

The Blog Factor: Why Starting A Blog Now Is More Important Than Ever.



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About This E-book Handout

This is the handout for the NACE Experience! 2008 conference. This handout is not the actual PowerPoint of my presentation.

Instead, I'm creating this handout in more of an e-book format to serve as a complement to my presentation. (Don't worry, I'll email you the PowerPoint after my talk, if you really want it). I'd like to provide you with something that you can take away from this event and use as a reference as you venture out to start your own blog or improve the one you already have. There are some things in this e-book that may not be covered in my talk (bonus!) and vice versa (bummer!), so take some notes during my talk to make sure you don't miss anything important.

I'm not going to claim this as a masterpiece, so please excuse any typos or erroneous grammatical errors (feel free to report them to me if you want, though – chris@chrisbonney.com).

Some portions of this e-book may be verbose and others seemingly a little thin. Don't worry, I'll be talking about most of this at length during my talk so you can fill in what you may need to know there. Also, we'll have time after the talk to chat or feel free to email any questions you have as you embark on your blogging journey.

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What Is A Blog?

Okay, I'm going to start out simple.

I am going to assume that you have a working knowledge of the Web and have heard terms like Blog, MySpace, and Facebook . So I will not be giving you a full explanation on how a blog is simply a different kind of website that you can post information to.

So, what is a blog? A blog is simply a different kind of website that you can post information to. (Sorry, couldn't help myself). There is special software that allows you to do this. And if you haven't done it before, don't let the term "Blog" scare you. This is all very easy to do.

But beyond the simplicity of concept and the ease of use, when it comes to your business, a blog is a platform. It's a way for you to open up a dialogue with your prospects. It's a way to show your skills. (There are picture blogs and video blogs after all). It's a way to voice your opinion or garner support for a cause. It's a platform.

It's also a channel – as in marketing channel. A blog alone will not bring in more catering customers or entice event planners to use your services above all else. You must integrate your blog into your existing marketing tactics. Is part of your strategy to gain credibility in your region? A blog is perfect for that. Are you looking for feedback from your customers on what your best dish is? A blog is perfect for that. Are you looking for a way to influence the FDA? A blog is just what you need.

Why Blog?

Blogs have been greatly misunderstood by people for a long time now. I think the term “blog” isn’t helping the cause much – sounds so visceral and clunky. Blogs are actually (or can be) quite smooth and sleek when done well.

Blogs are a way to put yourself out there. And this, of course, for some people is the scary part. Who wants to stick themselves out there for scrutiny? Why would you type all your ideas for the whole world to see and critique? Doesn’t seem like a good idea or a good business model. Someone may not like what you say and therefore not do business with you. If you tell people everything you know, then they won’t have to hire you, they can just do it themselves. The fears go on and on.

Here’s my response to that:

“It’s a new day. We are no longer judged (or hired) by what we own. We are judged (and hired) by what we share.”

Yes, this is a bold way to think. And I hope this e-book and my presentation will help you absorb this truth (if you don’t already) and give you the tools to make a blog your businesses greatest asset.

Why Blog?

Here is my five-tiered progression illustrating why you could and should blog today. If you rank as a one on the list below, by all means fire up that blog. If you're a five, then prepare for success because it's comin'.

You should blog if:

- 1. You have something to say – and a unique way to say it.**
- 2. You have something to say – and a unique way to say it and you're passionate about it.**
- 3. You have something to say – and a unique way to say it and you're passionate about it and it's relevant to your audience.**
- 4. You have something to say – and a unique way to say it and you're passionate about it and it's relevant to your audience and it provides value.**
- 5. You have something to say – and a unique way to say it and you're passionate about it and it's relevant to your audience and it provides value and you can sustain it.**

Notice simply “having something to say”, doesn't make it as number one. It's just not enough. It won't be enough to make a difference. If you're honest with yourself, and you don't think you're at least a one, you are either not up for blogging in general or, more likely, not thinking about the right topic for your blog.

So, what do you blog about?

