

# To Blog, Or Not To Blog?



By Dennis Schooley

***“Business blogs have yet to sweep the business community, which presents a significant opportunity to adapt the technology to any business.”***

We have now entered the world of blogs! Sounds kind of Harry Potterish, doesn't it?

If you're over 20 years old, you probably think this is some crazy sci-fi phenomenon, or I've simply lost my mind. Don't fret, the vast majority of people don't know what a blog is all about – and more importantly, why it matters to them.

If you're under 20 you can stop reading because you probably know all about blogs, and the value they have in sharing information. You've been trading game-breaking codes, South Park clips, and jokes through blogs for months now – or maybe even years.

In a recent article, Johnson Ong quips “I have a blog. Doesn't everyone? You mean you don't? How uncool are you? According to Merriam-Webster, ‘blog’ was the word of the year last year. Not having your own blog is like not having your own Gmail account. What? You don't have Gmail either? My God, what are you? A caveman!”

Over or under, cool or uncool, I want to address blogs from a business standpoint, and the tremendous value they can deliver to business. There are several reasons that developing a blog is a tremendous strategy for any business.

- 1) It will increase your web presence significantly – the search engines love blogs!
- 2) It will allow your business to educate customers and prospects about

certain subjects, and appear as experts

- 3) It will raise your business profile with your vendors and other strategic partners, if they are invited to contribute to your blog
- 4) Other blogs can, and will, take information from your blog, and you will increase your exposure to anyone that participates in the ‘taking’ blog
- 5) Blogs accept subscribers, and everyone that subscribes to your blog will be constantly updated (pinged) by you with current information

## So What is It?

The full name for a blog is a weblog. It's a repository for articles, newsletters, information, and discussion boards. It's like a ‘what's new’ page on the internet in whatever subject you choose. When people research any topics that you have on your blog, they may very well end up on your blog through their search. If you've done it right, your blog is of course, fully branded to your company, and linked to your main website.

If you keep current articles, and information on your blog, you will receive hits from people looking for information about those subjects. You will also receive hits from other blogs, and they will then distribute your information to their own audiences.

You will receive hits from contributors of articles or news items, as well as people

looking for those particular contributors through a search engine.

Hopefully, you get the picture. Your web traffic should increase exponentially through the proper use of a blog.

## **Business Blogs**

Business blogs have yet to sweep the business community, which presents a significant opportunity to adapt the technology to any business. It will allow you to share expertise and knowledge with a much larger audience, which should create a significant benefit.

There is specific blogging software, and you will have to learn how to create an effective and valuable blog. You will also have to learn how to acquire and produce current industry information to populate your blog with articles that will maintain interest and value. Yes, there is an element of work to it – you didn't think it was free, with no effort required, like the mumps did you?

***" You should have content on your blog about the subjects that are most often searched."***

As you add current information to your subject area, or to secondary subject areas that you may include in your blog, your chances of more hits are higher. If you continually contribute self-generated articles and news items to the appropriate subject areas, your chances also increase. In addition, there are sources that allow you to publish their materials, which can be used to increase the value of the blog, and therefore the likelihood of being found on the good old inter-web.

## **So How Does It Work?**

If you still push the Pause/Break button in the upper right-hand corner of your keyboard to request permission from your boss for a visit to the bathroom, you can skip this part. Otherwise, it's really not too hard to follow.

Without getting too technical, there are many web robots (bots), crawlers, and spiders, and similar technologies that have RSS Reader capability. That's the stuff that is specific to blogs. They are basically looking for news, and blogs have that news.

If you do it right, these bots, crawlers, and spiders find your blog, and send information elsewhere, which is just what you want. Your blog is basically yelling at these web 'beasts' to "come on in and take this great stuff I've got."

For example, these web 'animals' include yahooslurp, googlebot, feedstercrawler, pubsub, syndic8, msnbot, newsgator, CP30, & R2D2.

O.K., the last two were Luke Skywalker's buddies, but the rest are real.

It will take 4 to 6 weeks for the search engines to adjust rankings but the ultimate result will be that you will progress up the ladder in the engines in the various topic areas that you feature. When people are searching for technologies or subjects that are being discussed in your blog, they will find you on the search engines.

That should be a hint that you should have content on your blog about the subjects that are most often searched.

When a subject is searched that is covered by one of your branded, self-generated articles, your fully branded information may be pulled to another blog, or to a specific person doing a search in that topic area. You can post that same article on your website, and it won't go anywhere. However, on your blog it gets a shot of super juice, and may just get pushed through any number of doors.

## **Linking – The Benefits – Increase Your Brand**

When website owners and bloggers (yeah, I'm now a blogger!) think of linking, they are usually referring to inbound links from external websites and blogs. For example, if

you had a link to your website on the website of another business.

While adding more inbound links on external sites is important, there is also a sort of 'reverse' link strategy associated with blogs.

Your blog's incoming links will provide a secondary benefit when someone is referred to an article in your blog from another website. For example, through GooglePageRank, the receiving page (you) gets a boost up the search engine when that happens, which helps the blog overall by boosting the popularity of the blog, which in turn is what increases the search results, which in turn drives up the search engine rankings.

What!? I wrote it and I have to read it six times to really follow what I'm saying.

Basically, the more people that visit your blog when they come from other sources, the more likely it is for people to find you when searching for a whole myriad of topics. That type of benefit does not exist with normal website traffic, because those visits don't effect web site rankings on the search engines. But blog traffic that is through a link from another site will drive you up the search engines. There – that's much more clear!? As clear as fog in a low-lying bog. Ouch!

Web designer Sue Studios says; "Blogs are highly strategic, here-to-stay desktop tools that can strengthen relationships, share knowledge, increase collaboration, and

improve branding. Think of the potential for your e-newsletter strategies:

- 1) Articles within newsletters can be linked to a blog, extending life and creating a massive conversation
- 2) You can offer a bi-directional forum to customers to get true, personal opinion on your products and services
- 3) Company experts can start a blog and become industry experts, helping your company edge out competition and, through this interactive forum, draw customers into another exchange of information and thoughts."

Well, it's snowing out so I think I'll go blogging! Wait, is that something you do in the snow, or is it something you do to stay out of the snow?!

Or is it a Celtic dance? Or should the Steelers have blogged that kick Sunday? I'm confused.

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