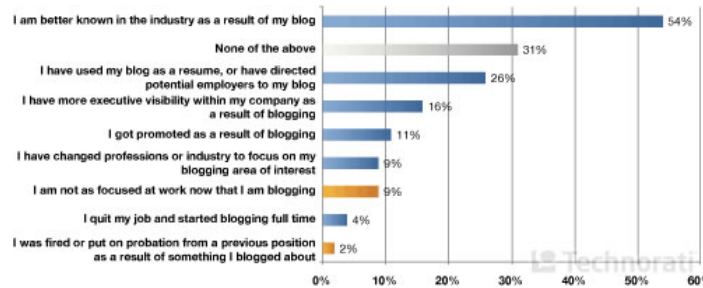


HOW BLOGS CAN HELP TO BUILD YOUR BUSINESS

WHAT IS A BLOG?

A blog is simply a website. A blog can be private, as in most cases, or it can be for business purposes. Blogs, either used internally to enhance the communication and culture in a corporation or externally for marketing, branding or public relations purposes are called corporate blogs.



RULES OF THE ROAD FOR BLOGGING:

Blog Rule #1: Strategic blog management begins with setting clear objectives. In other words, why does your organization want to blog?

Blog Rule #2: Business blogs are not necessary or appropriate for every organization. Evaluate the benefits and assess the risks before leaping into the blogosphere.

Blog Rule #3: Savvy business owners and executives must learn how to strategically and successfully manage the blogosphere today—or risk potentially unpleasant and expensive consequences tomorrow.

Blog Rule #4: It's the casual, conversational, anything-goes nature of the blog that makes it both so appealing to blog writers and readers—and so potentially dangerous to business.

Blog Rule #5: An organization without an external blog program may risk losing position, market share, reputation, and sales to techsavvy competitors who have already recognized—and tapped into—the power of the blogosphere.

Blog Rule #6: The blog is an electronic communications powerhouse that is likely to have greater impact on business communications and corporate reputations than e-mail, instant messaging, and traditional marketing-oriented websites combined.

QUESTIONS TO ASK ABOUT BLOGGING:

- 1) Who in our community do we most want to engage in reading and commenting on a blog? Are they online?
- 2) What kind of community conversation do we most want to have or is most needed in our community e.g., theme, tone, style?
- 3) What kind of information or ideas would our community most likely coalesce around and engage in thinking about and talking about online?
- 4) What are we already actively learning about that we could also blog about that would expand the possibilities for connections and wider learning?
- 5) Who else do we know is blogging on our topic that we could connect with and crosspost ideas, insights and information?
- 6) Who has time and interest in taking the lead for our blog? E.g., reading, writing, recruiting authors, coordinating, etc.
- 7) Who could I/we recruit to initially read and respond with feedback to our blog as we get started?
- 8) In what ways can we rethink what we do everyday to make blogging a thread in what we do rather than a sticky note (add on)?
- 9) What is our intention and purpose in hosting a blog conversation in our community?
- 10) Given your responses and provided you are ready to get started -- what will you title your blog?

How big is blogging?

The numbers vary but all agree that blogs are here to stay:

- ◆ Blogs: 77.7 million unique visitors in the US
- ◆ Facebook: 41.0 million | MySpace 75.1 million
- ◆ 94.1 million US blog readers in 2007 (50% of Internet users)
- ◆ 184 million WW have started a blog | 26.4 US
- ◆ 77% of active Internet users read blogs

The making of a successful blog

- ◆ Authentic voice is essential
- ◆ Transparency
- ◆ Write to inform, not to sell
- ◆ Full Disclosure
- ◆ Content is king
- ◆ Creative writing is key
- ◆ Frequent updates attract following
- ◆ Content-appropriateness can become issue
- ◆ Monitoring is important
- ◆ Linked to strategic objectives or goals

How much time/money does this take?

Most businesses can implement a blog for very little money; however, the best blogs that generate leads and revenue are launched in conjunction with professional help and can cost a few hundred to several thousand dollars.

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MarketingSavant

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MarketingSavant: Blogging Services

Blog consulting and coaching by an award-winning blogger

Award-winning blogger and internet marketing expert, Dana VanDen Heuvel, provides business blog consulting to corporations, non-profits and education. MarketingSavant will consult with your business on how it should blog, what tools to use and how to best join what is commonly known as “the blogosphere”.

Blog consulting services include:

- Blog setup, training and coaching to ensure that your blogging efforts are successful and profitable.
- Helping your company understand its target audience and what information should and should not be included on your company blog.
- On-call to answer any of your blogging questions. What is RSS? How do I attract the attention of A-list bloggers? How do I control comment spam?
- Show you ways to increase readership, attract the attention of journalists, improve search engine traffic and get your message across to your audience.

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PROMOTING YOUR BLOG

- ◆ Look at other industry blogs; see how they are engaging their readers. See what response they are receiving.
- ◆ Where possible, participate and become a welcome part of those conversations.
- ◆ Comments – Use other blogs to leave a footprint back to your own blog. Quality on-topic and knowledgeable comments will engage readers to enquire more on the writer.
- ◆ If a post on another blog inspires you to a particularly long comment, feel free to post a related piece on your own blog, citing the blog that inspired your post.
- ◆ Build a “blogroll” linking to other bloggers in your industry
- ◆ Trackbacks - Linking to other blogs gives you a trackback on many in their comments.
- ◆ Blog directories – Use them, get your blog listed in the right places
- ◆ Use traditional printed media – letter heads, business cards, etc
- ◆ Import the RSS Feed into your social network profiles such as Facebook Linking and feeds from primary site
- ◆ Using newsletters, promote engagement from newsletters
- ◆ Offer articles to other blogs, your articles would feature a link back to your own blog
- ◆ Blog as yourself separately and link this to your work blog.
- ◆ Send personal emails to any notable commenter to thank them and engage them further to bring them back.
- ◆ Mention your blog in E-mail footers and signatures

WHAT ABOUT NEGATIVITY?



In blogging, you need to Take the Good with the Bad. It is likely that negative comments will be made about your company or its products at some point. This could occur on that company’s blog or on another. It is important to address these dissenting opinions tactfully. Don’t suppress negative comments. Rather, use the blog to engage detractors in conversation and determine if there is an opportunity to improve your product.

Customers will appreciate the openness and willingness to listen, especially those within the blogosphere.

TOOLS TO USE

Blogging Tools:

- ◆ www.wordpress.com
- ◆ www.sixapart.com
- ◆ www.blogger.com

Blog Monitoring:

Sign up for an RSS reader account at www.google.com/reader

- ◆ Google Alerts: www.google.com/alerts
- ◆ Twitter: www.summize.com
- ◆ Technorati Blog Search: www.technorati.com