What Do You Blog About?

Before you write one single word in your blog, there are a few things you should do first that will help you hit the ground running. If you are already a blogger, then you might consider taking a step back and trying these things, if you haven't already. They could be the key that unlocks the next level of success for you.

1. **Read other blogs.** Ding dong. I know this sounds obvious, but many bloggers do not take this initial step, believe it or not. Find blogs in your industry and make notes on what you like and don't like. More importantly, make notes on what is not being covered.
2. **“Subscribe” to other blogs.** A cousin to #1, but it's vital. Some blogs you'll have a genuine interest in as opposed to a blog that you're simply researching. Instead of typing in the URL for each and every blog you want to visit each day, you can subscribe to blogs and have the information fed directly into your inbox or favorite home page like MyYahoo or iGoogle. Examine the subscription process (Called Real Simple Syndication or RSS) and what about these special blogs have enticed you to stay tethered.
3. **Comment on other blogs.** This is an easy way to get your name out before you begin your blog and also a way to find your writing “voice” in the process.
4. **Track your company.** Set up a Google Alert on your personal name and company name. You'll get an email anytime some mentions your company on a web page or blog post. Super important step!

What Do You Blog About?

So now let's get into what exactly the topic of your blog should be. The answer will be a personal (or corporate) one for you to make and the way in which each company or person makes that decision varies widely. Doing the four steps on the previous page should help greatly in your decision-making process, however.

Here are the things you need to consider when you're deciding on your topic. And, again, these are not chronological or in an order of any kind. Simply considerations as you make your decision.

- 1. What type of blog will you write?**
- 2. Who will your audience be?**
- 3. What subject(s) will you write about?**
- 4. Are you passionate about your topic and the idea of blogging in general?**
- 5. Do you have a plan to sustain the effort.?**

A quick note about your competition. You may feel that because there are tens of millions of blogs in the blogosphere that your little ol' blog doesn't stand a chance. Well, keep in mind that it's projected that a large majority of blogs in the world are abandoned quickly (not sustainable) and only a few are in your industry. What it does mean though is that your blog needs to be unique, remarkable, and speak to a niche.

What Do You Blog About?

Let's talk about types of blogs. Seth Godin (www.sethgodin.com), one of the biggest bloggers around, says in his blogging e-book that there are three kinds of blogs:

1. **CAT BLOGS** are blogs for and by and about the person blogging. A cat blog is about your cat and your dating travails and your boss and whatever you feel like sharing in your public diary. The vast majority of people with a cat blog don't need or want strangers to read it.
2. **BOSS BLOGS** are blogs used to communicate to a defined circle of people. A boss blog is a fantastic communications tool. I (Seth, that is, not me) used one when I produced the fourth grade musical. It made it easy for me to keep the parents who cared about our project up to date... and it gave them an easy-to-follow archive of what had already happened.
3. The third kind of blog is the kind most people imagine when they talk about blogs. Some of these blogs are for individuals and others are for organizations trying to share their ideas and agendas. These are the blogs that are changing the face of marketing, journalism and the spread of ideas. I (Seth does) want to call these **VIRAL BLOGS**.

What Do You Blog About?

I think these three categories of blogs are good for the brain. They make you think about what genre you want to be in. Most likely you'll want to think viral, like Seth said.

There are other folks like Rohit Bhargava and Jesse Thomas who think there are 25 types of potential blogs. See their slideshow on all 25 here: <http://tinyurl.com/ywj9zn>.

There are really only 5 types of blogs.

I'm of the mindset that there are really only 5 types of blogs you can create. You'll see overlap between Seth's and the guys above who say there are 25. For simplicity, let's focus on 5:

1. **Thought Leader/Expert:** This is the blog that positions you as the person in the know and you provide insights into your profession/industry.
2. **Practical Advice:** This is for the blogger who has been there and done that. Someone with years of experience that knows the ins and outs and can provide real-world advice on getting it done.
3. **Advocacy:** A blog for (or against, I suppose) a certain cause or movement. Could even be something as simple as a "Gadget Gal" type of blog or a product review site of some kind.
4. **Corporate:** Always tricky, but can be done. An "About Us" type of blog that talks mostly about the company and its happenings. Announcements about new products, etc.
5. **Journalist:** The biggest blog in the land falls into this category. (See next page.) You report news on your industry or interests. Maybe even post some exclusive interviews or profiles.

