and the Keystone XL pipeline. His campaign then hawked links to the petition on Twitter. At the start of the Feb. 22 GOP debate in Arizona, the Gingrich campaign paid Twitter to ensure that a tweet with the petition's link appeared each time a user searched for "Newt Gingrich" and also for "Mitt Romney." With Twitter's ads, Gingrich at least momentarily pulled off a feat—eclipsing Romney's message—that political analysts concluded he failed to do in the debate.

Vincent Harris, an outside social media consultant to the Gingrich campaign, says he's spending about four times as much money on Facebook as on Twitter simply because he can reach more voters there. It's math: Facebook reaches 44.6% of the U.S. population and Twitter 9.1% according to eMarketer. Yet it's Twitter, Harris says, that's become an invaluable tool for shaping the