The Biggest Blogs In The Land June 2008

According to technorati.com, June 25, 2008.

1. [Breaking News and Opinion on The Huffington Post](#)



By [Arianna Huffington](#) · 1 day ago

<http://huffingtonpost.com>

Authority: 26,553

2. [TechCrunch](#)



By [Michael Arrington](#) · 1 day ago

<http://techcrunch.com>

Authority: 23,100

3. [Gizmodo, the Gadget Guide](#)

1 day ago

<http://gizmodo.com>

Authority: 22,688

4. [Engadget](#)

By [WeblogsInc](#) · 1 day ago

<http://www.engadget.com>

Authority: 22,237

5. [Boing Boing](#)

Boing Boing is a weblog of cultural curiosities and interesting technologies. It's the most popular blog in the world, as ranked by Technorati.com, and won the Lifetime Achievement and Best Group Blog awards at the 2006 Bloggies ceremony.

By [Mark Frauenfelder](#) · 1 day ago

<http://www.boingboing.net>

Authority: 16,959

What Do I Blog About?

Who will your audience be? This could be the trickiest decision you make. Fear can keep you from focus. To be successful, you'll need to know exactly who you're trying to reach. It may be more than one group of people, but you need to know who they are.

Your audience could be:

Your customers

Your staff

The press

Your investors

Your vendors

Industry influencers

Your audience needs to know you're being authentic. They need to know that you're passionate. They need to know you're knowledgeable. They need to know they can trust you.

What Do You Blog About?

What should you actually write about?

Determining your audience(s) will help.

Determining what isn't being talked about in your industry will help.

Determining what you know the most about will help.

Determining what you're passionate about will help.

Determining what you can post about over and over again will help.

Pssst!

Another point that very few blog advisors talk about is the craft of writing. Are you a writer? Have you written or even been published before? Does grammar and spelling come easy to you? Do you love the written word? Remember that even though a blog can be a business tool, it is a writer's game. Those that do it well have been and will continue to be writers. If you're not a writer, don't be overly discouraged, but do some homework on the writing life because in due time you will officially be a published writer.

What Do You Blog About?

**Are you passionate
about your topic
and the idea of
blogging in general?**

Well, are you?

How Do I Blog?

Okay, so you're passionate, trustworthy, and credible. You've researched the industry, checked out other blogs and have even commented on some of them. You know your audience(s) and have a niche topic to write about. You're pretty sure you're a writer and feel like you're now ready to make your first post.

Not so fast.

There are some more decisions you'll need to make. Mostly tactical.

You'll need first to select the type of blogging software you will use. There are many to choose from, but the three major players are:

1. TypePad (www.typepad.com)
2. WordPress (www.wordpress.com)
3. Blogger (www.blogger.com)

I use TypePad and I pay a nominal monthly fee. Blogger is free as is WordPress. It depends on what you're trying to accomplish, but I'd say try TypePad to start, though WordPress is very popular and quite flexible, and, well, Blogger is very easy to use. See? Depends on what you want to accomplish? Check them out and follow your gut.

How Do You Blog?

Whichever software you choose, it will provide you with a URL for the blog. Like my TypePad blog URL is chrisbonney.typepad.com. I have a link to this blog from my main site www.chrisbonney.com. Some people recommend getting your own URL for your blog, but most likely you already have a website, so just use the URL the software creates and link to it from your website. Easy.

Now here's the part most people don't do before they start blogging:

Plan

Put together a plan that includes:

1. Frequency of posts. Could be every day but not necessary. At least once a week.
2. Topics of posts. Brainstorm 100 ideas – it doesn't matter if they are stupid or not. This will help you determine your feasibility for sustaining.
3. A stock pile of 10 posts already written and edited that are general in topic that you can use to get started and/or when ideas run thin.
4. How long you will blog for. The duration of this thing. Not all blogs have to go on forever.
5. A standard structure for your posts. A few things every post should have: Alluring title, a picture, a sense of anticipation, a call to action, trackbacks and comments turned on, at least 100 words but no more than 350 (unless being remarkable dictates otherwise).

How Do You Market Your Blog?

Okay, now you're up and running. We've got to tell people about your fabulous blog.

First consider:

- Do you have a marketing plan for your business?
- A blog is a channel. It cannot be your only marketing tool. (There are a couple exceptions).
- You* don't market it. It's a word of mouse proposition in most cases.
- Getting traffic to your site is not success, keeping traffic is.
- If you don't write incredible, relevant, useful, insightful content you won't keep traffic. Write great content before you worry about mass promotion. Can you find ONE person who wants to subscribe? Start there.
- There are no shortcuts to great content and subscriptions. It takes TIME.

Here are 10 tactical marketing ideas that work:

1. Become a member of StumbleUpon, Digg, Facebook, MySpace, LinkedIn, or any other social networking site that makes sense for your business. Be active. Be kind. Don't be blatant. Be a valuable member, and the community will come to you.
2. Use Twitter to promote your posts and ask for people's opinions. If you don't know what Twitter is, find out immediately.
3. Have a link to your blog from your website and ask others to link to it as well. When another blog links to you it's called a "blog roll." Blog roll with the right people.

How Do You Market Your Blog?

4. “Claim” your site on Technorati. Submit it to Google Blogs.
5. Put a feed to your blog in other places like your Squidoo.com page and your HubPages.com page.
6. Write articles on sites like Helium and ezinearticles.com and link back to your blog from there.
7. Put your blog URL (if you go that route) on your business card.
8. Continue to comment on other blogs.
9. Enable an RSS feed for your blog. Do this immediately. Look at how other blogs do it. Go to www.feedburner.com to get started.
10. Write great content. Wait, I already said that. Well, yeah, because that is what it takes to be a successful blog. BE REMARKABLE. There is no other way to be successful.

How Do You Measure Success?

If you don't measure it, you can't manage it.

...except when it comes to blogs.

You must have an ROI to be successful.

...except when it comes to blogs

Other tools and techniques with which to measure, when it's measuring you do, in fact, need:

Google Blogs

MyBlogLog

Technorati

Google Analytics

Feedburner

Trackbacks

Comments

Diggs

Stumbles

Other blog mentions

What Will Make Your Blog Great?

A list in no particular order because, after all, greatness has no order. It just is.

Remarkable content

Passion

Knowledge

Starting with a question

Adding a picture

Focusing on the reader

Building anticipation

Writing great titles/headlines

Asking for a dialogue

Expressing contrarian views

Writing for search engines

Making it a part of a bigger marketing effort

Showing integrity

Additional Resources

Books

Naked Conversations by Robert Scoble and Shel Israel

The New Rules of Marketing and PR by David Meerman Scott

GroundSwell – by Charlene Li and Josh Bernoff

Here Comes Everybody by Clay Shirky

Blogs

www.probblogger.com

www.copyblogger.com

www.remarkablogger.com

www.sethgodin.com

www.chrisbrogan.com

About The Author

I've worked within the technology industry for over 15 years and have worked specifically within the special event industry for many of them. As the VP of client services at Vanguard Technology (www.vtcus.com) I help the International Special Event Society (ISES) with many a technology initiative. I've also worked with Churchill Downs and their group sales division, implementing custom-built software that enable group sales clientele to select all of the food and beverage items for their event online.

I speak and write regularly within the technology industry. I'd be happy to share any written work or dates with people that are interested.

I also do company and individual training on blogging and email productivity.

You can learn more on my website: www.chrisbonney.com



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